

True and False

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

All of us in his word. And so we're continuing in our study in the book of 2 Peter. And I invite you to turn there now. We're going to be in chapter 2, verses 1 through 3.

And the last couple weeks, we've been looking at the question of why we can trust the Bible. We've turned from growth in grace to growth in knowledge. Remember that this is a letter written by a man named Peter to a church somewhere in the Roman Empire around the 60s AD.

And he writes it with one desire. He writes it that they would grow. We know this because he tells us at the very beginning he wants grace and peace to be multiplied to them through knowledge. At the very end, he gives them a command that they would grow in the grace and knowledge of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And so he wants them to grow in two ways. He wants them to grow in grace. And he wants them to grow in knowledge. And so we've been looking at the fact that we can trust the source of knowledge, the fact that we can trust the Bible.

[1 : 27] That was a positive, a positive way of looking at knowledge. And this morning, we're going to be looking at a negative way of looking at knowledge. So we've seen why we should trust the Bible. And now we're going to look at what happens if our knowledge is not reliable but false.

And so we're getting to finally figure out why it is that Peter cares so much about growth. This is not true of every letter, right? Not every letter has such a great emphasis on people growing. We have not found out yet why it is that Peter cares so much.

Now, at chapter 2, he tells us, these people have false teachers in the midst of them. They are threatening both growth in knowledge and growth in grace. They are teaching things that are false, and they are practicing an immoral lifestyle.

And so Peter is countering those things. He's writing this letter because he is concerned. Now, we learn something here about the way that the New Testament generally works. Writers start with the positive before they go to the negative.

Peter's done that for us. He has started with the positive of all the riches that we have in Jesus Christ. He waits until chapter 2 before he turns to the negative. And we can learn something here about the way that God deals with us.

[2 : 37] He comes to us with grace. We can also learn something about how the human heart works. That we're going to be heading into this question of why is knowledge so necessary?

Why is it essential? Why is it so important that we know that the Bible is true? Why is it that we have to trust it? Why is it that we are so wary of false teachers? Why are they such a threat?

And it's with that that we come now to read. I invite you to turn with me in your worship guide or in your Bible or on your phone. Remember, we're in chapter 2, verses 1 through 3. Regardless of where you turn, remember that this is God's word.

And God tells us in Isaiah chapter 40 that while the grass withers and the flower fades, the word of God will remain forever. And so that's why we read now starting at verse 1.

Verse 2, upon themselves swift destruction. Verse 2, and many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words.

[3 : 56] Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's Word.

Our Father in heaven, we thank you again that you are a good Father and you speak to us, and we ask that you would do that this morning, even with things that are challenging and hard, that you would remind us of your trustworthiness, and you would also remind us of the seriousness of the

things that you teach us, that we would see our sin and our need for grace, and we would also see your mercy as you save us and you meet us at that very same point of need. We ask these things not because we have earned them or deserve them, but because we ask them in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sorry, technical difficulties. I'm going to get really good at this. About 10 years ago, in the summer of 2010, I did many things when I was trying to figure out if I should become a pastor, try that out, and see if that's what God was calling me to. And so in the summer of 2010, I did an internship at a church in Virginia. It was in between my junior and my senior year of college, and the senior pastor was trying to figure out what can I do with this kid who's at my church for the summer. And so he did a variety of things. He sent me on a missions trip.

He had me do some youth stuff, and he also got this invitation in the mail for him to go and attend this multi-week seminar on hospice, an introduction to hospice care and what it is and how it works. And he said, Matthew, you're going to go and do this because I'm the senior pastor and I don't really want to. So I said, okay, fine. I'm the intern. I'll go do this. So I went week after week. I think it was once a week for an hour for maybe six to eight weeks, and I learned all sorts of things about what happens when people are near death. And I learned what hospice care actually is. And if you're familiar, you know that hospice care is what comes in near the very end of someone's life, and it's what's called palliative care versus curative care. Palliative care is simply care that's meant to make someone comfortable. It is not intended to heal. Curative care, on the other hand, is meant to restore someone. It's meant to make them well again. Of course, this makes sense, right? We know that at some point all of us are going to die. There's going to come a point at which we can't do any more. There is no curative care. There comes a point when it, with our body, corruption. The same, however, is not true for our spiritual lives. Our bodies are destined for death because of the fall. Our souls are not. There does not come a point where we have to give up on our spiritual state. And so there were many good things in this class. One thing that was concerning is we had a chaplain come in to talk to us about what she did during hospice care, and she emphasized to us that chaplaincy during hospice is also palliative and not curative. The goal is not to heal people spiritually, but simply to make them comfortable, to make them feel good about what's about to happen. And of course, that is incredibly dangerous. We're grateful for hospice care when it comes to our bodies. We need to stay far away from palliative care when it comes to our souls. And that's what Peter is telling us here. There is no place for palliative care in our spiritual lives, and yet there are palliative teachers. There is no place for palliative care in our spiritual lives, and yet there are palliative teachers. There is no place for simply trying to make people feel comfortable and refusing to heal them. And yet there are teachers who will do just that. That's what we meet here in this passage.

[8 : 03] When it comes to the church, every teacher is supposed to be curative. Every teacher should be seeking healing. Every teacher should want people to be restored in their relationship to God. Physical death is inevitable. Spiritual death is inevitable. Spiritual death is not. Physical death is inevitable. Spiritual death is not. And so that's the problem that we encounter here. There are these teachers who want people to be comfortable as they die spiritually rather than delivering them from it. We see this in verse one. There are false prophets, which is referring to what we just discussed last week about the Old Testament. We were told about prophecy, the fact that it was reliable. Remember, it was reliable because it was fulfilled. We know there are true prophets. Guess what? In the Old Testament, there were also false prophets. So Peter's drawing this comparison between the Old Testament and the New Testament for us.

Good faithful prophecy in the Old Testament, bad false prophets in the Old Testament. Good faithful teaching in the Old Testament. Bad, false teaching in the Old Testament. And they are bringing something that's destructive. It's death, right? They're bringing in, verse one, destructive heresies. So they are teaching things that will actually destroy people rather than heal them. That's the destructive heresies they're bringing in. Then we find out here in this passage and later in this chapter and in the next chapter what these destructive heresies are. First, we see in verse two, they're bringing in a way of sensuality. So there's some kind of sexual sin that they're promoting here. Not only are they bringing in sensuality here, but that's confirmed for us. We're going to see this later in verse 10 in coming weeks.

They're those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion. So they are using this false teaching to promote some kind of sexual sin among God's people. But that's not all of what they're teaching.

They are also motivated by money. We find out in verse three that their greed is what causes them to exploit these people. And then we're going to see that throughout the rest of this chapter. Again, verses 14 and 15, we'll see they have eyes full of adultery. They're insatiable for sin. And they have hearts trained in greed. And in verse 15, they love gain from wrongdoing. And so these false teachers are coming in and they're teaching people, hey, what you do with your bodies doesn't really matter.

And they're also doing it because they know it will help them make a living. Finally, we're going to learn in chapter three that they are denying not just grace, not just growth in holiness when it comes to sexual sin. They're denying knowledge. They are teaching people that Jesus is not actually returning. And so there's a false practice there's teaching. There's also a false doctrine. They are threatening the very spiritual lives of people in the church. And so that tells us what they're teaching. We also find out here why they're teaching it. We see in verse two that many people will follow after them. So we find out there's something popular about telling people there's no judgment. You tell people they can live however they want and they don't have to answer to God. And that is going to be a very popular message. I've told you before what my mother told me growing up, which is that people will climb over walls to get to the truth. People will also do whatever they can to avoid the truth. There are some people who will run to know what is right. And there are other people who will do whatever they can to avoid the truth for the sake of freedom. And we find out in chapter two, verse 19, that freedom is what these teachers are saying that they're offering. They are teaching these people something that they believe is good that will give them life. And yet we also find out in verse 19 that this is freedom that's actually slavery. They are free in the same way that alcoholics are free to drink alcohol. That is the kind of freedom these false teachers are peddling.

So they teach it because they're going to get a following. People are going to follow after them, verse two. They also teach it because it makes them a lot of money. Verse three. In their greed, they will exploit you with false words. So they teach things that aren't true. They do it because people listen. They do it because people are willing to pay them for it. In other words, there is always a market for what people want to hear. If you tell someone you can do whatever you want, whenever you want, with your body, God will never judge. He is not coming back. That will always be a popular message.

[13:16] And yet it also threatens destruction to these people. And so that's why we see the warning that Peter gives us. It's going to destroy the people who listen, and it's also going to destroy the people who teach. We see that it's going to destroy the people who teach in verse one, because we're told they're bringing upon themselves swift destruction. We see the same thing in verse three. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. These false teachers will not escape God's judgment. And it also destroys the people they're teaching, because as we saw before in verse one, these are destructive heresies. So there's a double destruction going on. There's a double death that Peter wants to warn about. You can think about it this way. We're talking about different kinds of cures, curative versus palliative care. Let's say you have a doctor, and you have cancer, and that doctor tells you you're completely fine, and there's nothing wrong with you.

Well, both of you are going to be destroyed in some way, right? You're going to be destroyed because you're never given the option of healing. You go down the path of destruction. The doctor will be destroyed when he has a suit brought against him for malpractice. Both of you will face destruction in different ways. Same thing is true here. Peter is concerned about his own people in the church, their destruction, and he reminds him of the destruction that's coming to these teachers. He cares so much about growth that he wants to combat these false teachers in the church, knowing that they could destroy the very people he loves.

Now, I don't do this very often, but this morning I'm going to do a little bit of a master class for you on how to read the Bible. I've told you before that my hope is not that you simply hear something from the Bible and take it away. My hope is that you actually learn how to read the Bible.

My hope is that you go away, and the next time you open up the Bible, you have more tools and resources than you had before to understand what it is that God's saying. And so we have a question here. When we come to these false teachers, what are we going to do as people at Cheyenne Mountain in 2020 on November 15th? How are we going to apply this passage to our lives? And I'm going to give you some options here. There's different ways we could come at this.

Remember, not all of the portions of the Bible apply to us in a one-to-one way. We are not in a church in the Roman Empire in the 60s AD. And so one thing I could do now is I could start railing against false teachers who are present today. I could go off about people who teach the prosperity gospel and how terrible that is, and I could warn you about that, and I could start naming names of people who teach those doctrines, and I could get very excited up here up front and start going off about other things that people teach that are false. The problem is this passage is not about the prosperity gospel.

[16:26] And so I completely missed the point of this passage. This passage is about very specific false doctrines. Peter's going to hone in on those doctrines. It's Jesus' second coming, that he is returning to the earth to judge the world. And he also brings up this idea of sexual sin, sensuality, adultery over and over. So they're teaching people to do whatever they want with their sexuality. Those are the doctrines that Peter wants us to get at here, not just any false teaching in general. He is warning these people against specific false teachers and specific false doctrines. So that's one option we could take.

We're not going to do that one. Another option I could take is I could start warning you about false teachers in the church, and I could apply this situation as if it's the same. The problem is we do not, to the best of my knowledge, have active false teachers at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church.

I am not aware of anyone in this church who is actively teaching against Jesus' second coming. I'm also not aware of anyone who's actively teaching sexual licentiousness in our congregation.

So I'm not going to apply it into a one-to-one way. Which raises the question, what do we again do with this passage? We have two more options here. One, we could take a general principle away. We did this when we were in Nehemiah chapter 5. If you were with us, remember in Nehemiah chapter 5, there were people who were using debt to enslave other people in the community. Now, at the time, there was no one at Cheyenne Mountain who was using debt to create slavery for other people in the congregation. So what we did was we derived a general principle, right? People are more important than money. We're willing to lose money for the sake of other people gaining. We're willing to sacrifice for other people rather than using them.

There's a final option. It's the option I'm going to suggest for this passage for us. When we're reading the Bible and we encounter a negative situation that is not the situation that we're directly facing in our community, one of our best options is to ask, what is the opposite?

[18:40] What is the positive thing that we're meant to pursue and celebrate? Some people do this with the Ten Commandments. Okay, if God tells us not to lie, what's the positive that we pursue and celebrate?

Wow, we celebrate the truth. These false teachers are teaching what is wrong to the people. What is the opposite of that? Verse 2, we see the threat they are going to lead to the blasphemy of the truth. The way of truth will be blasphemed. What is the opposite of the way of truth being blasphemed?

We want the way of truth to be honored and taught and upheld. We want to cling to the truth. We want to stick to the truth. We want to be as close to it as possible. So if these false teachers, if they're going about and promoting these things that are wrong, we want to be making sure we're promoting the things that are right. If these are the doctrines that they're attacking, those are the doctrines that we want to uphold. Those are the doctrines we want to remind ourselves and repeat that we want to cling firmly to. We can take the positive and run with it. And so first we hold firmly onto these doctrines. We remember and remind each other that Jesus is coming back. And when he does, he will bring restoration for his people and judgment for the wicked. Jesus is coming back. He will bring restoration and salvation for his people, and he will bring judgment for the wicked. The very doctrine that they are attacking, we remind and teach and promote.

And we're going to have plenty of chances to look at that in 2 Peter, especially chapter 3. It would be tempting as a church, right, to believe that we have everything that's true, and yet we could easily avoid those doctrines, right? We could never talk about them. We could skip over them. I could just show up Sunday after Sunday, and I could tell you tips for how to live life well and get along with other people and to have a good marriage. And we could pat ourselves on the back that we're a doctrinally sound church and never touch on the hard truth that are also accurate and necessary and needed. And so we hold firmly to that. We cling to it.

We cling to what God teaches us about sexual integrity. We've done that multiple times this year, both in the book of 1 Peter and also in the Proverbs. We're teaching that and reminding ourselves of the truth.

[21 : 12] And so we hold firmly to these doctrines and we teach them. We also do the opposite of what the false teachers do when we remind people of the danger that they're in rather than assuring them that they're okay. We're going to find out in chapter 3 that these teachers are asking people, why has Jesus not come back yet? If he was going to return, wouldn't he have done it already? You don't need to worry.

Jesus isn't coming back to judge you. If he was, he would have already done it. As teachers, as people in the church, the opposite of that is to remind people of what's true, to warn them, to be doctors who are concerned with curative care, not palliative care, to tell people the hard thing, right? We talked about the doctor who would not tell you that you had cancer. Well, what kind of doctors do we want to be? We want to be doctors who tell you the hard truth because we love you. We remind people that there is a coming judgment, that there will come a day when we answer to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for everything that we have done and every word that we have spoken.

We remind people that there is a seriousness and an urgency to make a decision about where they're going to stand in that day, whether they are going to receive God's offer of salvation for them or not.

The false teachers preach peace where there is no peace. True teachers preach and proclaim judgment where there's judgment. Even when it is not popular and it does not lead to financial gain. [23 : 06] Preaching judgment will not make you rich. But it will make you not a malpracticing doctor, but a faithful doctor.

And so we look for and celebrate the truth whenever and wherever it is spoken. We want to be a church, a place where people actually find healing and restoration from sin.

If you're with me in the most recent new members class, you're familiar with this quote that I read to you all from Evangelism as Exiles, which is a book I referenced a lot when we were in 1 Peter. And I continue to reference it now. He talks about the church as a hospital, as a place of healing. And he says this, In other words, it needs to be a curative hospital, not a palliative hospital.

I've seen my share of dirty hospitals in the world, and you don't want to go there. A hospital is only a good place if there's medicine and a remedy.

There must be visible evidence of a cure. We who were once on our deathbeds have found the antidote. Our gospel is for sick sinners to be sure.

[24 : 27] But we preach as healed saints, as those who are being delivered from the malignancy of our former corruption. In other words, if we love one another, we will tell each other the truth for the sake of healing, rather than speaking lies for the sake of money.

And we will tell ourselves the most important truth, and it is this, that Jesus is actually coming back. He came in his first coming to die for us and our sins, to take the punishment that we deserve. He came with salvation. He is coming again with judgment. When he comes with that judgment, we will answer for how we've lived our lives.

That is what Peter was telling us in chapter 1. Remember, we saw that in verses 5 through 8. He exhorts them to holiness so that they would see Jesus when he returns.

Verse 11, For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In other words, there are those who will enter the eternal kingdom and those who will not.

[25 : 36] The ones who enter will be those who have faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Those who do not enter will be those who do not have that faith. And so there's only two categories of people.

There are not three. We've talked about this before. In our world, we like to think there's bad people and really good people and normal people. In God's world, there's only two kinds of people, those who have faith and those who do not.

And so we cling on to that truth, remembering it. We talked about last week as a point of hope and encouragement and also a point of challenge to turn away from sin and to walk in God's ways.

In fact, Peter's going to ask a question. In chapter 3, verse 11, after he's explained to them the reality of Jesus' second coming, he's going to say, what then type of life should you live? What sort of holiness should be true of you, knowing that Jesus is coming again?

And so that decision is before all of us. That question, which are we? Are we people who have faith in Jesus Christ or people who do not? Are we people who know that we're sinners and outside of God's mercy and forgiveness and salvation, outside of accepting Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf, we have no other hope.

[26 : 48] But we know that because of him we do have hope. Or are we people who've rejected him and have nothing but judgment to look forward to at his second return?

The call for everyone is to have faith and trust in Jesus Christ, to confess that we are people like the false teachers who would normally head after sensuality, who had eyes full of adultery, who would want money, who would be full of greed.

But we've turned away from that to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. If that is true of you, then you have the hope that Peter's going to speak of.

If it is not, the call for you for faith and repentance is now because Jesus is coming back. And we say that as people who want cures and not comfort.

And Peter's able to offer that to these people because he has been with Jesus. He has seen Jesus risen. He knows that Jesus died and he knows that he offers the real cure for these people.

[27 : 57] And so the rest of this book, there's going to be a heavy emphasis on this choice. We're going to see it again next week. So I'm going to start to sound like a broken record here. Second Peter is going to tell us over and over that there is a choice between judgment and salvation.

And that choice exists because Jesus is actually coming back again. And so Peter is going to repeat it over and over. The good news is this, of course, that it's not just judgment that's an option, but also restoration.

Jesus came not to give palliative care, but curative care. Jesus came to offer up himself, to make himself sick and the object of God's judgment so that we would not have to.

He made himself the patient so that we could have the cure. Jesus sacrificed himself to save us from judgment and wrath. The cross is curative.

It is not palliative. When we see Jesus dying on the cross, it is not something simply meant to make us feel good or an example for us to follow, but it is someone actually healing us by his wounds.

[29 : 03] That's what we're told in the book of Isaiah, that it's by Jesus' wounds that we're healed. He is the one making us right and who has made us right with God. He's restoring us through sanctification, making us look more and more like himself, and he has saved us by justification, taking our punishment on himself.

And so palliative care is comfortable, but it leads to death. Curative care, painful and hard, and it leads to life.

That's the path that Jesus walked himself. It was painful for him, and to a lesser extent, it is and will be painful for us, and as we saw in the book of 1 Peter, it leads to a wonderful and glorious future. And so why is it that knowledge matters so much? Why is it necessary? Why is it essential? Why does Peter feel so strongly to warn these people against false teachers?

Remember, knowledge, growth in knowledge and growth in grace go together. They're not separated. It's the doctor's knowledge that allows him to cure you. The same is true for the many warnings we see.

[30 : 21] Right if you're out here in Colorado Springs on certain trails, you'll see signs saying, don't pass this point. This is a military installation. Cross at your own risk.

If you're out hiking, you might see signs near waterfalls saying, this waterfall is dangerous. Nine people have already died near it. Please don't get near it. If you're out near our church at Quail Lake, it's like a great body of water, right?

People go out there and paddleboard and kayak. You'll see a sign that says, this water is not potable. That's good knowledge, right? It means you should not drink this water.

It will not help you. It will hurt you. When it comes to knowledge, there are sources that help and there are sources that hurt.

There are sources that lead to life and sources that lead to death. Peter wants his people to have and to only have life.

[31 : 25] And so why is knowledge so necessary? necessary because it is what shows us the way of life. And it's what protects us from the way of death. And it's knowledge that we find in and only in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And so I invite you to pray with me. Dear Father in heaven, we thank you for your word, that it's always good, even when it's hard.

We thank you that you speak the hard things to us and the good things to us. You're a father who encourages us and warns us. We ask that you would use this passage in that way today, that we would be reminded of your care for us, that you care passionately, that we know what's true.

And we'd be warned of the dangers of turning away from it. And most of all, we would look to Jesus Christ and we'd see him as more beautiful and more glorious than anyone else because he is the doctor who comes to cure us, not at our expense, but at his.

And so it's on his account that we ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.