

I want to talk this morning about false prophets. Part of what we need to see is that false prophets aren't out there deceiving other people somewhere else. False prophets and false teachers are here in our circles. And we ourselves, even the most mature among us. Even those of us who have walked with Jesus for a long time, we can still fall pray to false prophets and false teachers. Because I will be the first to admit that I have fallen for false teachers. I've had books on my shelves, listened to the sermons, and been disciplined by and really influenced by people who turned out to be false prophets and false teachers.

We often assume that these false prophets and false teachers will be so obvious. Like they will be mustache twirly, and then only fools would ever fall for them. But we need to be careful. In 2 Peter 2, Peter is going to show us what we should do about false prophets. Because our instincts are not always correct or Biblical.

I. We should trust God to deal with them (v. 1-9).

This is where we need to start.

Especially because it is not our natural instinct.

But this is where we have to begin.

We start by trusting that God will handle them.

Verse 1, **"But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction."**

There will be false prophets among us.

They will be here.

This is not an if.

This is not a this possibly could be something that happens.

This is God letting us know that false prophets are going to come.

They will be in the midst of the church.

They will be in the middle of the congregation, taking communion and even teaching at times.

Because these false prophets are often secret and quiet.
False teachers don't usually come in and tell you there are going to teach something insane and different.
They do things slowly.
So much that many don't even realize what is happening.

It would probably be helpful for me to define what heresy is.
Because heresy is something that we might use a lot.
Are we might be quick to call someone a heretic.
But this is a very specific and a very loaded word.

A heresy is something that if you believe this, you are no longer a Christian in your salvation is in danger.
And I don't mean like you're losing your salvation.
But it is something that if you believe this, you are no longer following the faith of Jesus handed down to us.

There's lots of different things that we can disagree about as Christians and we can still be in the faith.
We can argue about secondary issues like legalism.
What kind of thing should Christians and shouldn't Christian watch.
We could argue about how is Revelation going to be fulfilled.
But we can't disagree about the fact that He is going to return and this is our hope.
Because if you deny the physical return of Jesus, you are a heretic.
Denying that Jesus is God is heresy.
Denying that God is all powerful and all knowing is heresy.
So heresy is denying a fundamental truth about the faith.
Not just something unbiblical.
Especially it is something you don't repent of.
Plenty of young Christians or immature Christians believe heresy.
But if they are taught rightly and corrected on why their belief is heretical and still don't change their mind, that is when it is heresy and you are in danger.

The problem is a lot of people don't know their Bibles enough to recognize heresy when they see it when they hear it.

Or some people know their Bibles really well, but they don't know doctrine.

So we need to know our Bibles and know the fundamentals of the faith. Because they can secretly bring these in.

And we have to be ready.

These will go so far to even begin to deny Jesus.

Some will be so bold to do that.

And when they do that, it will bring destruction.

Verse 2, "**And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.**"

There will be many people who follow them.

They hear their teaching and they will listen to it.

The ancient path of following in Jesus will be blasphemed and denied.

Verse 3, "**And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.**"

One way we can see these false teachers as their greed.

They will try to exploit you.

They will try to deceive you.

They will use their words not to help you become more like Jesus, but to help themselves get rich.

We studied some of the earliest Christian writings on Wednesday recently. These were written at the time when the apostles are still traveling around and they're still prophets and people working miracles.

And they have a lot of instructions and how do identify false prophet.

Do you know the way that they said you could do that?

They said if they ask you for money, they are false prophet

If someone came to, you said they were a teacher of Jesus and then they said give me some money. We're gonna take up a collection. You just go ahead and kick that person out.

False teachers are driven by greed.

And this hasn't stopped it's just changed.

Don't listen to greedy people.

"Their condemnation is not idle"

This is the good news.

God knows who these false prophets are.

God knows who these false teachers are.

They have been condemned from long long ago.

It's not idle.

And the judgment is going to come for them.

So we can trust God to deal with them.

He is already planning on what to do.

You could think about mobster.

In a prominent town and he's operating kind of openly.

Everybody knows that he's selling drugs that he's running guns.

He has murdered plenty of people and we know that he's guilty.

But he controls the local police and local politicians and it seems as if nobody is doing anything and nobody cares.

But somebody with much more power and much more authority is paying attention.

The FBI has been paying attention and they are building an ironclad case.

Nobody knows, but they are almost done and soon everyone will be thrown in jail forever and the whole operation will be undone.

God is doing something like that on a much broader scale.

He's collecting evidence he's building the case and one day justice will come.

They will get everything coming to them.

We can trust God to deal with them.

Verse 4, **"For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;"**

He gives an example of how God dealt with demons.

This seems to refer to how God dealt with the fallen angels in Genesis 6. If God dealt with demons and fallen angels, he can deal with these people.

Verse 5, **"if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;"**

Then he turns to talk about Noah.

God says that He dealt with the whole world in Noah's day.

The world was filled with wickedness and God destroyed the ungodly.

But He saved and preserved God's people.

Verse 6, **"if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;"**

He also talks about the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

God heard of their wickedness.

He heard of their sexual perversion.

He heard of their abuse of women and innocent.

He heard of their greed and he made an example of them.

Those cities became extinct.

They were wiped off the face of the earth so much that now people wonder if they ever existed at all if they are merely legend.

And God says he did this as an example of what will happen to the ungodly

This is what will happen to the false prophets.

Verse 7, **"and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked"**

But there is also is this promise.

It is not just that God will deal with the wicked.

It is also that he can rescue his people

even when they are in the midst of the wickedness.

He could rescue His people from the oppression of angels

He could rescue Noah and his family even from a flood that takes over the world.

And He rescued Lot who is surrounded by the sensuality in the wickedness of the city.

Verse 8, **“(for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard);”**

God could rescue him, even though every day for a Lot was torture.

Having to live in a city in a place that was so evil and so wicked it was torturing and tormenting his soul.

Him to live in this place, and we read the story too, that it caused him to act like them as well, even though he might've been trying his best.

It should be a comfort that God knows how to rescue us too.

Verse 9, **“then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,”**

But I want you to see here is that verse nine is a promise and it is also a command.

God promises that He will deliver us, and He will rescue us.

He can rescue the godly.

It's a one this is a promise and a comfort that God will deliver us from these false prophets.

He will deliver us out of trials and out of suffering.

He will save us from the false teachers who try to influence and infiltrate and destroy the church of Christ.

But this also tells us how we to respond to the false prophets into the false teachers

What is our responsibility?

What does it say in this chapter?

Do you see anything in this chapter or anything in this passage that tells us how weird to go out and search for false prophets?

Do you see anything in here about how we are too hunt down the prophets and identify wherever they may be hiding?

Do you see anything about how to respond to false prophets and to defeat them bouts of rhetoric and debates?

Or does it just tell us God knows how to handle it?

See what Peter wants us to understand yes false prophets are here.

Yes, it will be terrible. But God has got it.

You see God does not need us to deal with the false prophets in this world.

He doesn't.

This is because I see repeatedly.

There's some who take it upon themselves as if it is their spiritual mantle.

Or their spiritual gift or their divine call from God to go hunt for false teachers and prophets.

And so they just wanna read through every single Christian book and every single Christian preacher that they come across to examine all their stuff so they can expose and shine light on every single false teacher everywhere.

I understand the desire

I think it's even coming from a good place out of a zeal for truth and a desire to honor God.

But it's misguided because it's not something scripture command us to do.

And I've rarely seen somebody who tries to build their ministry and build their life around hunting down false doctrine.

I've rarely seen that person become more Christlike.

I've certainly rarely seen that person longing for the repentance in the restoration of these teachers.

Unfortunately, these people end up becoming the very thing they're hunting.

Now the other wrong extreme would be to do nothing.

And I am not saying that.

But I am saying that the responsibility of attacking every false prophet and every false teacher is not our job.

But there has to be balance.

Now it is important that there's no false teaching or false prophets at Tanglewood Bible Fellowship.

In our local assembly.

In our congregation and our church family here we should be sure that there's no false prophets.

Here we should be examining the doctrine of your pastors the doctrine of those who come to preach the doctrine of our missionaries that we support the doctrine of the Bible studies that we put on those things we care about and we should pay attention to.

Someone was teaching heresy in a Bible study here then we need to do something about it actively because it's part of our responsibility.

Now it's not my responsibility as a pastor to come up to you and ask you to let me know all of the Christian books you're reading all of the Christian podcast you're listening to all of the Christian songs you're singing and all of the Christian sermons you're hearing so I can let you know if those people are false teachers or not.

That's probably too far.

Now you wanted me to do that and you asked me to do that I would do that for you.

It's certainly not our job to go poke around other churches in town, undermine the authority of their pastors or their elders or their congregation and examine their teaching.

Because they are a part of our body that's between the Lord.

That is what Peter is out here saying false teachers are coming. God is going to rescue you and he's going to deal with them.

So let's take serious the false teaching seriously but

Don't let this take over your life.

I've never seen that go well for anyone spiritually.

We can trust God to handle it.

We have to start here.

Because if we miss this, then we won't do anything else right.

II. We should learn what they are like (v. 10-16).

We are trusting God, but what we are these people like?

Verse 10, **"and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority."**

So they indulge in their desires.

Having sexual desires is a good thing.

Engaging and giving into those sexual desires and ways that God did not design, and God did not intend for us is not a good thing.

This is where lots of false prophets and teachers come from.

From the very beginning and still today, they tell us to ignore what God's word says about passion and desires.

They will tell us we can do whatever we want sexually.

God would never deny love.

But we know God's word that some sexual desires actually defile us.

Also says that these people who despise authority.

Because false prophets hate accountability.

They don't want to have to report to someone.

This should be convicting for some of us, who also don't like authority.

"Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, ¹¹ whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord."

I don't think this is a reference to the angels in heaven.

This appears to be talking about fallen angels, or demons.

And Peter says even demons themselves.

Even though they have rebelled against God.
They are actively working to destroy His people and His kingdom.
They have more might and power than all of us.
But, they know better than to blaspheme God.

They will hate God.
But they will not blaspheme.
These false prophets and teachers have no such shame.
They are being portrayed as even worse than demons.

Verse 12, **"But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction,"**

They are like wild animals.
He is saying the false teachers are not more enlightened.
They do not have extra wisdom.
They are wild animals who know nothing.

They are blaspheming about things they know nothing about.
They have as much to teach you about theology as a squirrel's mutterings.
Or the ravings of a rapid dog.
And they will be destroyed by their own destructive lies.
This is the true nature of these teachers.
Wild ignorant animals.

Verse 13, **"suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you."**

All they want to do all day is sin.
They pursue not study, not good works, not holiness, but only sin.
They are a stain and blemish on the people of God.
They are the leaven in the bread.
And they find their sinful deception hilarious.
They laugh as they sit down at the feast and communion table with us.

Verse 14, **"They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children"**

Their eyes are full of adultery.

They are controlled by lust.

Everywhere they look they see not people made in the image of God, but sexual objects.

Their hearts are consumed with greed.

They never get enough.

They are cursed children.

They are like a spoiled child who never has enough presents.

One thing you notice if you study cults.

Look at any of them is where they lead.

They always lead to the leader having tons of money and sex with whoever they want.

Because false teaching always leads to the same place.

It cannot help it.

Verse 15, **"Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing,"**

Peter brings up the story of Balaam the prophet.

He was a true prophet of God.

He started right.

But he was consumed by greed.

And he realized prophecy for hire paid better than service to the King of Kings.

He was happy to prophecy whatever you wanted for the right price.

I would also encourage you to go and read the book of Jude.

It is short and only one chapter.

But the entire book has a lot of overlap and parallels with this chapter.

Especially this reference to Balaam.

Verse 16, **"but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness."**

Balaam used to be a good prophet.

But he got greedy.

He started to be willing to say whatever people wanted for money.

So Balaam was rebuked by his own donkey.

The donkey spoke and told him that if he did not cease from his sin, then God was going to kill him.

The wild donkey was more a true prophet than Balaam.

But he listened and was saved.

This is a warning and call to the false prophets.

Heed the true voice of God.

Which sometimes comes through the donkey.

Heed that voice rather than the voice of the wild prophets.

III. We should avoid their slavery (v. 17-22).

It is so much more than these people are wrong.

The world will give you a false impression.

It will make you think that Christians oppose others religions because we are ignorant.

And we don't accept false teachers and heretics in our churches because we want control.

ANd we want people to only think one way.

But the real reason is because false teaching and false religions enslave people.

They keep you trapped in sin and death.

This is what makes false teachers so dangerous.

They are like kidnapers and traffickers.

Slowly luring you into danger to take your freedom.

Verse 17, **"These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved."**

They are waterless springs and mists.

One this shows their powerlessness.

They have no more might or power than a mist.

It can be driven too and fro by the storm.

But they also do not have the power to refresh.

When you are in the desert desperate for water.

They are a spring with no water.

And they are a light mist.

It will feel good for a moment, but then blows away.

And for these people they will be judged in utter darkness.

They will get what they deserve.

Verse 18, **"For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error."**

They boast in their follow.

They entice people with sexual passions.

Verse 19, **"They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved."**

This is the key verse I think.

They promise great freedom.

But they themselves are slaves to sin.

False teachers will promise you wisdom.

Even those who are more obviously heretics.

They will promise that you can take off Christ's yoke.

You can say goodbye to the oppression of the Bible and God's laws.

Just come and embrace their ways and find freedom.

But it is a false freedom.

It can only lead to more slavery and death.
It is the lie of our world and our age.
It is the unfortunate lie of transgenerism.
People have a real struggle with their identity and gender, and the world promises you freedom, but it is only more chains.
It is the lie sexuality promises. Just give into to your desires and be free.

Whatever overcomes a person is what we are enslaved to.
This is a hard principle to remember.
Because it can be convicting.
What are you enslaved to?
What can overcome you?
What cannot you not function without?
Or what can cripple you?
Anxiety?
Caffine?
Workaholism?
Money?
What holds your chains?

Verse 20, **"For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first."**

I don't think this means they have lost their salvation.
This is the picture of someone who has a demon cast out of them and then decides not to follow Jesus.
And they decide they want to go back to demonic possession.
Like Israel who had been set free in Egypt, but then some thought they might want to go back.

They have heard the gospel.
Maybe they even turned away from some sins and came to the church.
But they decided to go back to their sin to slavery.

Verse 21, **"For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them."**

And it would have been better for them.

It would have been better if they never came to church.

Because their punishment will be worse now.

They had a greater chance to respond to the gospel and said no.

And they got to experience a taste of what following Jesus can be.

They saw the light of Christ and returned to darkness.

They felt their chains be removed and instead pulled back their hands.

Verse 22, **"What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."**

This is a gross image.

But sin is defilement.

And this is what our sin is.

We are dogs who return to vomit when we return to sin instead of to Christ.

But it does not have to be this way.

Christ has washed us clean in the waters.

The Spirit has given us a clean heart.

We should turn from our sin and turn to Jesus.

He is the only place that brings true freedom.

On the cross, Jesus broke our chains.

Don't let false prophets put them back on.

CONCLUSION:

1. How should we deal with false prophets? Mostly we should let God deal with them, But we should learn what they are like so we can avoid their chains.

2. I've spent a lot of time talking about false prophets and false sheperds. I want to end with a story about a good shepherd. We need to not spend so much time talking about false prophets that we forget what is good. Thomas Oyode is a catholic priest serving at a seminary in Nigeria. During Sunday evening service his church was attacked by gunman. They came in and took two students hostage to kidnap them and hold them for ransom. Thomas did not just stand by and do nothing. He also did not try to fight back. Instead, he offered himself in their place because he was more valuable and they accepted. And he was kidnapped in their place. This is what true shepherds do. Like Jesus they offer themselves in place of the sheep. False shepherds take life and steal, the true shepherds give like Jesus.