

## Joshua & Peter: The Sufficiency of God

### Lesson 18: The Insufficiency of Sinful Man

**Key Verse:** 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 Peter 2.1

In this digital age, the term “catfishing” means the act of deceiving another person online by being dishonest about who you are. Usually found in pursuit of romantic relationships or for financial gain, these setups are elaborate and lead the victim into destruction and ruin. Likewise, “false prophets” and “false teachers” are dishonest about themselves and their motives, leading their victims away from godly living and into **total depravity**. Peter reinforces the truth that your knowledge of your **Lord**, your **Master**, will keep you in service to Him, “enslaved” to Jesus rather than a “slave to corruption” (V 19). *Master, Lord, Adonai, I offer myself to you completely. I am Your servant under Your sovereign reign. As I am warned of false teachers, please reveal where I am being led astray. I beg that you reveal any rebellion against You in my heart. Thank You for allowing me to escape the defilements of this world through the knowledge of my Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**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<sup>1</sup>, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.”

<sup>1</sup> Dogs were not household pets in this time period. Instead, they were considered “the lowest form of wildlife” and were “despised scavengers” Sproul, p.272

### **Diamonds:**

Remember, Peter is not writing to a pagan audience. Rather, his letter is being read aloud to the Church.

1. Read 2 Peter 2.1-22 in several different translations. In your own words, what are the “red flags”, or signs that should cause you to suspect a “false teacher”?

Peter provides three illustrations of God’s righteous judgment of the ungodly/sin and of His preserving power over his people: fallen angels; Noah and the floods; and Lot at Sodom and Gomorrah.

2. Choose **one** of the stories to read. Summarize the story for your group, focusing on how the story illustrates Peter’s point of God’s judgment of sin and His preserving power. Freely include any details of the story that intrigued you and taught you more about who God is, or what God taught you about God!
  - a. Fallen angels [please be mindful there is much prophecy here and must be prayerfully and cautiously interpreted, except for what Jesus said in Luke]: Isaiah 14.12-15; Ezekiel 28; Luke 10.18
  - b. Noah and the floods: Genesis 6-8
  - c. Lot at Sodom and Gomorrah: Genesis 18.16-19.29

Peter illustrates the reality and rebellion of false prophets through the story of Balaam (Numbers 22-24, Numbers 31.1-24, Revelation 2.14). Balaam was a pagan prophet motivated by greed and the presence of powerful people. Additionally, Balaam was radically rebellious against God’s law, commands, and authority (Revelation 2.14 + Numbers 31.15-16). Despite God’s clear command to “execute the LORD’s vengeance” by killing everyone in the battle against Midian, God’s people followed “Balaam’s advice” and “let the women live” (Numbers 31.3,16). God sent a plague upon His people as a result of the people acting “treacherously against the LORD” (Numbers 31.16).

As such, Balaam is a perfect illustration of Peter’s concerns of how easily God’s people can be led by a false prophet into rebelling against God. Likewise, we too can be led into rebellion against God through false teachers (2 Peter 2.1).

3. Read the entertaining story of Balaam (see passages in paragraph above). Why do you think God’s people were so easily and willingly led astray and into rebellion against God’s command?
4. What does this teach you about how easily you are led to rebel against God’s commands? Read Paul’s remarkable thoughts with this struggle from Romans 7.14-25, using it to guide your answer.

5. Who knows how to “rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment” (V 9)?
- a. Since that is true, what role do you have to play when your fellow sisters and brothers in Christ are under trial? Likewise, what about your role when you witness the unrighteous experiencing punishment for their unrighteous actions?

**Deity: Lord/Master/Adonai**<sup>2</sup>~A Hebrew name for God, meaning basically “Lord”. This name/title is simply a term of respect, similar to the English word “sir”. It is commonly found in scripture to address a person who is superior in some sense (i.e., general recognition of superiority, master, superintendent, owner, husband, king, prince, captain, governor, prophet).

When used of the true God, Adonai indicates that He possesses supreme sovereignty and ultimate authority over all things external to Himself (Psalm 8.1; Acts 7.59; Matthew 7.28-29).

As “Master” or “Lord”, God, our Adonai, calls all God’s people to acknowledge themselves as His servants, claiming His right to reign as Lord of our lives (2 Samuel 7.18-20; Daniel 7.13-14; Habakkuk 3.19; Romans 5.1; Hebrews 13.20).

Judas provides a notable example of someone who was face-to-face with God through Jesus, exposed to and experienced His divine power and teachings, yet never called Him his personal Lord, Master, nor Adonai. Peter wouldn’t have included Judas in this passage because he was not a false prophet nor false teacher. However, he is someone whose unwillingness to submit to the Lordship of Christ cost him his life (Matthew 27.1-10; Luke 22.3-6).

6. Verses 20-22 state that it would have been better for the false teachers (heretics) to never have known the truth of God and Jesus as Messiah than to know and yet decide to rebel against God. They are as disgusting and repelling as vomit-eating dogs and mud-filth wallowing pigs. What must be our response when we discover a false teacher? How can you help a fellow sister avoid being led astray by a false teacher?

**Doctrine: Total Depravity**<sup>3</sup>~ This doctrinal term describes “the un-meritoriousness of man before God because of the corruption of original sin.”

...total depravity means that the corruption has extended to all aspects of man’s nature (Jeremiah 17.9; Matthew 7.11; Ephesians 4.18), to his entire being (Genesis 6.5; Mark 7.20-23); and total depravity means that

<sup>2</sup> J. MacArthur and R. Mayhue, “Biblical Doctrine”, pg.159; Reformed Bible Studies and Devotionals at Ligonier.org

<sup>3</sup> Evangelical Dictionary of Theology

because of that corruption there is nothing man can do to merit saving favor with God. (Romans 1.28; 2.9-18; Ephesians 2.3)

This passage (2 Peter 2.1-11) provides a pretty exhaustive explanation of the kinds of behavior, attitudes, and actions that describe total depravity! That said, just because good people do not engage in these extremes does not preclude them from being under the reality of their total depravity.

7. Consider the good people God has placed in your life who you suspect are still subject to their depravity. How is God leading you to address their need for a Savior, despite their good living? How can your sisters in Christ pray for you and for them?

### **Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer:**

### **Lecture Outline:**

**Aim:** A deeper knowledge of Jesus Christ guards against destructive false teaching.

- I. False Faith (2 Peter 2.1-10a) **T1:** False teaching is recognized and rebuffed by a deep knowledge of Christ revealed in the absolute truth of His Word.
  - a. How quickly do you recognize false teaching?
  - b. How do you respond to the lies false teachers spew?
- II. False Freedom (2 Peter 10b-22) **T2:** False teaching never leads to true freedom because it is only found in Christ!
  - a. Which freedom are you pursuing...a false freedom or true freedom in Christ?
  - b. How might a deeper knowledge of Jesus Christ help you guard against being enslaved to sin and corruption?
  - c. Does your lifestyle proclaim you follow the sensual way of false teachers or the sacred way of the Lord Jesus Christ?