



FALSE TEACHERS ARE DESTINED FOR UTTER DARKNESS

2 Peter 2:10b-22

INTRO

As you can hear, Peter doesn't pull any punches in this passage, so we must not either. **False teachers, these people that Peter has been describing in the second chapter of his second letter, are destined for hell.** These teachers bring in destructive heresies that will lead them to swift destruction. Peter had strong words for these deceivers, and he provided Old Testament examples of similar situations.

Now, who is a false teacher? It's not just every Christian you disagree with. It's not those who sincerely hold beliefs different from yours— if those beliefs are within the spectrum of possible interpretations. It's not even a Christian, or even a Christian leader, who speaks in ignorance of correct doctrine. Such a person is a candidate for the category of "false teacher" but that remains to be determined until they receive correction. But someone can, in sincerity, teach something that is false without being a false teacher.

So, let's be clear that within the definition provided to us by Peter, false teachers are people who know the truth, but bring destructive

heresies into the local church for the purpose of personal gain. They want to redirect the glory that belongs to God so that it flows to them instead. They want to undermine those in authority in the church so that authority will flow to them.

Peter has already assured us that such unrighteous people will be kept under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially, Peter said, those who *“indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.”* But equally important—or perhaps we should say even more important—is that the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials.

Peter has already given us a sufficient description of false teachers, informing us that they will be held for punishment, and assuring us that we would be rescued from trials. But as we look at this week’s passage, we can see that Peter is not even close to done with describing the false teachers, what they are like, what they do, and where they will spend eternity.

And so the question I will pose to you at the beginning, which I will spend some time answering, is this: Why does Peter feel the need to go into such extensive, detailed descriptions of what these false teachers are like and what they do? Why does he spend another 12 verses after he seems to have already made his point?

It’s because false teachers within the church are agents of Satan who are subtle corruptors of others. These predatory leaders follow longstanding, well-established patterns, and they are destined for hell.

Peter wants us to know this, first, about false teachers...

1. FALSE TEACHERS WANT TO CORRUPT YOU (VV. 10-14)

10b Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones,

They are bold and willful. Those can both be positive traits, but not when exercised in rebellion against God.

It is quite sobering to see how these bold and willful people can often come off as intensely caring for others. But in fact, they are not people who genuinely love others. They are primarily people who love themselves, and their way of loving themselves is to deceive others into thinking that they love them. That's their mission.

They exploit people with false words, and all the while, they are playing a long game, deceiving people into giving them what they want. As we saw last week, this is the type of person who will appear to be exactly what you want them to be so that they can get exactly what they want from you. Their main tool of deception and exploitation is the pouring on of counterfeit love, and their main goal is self-gratification.

Back in v2, we read that through such people "the way of truth will be blasphemed," and here the "glorious ones" are blasphemed. To blaspheme means to slander or to speak profanely of sacred things, or to take them too lightly. Now, who are the "glorious ones" referred to here? In this case, Peter is referring to angels, who are spiritual beings of great dignity. They blaspheme these beings and don't feel any shame or fear in doing so.

This blasphemy always branches out. They speak irreverently about God and sacred things. This is again related to how they reject authority. They speak slander of those in authority in an attempt to bring them down and take their place.

They speak evil of exalted beings—angels. They speak evil of Christ, but not openly at first. They blaspheme God. Now, this couldn't have all been obvious and out in the open, could it? How would people creep in unnoticed if they were rejecting those in authority in the

church and speaking irreverently about God? That would make them obvious, right?

11, whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord.

The principle here is that all our proclamations of judgment are best stated as appeals to God to judge. This aligns with other biblical teachings about judging. When Jesus said, "*Judge not lest you also be judged,*" he was not telling us to ignore visible sin. He was telling us to use God's standards and not our own. He was warning us not to put ourselves in a position of authority that might seem to be above his own. And this principle applies, it seems, as we see in Jude, even to a case where the archangel is confronting Satan.

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,

He begins by calling them irrational animals, creatures without reason. He says they are born to be caught and destroyed, to perish, to be in a continual state of ongoing decay. In other words, they are spiritually dead in a state of spiritual decomposition.

And it's important to note that this internal decomposition is not always externally visible. If it were, that would make everything that much easier, wouldn't it? If the state of someone's external appearance always matched the state of their soul, what do you think we would look like to each other? And what would we see if we looked at one of these false teachers? No one would approach a zombie for a hug, but inwardly, these men are dead and decomposing.

These irrational animals, these creatures without reason, blaspheme about matters they don't understand. And because of this lack of humility, they will be destroyed.

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.

If you want to engage in this type of behaviour, then you will be paid for your work, but the payment you will receive is to experience the judgment of God and people acting wickedly towards you. This will be the consequence of their own unjust actions, and so in this way, we could use a common phrase that they are "receiving their just desserts."

These people joyfully take part in self-indulgent activities in broad daylight. Usually, these activities take place under the cover of darkness due to the shame that most people feel for acting this way. But for these people, it is something to be proud of.

Peter says they are blots and blemishes, keying in again on the previous passage where he said, because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. These people are a stain and a disgrace to the church due to their predatory and self-indulgent behaviour.

They are full of deceit and deceptions, and the lusts that are triggered by this deceit, and they are revelling in all of this. They are not secretly or ashamedly indulging, but they are proud of all of this, and they do it while they're together with you. In other words, this is happening right under people's noses!

How do such people get away with this? He seems to be saying that they are acting this way in broad daylight, so why is no one noticing?

Maybe the same problem existed then that exists today. Maybe the case is that many people were decrying these blatantly false

teachers, but many others were supporting them and joining them in their revelry and couldn't be talked out of it!

Peter goes on...

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

This word for adultery is not just a gender-neutral term; it is actually more specifically an adulterous woman. What's implied here is that men like this often have their heads on a swivel, looking out for women that they think might be open to an adulterous encounter. They then often isolate them, press them, and test boundaries. Sometimes they'll do this with a whole bunch of them at once, so they can figure out which ones are most vulnerable.

This happens all the time. These types of men will set up their surroundings so that it's like a target-rich environment with many possibilities they can take advantage of. And then they just have to figure out which potential victim is most vulnerable, and then the next and the next.

In Romans 15:1, Paul couldn't be clearer that "*We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*" We are supposed to have extra regard for weak Christians, and we're supposed to lay aside even things that aren't inherently sinful for the sake of the weaker Christians so that they don't stumble. But these false teachers, with eyes full of adultery, do just the opposite. Every predator does. They want to identify who is the weakest so they can attack, not so they can protect.

They will join a group and begin to discover who is weak by testing boundaries, to see whose boundaries can most easily be violated. From there, they get their potential victims alone more often and

begin to press the boundaries further. And then eventually they lead these victims to act as the fulfillment of their sensual desires.

How do they do it? They traffic in trust. They appear to be someone that you trust, and then they try to exploit you with their words, exactly as Peter has warned.

Insatiable For Sin

It's just it's evil upon evil upon evil, and it happens over and over and over. Now, you might be wondering, what kind of men are we talking about? If you were an adult Christian in the 1980s and 90s, you might think of men like Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Bakker or other high-profile cases where purported ministers of the gospel were repeatedly caught in adulterous affairs.

But Peter is specific here: this is a local problem that is not blatantly obvious. These people work from inside the church. They will worship with you, fellowship with you, even take communion with you, but inside, they are the ravenous wolves Jesus warns about in Matt. 7:15-16 *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits."*

An important distinction here is that both Jesus and Peter are telling us not how these men will *appear* to be but how they actually are. They won't appear to be wolves; they look like sheep. If everything that Peter described here were apparent and obvious, we wouldn't need warnings and instructions. But both are needed because these men appear to be one thing while they are actually something else. This is where the phrase "a wolf in sheep's clothing" comes from.

These men are rabid in their search for fleshly pleasure, but they are not immediately obvious. These desires are insatiable and unceasing. They can't get enough. They are not interested in

stopping, but they are not immediately obvious. Even when caught, they will give a partial repentance if they believe that's the best way to continue doing what they want to do. But they are caught in the same sins repeatedly, showing that their repentance was not real.

The strategy is always the same: they lure and entice people with smooth words and deceive them into morally compromising situations. They do this for their own selfish, fleshly, sensual purposes.

And who is it that they lure and entice? It is the souls of those who are not well-established. They are looking for the weak of spiritually immature, those who may be more easily enticed, deceived, and convinced into participating in their sin.

Hearts Trained in Greed

And this is not an accidental one-time activity for them. You can see here that Peter says their hearts are *exercised* in greed, meaning that this is far more than just an impulse that arises, upon which they foolishly act. No, this is something they continually pursue, and in ways that they can get better and better at it. Peter has instructed us to "practice these things," meaning the virtues he listed earlier. These people, too, are practicing, but they are practicing evil.

They are interested in honing their craft and increasing the efficiency of their predations on the weak and vulnerable. They are striving earnestly to become more crafty and more dangerous.

And they are greedy about this. It's sometimes about money, yes, but it's about every sensual appetite: money, attention, adoration, power... They want more and more and more, and it becomes consuming. Their eyes were *full* of adultery. Their minds were *full* of thoughts and emotions in that direction. And so they look for weak and unsteady souls to entice. And of course, since they often pose

as ministers of the gospel, they find themselves in proximity to many weak people in need of care and encouragement.

This is one of the saddest realities about situations like this. People seek help from ministers of the gospel and expect them to be trustworthy, and when the trust is betrayed in the most intimate and vile ways, many victims are broken and sometimes seemingly beyond repair. That is a tragedy, and that has happened countless times in churches.

It is for this reason that Peter emphatically writes these words of description: Accursed children! These are men to be loathed, despised, and detested. They are men from whom weaker Christians must be protected! They want to corrupt you!

Second, Peter would have us know this...

2. FALSE TEACHERS FOLLOW FAMILIAR PATTERNS (VV. 15-16)

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

They forsake, they turn away from the truth and run in the opposite direction. They leave behind the life that Christ offers, where the flesh must be crucified. Instead, they follow the way of sensual pleasure where the flesh becomes their god! Nothing good can come of this, and nothing good ever has come from this.

Peter again invokes another Old Testament example of Balaam, who *"loved gain from wrongdoing."* A foreign king hired Balaam the prophet to curse the Israelites. Balaam is enticed by the great rewards on offer, even though God forbids him to do this. Balaam keeps trying to get God's permission, but he won't give it.

On the way, he encounters an angel in his path. He cannot see the angel, but his donkey can. The donkey refuses to move, and Balaam beats the donkey. God then opens the donkey's mouth, and it rebukes Balaam.

This story illustrates Balaam's desire for gain, which causes him to be unfaithful to God. He was willing to engage in wrongdoing for the sake of gain. Peter writes that these false teachers are men just like that. They desire to do wrong, and they desire it for personal gain.

17a These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm.

A waterless spring is a contradiction in terms. A spring offers the promise of water, of sustenance, of the substance needed for life to grow. But these men are not that; they appear to be springs, but they are actually deserts of harm.

They are mists driven by a storm, light and tiny droplets of water that can be pushed from one location to another by a breeze. This speaks to their temporality and the fact that they will not stand fast or last long. Their influence might be strong, but it will be temporary.

In the short letter of Jude, which is closely related to the second letter of Peter, we find some descriptions of false teachers that map perfectly onto Peter's descriptions. This will help to fill out the descriptions that Peter has provided. And so in Jude we read that

4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed...

A virus, a cancer, had wormed its way into their church. Some people had crept in unnoticed. They came on the scene and seemed like good, moral, average, maybe even above-average Christians. And so they were accepted, and no one suspected anything was wrong with them, even though there was.

Like a virus, these people need a host to infect so they can flourish. That means being around people, and this is why they enter the church. They see opportunities and advantages to being present in a church. They see it as an opportunity to access people from whom they can get their needs met.

These are people who deceive with words, giving the appearance of benevolence on the surface while concealing much wickedness underneath. They deceive people for evil purposes. They appear to have embraced faith, but in reality, their apparent embrace of faith was just a pretence for a greater embrace of their flesh.

These people don't come in with their destructive beliefs obvious for all to see; they creep in unnoticed! They bury that at first and begin to reveal it later, once they have gained trust. And sometimes they go undetected for years. And these types of people are often a much greater threat to the church than persecution from outside the church.

Jude describes them as... *ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*

They have a total lack of reverence for God, which they show by using grace as a license for immorality. Still today, people like this creep into churches. And these people can be unmasked if we know God's word and seek to apply it constantly.

And then Jude goes on to provide further descriptions of their character and actions:

1. They Reject Authority

Those who reject authority claim the liberty to do whatever they want and hate to be told they can't or that they are in the wrong. They try to reject, resist, or dismantle anything that comes to them

with authority. They want to be free from any boundaries and from those who enforce them so they can sin more freely.

They do not want anyone in authority over them; they want to *be* in authority. If they can get away with something, they will try. If caught, rather than repent, they repent falsely while blaming others; quite often, they blame the very victims of their predations. They love to walk on the edge of legality, doing what they know should not be done, then boasting about it and claiming they are the victims when they are caught.

There is a fleshly thrill in all of this for them. To be *outside of authority* is to exercise what seems to be autonomous self-determination. To be *under authority* doesn't provide this thrill, so they avoid it.

The rejection of God-ordained authority is a defining characteristic of those who seek to harm the church and its members.

2. They Blaspheme the Glorious Ones

They speak irreverently about God or sacred things. This is again related to the rejection of authority. They slander those in authority, wishing to see them removed or to resign.

They speak evil of Christ, but not openly at first. They blaspheme God. This couldn't have all been obvious and out in the open, could it? That would make them obvious, right?

But Jude wrote, and Peter wrote these letters for this very reason: Because it's not always obvious. And it could be because the church and its leaders were unaware, undiscerning or just ignoring the problem. But keep in mind that these people sneak, creep or worm their way into churches. It's not obvious at first.

3. Shepherds Feeding Themselves

There are many Old Testament references about bad shepherds. Instead of caring for the sheep, they use the sheep to fulfil their own needs and desires. And what happens? The sheep starve when the shepherds are focused on serving themselves, not serving others.

4. Waterless Clouds

Clouds bring hope to those who need rain, but with false teachers, it is false hope. They promise much but deliver little. They are all show and no substance, failing to show what was promised.

5. Fruitless Trees

Producing fruit, of course, is the purpose of fruit trees, yet as trees, these people are unfruitful. Even if they seem to be bearing fruit, this fruit rots on the vine and falls to the ground.

6. Wild Waves of the Sea (v13)

If you think about it, wild waves of the sea damage nothing unless they have something to toss around and destroy. When that's the case, they can cause shipwrecks. These people wreck lives. They are raging waves, but they can only destroy what they can access—so they must not have access!

All of the above that Jude wrote and all that Peter writes give us a clear profile of false teachers, of wolves, of predators within the church. They follow familiar patterns. If you know what to look for, you will see these patterns.

What is the destiny of such people? Peter is very straightforward about this.

3. FALSE TEACHERS ARE DESTINED FOR HELL (VV. 17-22)

17b For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.

Peter is referring here to the reality of hell. They will undergo eternal conscious punishment in the place reserved for the devil and his angels. They served Satan in this life, and they will go to the place of his dwelling for eternity to be punished by God.

Why? He tells us in v18-19. A place in hell is reserved for them...

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

They are loudmouths and attention-grabbers who lure and entice the weak. They use the passions of the flesh to entice others to fulfill their base and sinful desires.

This again is the exact opposite of what good shepherds do! Ministers of the gospel should be the exemplars of putting the desires of the flesh to death and encouraging and helping sheep do the same. What we should *not* do, what would be most evil for us to do, is to discern the weaknesses and passions of your flesh, and then take advantage of those weaknesses for our own sensual pleasure, to satisfy the cravings of our own lusts.

That would be diabolically evil and, as Peter states here, deserving of damnation.

It is like a wounded lamb coming to a shepherd for care and comfort, and having that shepherd wound them further by devouring them for their own pleasure. I can scarcely think of a more wicked and disastrous scenario, and yet this happens again, and again, and

again. False teachers with eyes full of adultery are experts in spotting and enticing those who are most likely to engage with them in sinful acts. Peter is calling that out here.

Not only do they appeal to the sinful inclinations of these people, but they do so while promising them some sort of “freedom”! They hide or twist the fact that this will put people in bondage to sin, and tell them the opposite: that this will bring them to liberty, it will bring them to a state of freedom from slavery! The irony and the tragedy is that they are in no position to offer freedom to anyone because they themselves are slaves to their own sin and corruption.

Slaves of Corruption

In a previous sermon, we looked at the Greek word “doulos,” which means slave. And Peter described himself as a doulos, or a slave of Christ, meaning that Christ had purchased him, and he now served him both willingly and unreservedly. The opposite is true of these supposed teachers. They are slaves as well, but they are servants of hell and slaves to their sinful passions, not to Christ.

Spurgeon somewhere makes the point that “Man is born to be a servant and a servant he must be!”¹ Meaning that we will serve someone or something no matter what. Bob Dylan captured it well some years ago when he sang the words, “It may be the Devil, or it may be the Lord, but you’re gonna have to serve somebody.”

These men have chosen whom they will serve. They have chosen to become servants of their sinful passions, and they entice others to do the same. They want their own sinful passions fulfilled so badly that they will commandeer the sinful passions of others for their own increased gratification. It is the ultimate selfishness. And they often

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do this with reckless disregard for the consequences to their victim. That is how deep their selfish sinfulness runs.

"For," Peter says, "whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved." If you continually yield to sinful passions, you will be conquered by them. It is a reality for these false teachers, but it is also a warning to us.

And these next verses are a warning as well...

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. 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.

Peter seems to be saying that it is worse to be consciously aware of the truth and deny it than to be completely ignorant of the truth. To know the truth and deny it is worse than not knowing the truth at all.

There are two types of ignorance, and it's worth noting here that ignorance is not necessarily damnable. There is a type of ignorance that is simply due to a lack of exposure to knowledge, but that is not the type of ignorance Peter points out here. Here, Peter is talking about the type of ignorance that knows the truth but turns away from it. That kind of ignorance is *always* damnable.

Of course, the solution to this is genuine repentance, but if that is not the path taken, then the one who is once again entangled and overcome is indeed in a worse state than they were. Peter says that it would actually be better for such people never to have known the way of Christ than to turn back after knowing it. Having tasted the

truth of righteousness and rejecting it is worse than having not tasted the truth of righteousness at all.

Peter finishes with this...

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."

What Peter is saying here is that, even when there seems to be change, their true nature is revealed in the end. An apparent turning to Christ is often only an adaptation to a new environment. They seem to have changed; they seem to be followers of God; they seem to be sanctified, but it is usually an act put on for a purpose. The purpose is so they can exploit more people. But given enough time, their true nature is revealed.

Can people, even people like this, change? Yes, but it is extremely rare, and the veracity of the change must be proven over time. In the meantime, such people must be kept from those they have shown a propensity to hurt.

Remember that earlier, Peter called such people "irrational animals." Animals act according to their nature. Peter's point is that the people in question act according to their nature.

These false teachers have never truly been changed by the gospel, even though they had a genuine knowledge of it. They were never connected to the true vine, even though they appear to be. They were never filled with the Spirit of God, even though they claimed to be..

All of this was an illusion, a convincing deception, a "cleverly devised myth." And we see in this passage of the letter what the motive was for all that play-acting. It was to lure and entice potential victims, and then to exploit them. It was to invite the wounded lambs for comfort, but only to make a meal out of them.

CONCLUSION

Ok, let's go back to the question I asked at the beginning: Having already given a description and warning about such people, why does Peter go out of his way to provide such a vast and detailed description of such people and the things that they do? Why does he seem to need to pour on description after description?

He must be saying that all of this is not always obvious. He must be saying that it's very unlikely to be obvious. He must be saying that you might actually already be under the influence of such a person, but because they are so good at deceiving you, you don't recognize it.

Why does Peter persist in offering description after description of such people? The answer must be that there is far more danger when such people are around than we might ever suspect. The answer must be that the ways these people function are far more spiritually hazardous than we could imagine. The answer must be, in short, that this is very important and that we need to learn to do the hard work of awareness, of testing and inquiry and discernment.

It is a grave error to think that all of this will be immediately externally and obvious. If you are resting in the thought that "I'll know it when I see it," Peter is saying here, and my experience confirms that until you have seen it up close at least once, you are resting in false security.

Peter must be saying, "I'm giving you all this because it's not going to be obvious!" Because of all of this, if you look at all of what he's described, and you had someone functioning in your church that did these things transparently and openly, that'd be pretty easy, right? People like that wouldn't be welcomed in a church, which is why they become experts in deception. But this internal corruption will eventually manifest externally if you give it enough time.

And even though this is not out in the open, it is like an undiagnosed cancer in a body. It is still having the effect of cancer, and eventually, the symptoms will manifest externally. Cancer can not be hidden or ignored; it grows.

What Peter is doing in this passage is describing the internal reality of such people and telling you to watch out for these potential external manifestations. These are attitudes of the heart that are being cultivated internally. Of course, these people don't do this transparently. They may do it openly, but when they do, they appear to be doing something else. If they did all of this transparently, it would be obvious to everyone what kind of people they are, and you would avoid them.

But if they can keep these sins under wraps for as long as possible, if they can entice as many people secretly and get them to agree to engage in covert activities, well, then they can just continue to function the way they want, for as long as they want. And quietly, they accumulate victims.

Remember that these people are insatiable, like irrational animals. They see something they want and follow their impulse to get it. But eventually, their evil done in secret will come to light. And there is sadness upon sadness when such a person is given license to function in a church for an extended time, gaining followers by enticing them with false love.

Discernment

One of the ways you can discern that you are dealing with a person like this is that they, as Peter has told us, despise authority. Don't be mistaken, they seek to *have* authority, but they defy the authorities who are legitimately put in place over them by God. They do not want to come under authority or accountability; they want authority without accountability.

And if you don't pick this off soon enough, such people will embed themselves in your church and begin to gather followers, a defence team to speak in their favour. But Peter warns us against such people. We must watch out for them.

Peter's point here is not that to qualify as a false teacher, you have to check every single one of these boxes. It's not that such people are explicitly doing all of the above all the time. That's not his point. His point is that if you see a person of influence in the church, someone who is giving the appearance of being an authority, and they're guilty of any one of these, they may be a false teacher. Either that or they are on their way to quickly becoming one, and if that's the case, and you see a danger, these people should be confronted.

Eventually, their corruption will become manifest, but it starts as internal rot that may not be outwardly visible, depending on how clever they are in their deception. This kind of thing can happen over a period of years. These people know how to play the long game. They know how to trap one person after another, after another, after another. This happens all the time, and eventually, the truth becomes known. "Be sure your sin will find you out." The corruption of deception and defiance produces bad fruit, but the bad fruit will be hidden for as long as possible.

Cling to Jesus

These men work against the gospel. They work against Christ and deny him by their deeds. Avoid such men when they entice you, and cling to Jesus, who is kind and patient with unsteady souls.

You cannot grow in true freedom if you are led by one who is a slave to corruption. Jesus is the Master who bought you and who offers you true freedom. If you seek freedom from those who are slaves to corruption, you will be corrupted. They offer "freedom" to pursue the

desires of the flesh, but true freedom is found in the one who died in our place so that we might crucify our flesh.

If you try to drink from a waterless spring, you will die of thirst. But in Jesus, we read in John 4:13-14, *"Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*

False teachers want to suck the life out of you, but Jesus laid down his life for you. Jesus offers you his protection and safekeeping. One way he does that is by giving you leaders who think, act and look like him. Remember that one of Peter's purposes here is to draw a contrast between false teachers and true teachers.

We are supposed to distinguish between the two, and to do that, you need to look into your leaders' lives. And you will find that if they are such men that the Bible describes as qualified to lead the church, they won't mind you looking into their lives. And if they're not such men, if they are deceivers, they're going to be very, very aggravated that you want to look into their lives. Do it anyway. Don't let them scare you off.

In Hebrews 13:7 we are instructed to *"Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith."* How will you know if your leaders' way of life is worth imitating? You must examine the outcome of their lives. Look at their conduct. Make sure they are trustworthy. Make sure they're actually the men of God that the Bible says they should be.

It's worth doing. Make sure I am that kind of man. Make sure the men who shepherd the church with me are that kind of man. Make sure that whoever comes after me is that kind of man.

If you learn to discern in this way and if you train your powers of discernment by constant testing and persistent prayer, then you will know how to see the truth, and what is false teaching and who the false teachers are will be obvious to you. This is a skill you can learn.

I was once teaching on the subject of false teachers, and I played a clip by a false teacher. I was a little bit surprised, but then encouraged that people started laughing at the false teaching. Because the error being taught was serious, I wasn't expecting laughter. But I realized that in this case, laughter was actually a mark of spiritual maturity.

Nobody in that room was watching this false teaching and going, "That's a good point. I might want to look into this guy a little bit more!" Nobody did that. Why? Because their powers of discernment have been trained. Because they were getting good at seeking God in his Word. And just like people who train to detect counterfeit money study the real thing, these people had been studying the Word, and recognized false teaching when they heard it.

False teachers are destined for hell. That is their fate, and like their father, the devil, they want to cause as much harm as they can and take as many people with them to hell as they can. You must be clear about this. You must know how to identify predators. You must protect those who are young and weak in the faith. And you will do all of that if you cling to Jesus and know God's Word.

Let's pray.

Discussion Questions:

Introduction

How does the sermon's specific definition of a false teacher—someone who knows the truth but intentionally brings in destructive heresies for personal gain—protect the church from both a hyper-critical, divisive spirit and a dangerous naivety?

1. False Teachers Want to Corrupt You (vv. 10-14)

The sermon noted that bold and willful traits are dangerous when exercised in rebellion against God, often masked by the pouring on of "counterfeit love". How can we practically discern the difference between genuine pastoral care and a predator's "long game" of deception?

False teachers often joyfully take part in self-indulgent activities in broad daylight, sometimes because others are supporting them and joining in their revelry rather than stopping them. Why do you think people are often reluctant to call out blatant sin, even when it is happening right under their noses?

2. False Teachers Follow Familiar Patterns (vv. 15-16)

The sermon compared false teachers to a virus or an undiagnosed cancer that needs a host to infect and flourish. Why are these types of internal threats, who conceal wickedness underneath a surface of benevolence, often more dangerous to a local church than external threats?

Rejecting God-ordained authority is a defining characteristic of those who seek to harm the church, as they desire to be free from boundaries so they can sin more freely. Why do false teachers find a "fleshly thrill" in sinning freely, and how do they typically respond when their sins are caught?

Jude compares false teachers to "wild waves of the sea" that wreck lives. Since these raging waves can only destroy what they can access, what practical steps must a church leadership take to ensure such predators are denied access to the vulnerable?

3. False Teachers Are Destined For Hell (vv. 17-22)

The text states that false teachers are "destined for hell" and the "gloom of utter darkness has been reserved" for them. Why is it essential for the church to maintain a firm, unapologetic stance on the eternal, conscious punishment of unrepentant predators?

The sermon makes a crucial distinction between ignorance due to a lack of exposure and a damnable ignorance that knows the truth but willfully turns away from it. Why does Peter argue that this latter state is actually worse than never knowing the way of righteousness at all?

An apparent turning to Christ by a false teacher is described as a possible "adaptation to a new environment" designed to gain trust and exploit more people. Why must we insist that any claim of repentance from such a predator be proven over a long period of time before trust is restored?

Conclusion

We are instructed by Hebrews 13:7 to examine the outcome of our leaders' lives and ensure they are trustworthy men of God. Why should a biblically qualified leader welcome this scrutiny, and why do deceivers become deeply aggravated when their lives are closely examined?

The content of this booklet was written by Michael Krahn, lead pastor of Community Bible Church in Ilderton, Ontario. We are a gospel-centered church devoted to the faithful teaching of Scripture, the building up of believers, and bearing witness to Christ in our community and beyond. To learn more, join us for a Sunday service, or connect with us directly, scan the QR code or visit: cbcilderton.ca/contact-us

