

Sermon Outline

“The Reality of Judgment & Rescue”

2 Peter series, part 6 – 2 Peter 2:1-10 – Joshua Harris – November 20, 2011

Introduction

1. The driving purpose behind the book of 2 Peter is to warn Christians against false teachers. Peter wants Christians to find stability for their lives by really knowing God. He wants their faith to be *grounded* and *growing*—not wobbly and unstable. In Peter’s day, teachers were rising up from within the church and telling Christians that Jesus wasn’t actually going to return, that there would be no final judgment and that *godliness didn’t matter*.
2. The same challenges face today’s church. The Christian church in 2011 is overrun by sensuality, sexual compromise, pornography, adultery and divorce. This year one of the most influential and popular pastors of this generation published a book that, in effect, denied the biblical doctrine of hell. It denied that there is eternal torment and wrath for those who die apart from faith in Jesus. And the book became a *New York Times* #1 best-seller.

Profile of False Teachers (verses 1-3)

1. Peter begins this section of his letter by telling his readers that not all who speak for God are trustworthy. Some are false teachers. And then he gives us a profile of these false teachers.
 - a. They come from within the church. “There will be false teachers *among you*.” This isn’t an outside attack. They’re known and trusted. They’re people who everyone assumed were genuine Christians.
 - b. They are sly. “Who will *secretly* bring in destructive heresies.” The word “heresy” means a teaching that contradicts the established teaching of scripture—it’s wrong doctrine. And the false teachers subtly use the same words but change the meaning. The result is destruction and ultimate judgment for those who are led astray by them.
 - c. They deny Jesus’s Lordship. “...even *denying* the Master who bought them.” Based on what we learn later about their teaching, their denial of Jesus seems to be a denial of his authority. They don’t outright reject Jesus but they deny their need to obey him and follow his Word. And they deny that he has the right to judge them.
 - d. They’re popular. “*Many* will follow....” Because they tell people what they want to hear, they gain a following. Sometimes we assume that just because a lot of people trust someone that they’re trustworthy. But popularity is not always a good measurement of biblical faithfulness.

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- e. They're sexually immoral. "Many will follow their *sensuality*, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed." They're characterized by a pursuit of sexual pleasure that brings dishonor on the Christian faith. Even non-Christians see their behavior as contradictory and thus scorn Christianity.
 - f. They're greedy. "...in their *greed* they will exploit you with false words." Their motivation is not the good of the church. Instead, they want to use people for their own enrichment and comfort.
2. After pointing out the characteristics of these false teachers, Peter is very blunt about their future: they are not going to get away with anything. God is going to judge them and hold them accountable.

Examples of God's Judgment (verses 4-8)

1. Example 1: Fallen Angels. There is some disagreement among Bible scholars about exactly what Peter is referring to in verse 4. Some believe this is a reference to the punishment Satan and the angels experienced when they first rebelled against God. Others believe this is a reference to Genesis 6, which they interpret to be a description of a time in the ancient world in which angels had sexual relationships with human women. Whatever the case, the vital point here is that when angelic beings disobeyed God and sinned, God didn't spare them. There is no favored status that excuses us from obedience. God restrained them and is keeping them for a final judgment.
2. Example 2: Noah (see Genesis 6-9). The story of the flood is a sobering and horrific picture of God's righteous wrath toward human sin. Before God, all of mankind will one day give an account. In the account of the flood, God brought sudden, universal and irreversible judgment on the world. This is a foreshadowing of the universal judgment that will come at the end of the age.
3. Example 3: Sodom and Gomorrah (see Genesis 19). These two cities epitomized sensuality, wickedness, depravity and perversion. Because of their rampant and unrepentant lawlessness, God rained down fire and destroyed both. The point of this example is this: when we reject God and his law and pursue our own wicked desires, we will face God's judgment. The smoking, charred ruins of Sodom are a God-given warning to all of us. They are "an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly" (vs. 6). God's judgment is real. God does not put up with those who flaunt his laws. He made us. He owns us. He has the right to tell us how to live and how we ought to conduct our lives.

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Implications for Us (verses 9-10)

1. The stories of Noah and Lot are not just stories of judgment. They're also stories of rescue and grace. God preserved Noah and his family. He kept them safe from the floodwaters. The same is true of Lot. Though he was tormented and greatly tested by the lawless deeds of his culture, God plucked him from the city doomed to destruction. The point of these stories is that God can both rescue the godly and keep the unrighteous under punishment for the Day of Judgment. The implication for us is that we don't have to be hopeless, vengeful or bitter. God will take care of the wicked and he knows how to rescue his people.
2. God has sent more than an ark or an angel to rescue us. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has come into the world on the ultimate rescue mission. He came to save the unrighteous and unworthy. He came to redeem the outcasts. He offers new life and forgiveness to the sexually immoral. Jesus died on the cross and took a wrath greater than Sodom faced, a judgment greater than the flood that consumed the world. Jesus took God's judgment so that all who trust in him can be forgiven.
3. So when we look around at a culture that is increasingly being given over to sin, we don't have to throw up our hands in despair. We should continue proclaiming the gospel. We should continue standing up for righteousness. God can rescue us and he will reward us for our faithfulness.

Fellowship Starters

1. Take time as a Care Group to read 2 Peter 2:1-10. (It may be helpful to read 2 Peter 1:1-2:10 to put everything in context.)
2. When you consider the truth about God's judgment, what comes to mind? How do your thoughts compare with the teaching in 2 Peter and other parts of Scripture?
3. What point about judgment and grace was Peter making in referencing three Old Testament examples of judgment (2 Peter 2:4-8)?
4. How should the truth of God's coming judgment motivate you to righteous living?
5. For the Christian, judgment is not your eternal destiny. How has God rescued you and taken the judgment you justly deserved?