

Before Jesus ascended into Heaven, He met with Peter. And He did this to both restore Peter, **and** to give him a very solemn responsibility...

- Feed my Lambs;
- Tend my sheep;
- Feed my sheep...

And in this 2nd letter of Peter, that's what he's doing. He's reminding us to stand firm, in the pure teaching of the Apostles...

And we're in a section of this letter now, where Peter is condemning **false** teachers. And he's being quite 'in depth', in the way that he warns us about them.

Last week we learned that:

- their **motive** is greed – a craving for something they have no right to – maybe it's greed for:
 - money;
 - power;
 - prestige;
 - recognition;
 - influence...
 - something else...
- Their **outcome**, is exploitation – they use others in the church, to achieve their own goals and ambitions; and
- Their **method** is they use plasticine words – they bend and shape the scriptures, to fit the message they want to give.

And we left off where Peter said, **Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.** And that's where we're going to pick it up today, as Peter continues this line of thought.

He reminds us that God didn't even spare Angels who sinned... It seems that the Angels who rebelled against God (probably the demons of today), are still awaiting their final judgment, but even now, they're in some place of torment.

And if God didn't spare the Angels, he won't spare the false teachers.

And then he takes this thought a bit further. It's not **only** about the destruction of the wicked. There's good news to add to this – the salvation of the righteous...

And so, he reminds us of Noah and the flood – yes, the people of the ancient world were destroyed, because they were so evil – but the good news is, **God saves the righteous**... Noah was a righteous man – he **preached** righteousness (doesn't mean he was perfect) – and so God preserved Noah (and his family)... (righteousness; faith)

And he reminds us of Sodom and Gomorrah – those wicked, evil cities, where rape and homosexual violation & defilement was normal... and God turned those cities to ash... But not until He first rescued righteous Lot.

Lot hated the behaviour that surrounded him in that city... his soul was tormented by ⁸ ...**their lawless deeds that he saw and heard**);

It makes us think (Doesn't it) – How do **we** feel about the world **we** live in? I worry sometimes, that many of us, as

Christians, we do the best we can, to **supress** the grief/our horror at what our society has become. All sorts of wickedness and immorality are not just accepted – many of them are protected by the Law... And we supress our torment/horrification, because we don't want to appear judgmental...

Do you know what – When God looks at this world, He's horrified/tormented with the wickedness and sin in our community,, and if we are to be 'Godly', then it's right for **us** to also be horrified and tormented with the sinful immorality of our culture...

But just as God loved this wicked world so much, that He gave His only Son – while **we** were still sinners, He gave His Son to save us – we too, are to love this world, so much so, that we would give up our rights/freedoms/lives, by boldly loving the very ones who grieve us so...

Anyway, the point is, God nuked Sodom and Gomorrah, not because they were any worse than our society today, but He did it, as an example for **all** people, in **all** times – “This is what's going to happen to the ungodly.”

And here's the key to what Peter is saying:

1. God will judge and punish the ungodly (false teachers in the church);
2. The righteous are rescued from these times of trial;
3. The wicked are kept under punishment until the Day of Judgment...

Now, as soon as I read this, the first thing I thought about, was one of the parables that Jesus told... And Peter might've been thinking of this parable too, because the question we often wonder, is "Why does God allow the wicked to continue?" :

Matthew 13: (ESV) ²⁴ He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, ²⁵ but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. ²⁶ So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. ²⁷ And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' ²⁸ He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' ²⁹ But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn." ' "

And when they were alone with Jesus, the disciples asked Jesus, "Can you explain that parable?"

Matthew 13: (ESV) ³⁷ He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom.

The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.

⁴⁰ Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, ⁴² and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

You see, it's not that God isn't going to take action. He **will** take action.

At God's appointed time, the wicked will be gathered for destruction...

But even now, it's like they're on "remand". In our justice system:

When a person is charged with a crime, there is a period of time until the trial. For some, they are remanded in custody – "They have to sit in jail and await their trial." For others, they are remanded, either with or without bail – They are still in the community – They're not put in jail just yet, but that doesn't mean they've gotten off 'scot-free' – not at all – their trial and conviction will come".

At God's appointed time, the wicked will be judged, and their punishment will be swift... And right now, it's like they're on remand... The time of judgment is coming... But not yet..

But along with this, is the **good** news. The Good news is, even in this time of remand (in the time before judgment), the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is being preached... And through the cross, and our repentance and faith, our sins are forgiven. We can escape judgment.

And so, the righteous are rescued. Just like God rescued Lot from Sodom. The Angels had to grab him and drag him out of there before the city was destroyed...

V⁹ then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials...

God doesn't promise that we won't have any trials – he doesn't promise us that everything's going to be easy for us... And Peter understood this very well – he was about to be executed for being a disciple of Jesus...

What does it mean to be rescued from trials??? **Glory**. (Peter talked about the coming glory of Jesus [and our part in it] in Chapter 1)... And even if we die for Jesus, we are rescued straight to glory. Praise God.

So:

- the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials

- And He knows how to keep the unrighteous on remand until the Day of Judgment;

And in V10, he starts to get specific:

- There's 2 characteristics that Peter connects with false teachers & their followers. There's two characteristics, that identifies them as "the **unrighteous**"

1.

Firstly: they indulge in the lust of defiling passion

That means they "follow the corrupt desire of our sinful nature". ... BTW, it's not those who are **tempted** (we all get tempted) – it's those who **indulge** – it's those who hand themselves over, to all kinds of sin... It's not even about falling in to sin. We all fall into sin at times, and then we repent and are forgiven.

To **indulge in the lust of defiling passion** is to make a life choice – a conscious decision: I'm going to embrace it – this is who I am. And God has given me freedom to be this and do this.

It seems there were some who lived sensual lives – surrendered themselves over to a life of sin, and yet, in their minds, and in their words, they justified it. Their behaviour is an insult to The Lord.

2.

And, their **second** characteristic, is like it: they **despise authority**.

Now, this ‘cuts close to home’ for me. You see, the fleshly Michael, despises authority... And so, this is a very big challenge for me: The Lord has made it very clear, that to honour Him, I have to respect authority. And this is a key biblical theme.

In Peter’s 1st letter, he couldn’t have been more clear:

1 Peter 2: (ESV) ¹³ Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good (respecting and honouring our appointed rulers) you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

Now, you and I both know, that sometimes, our governments/rulers make decisions, and laws, and things that impact on us, and we don’t like them... And the fleshly side of Michael despises the government for it... But do you understand why I’m saying “fleshly”, because that’s not Godliness...

Peter’s saying “be subject, even to the emperor”... Do you know who the emperor was? Nero – one of the worst persecutors of Christians ever... This man would coat Christians in pitch, and set them on fire, to use them as garden lighting...

And yet, God had appointed Nero as ruler, And so, to despise, even the authority of Nero, is a characteristic of the

unrighteous. It's the **unrighteous** who despise authority (not the Godly)... And when Christians despise authority, we give Jesus a bad name...

And using this definition that Peter has given us, if I was to stand up here today and tell you, that as Christians we should disobey our rulers, I would be a false teacher. Peter describes them as being **Bold and wilful** – they're daring to defy both God and man. And they're determined to please themselves...

Now of course, there are limits to our obedience. And there's examples of this in the Scriptures. So for instance, if our rulers made it a Law, forbidding us to pray, we would break that law. Or if they made a law that we had to worship another god, we would break that Law... But the exceptions are rare. The Godly principal that remains, is to be subject to our rulers...

So, boldness and wilfulness – are most often cravings of the flesh. It's the **unrighteous** who despise authority.

Now, at this point, Peter brings in an example that's **really** obscure. And it's so obscure, we **cannot** be sure of exactly what he's talking about: **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.**

Who are these “**glorious ones**” he’s talking about? We can’t be sure, but most Bible scholars I’ve read, agree that the most likely answer is “the fallen angels; Demons; Satan”...

In Jude V8, we gain a bit of insight: In Jude, some of the teaching (and the language) is very similar to 2nd Peter. And Jude is reflecting on some Jewish literature, a document called “The Assumption of Moses”. We don’t regard it as “Scripture”, because it was written between the Old Testament and the New Testament...

And Jude talks about when the Archangel Michael was arguing with the Devil, and even he didn’t **presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment**, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.”

Now, compare this with some Christian leaders who want to give an appearance of being spiritually powerful sorts of people, and what do they do? – They mock the evil spirits, as if they were nothing, or as if they’re something to be laughed about... And we have to understand, that we personally don’t have power over evil spirits – God is the one who has the power. And so, we are **not** to blaspheme spirits – even evil spirits. We appeal to the Lord. Lord, May **You** rebuke this spirit. Lord, may **You** set this person free from this evil spirit...

Basically what he’s saying, is they pretend to be all very knowledgeable/Spiritual, but they’re talking about matters they don’t even understand... When it comes to knowing God

and being Spiritual, everything we need to know is in the Scriptures.

But Peter says, they're like irrational animals, creatures of instinct...

In other words, they confuse “animal instinct”, with the leading of the Holy Spirit....

This is a bit tricky, isn't it...

If somebody says to us, “I feel led” or “God has put it on my heart to do this”... How do we test that? How do I know if it's God leading me, or if it's just something I want to do???

From personal experience, **I** know it's God leading **me**, when it goes **against** what my flesh is craving, and yet I'm feeling compelled to do it.....

If I'm feeling led:

- to buy a new gadget – probably not God;
- to give generously/sacrificially to the poor – probably is Holy Spirit;
- to go on a fun mission trip – probably my quest for enjoyment;
- to serve on a mission that's not going to be much fun (maybe a commitment for a lifetime of service) –

probably the Holy Spirit;

- to change churches because I've got a lot of friends in that church; or it's got all the services I could ever want; and it seems exciting – maybe, maybe not the Holy Spirit;
- to join a church where I can serve Him, and fellowship with a people who love Him and love His Word – more likely the Holy Spirit...

Are you with me? It's an important thing for us, not to confuse our animal instinct, with the leading of the Holy Spirit.

And like an animal of instinct that gets hunted and trapped, those who follow the cravings of the flesh, will suffer.

And Peter paints a picture of sinful abandon:

- revelling (even in the day time)
- **blots and blemishes** (opposite of the holy character of Christ)
- revelling in their deceptions...

Something I've noticed is, when false teachings get going in a church, that's actually what they're most excited about...

- “God's going to make you rich”, and that's what they get excited about;
- “God's going to turn you into a person of influence”;
- When a church goes down the LGBTQ alphabet line – they want to celebrate what God very clearly says is some of the most defiling forms sexual immorality...

And they fly the rainbow flag for all they're worth with prideful abandon...;

- A church may focus on bringing heaven to earth – we can have the glory now, and that's what they get most excited about;
- And some churches focus on all sorts of stuff that appeals to the flesh...

revelling in their deceptions,

- while they feast with you

Alright, Peter's concern, isn't about those out in the world. It's normal for people in the world to live according to the flesh. It's sinful abandon in the church, that he's worried about...

- **eyes full of adultery.** This tells me, we're talking about a condition of the heart... Remember Jesus said, "Even if you look at a woman with lust, you've already committed adultery with her." And in the church, men and women are brothers and sisters in Christ, and we're not to see each other as potential sexual liaisons....
- **insatiable for sin ;**
- **They entice unsteady souls.** When Jesus foretold Peter's denial, He said to him, "and after you turned back again, ^{Luke 22:32.....} **strengthen your brothers**".

To be unsteady, is to be easily toppled.

I've been involved in leadership in the church for a lot of years now, and something I noticed, very early on, is some Christians are very solid Christians, and others,

are unsteady souls...

Jesus taught us what it means to be a strong, solid Christian... In His sermon on the mount, He gave us some very good; very solid; very sound teaching, and at the end of the sermon He said:

Matthew 7: (ESV) ²⁴ "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

The wise man, is the one who isn't easily toppled, because his faith is built on a firm foundation – the word of God (not the plasticine twisting of the word). **And actions.** He **hears** it, **and he does** it....

And the task of church leaders today, is to strengthen those who are unsteady – To preach the word of God (as the word is), and to continue pointing the unsteady to the pure Gospel of Christ.

But unfortunately, false teachers do the opposite. They entice – it's like bait on a hook – it's something that

ensnares unsteady souls... Come to this teaching; Come to this teaching; Come to me. Come on; Come on... But those who are firmly planted on the Word, will not be moved.

- They have hearts trained in greed.
- **Accursed children!** A lot of the time, false teachers are claiming “we’re blessed”, but they’re not blessed – they’re cursed...
- ¹⁵ Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray.

Alright, this is no little matter...

Peter says: 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,

Now, at this point, Peter’s taking us into the Old Testament (Numbers 22)

The people of Israel are on the way to the promised land. And a pagan King (Balak), is wanting to fight them as they pass through. And so he hires a “seer” by the name of “Balaam” to come and curse the people of Israel... Now, it’s a bit hard to understand where Balaam stands on this:

- He’s not an Israelite; and
- yet he enquires of YHWH, the god of the Israelites. and
- so he’s sort of ‘dabbling in God’, but he’s not one of God’s people.

And so King Balak sends messengers to Balaam, with an offer of money to curse the people of Israel... Now, if Balaam truly

knew God, he would well know that the answer is, “No, I won’t.” But Balaam says, I’ll enquire of YHWH.

And that night, God says to Balaam, “You’re not to go. You can’t curse these people because they’re blessed.”

And so Balaam (quite rightly) rejected the offer to curse the people. But King Balak won’t let that go – he increases the offer, and sends more important people to entice him – “I’ll give you more if you curse them”. And so Balaam does what he shouldn’t do (Balaam already has his answer from God), but he’s not happy with it, and he says, “I can only do what God tells me, but maybe he will tell me more this time”.

And strangely, this time God tells him, “You can go with them, but only say what I tell you to say...” And of course, when he gets there, God tells him to **ble**ss the people of Israel. And King Balak’s really upset at Balaam because he’d hired Balaam to curse the people of Israel, but Balaam would only bless the people of Israel, as God had commanded him.

That’s how it ends, but on the way there, an angel blocked the way of Balaam’s donkey. The Donkey could see more in the Spiritual realm than this fals(ish) prophet... And Balaam’s donkey spoke and revealed more of the things of God than Balaam did...

And what Peter’s picking up on here, is the enticement for Balaam, was to receive gain from wrongdoing. And his own cravings were preventing him from hearing God correctly. God had already spoken, “But perhaps God’s got more to say on this”... He was looking for a new revelation – a revelation

that would conflict with the word that God had already spoken. It's madness...

And this is what False Teachers do – The word of God is clear in the Scriptures, but they add to it “I've had a fuller revelation, because I'm spiritual. And come and listen to me, because I'll give you revelation...”

It's madness. And what False Teachers promise, they cannot deliver.

That's why he calls them **waterless springs; and mists driven by a storm.**

We're familiar with those, aren't we – there's nothing more discouraging...

*When we've been in a time of drought, and we've been craving rain, and a storm builds in the west, but then it sorta skirts around the side of us, and we get a big wind, with a little bit of a mist, while a few miles away, they've had a deluge...
How discouraging...*

Big claims; Big promises; no delivery...

V¹⁸ 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.

Have you ever noticed, that False Teachers are often the loudest in their delivery... Not always... But they make **big** claims – **big** promises that appeal to the flesh – And this is the bit that I find the most troubling: The ones they entice with their promises, are often those who are barely saved....

- Some of the newest Christians; or
- someone's who's **almost** come to faith; or
- **recently** come to faith; or
- someone who is **unstable** in their faith – not really sure what they believe – they're craving something more...
–these are the ones they bait... and they're the ones who get hooked...

In Vs19-22, we come to the dreadful seriousness of the matter – **enslavement** and possibly even apostasy (to abandon the very **essence** of the Gospel, and therefore to lose salvation)...

This is serious, serious stuff... This is why Peter is being so detailed/scathing, in his warning about false teachers.

Enslavement – they promise freedom, but what they provide is the opposite – enslavement.

For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

You see, Jesus died to set us free from things of the flesh.

What does the flesh crave?

- health;
- wealth;
- power;
- an easy life;
- a long life;
- significance;

But the Gospel sets us free. We no longer crave things of the flesh – we crave things of the Spirit:

- truth;
- righteousness;
- justice;
- mercy
- our hearts are no longer fixated on this life – we’re living for eternity.
- And so, even if I die in this life, that doesn’t matter – I’m just passing through this life.. Heaven is our home.

But, what **false** teachers do, is they appeal to the things that the flesh craves. e.g.:

- “Come to Jesus and you’ll be better off financially”
- If you have enough faith, your debts will be paid;
- Believe in Jesus and you will have an easy life;
- Come to Jesus and He’ll fix your family problems;
- God doesn’t judge – It’s ok to live with your girlfriend – you don’t have to be married...

- a false teacher may tell a young man/woman who’s struggling with their sexuality that it’s ok to date/marry someone of the same sex,,,

These things appeal to the flesh. And for some, to hear these promises, might **feel** like “freedom”. But it’s not freedom – it’s an enslavement to the flesh and worldliness.

And enslavement (in its extreme), becomes **apostatism**...

Reading from half way through V19:

For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. ²⁰ For if, after they have **escaped** the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour 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’s painting a picture here, of someone who initially responded to the true Gospel, and they were saved. **they** have **escaped** the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

They’ve been set free. They’ve been saved...

But then, something dreadful happened. They were walking with the Lord, but then a false teacher, twisted the Gospel, and gave them a message that sounded like freedom, but it enslaved them to things of the flesh... So, they **had** **escaped**

the defilements of the world , but now they are again entangled in the defilements of the world, and overcome

Now, let me be clear here: Peter is **not** talking about:

- slipping up by sinning;
- repenting;
- receiving forgiveness; and
- moving on, continuing our walk with The Lord...

That's not what he's talking about. He's talking about:

- a deliberate ongoing decision, to not walk in the ways of the Spirit; and
- to hand one's self over to
 - worldliness;
 - immorality;
 - gospel of their own making

The result: They lose their salvation... This is serious, serious stuff...

A false gospel, is **not** better than no gospel at all...

Peter says:

- 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...

Now, anyone who believes in the human teaching of once-saved-always-saved, is going to have a lot of trouble with this verse...

If someone has been saved (and there's no doubt about it, the language Peter is using here, he's making sure that we know they **were saved**)... But if they then turn away from the Gospel, and are again entangled in the defilement of the world, they're worse off than they were before they were saved...

It's like a dog returning to its own vomit, and like a **sow**, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire." Just as filthy...

This should highlight to us:

- why it is so critical that we hold fast to the true Gospel?
- why Peter is so scathing of false teachers???

It's because not only is their own salvation at stake, but the salvation of those who are weak and unstable – the ones who they lure away from the way of Christ – **their** salvation is at stake...

So, let's hold fast to the beautiful true Gospel of Jesus Christ – the Gospel by which we have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

Remember the good news of this message – the unrighteous are awaiting judgment, and they will be judged... **But God knows how to rescue the Godly....**

My prayer, is that we would be:

- vigilant;
- stable souls – not the unstable who are easily enticed;
- that we would build our house on the Rock of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 - hearing His teachings (as they are)
 - obeying Him – doing what He has commanded
- walk with the Spirit; keeping in step with the Spirit
- as His faithful disciples.

God knows how to rescue the Godly.

Amen.