

2 Peter 2:1-11

“God Deals With Deceivers”

There's a reason that counterfeit \$100 bills exist, it's because there's a genuine article. There's a reason counterfeit diamonds are around, it's because there is a genuine article. As a matter of fact each and every counterfeit of any kind on any level bears witness of a genuine article. You'll never find a counterfeit \$8 bill, you'll never see a counterfeit 23 cent coin, because the fact of the matter is that the genuine article does not exist. No one will try to pass off something as legit that has no legitimate counterpart, there's no profit in it. But wherever there's a genuine article there's bound to be a counterfeit.

The same holds true with the gospel message, the same holds true with the person of Jesus Christ. Since there's a legitimate message you can count on the fact that there will be all kinds of deceitful messages as well, since there's a legitimate Savior you can bet that there will be all kinds of people who would have you to believe that they have the genuine article as well when in reality what they have is a counterfeit Christ.

It shouldn't surprise us, Satan has been a counterfeiter from way back, even from the beginning. From the point he deceived Eve forward he's been hard at work seeking to deceive as many people as he possibly can. He came to steal, to kill and to destroy and by whatever means that he needs to employ in order to accomplish his agenda he'll be all about it. The bible is clear that he has a false gospel, false believers, a false righteousness and that one day he'll present the world with a false Christ (otherwise known as anti-Christ).

In today's text the overall exhortation is pretty plain, “Don't be ignorant of deceitful doctrines that will destroy your life.” They're all over the place and you and I do well to be aware *of* them and be alert *to* them. Oh not by seeking to study up on every cult or “ism” that's out there, but by being closing connected *to* and growing *in* our relationship with Christ. Paul told Timothy, “*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.*” 2 Tim 4:2-4 You see there's actually a two-fold dilemma that works against us in the church today. # 1 Deceptive doctrines are out there, # 2 people are *looking* for the easy way out, we want the path of least resistance, we want to hear everything is going to be ok, I'm ok, you're ok, sin is a relative issue what's good for me may not be good for you, we can all do whatever we want, whenever we want to do it and in the end we all go to heaven.

My wife and I were out on the golf course a couple months ago; I was playing my usual horrible game but she, just learning was doing not even quite that good. She'd finish her hole I'd ask what she shot and she'd say something like, "Gimmie an 8." I'd say, "Well is that what you shot?" "It doesn't matter what I shot gimmie an 8." "It doesn't make you a better golfer to write a lower score." "Yeah, but it makes me feel better about it and that'll keep me coming back" 😊.

People are that way about spiritual issues, often times they know what they're placing stock into isn't reality, but it makes them feel better about themselves and keeps them coming back; and too many people are willing to give people what they want to hear in order to *keep them* coming back.

Keeping the context as we come out of Ch 1 and enter into Ch 2 Peter has just affirmed to us the *more sure word* of prophecy; that God *never* misses. You can place 100% confidence in His word because He's proven Himself to us over and over, literally hundreds and hundreds of times through the prophetic word and has never missed not even once. (Notice Vs 21 of Ch 1, read)

But wherever there's a genuine article there's bound to be a counterfeit, notice...

Vs1-3

Listen, the part of a faithful pastor will be not only to feed the sheep but also to protect and to warn the flock of certain danger. In speaking of Christ Paul said, "*Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*" Col 1:28 It's been said that the person who only feeds the sheep, teaches the sheep, but never warns the sheep is only fattening them up for the kill. I'm not sure why it is when a doctor warns a person of physical problems he's heralded as a hero but when a pastor warns a people of spiritual danger he's intolerant, inconsiderate, full of himself or mean. "Well doesn't the bible say to judge not?" Yes it does, speaking specifically of a double standard, hypocritical kind of judgment. However Jesus said, "*Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.*" John 7:24 If you do not exercise a certain resolve with regard to doctrinal integrity and practical life style then you're right back into relativism, there's no absolutes.

The next time someone tells you that there's no such thing as "absolute truth" ask them if they mean that absolutely... (it's self defeating). Just because someone stands behind a pulpit, or seems well versed in scripture or other spiritual topics doesn't mean that we simply check our brain at the door or don't use discernment placing what he/she has to say under the scrutiny of the scripture. "How do I check for false teachers?" You don't have to check for *false* teachers, you should check *every* teacher.

Don't take my word for it, make sure that the things I tell you can be well balanced by the word of God, what are the fingerprints of my life, do I bear good fruit or bad fruit? I'm not telling you to have a critical spirit, but I am saying that anyone who takes the platform of a teacher of the word of God is rightfully subject to biblical scrutiny.

What Peter is saying here is essentially the same thing that Jesus was saying when He said, "*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.*" Matt 7:15-20 Don't be fooled by smooth talk, or spiritual rhetoric, nice suits and lots of followers, filter everything through the proper context of the word of God and see examine the fruit that's found in their life.

Peter says that just as there was false prophets among the nation of Israel there will also be false teachers in the church. Note the fingerprints of the false teacher, Peter doesn't pull any punches. He uses words like, *secrecy*, *destructive heresy*, they deny the Lord's *sovereignty* and/or His *deity*, His *sufficiency*, because of them others will speak *blasphemy* and the root of their motive is found in how they can profit *personally* (Vs 3) it's through covetousness that they exploit people. The results of their ways will be found ultimately in their judgment and destruction.

But take note, these guys are stealthy; they introduce their destructive heresies *secretly*. That is they don't come in announcing that they've got a bunch of lies to try and convince you of, they don't advertise themselves as untrustworthy heretics. They package their lies in a large volume of truth and slowly begin to infiltrate that truth with their poison. The problem with false teachers is that they never introduce themselves as false teachers, they're often very knowledgeable in the scripture, they're charismatic/charming individuals, they gain your trust and then they lead you astray.

Now, let's not confuse bad ministry with false teaching, the real nail in the coffin of a false teacher is his/her take on Christ. There may be all kinds of places that don't see things exactly like we do, that's ok. But we all agree in the sufficiency of Jesus, the completed work of the cross, that Jesus is the Son of God and God the Son, born of a virgin, resurrected the 3rd day and that we're saved by grace through faith alone. There's liberty in non-essentials, but there has to be absolute unity in the essentials.

We can disagree on the rapture and whether or not to celebrate Christmas, but we better not disagree on exactly who Jesus is. The false teacher will always deny in some subtle (or in some cases blatant) way the deity, the sufficiency, and/or the competency of Christ. And it can be difficult to spot sometimes because often times these false teachers/false ministries will use the same verbiage that you and I do, but they have different dictionaries that ascribe a different meaning to the word.

They use (Vs 3) *deceptive words*. When a Mormon comes to your door he will use words like *Jesus, Son of God, Gospel*, but what he *means* by those words is not what *you mean* by those words. In their “theology” Jesus is a created being, born of the tribe of Benjamin, (the bible is clear that Jesus is eternal in nature, that all things were made through Him and with out Him nothing was made that was made.) The bible is clear that Jesus was physically of the tribe of Judah of the lineage and offspring of David, the Mormons purport that Jesus is Lucifer’s brother (Satan’s brother), the bible is clear that Satan is a created angelic being and that Jesus is the *only* begotten Son of God. So when they’re talking about the *gospel* they’re not talking about what your bible teaches, they use the same words, but those words don’t have the same meaning. As a matter of fact Brigham Young said that Adam was our Father, and our God that Eve was only one of His celestial wives and that He (Adam) is the only God with whom we have to do! The Mormon Jesus is not the Jesus of the bible.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses Jesus is Michael the Ark angel, a created being, a perfect man but not the same in nature as “Jehovah,” they believe that when He rose from the dead He didn’t resurrect bodily but as a *spirit being*. They don’t believe in hell, or an eternal place of torment, but that the soul of the ungodly will simply be annihilated.

Jesus to the Christian Scientist is not the Christ, but the perfect representation of “Christ consciousness,” creation is simply a product of the Divine mind, heaven is being in line with the Divine mind and hell is to be out of harmony with the divine mind.

To the scientologist Jesus was simply a great teacher who was wrongfully/unfortunately put to death who’s gained legendary status over the years, they believe in multiple gods, reincarnation, that the religious practice of all faiths is the universal way to wisdom, understanding, and salvation.

They believe in the inherent goodness of all men and that’s its utterly below contempt and despicable to tell a man that he’s evil and/or that he needs to repent. However the bible is clear that there’s only 1 God, that Jesus isn’t simply a man but the 2nd personal in the eternal triune God, that man is inherently corrupt and that there’s only one way regarding salvation and that’s through Jesus Christ who said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*” John 14:6

So when push comes to shove the question that has to be answered is “Who is Jesus?” Who do men say that He is? False teachers will invariably deny the Lord who bought them. What does that mean? “Who bought them.” Does that mean that they were saved but walked away? Probably not in this case; though it seems to me that scripture makes it clear that you can abide *in* Christ, or that you can walk *away* from Christ, later on Peter will refer to these guys as “dogs” and “pigs” neither of which were clean animals which lends itself to the fact that they were never saved. It seems more appropriate to understand this as saying that when Jesus died upon the cross that He paid the penalty, the “ransom” for the sin of all of mankind. Their sin is paid for just as yours is and mine is. However the righteousness of Christ has never been imputed to them because they’ve not *confessed* the Lord who bought them, but rather they’ve *denied* the Lord who bought them. Remember Jesus said, “*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*” Matt 13:44 Jesus paid the purchase price for the whole earth, that He might “extract” you (His treasure) out of it.

And notice there in Vs 1 that they *bring on themselves* swift destruction, God doesn’t set them up, they dig their own pit. They willfully choose to go down that path, to deceive people and reap the ramifications of destruction.

Vs2 Tells us that *many* will follow their destructive ways. The word translated “destructive ways” means more literally “lasciviousness” or “unbridled lusts.” Why? Why would so many be taken seemingly blindly down that path? 2 Reasons, #1 because people don’t know what the word of God teaches and so rather than study it themselves they take someone else’s word for it, and # 2 because people look for ways to justify the things that appeal to their flesh. We want the seeker friendly, feel good message that says I’m ok, you’re ok, God understands after all we’re just exploring our humanity. Jesus said it like this, “*...wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.*” Matt 7:13 Of course directly after this statement (after addressing the difficulty of the narrow gate) He spoke of the false prophets, wolves in sheep’s clothing.

It’s guys and groups like this that cause the way of truth to be blasphemed, they often wind up as a joke on the late night talk shows, people mock believers in general because of the way these groups represent godliness and holy living. They blaspheme the truth in professing to know the Lord or be right *with* the Lord but in works they deny Him being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work (Titus 1:16), they have a form of godliness but deny it’s power. Yet many will follow them, a popular ministry isn’t necessarily an indication of a godly, right on ministry. Deceivers can be popular, have TV and radio broadcasts, be careful.

“Through covetousness they’ll exploit you with deceptive words.” (Vs 3).

What do we have there? 2 Things; their *motive* and their *means*, what’s the motive? Covetousness; it’s greed, personal profit, they might be hungry for power, or fame, position or influence, most generally it’s all about money. The word “exploit” there is the word from which we get the word “emporium” it means to make merchandise of you. They want to sell you a cloth they’ve prayed over, or they want you to give in faith to their ministry even if you don’t have it to give, just put it on your credit card and trust God to bless you for it, sow into their ministry for a hundred fold return. They exploit you; through what *means*? “Deceptive words.”

That word “deceptive” is an interesting word it’s the Greek word “Plastos” speaking of something that is able to be formed or molded like clay or wax, it’s where we get our word “plastic.” They say whatever they need to say, to whomever they need to say it in order that their words fit the mold that will appeal to the people whom they are addressing. Like much of modern politicians, if I’m addressing liberals I’m all about liberal rights, if I’m addressing conservatives I’m all about conservative morals. Whatever it takes to gain your trust and get your allegiance. They’ll use the right words, but again those words come from a different dictionary, they don’t mean what you think they mean. They twist the scripture to their own destruction.

One has said that false teachers are better known for what they deny than what they affirm. They deny the infallibility and inspiration of the scripture, they deny the sinfulness of man, the sacrificial atoning death of Christ upon the cross, salvation by grace through faith alone and often times even the reality of eternal judgment. They seek to undermine the deity of Jesus because if you can do away with His deity you can destroy the entire body of truth; because Christianity *is* Christ, and if He’s not who He claims to be, there’s no Christian faith... But when people refuse to believe the truth, there’s no limit to the kind of lies they’ll believe. But don’t think that these guys are always in some other place in weird little compounds. Peter says they’ll be right among us; the tares will grow right alongside the wheat, they’re not ministers, they’re merchandisers.

In contrast the true teacher, the true minister doesn’t operate in secrecy, he has nothing to hide, his life is an open book, he speaks the word of God in truth and in love and doesn’t twist the scriptures to promote his own agenda. Paul described the genuine teacher of the word of God like this in 2 Cor 4:2, “*But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.*” Compare that with what we’re reading here, the false teacher will, “secretly bring in destructive heresies, denying the Lord who bought them, and by covetousness they exploit you with deceptive words.”

Vs 3 continues, “for a long time their judgment has not been idle and their destruction does not slumber.” Translation, “God’s not asleep on the job, His judgment is right on time.” Often times people misconstrue God’s grace in giving them time to repent for what they consider to be the fact that they’re getting away with it, or that God doesn’t care, or perhaps even (in some cases) approves of them. Yet God will allow a person, a people to fill the wine cup of His wrath to the brim with their sin and rebellion at which point He will press it to their lips and force them to drink it to the dregs...Peter issues 3 examples of the certain judgment of God, notice.

Vs4-9

How do you wrap all this up in a few minutes? ☺ What’s the bottom line here? Whether you’re in certain respects the highest order of creation (angelic beings), or you have the vast majority on your side (the whole world minus 8), or you’ve debased yourself to the lowest level (Sodom and Gomorrah) from the highest to the lowest or even if the whole world agrees with you God will deal with the unrighteousness, the ungodliness and the wickedness of His creation.

God showed no mercy to the wicked rebellion of the angels who sinned. Whether this is in reference to the pre-creation account of the rebellion of Satan and a third of the angels who rebelled with him, or the Genesis 6 account (perhaps it points to both) it doesn’t matter the point remains the same. Even the angelic hosts weren’t exempt from being brought into swift accountability for their sin. Rather than follow after God’s way, God’s word, and God’s will they wanted the *freedom* to do their own thing which resulted in being bound in chains of darkness. What a powerful picture of people who insist on personal freedom as opposed to following the Lord, they wind up bound in chains of darkness, in miserable bondage to the sin that they thought would constitute their freedom.

God dealt with the whole of His creation in the days of Noah when He saw that every intent of the thoughts of man’s heart was only evil continually. He judged the earth and destroyed it in a flood save only Noah, his wife, his sons, and his son’s wives, 8 people because Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, cities plagued with perversion, ungodly activity, homosexuality, and depravity, cities that in many ways seemed to parallel much of our culture today, “making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly.” An example of what? Of the fact that God deals *with* and brings judgment *upon* those who refuse to repent of their sin but persist in walking in ungodliness. Preferring to be bound up in chains of darkness rather than living in the freedom of the light of Jesus Christ

Now in both of the examples pertaining to man as you search the scripture you find that people were confident that things were going to continue on business as usual until judgment came and destruction was upon them at which time it was too late to do anything about it. Peter's point being what then makes the ungodly think that for some reason *they* will be an exception and that they will escape the judgment of God? It's going to happen. As a matter of fact Jesus said that it's going to be more tolerable in the day of judgment for the city of Sodom than for those who reject the message of the gospel (Luke 10:10-12).

We're not far from finished notice quickly 2 things. #1 Lot tormented his own soul; though he was saved he was living in the midst of such corruption the temptations were constantly tugging on and tormenting him. In fact because he subjected himself and his family to being constantly bombarded with pollution, though the Lord delivered *him* he effectively lost *everything* including most of his family because of his close association with the depravity of those cities. A little leaven will leaven the whole lump. You might be able to with stand in an ungodly environment, your children, your wife, your husband might not, why take the chance, do what you can do to maintain a godly environment for your family.

#2 Peter makes a point to underscore the fact that even though the wicked were judged, the righteous were delivered.

Vs9

To me this is just one more evidence that the church won't be going through the Great Tribulation period when God is pouring out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world. Because God makes a way where there is no way, we don't always know, but mark it well, "The Lord knows" we don't see any options, He has unlimited options at His disposal. He's never at a loss for means even when you and I don't see any way out.

God reigned fire and brimstone down on Sodom and Gomorrah yet refused to administer His wrath until the righteous was 1st removed from the scene. He "delivered the godly" yet "reserved the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment." The same holds true when God will judge the earth in righteousness, he will deliver the righteous and reserve the unjust under punishment, for God did not appoint us to wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (1st Thess 5:9). God delivers the righteous from wrath, but reserves the unjust for punishment.

Vs10-11

More characteristics of these false teachers, they despise authority (wanna be the one in charge) *presumptuous* (or bold in their endeavors) *self willed*, living only to please themselves, and *arrogant*, unafraid to speak evil of dignitaries, even the very angels of God, they're proud and insolent, even the very angels of God won't accuse them yet they'll speak evil of even the messengers and servants of God.

Here's the point, God deals with deceivers, they may be proud, arrogant, deceptive, subtle, secret, thinking they're getting away with it; for a long time their judgment has not been idle and their destruction does not sleep. It's truth or consequences... "What is truth?" It's not a philosophy is a person specifically, namely Jesus. He is the way *the truth* and the life, and He said that everyone who is of the truth will hear His voice, He said, "My sheep hear My voice and they follow Me." Search the scriptures, don't be deceived; follow Jesus.

Prayer Points:

God we thank You that You've given us Your word, and that Your word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path that we not walk in darkness nor be deceived but that we walk in the light as You are in the light and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us of all sin. Help us to walk in the truth, to lead lives set apart to You...we thank You for the comfort of Your word that You have not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ

If you're unsure if you're in the # I want to give you the chance to *make sure* right here and right now. If you're "of the truth" and you will respond to His voice, if Christ is calling you into the light, to turn from your sin and receive the free gift of everlasting life, than why kick against it rather than freely receive it? Give Jesus His way in Your heart today, receive Him as Your Lord; and as Your Savior, trust in His sufficiency and the cleansing flow of His blood on your behalf *personally*.