

“Going Out As Lambs”

2 Peter 2:1-3

God's people must rejoice in truth in spite of the falsehoods that are promoted

Be Beacons of Truth

Be Steadfast in Truth

Be Confident in God's Judgment

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2 Peter 2:1, NKJV

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.

In all times there has been, are, and will continue to be false teachers that will challenge the truth wherever it is declared, lived out, and encouraged. Today in the twenty-first century is no different than in Apostle Peter's day during the first century of the Church. False teachers abounded then as they do now.

The main effect false teachers have on people is generally one of confusion. They are often not concerned what people believe, only that they are able to personally profit by their beliefs. Apostle Paul was divinely inspired to warn Timothy that, “...*the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers...*” (2 Timothy 4:3, NKJV).

There will never be a shortage of people speaking things that are untrue or people willing to accept anything they are told as long as it is what they want to hear. The tendency is to complain and be forlorn about the presence of these false teachers. This kind of behavior only draws attention to the false teachers rather than convincing people that it is the truth they are in need of in their life. Apostle Peter is neither denying the presence of false teachers or paying too much attention to them. He is merely acknowledging the fact that their false teaching will “...*bring on themselves swift destruction*”.

The messages of these false teachers will vary in subject matter and method, but the one thing that holds true among them all is their denial of Christ as having paid the debt of sin owed to God to satisfy His justice and righteousness. It is important to notice that these false teachers are going about their misleading messages. They are not publicly stating what they truly believe but “...*secretly bring in destructive heresies...*” that include denial of Christ as Lord and not limited to just that specific aspect of their message.

Heresy can be anything that is against the accepted doctrine of a person or group. In the Muslim world Christianity is a heresy to the follower of Islam, as Islam is a heresy to the follower of Christ. Proclaiming something that is heretical is saying nothing specific. Therefore, God's people must be able to articulate eternal truth in a way which is precise, clear, and confident even when encountering strong opposition to the truth. Many who hear this are most likely thinking this directive is much easier said than done.

There are few who would consider themselves to be someone who can with grace and confidence share the Gospel with objectors as Ravi Zacharias (<https://www.rzim.org>). Some are called to proclaim the Gospel in public ways defending faith in Christ against hostile enemies. The majority of God's people are gifted with the message of salvation they have received by the Holy Spirit living within them from the time of their conversion.

The lack of knowledge and understanding is not an issue for those who share the Gospel daily even when they are spiritually young. This is true since they share the Gospel as they share what convinced them that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came into the world to die for their sins and rose again to give them new life in Him as they trust in His name for the forgiveness of sins. As God's people mature in their faith in Christ they are able to speak more fully of what Christ has done for them using Scripture to support their conclusions. Those who either choose to not share what Christ has done and allow Him to bring great change in their lives really need to consider if what they say they believe about God is true. Truth changes lives. Truth changes actions. Truth changes lifestyles. Truth is the guarantee that things cannot remain as they once were or cease to bring change in attitude, speech, and perspective throughout a person's lifetime.

The moment a person accepts the truth about who Christ is and believes on His name for the salvation of their souls changes start taking place. Some of the change is noticeable to those who are around the person and some changes only the person themselves are aware of a difference. Either way, it is something that never stops once it begins for the person who authentically gives their life to the service of Christ.

One of the greatest and most important transformations a person goes through after coming to believe Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God who is God in the flesh is their desire for truth. They need to hear it, know it, and proclaim it. Nothing else satisfies them like the truth. Lies at one time were enough to appease them, but now that the Holy Spirit is part of their lives they long to taste it again and again. It is not falsehoods they are interested in identifying, but truth they are longing to receive and live out.

Apostle Peter speaks of the false teachers only to share their condemnation. There is no reason to refute them point by point. It is only necessary to allow the truth of God's Word to speak for itself. God's people are actually beacons of truth. The Spirit works through the children of God by giving them guiding points of faith, hope, and love in a world spiritually covered with the thick fog of lies which produce nothing but confusion and chaos. Therefore, it is the truth God's people need to be consumed by and obsessed with.

The majority of believers have no need in being experts on the occult, versed in the teachings of the false religions of the world, and knowledgeable of those who are misleading many by their desire to itch the itchy ears of people who long only to listen to what will make them momentarily happy. It is the Bible that God's people need to know better than anything else. Being a beacon of truth is impossible without knowing what the truth is or at least where to find it when questions arise in their hearts and minds or are posed by others who challenge their standing on specific issues.

Basic knowledge of the Bible is the first step in allowing the Holy Spirit to shine the light of Christ in this dark world. This knowledge being referred to as basic is: (1) know by heart the books of the Bible in the order they are found, (2) have a general

understanding of the message of each book, (3) know how Christ is found in each book, and (4) know key passages that identify what a person needs to understand about salvation from God through faith in Christ Jesus. A few of these verses are: Joshua 24:15; Luke 13:3; John 3:16-18, 14:6; Romans 3:23, 6:4, 23, 10:9; Acts 16:31; 2 Corinthians 6:2; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; James 2:10; 1 John 1:8-9. It is only when this is known in the life of God's people that they will shine the light of Christ in the world faithfully and consistently while being bombarded by persecution and challenges to the truth.

Be Steadfast in Truth

2 Peter 2:2, NKJV

And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

The distortion of the truth is often more dangerous than complete lies. Those who wage war against God are most effective when they take the truth and twist it ever so slightly to change the meaning without removing all statements of truth. A perfect example of this would be an offense of Scripture that is commonly done with John 1:1.

John 1:1 reads, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*" (NKJV). We know that the Word is referring to Christ who was with God in the beginning and was God, eternal and not created. The New World Translation published by the Jehovah's Witness has John 1:1 reading, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god" which twists the truth by only adding a simple letter "a" before the last word of the verse.

This robs Jesus of His deity, removes Him as a member of the Trinity, and removes His ability to be the propitiation for mankind's sin. If Jesus was not God in the flesh, He could not live a perfect life. If Jesus did not live a perfect life, His death would have been for Himself rather than others. One simple letter has voided the truth by twisting it beyond recognition. This is what Peter is speaking of at "*...their destructive ways...*" in this verse.

This is blasphemy against the truth of God's Word. Blasphemy is a word that is not used much if at all in the twenty-first century. Literally translated from the Greek it means, "will be evil spoken of". This is something that is being seen happening in the present age of the Church with many modern issues. There are those who desire to make Christianity socially acceptable and inclusive in order to be welcoming and hospitable to everyone in the society no matter what they want to believe.

Being beacons of truth means that we are first and foremost steadfast in the truth. There can be no doubt about the character of God, no question about His righteousness, holiness, justice, love, or wrath. Suggesting that God is in any way unjust in His actions is a denial to the Word of God and the character of God. The whole gender confusion idea in the developed countries of the world is proclaiming that God makes mistakes in assigning genders to people that do not match the individuals' personality. It is not God that is mistaken, but the sinfulness and rebellion of mankind that is being revealed.

God does what He does because it is right no matter what those who are created think or feel about it. This understanding is not something that is difficult to see in Scripture at all. Some verses expressing this say, "*For by Him all things were created*

that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:16, NKJV). *“The Lord has made all for Himself, Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom”* (Proverbs 16:4, NKJV). *“There are many plans in a man’s heart, Nevertheless the Lord’s counsel—that will stand”* (Proverbs 19:21, NKJV). *“The counsel of the Lord stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations”*(Psalm 33:11, NKJV). *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose”* (Romans 8:28, NKJV).

What needs to be understood is the Word of God rather than the culture surrounding the body of Christ. Culture is expressing the same sinfulness as it has always done. As Solomon was inspired to put it, *“That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun”* (Ecclesiastes 1:9, NKJV). There may have been changes in culture, technology, and ways in which people do things but the basic lusts of the flesh and self-centeredness of mankind has not and never will change unless a person surrenders themselves over to the authority of God over their life.

It is crucial that God’s people know the truth, are convinced of the truth, and are passionate about the truth. There is no other way in which a person can stay grounded in the truth against the subtle and lethal lies and twisting of the truth that is so prevalent in the world. It is not worse than it has ever been today. Each generation of God’s people have had to deal with the deception of false teachers as Peter made clear in the first verse of this chapter. What makes it seem worse is the lack of commitment to learning and knowing the truth in the life of the congregation. Being committed to the truth will equip the people of God to fight with the weapons of God as Apostle Paul referred to them, *“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”* (2 Corinthians 10:4-5, NKJV)

The power and effectiveness of the truth is without question. Lies are revealed in the light of truth. Ideologies and religious teachings that are contradictory to the Word of God are crushed under the weight of truth when presented. This is why it is vital for everyone who claims to be a follower of Christ to be involved in a Bible study with other believers. This does not mean that personal time with the Word of God is unnecessary or eliminated. Both private study and gathering with others to study the Word of God is critical to the growth and stamina of the body of Christ.

Many reasons are given for the lack of personal study of God’s Word and withdrawing from joining with others to study Scripture together. There are many things that get in the way. Time restraints, dealing with distractions of small children, and work schedules are all certainly valid reasons for lack of participation. Yet, the cost of not knowing the truth and the deadliness of the lies the enemy is speaking are all reasons to make the time. Are we to allow the enemy to dictate how much time we give to God? It is time for the body of Christ to claim the victory of Christ over the time God has given us and make whatever changes that are needed and allow God to be Master over the time He has given to His people.

Start a Bible study with another couple or family in your home. Singles, gather together with other believers at a coffee shop or restaurant and discuss passages of

Scripture together. Make blocks of time in your day personally and in your week as a family that are set so that everything else works around that schedule rather than giving God the leftover time of the day and week.

There are many helps to get you started with studying the Bible privately and with others. There are things you can look for in the passages you read and discuss with others or journal about for yourself: Sins to Confess, Promises to Claim, Actions to Avoid, Commands to Obey, and Examples to Follow (S.P.A.C.E). There are questions that you can ask once you finish reading a passage of Scripture to help you think about, understand, and apply what you just read: (1) What is God instructing me to do? (2) What can I thank God for after reading this passage? (3) What do I need to confess and repent of after reading this passage of Scripture? (4) How can I practically apply this to my life?

These are just two of the many ways to simply start discovering the benefits of knowing the truth and standing firm in the truth. The world needs to know the truth since God is going to be bringing judgment upon those who are living in rebellion to their Creator.

Be Confident in God's Judgment

2 Peter 2:3, NKJV

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.

It is impossible to know truth apart from God. Christ was truth in the flesh as Jesus made clear when He said, "...I am the way, the truth, and the life..." (John 14:6, NKJV). All that is contrary to the Word of God is therefore not true. All that is in the Word of God, regardless of people's acceptance of it or ability to understand it. This means everything that God says is without error or flaw. There is no lie God has ever said since it is impossible for Him to lie, and has never broken a promise (Numbers 23:19).

There are many who ignore large portions of Scripture because it proclaims judgment, reveals God's wrath, or causes people to be uncomfortable with what is said in the Bible. Apostle Peter is confirming that God is actively and will in the future bring judgment upon those who are exploiting the people of God with their deceptive words in an attempt to lead them away from the truth. The greater danger for many in the body of Christ is being so distracted by the twisting of truth and focusing on challenges to the truth they forget God is the One who will judge them rather than we as His people.

Peter is inspired to make it clear in what he is writing that the condemnation of those attacking and distracting the body of Christ is guaranteed. They will not escape the wrath of God, but suffer under it if they do not turn to the Lord and find forgiveness through faith in Christ Jesus. The most powerful way to combat the lies and enemies of God and the body of Christ is to know the truth and live in the truth so that God can be trusted to execute the truth in the proper time and measure.

The book of Esther is a perfect example of how God works behind the scenes and through His influence over creation. Take some time to read the book of Esther, especially if you have never read it before. God used a young Jewish girl to save the Jews from annihilation in the province of Persia. This orphan girl raised by her relative Mordecai who was a scribe for the king became queen. A man in the court of the king named

Haman was upset at Mordecai for his unwillingness to show him respect he deserved from Mordecai. His plan was to hang Mordecai but also wipe out all the Jews throughout the whole empire of Persia. That was Haman's plan.

God's plan brought the death of Haman and his family, great victory for His people, and many to come in Persia to turn from their idols and worship Him. *"The Jews had light and gladness, joy and honor. And in every province and city, wherever the king's command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday. Then many of the people of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them"* (Esther 8:16-17).

God is often doing more behind the scenes in the world than is demonstrated in miraculous signs and wonders in the world. The raising of the dead, fire falling from heaven, and people being swallowed up by the earth are rarely seen in the twenty-first century. This does not mean that God is absent from life or is no longer involved with what is going on throughout the course of an ordinary day. The opposite is true. God is involved and actively working in every person's life in some way that brings about His purposes.

What we are witnessing in the world and call chaos is nothing more than people desperately trying to avoid the authority of God over them, escape His wrath, and convince themselves of lies by shouting down and eliminating all they can of anything that is truth. They are getting away with nothing before God. Every idle word is being recorded by God (Matthew 12:36). It is the ministry of the body of Christ to proclaim reconciliation to the world (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). The Church is responsible for going into all the world and making disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them the truth (Matthew 28:19-20). These things are impossible if God's people do not know and accept the whole truth.

Hell is waiting for all who do not know Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord of their lives, having their names written in the Book of Life (Revelation 20:11-15). God does not make His people responsible for what people choose to do with the truth they have been given. God's people are responsible to proclaim the truth faithfully. Therefore, God's judgment and wrath cannot be forgotten, ignored, or explained away. The love, mercy, and grace of God must never be shared without telling of God's righteousness and holiness in comparison to mankind's sinfulness.

Speaking truth means that the whole truth is spoken, that which is pleasant and that which is harsh. One without the other is a lie. It is only when a person knows God personally and commits themselves to studying and proclaiming the truth will they be able to stand firm in the truth. Those who stand in truth will radiate with the brightness of the truth in this dark world and warn others of their destruction if they do not turn in complete surrender to God for the forgiveness of their sins.

It is time. No matter what your knowledge of Scripture is currently, there is always need to know more. All of God's people need to be theologians, that is people who study God's Word. As the end of 2018 approaches, make plans to place God the center of your schedule, the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice of your life, and study of the Bible privately and with others as part of your normal routine.