

“LIAR”

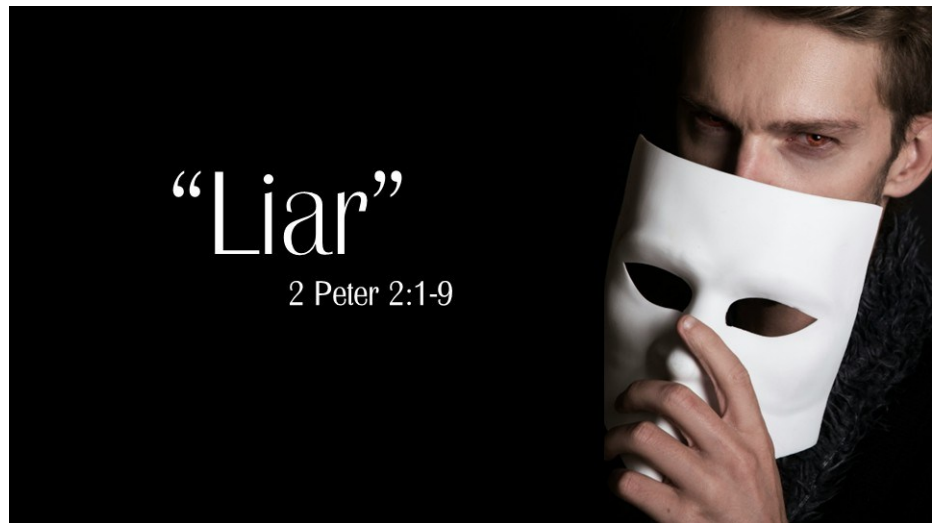
2 Peter 2:1-9

Pastor Tim Dodson

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2 Peter 2:1-9

"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) — then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment."

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. 'Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

Back in school we were told the account of the boiled frog. The idea was this: the frog is placed in cold water and then the pot placed over a flame and slowly heated. The premise is built around the fact that if the frog had been dropped into hot water at the start, he would immediately jump out. However, if the water is slowly heated under the frog, it is lulled into complacency, and he dies never realizing the danger until it is too late. This is essentially what Peter is telling us in chapter 2.

One of the great “right of passings” as we mature as believers, is that of false prophets/false teachers stepping in your path. Some of us will make it through this fight, and others of us will not. For some, it will be a time of true awakening and others a beginning of apostasy. But we all will face that battle at some point.

As we have noted throughout this letter thus far, this is Peter’s last letter...his final message to the believing church. Thus we are uniquely compelled to pay keen attention to what he chooses to include herein.

With each passing day, the pressure upon the authentic church increases. Ironically, the church has withstood martyrdom, church burnings, and vilifying from the press. It has survived swords, bullets, and political prohibitions. Every frontal attack that has been meted out has been beaten back and endured. One might be emboldened by these facts, but such would be premature. For while we are puffing out our chests in defiance, Satan is slipping in the back door bringing slow compromise and methodic assimilation to cultural lies and unbiblical doctrines. Slowly turning up the heat while we rest in our oft apathy.

The plan is both intricate and subtle. Roots that reach deep into our modern culture and the very social fabric of a generation. Entire concepts, word meanings, standards of morality, and institutional norms have been slowly manipulated in order to now skew the view of truth, faith, power, authority, relationships, and human interaction. It's hard to clearly describe a situation when the words therein used mean different things to different people, and even the dictionary definitions would be debated and often rejected! An concept that was clear and undeniable 20 years ago is today often contested, debated, argued, and rejected on grounds of the even more nebulous concepts of tolerance, acceptance, choice, lifestyle and social reform!

Today we are seeing a growing acceptance of the use of violence in the burning of cars, looting buildings, and even assassinations to mete out personal hurt, anger and upheaval. Even recent violence and graffiti meted out toward our own Word on the Street magazine on UW Stout campus. 'Tolerating you' now means that I must facilitate and advocate for your personal decisions, and 'loving you' means I let...even encourage you, to do whatever brings you satisfaction no matter the danger to you or to those around you. Since the definitions have changed, and what is 'normal' is anything but, the greater church will in no way endure unaffected.

One of the great drifts in our culture today is the demonization of the all the powers that be, those with more money than me, and those who wield political power. With an air of "guilty until proven innocent" the trials continue in the courtrooms of public opinion. We WANT to believe that the little guy is righteous...because *we are the "little guy"* ...and that the accusations of abuse by those who wield the power are factual.

In November 2014 Rolling Stone printed a bombshell story recounting an alleged brutal gang rape of a young female college student "Jackie" by seven men at the Phi Kappa Psi fraternity house. The story ignited national outrage and prompted the university to suspend all fraternity activities temporarily. However, over the weeks and months that followed it slowly became clear that the whole account was fabricated...dates, events and people that were intricate to the events began to unravel. Rolling Stone retracked the story. A subsequent review concluded that the magazine had failed to use basic journalistic practices, such as contacting the accused individuals to get their side of the story.

The university's associate dean of students, Nicole Eramo, who was portrayed negatively in the article, sued Rolling Stone and the writer for defamation and was awarded \$3 million by a jury. The Phi Kappa Psi fraternity also filed a lawsuit, which was settled for \$1.65 million. The New York Times declared that in the "age of misinformation" belonging is stronger than facts. It is *my gang* against *your gang*.

This is but one of what is now daily accounts of people defending their shoplifting, their shootings, their violence and slander, as well as rejecting the lawful results of their behavior in order to present themselves as righteous no matter the circumstances or results. It is in this environment that the church today is trying to operate. Certainly we cannot dispute that there has been abuse by the powerful and influential throughout history, and that includes those who held church positions. But we would be naive to not believe that many have equally manipulated situations to appear righteous and abused in order to render pain and revenge on another. So what is the answer? Should we rather just passively stay in our lane in order to remain outside of the fray? The answer must now and forever lie in the truth...the facts, outside of emotions, preconceptions, sensitivities and even personal loyalties. Without such a stance, we are doomed to a world of anarchy and vigilante justice.

Peter is herein warning us concerning false teachers and false prophets...simple liars if you will, which tells us that on some level this issue is not a new one. It seems use of misinformation has been a tool of Satan from the very beginning, where he said to Eve "*has God really said....*" and "*you will not really die...*" Why would Satan need to design new attack plans when the 'old and true' methods are so successful? Unless we as Christians grow up and learn to seek the truth...the facts, we will go on losing our way and failing to know our destiny as *believers and our experiencing the glory of God's body, the church*.

"If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods' —which you have not known— 'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from

the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.” (Deut 13:1-5)

“...the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?’ — when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.” (Deut 18:20-22)

The answer is never to avoid the issue or to put blinders on. The answer is that we must seek the truth, and such must be based of scripture or we are just "fluttering in the wind." There absolutely must be a baseline...a 'final word.' Such 'word' is not the church as an institution, a pastor as its leader, or even (God forbid) our government or its leaders. We must forever be cognizant that *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked...out (of it) proceed(s) evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."* (Jer 17:9 Mt 15:19)

Arthur Pink says *"False prophets are to be found in the circles of the most orthodox, and they pretend to have a fervent love for souls, yet they fatally delude multitudes concerning the way of salvation. The pulpit, platform, and pamphlet hucksters have wantonly lowered the standard of divine holiness and so adulterated the Gospel in order to make it palatable to the carnal mind."*

John Piper says *"Chapter one (of 2 Peter) is mainly an encouragement to avail ourselves of God's power to lead lives of godliness and love. Chapter two is mainly a warning against the destruction that will befall those who don't avail themselves of this power. If chapter one is the carrot, chapter two is the crack of the whip over our heads. There are no commands, no admonitions, no imperatives in chapter two; just pure, terrifying description of what will happen to those who fall prey to the false teachers in the church."*

If the Word of God...the gospel of Jesus Christ, is the answer, then such had better be central to all that a church body does and all that they learn. We must note that the Peters text says that these 'false teachers' will be 'amongst you.' Not 'out there,' but in here. We must never get the idea that it is safe here in the walls of a church. The fact is, Satan goes to church faithfully. And what he cannot "prevail against" with the 'gates of hell', he will try to corrupt from within through encouraging an air of lethargy and hearts of compromise. The battle is forever on. There can be no rest and no surrender! Pastor Rob Salvato in a message on this issue said the following: *"...when it comes to the church today there are some who feed their flocks what amounts to spiritual ice cream, cake & candy — feel good sermons — whose aim is to make people feel happy and to help them feel good about themselves. Sermons where people are never CONVICTED ..never CONFRONTED or CHALLENGED — although that congregation may be happy, they are not healthy. Then there are other “spiritual leaders or movements” who feed their congregations and followers what amounts to poison ...causing their congregations to never come to life but remaining dead in their sins."*

Peter is not herein alone in his concern. Scripture is full of warnings on this matter. Paul repeatedly joined the warnings saying "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock & from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." (Acts 20:27-32)

Despite such repeated and overt warnings, we can so easily dismiss the danger as not a concern for me personally or not a concern for us as a body. I assure you, we are not safe...you are not safe! This issue has taken innumerable individuals out of the fight over the years. We all have lost friends, family members, brothers and sisters to this issue. All of them no doubt heard the warnings and believed themselves to be beyond such a ruse... too smart to be fooled...their spiritual prowess too keen to fall into such traps. But fall they did. To false teaching, to emotional doubts, to lies and innuendos. And the secondary fact remains: few return. Few that fall out will find their way back again. Because only through deep humility is such possible. Lies take us out and our pride keeps us out!

Verse 1 says they will work the scene in secret...they will not be obvious. They will come in amongst you and pretend to agree with the teachings, the doctrine and the spirit of your fellowship, but will slowly and subtly move to undermine the church. I have had people come in here and join us in all appearances and then strategically pass a book of false teaching, or drop a comment in a conversation to 'test the waters.' Hyper-Calvinism, hyper-dispensationalism, oneness doctrine, King James only teaching, home church movement, anti-church office structure, accusations of legalism or shepherding, accusations of favoritism or pastoral elitism, spiritual abuse, etc.

Verse 2 tells us that because of these "destructive ways," the way of truth will be blasphemed. Inside and out, the greater church is ridiculed as being unable to find unity and the bitter fights that follow bring shame to Jesus Christ. Daniel Defoe (of Robinson Crusoe fame) wrote "Whenever God erects a house of prayer, the Devil always builds a chapel there." The point is that whenever the true work of God is found it is not long before satanic counterfeits begin to infiltrate.

One of the 'give aways' that we should look for is the way the debate is handled. Is the issue conducted over social media, or in secret behind closed doors? Dark alley whispers and quiet phone calls and texts? Or is the issue out in the open for all to see? Did Jesus work in secret? Matthew 26:55 records the opposite saying "Jesus said to the multitudes, *"Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me."*

This is the way such matters are to be dealt with. Certainly there is a place for personal and quiet discussion...one on one conversations where clarity is given. But so often such back alley conversations are not with the intent to seek clarity and understanding, but rather to sow gossip and doubt. A church must always seek transparency in all they do. It is hard to hide when the lights are on! It doesn't take a lot to sow seeds of doubt that eventually grow into full blown poison. I call it the 'mercury effect.' It only takes one drop of mercury to kill a whole lake. It's some nasty stuff. It can happen the same in a faith community, and has so often!

One naturally asks "why?" Why would someone do such a thing? The obvious answer is they are working for the "other side" either unwittingly or knowingly. That these folks do not know Christ and never have. But verse 3 gives us another reason: jealousy. They either covet your position, the spiritual success of the church you attend, etc. It's not fancy, but it's true. You have something they do not have, and they want it. And if they can't have it, neither can you!

You see, some folks have got caught up in the flesh, pride and sin and have thrown it all away. Years perhaps of gracious history and awesome experiences and relationships, and then when it finally dawns on them what they have lost, instead of repentance they exude bitterness, resentfulness, and wicked hatred and will move to try to tear down everything for everyone else. It is nothing more than a classic situation of a child throwing away a toy until someone else picks it up and they suddenly want it back, and if they cannot they at least want to make sure no other child gets it! So they seek out those they perceive to be weak, faith young, or not quite 'on board' with the church direction, and begin the emails, the texts, the phone calls, the whispers...

We must remember that while every attempt should be made to make peace with such souls, baring a full repentance, such folks are in the hands of God. He is not inept or out of the loop. None of us are ever out of His realm of correction, discipline, or even destruction. Our text says that the "Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment." Meaning He 'has our back.'

Despite what seem to be a message of doom and gloom, God is in control! Firmly and forever in control. Our part is to stay alert and humbly remain 'on our knees' before Him. We must continue to learn. To grow in head knowledge and heart knowledge. To grow in experiential 'gnosko' knowledge. To remain alert and attentive. Not paranoid, for God is your protector. But not stupid and child-like either. We must grow up. Move beyond the milk bottle and on to the steak! And never ever let your guard down. Always asking "what does God have to say about that?"