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The Second Epistle of Peter

*To Deal With Evil, We Must
Know What it Is*

October 22, 2017

Sermon Text: 2 Peter 2:4-22

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 6

One of the things that strikes us as we have been studying this second chapter of 2 Peter is what I suppose we might call the *harshness* of Peter's words as he describes the false teachers who creep into the church. Today, it seems, professing Christians object and are offended when we speak in harsh language about even the most wicked of people.

But if we are going to take heed to Peter's warnings that we not be duped by these wicked ones, we must be wise as serpents regarding them:

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, **take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.** But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Peter 3:17-18)

See it? Christian maturity and Christlikeness are *not* naïve "love and forgiveness and mercy and kindness" toward evil. *It is the ability (grace leads us to it) to be able to discern the error of wicked ones and thereby stand firm against them.* To discern good from evil and evil from good.

Listen once more then to Peter as he describes how the Lord views these wicked ones and what He has handed them over to:

2 Peter 2:1-22 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who

will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, **bringing upon themselves swift destruction.** (2) And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. (3) And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. **Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.**

(4) For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; (5) if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; (6) if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, **making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;** (7) and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (8) (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); (9) then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, **and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,**

(10) and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, (11) whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. (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, (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.

(14) They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin.

They entice unsteady souls.

They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!

(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.

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

(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.

(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. (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."**

Once more, be careful to remember who Peter is speaking of here. *He is not talking about the general sinner who does not know Christ. No, Peter is speaking of people who KNOW Christ, but not in a saving way. They possess a temporal, false faith and evidence a temporal and false repentance. For the purpose of personal gain, like Balaam, they turn aside from the truth of Christ and work in disguise among Christ's people, seeking out "unsteady souls" to lead away from Christ and to eternal destruction with them.*"

And as we have mentioned many times before, most churches and pastors and church members simply do not want to acknowledge the existence of this category of sinner for whom *the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved*. But in fact the visible church today is full of such people.

Here is a typical example of the false teaching about these wicked ones that we see over and over in the church today. To make this example worse, understand that this interview was on a Reformed radio talk show. The moderators should have taken this pastor and so-called "expert" to task for what he says here, but they did not:

Question: How does the gospel speak into, heal, and really answer the problem of domestic violence

and how might we hope in Christ in the midst of a dark, broken Genesis 3 world where it seems like domestic violence abounds?

Answer:

I want us to be a voice of hope because there are a lot of voices out there speaking to this topic and many of them can be angry, can be resentful and somewhat rightfully so. *[He is no doubt attacking ACFJ here]* But I think the church can be a voice of hope here. Not hope for marriage restoration, but hope for the glory of God and the advancement of the gospel, which is our best hope for marriages moving forward.

What I often say in the idea of redemption is **'Did Jesus die for abusive men?'** And while I do understand the aspect of the reprobate and being targeted by God's wrath and a seared conscience and so on, I do believe there's an aspect of hope that we don't simply write everyone off.

But we embrace the reality that not only did Jesus die for violent men, he hung on a cross designed for a violent man and by a sermon on the mount type of theology each of us have that heart of violence potential within us and so if we have no hope for the abuser then there's little

hope for us...

Those are of course false, disgusting, evil-enabling words. This pastor is absolutely denying the effectual, definite work of Christ on the cross, he is lumping all people outside of Christ into the same category as the most wicked and evil type that Peter is speaking of here. He is arrogant and he is flagrantly disobeying the Lord's command to us to put such evil ones out from among us. He thereby becomes an ally of evil and so does anyone who accepts what he is saying as truth.

Be certain then to understand very clearly that these evil ones Peter is speaking of are, as we have noted before,

- People who have heard the gospel
- Who have acknowledged the gospel is true
- Who have benefited from the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit so that they see and taste the goodness of Christ
- They even have shown some evidences of repentance and appear to have escaped the clutches of the world
- But they have willfully, in the face of all these gracious works given them by the Lord, just like

Balaam, turned back to the vomit and muck, *knowingly* choosing to oppose Christ, to preach a false gospel, to lead people away from Christ, and all for their own personal gain and glory.

THAT is who Peter is speaking of, and any teaching that says *each of us have that heart of violence potential within us and so if we have no hope for the abuser then there's little hope for us* has joined the ranks of these deceivers.

A Look at Peter's Descriptions

- **Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.** This is NOT true of every human being. The gospel offer still goes out calling on people to hear and believe and be saved. *But not so in regard to these kind.* Even now the gears of their judgment and destruction are set in place.
- **they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.** Notice the “knowingness” and culpability of their evil. Also look very carefully here at the kind of person they specifically like to target – those who are barely escaping. They entice (see vs 14)

“unsteady” souls. Unsteady souls are “carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from their steadfastness.” YOU MUST NOT BE AN UNSTEADY SOUL! These evil ones can smell such a person a long distance off and then they move in for the kill.

Ephesians 4:11-14 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, (12) to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, (13) until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, (14) **so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.**

- **(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.** Think on this very, very carefully. IS THIS TRUE OF EVERY HUMAN BEING? No! IS THIS TRUE OF EVERY CHRISTIAN? No!

In fact, it is not true of ANY real Christian. Clearly Peter is warning us of a particular type of wicked person, and you simply do not sit down with them and try to reason them into repentance or try to love them back into the fold! No! In fact Peter says they are “unreasoning animals” (vs 12).

In light of all this Scripture, listen to this false teacher’s words again:

But we embrace the reality that not only did Jesus die for violent men, he hung on a cross designed for a violent man and by a sermon on the mount type of theology each of us have that heart of violence potential within us and so if we have no hope for the abuser then there’s little hope for us...

The fact is that there are people for whom not only is there “little hope,” there is NO hope. And those kind have no one to blame. They have done it all to themselves – they will suffer wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They have brought swift destruction upon themselves.

This is why Scripture uses such powerful and harsh pronouncements

against these children of the devil, to warn us about what they really are and to warn us about the consequences of getting deceived by them and giving them our allegiance.

Jude 1:4-5 For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (5) Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

1 Corinthians 10:1-12 For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, (2) and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, (3) and all ate the same spiritual food, (4) and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. (5) Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. (6) Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. (7) Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." (8)

We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. (9) We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, (10) nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. (11) Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. (12) Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

Hebrews 2:1-3 Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. (2) For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, (3) how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard,

Hebrews 3:12-19 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. (13) But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. (14) For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

(15) As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." (16) For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? (17) And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? (18) And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? (19) So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

And the enemy's common tactic is to send false teachers and leaders in among us who will either teach the false gospel of legalism (see Galatians) or that of libertinism (see 2 Peter and Jude). *If you are drawn away by them, there may never be any coming back for you.* YOU have tasted the heavenly gift. YOU have experienced the goodness of God. The Holy Spirit has opened YOUR eyes to the truth of the gospel. And therefore if YOU embrace these false teachers, you do so knowingly to the eternal danger of your soul. Do NOT be a baby. Do NOT be unsteady, unable to tell evil from good, truth from error. Grow up in Christ by diligently heeding His Word and increasing in your knowledge of Christ.

Finally, notice that Peter's words tell

us something else about these evil ones. Namely:

They are wicked by nature. They share the devil's DNA. Evil is who they are.

It is a very foolish Christian who wants to keep thinking that there is "some good in everyone" and that if we just try hard enough and love hard enough, we can reach anyone's island of goodness and they will repent. That is foolishness and it is dangerous. Listen to Peter's descriptive words again:

- Daring
- Self-willed
- No fear of God
- Like unreasoning animals born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed
- Count it pleasure to revel in the daytime (No shame)
- Stains and blemishes
- Reviling in deceptions
- Never cease from sin
- Have a heart trained in greed
- Accursed children
- For whom the black darkness has been reserved
- Their LAST state is worse than what they once were

Christ died for these people? We are to

offer hope to such people? We are to counsel them and educate them about how wrong their ways are in order to get them to change? Of course not! We are to be wise about what they are. We are to put them out from among us and be done with them.

Now, Peter is going to continue to warn us in the 3rd and final chapter of his letter about still more tactics that characterize these creeps who creep in among us. Listen to how he begins:

2 Peter 3:1-4 This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. **In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder,** (2) that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, (3) knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. (4) They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."

Notice that he once again states his purpose in writing. We need "stirring up." We need to be reminded. Why? Because we are being bombarded with lies and we must constantly be coming back to the truth of God's Word. *The day of the Lord is coming!*

