

I. Introduction

- A. I was tempted to begin my message today with all kinds of warnings and disclaimers and explanations. I was tempted to frame my talk in the best possible light, and with that, to minimize the force and difficulty of the Scripture we are about to read.
- B. But I've decided not to do that. So buckle up.
- C. Please think with me on the topic:
 - 1. *Two Things to Remember God is Good At*
- D. We began working our way through this book the Bible several months ago, and today, by some coincidence, we have arrived here. Here is the first part.
 - 1. *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. (2 Peter 2:1-3)*
- E. When he wrote this, Peter was an old man. He knows his days are numbered. The time of apostles is fading. It has been about 30 years since Jesus ascended to heaven. False teachers have worked their way into the different churches. They are gaining ground.
- F. Peter goes on record. He wants to guard the flock from the wolves. He doesn't hold back. Peter pulls out his heavy artillery and lets the false teachers have it.
- G. Because truth matters. And because truth doesn't change with the times.
- H. But the false teachers and the false prophets always pull out their tools to dismantle the truth and to replace it with a sparkly, shiny, palace of deception that looks so seductively inviting.

II. Palm Sunday

- A. Today is Palm Sunday. This is the name for the Sunday one week before Easter Sunday. On this day, Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem. He did this in a remarkably weird kind of way.
- B. This event is called the Triumphal Entry.
 - 1. *So they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their garments over it for him to ride on. Then the crowds spread out their coats on the road ahead of Jesus. As they reached the place where the road started down from the Mount of Olives, all of his followers began to shout and sing as they walked along, praising God for all the wonderful miracles they had seen. "[Hosanna!] Bless the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in highest heaven!" But some of the Pharisees among the crowd said, "Teacher, rebuke your followers for saying things like that!" He replied, "If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!" (Luke 19:35-40, NLT).*
 - 2. The false teachers were even there at this Triumphal Entry. "Teacher, rebuke your followers for saying things like that!"
 - 3. But it gets worse.
 - 4. Because five days later, on the day Jesus died, this same crowd of people that is here shouting Hosanna... in five days they will be shouting Crucify Him!
 - 5. How did this happen?
 - a) They were sucked into the vortex of a false teachings.
 - (1) The false teaching that the Messiah would come has a conquering hero but never a dying Savior.
 - (2) The false teaching that there could be redemption with military might apart from the shedding of blood.
 - (3) The false teaching that truth belonged to the professionals priests rather than to all the people of God.
 - 6. Five days for the lies to take hold. Five days for the false teachers to have their way.
 - a) *Never underestimate the seductive power of false teaching in your own life.*
- C. It was around even Jesus's day.
- D. And now, 30 years later, here is wise old Peter. And he writes in bold letters a warning to every generation. *There will be false teachers among you!*

III. Peter

- A. To strengthen his warning, Peter describes the things they will do.
 - 1. *who will secretly bring in destructive heresies...*
 - a) a heresy is false teaching, and they are destructive because they contradict the Word of God...
 - 2. *even denying the Lord who bought them...*
 - a) They deny the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, the preexistence of Christ. They deny his miracles, his cross, and his resurrection. They deny redemption through his blood. They deny him as the exclusive way to God and heaven through conscious faith alone in Christ alone. They deny the absolute authority of his Holy Word.
 - b) And the horrible irony is they deny the One Person who loved them enough to die for them. They deny the Lord who bought them.
 - 3. *and bring on themselves swift destruction.*
 - a) You cannot twist truth without damaging yourself.
 - (1) *When you violate God's Word, you violate yourself.*
 - (2) What do we see in our culture today? Masses of people doing what they want, impulse driven and vengeance motivated.
 - (3) What is the consequence? Despair. Depression. Chaos.
 - (4) They bring it on themselves.
 - 4. *And many will follow their destructive ways,*

- a) False teachers draws massive followings.
- b) The heart is deceitful above all things says the prophet Jeremiah. Deceitful truth claims find a warm welcome in deceitful hearts.
- 5. *because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed [mocked and condemned]*
 - a) Do you want to be mocked and condemned? Stand up and declare that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one comes to the Father but by him.
 - (1) So narrow, they say. So bigoted.
 - b) Stand up and say that unless a person is born again they cannot see the kingdom of heaven.
 - c) Stand up and recite any two of the Ten Commandments and let me know how that works for you.
 - (1) The way of truth is blasphemed, mocked and condemned, and a seduced society sides with Satan's insurgency against the Savior.
 - (2) Well done, false prophets.
- 6. *By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words,*
 - a) By covetousness... this word means a frantic search for happiness. The false prophet dangles bait in front of you. They tease you with it, tantalize you with it, torture you with it. If only you give us this, you can be happy, you can have a supernatural experience, or, as the serpent said, You can be as gods.
 - b) Every cult does this. They induce a frantic search for happiness, but all they're doing is exploiting people—buying and selling souls— with deceptive words.
- 7. *for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.*
 - a) This is Peter's way of saying that there is a righteous and fierce Judge in heaven, omnipotent and terrible all at once, and that nobody gets away with evil in the end. Judgment day is coming and devastation is on its way.
 - (1) Even if it looks like good people suffer and bad people get away with it.
 - (2) Even if false prophets fly their private jets to suck more money from gullible Christians.
 - (a) Don't worry. God is rolling up a lightning bolt more fierce than any human mind wants to contemplate.
- 8. Welcome to church.
 - a) We are reading a letter that is written to us. This is Peter's warning that false prophets will come and seek to destroy the church and seek to destroy your faith.
 - b) But this is also God's promise the only thing that gets destroyed is them and the people who take their bait.
 - c) Peter is getting ahead of this.
 - d) But he's still concerned.
 - e) So he pulls out the big guns.
 - (1) Three examples of God's blistering damnation raining down on evil.
 - (2) Plus two examples of hope in the midst of all that.
- B. *For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell [Tartaros] and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment...* (2 Peter 2:4)
 - 1. First example of God's blistering damnation... angels.
 - a) Sin did not begin in the human race. Sin began in the angelic race.
 - b) Powerful, beautiful, impressive, shimmering, glorious angelic beings... but none of that stopped God when they sinned. God blasted them to hell, delivered them into chains of darkness, and is holding them in custody until the final judgment.
 - c) I can't leave this verse without asking who these fallen angels are.
 - d) There is a debate.
 - e) I land on the side that says these are angels who sinned in the days of Noah. Genesis 6 calls them Sons of God (Gen 6:2,4; clearly angelic beings in Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7).
 - f) I won't go into all that happened, but there are three categories of fallen angels:
 - (1) Lucifer who became Satan, the devil.
 - (2) The fallen angels who rebelled again God with Lucifer. These are now called demons.
 - (a) Both Lucifer and the demons are roaming the earth today. They are not yet in chains. They are active in spiritual warfare.
 - (3) The third kind of fallen angels are these "angels who sinned" in a special way (Gen 6, Jude 6). They are already in their corner of hell called Tartarus.
 - g) The point is this: to rebel against God is to bring down damnation on your head, even if you are an angel. Power and beauty can't save you in that day.
 - h) Peter is just getting warmed up.
 - 2. *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;* (2 Peter 2:5)
 - a) In his holy wrath, God did not spare the fallen angels, and now God did not spare the ancient world. Peter's second example.
 - b) Of that ancient world, the Bible declares:
 - (1) *Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* (Genesis 6:5)

- c) This is the same chapter of the Bible that talks of the Sons of God, the fallen angels, polluting the race of humankind, in a desperate ploy to corrupt the line of the Messiah.
 - d) The Flood came because society was saturated with evil. Soaked through and through, dripping wet. The people couldn't get any more depraved than they were.
 - e) And God did not spare them.
 - f) Before God unleashed his wrath, he announced his grace. Noah was a preacher of righteousness. And for all the decades it took him to build his Ark, Noah preached. He warned of coming judgment, just as I am doing today. And he said God has prepared an escape, get on board the ark.
 - g) And for 120 years, the false prophets mocked him, and the crowds jeered him.
 - h) Until time was up. Noah and his family got on board the ark. Eight people. God sent the animals two by two. Then God shut the door, the Bible says, and it was too late.
 - i) Not only does God know how to store up his wrath, and deliver it when the time is right, God knows something else.
 - j) He knows how to reach in to a basket of scorpions, and pull out the gem hiding deep inside. The whole world was saturated with evil, but that didn't stop God from delivering Noah. That's another thing God is good at.
 - k) Now Peter digs deeper.
3. *...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; (2 Peter 2:6)*
- a) The moral laws of God are not optional.
 - b) When God says, "Thou shalt not..." it isn't optional. It isn't a suggestion. It is a commandment from heaven. It is a reality. You can run, but you can't hide from the laws of reality.
 - (1) God says he made humans male and female (Gen 1:27, 5:2; Matt 19:4).
 - (2) God says a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife, and they two shall become one flesh. Jesus said the same thing centuries later (Gen 2:24, Matt 19:5).
 - (3) God says any deviation from that is adultery.
 - (4) And God says you shall not commit adultery.
 - c) Sodom and Gomorrah were city-states in the ancient world. They were big cities. They were advanced cities for their day.
 - d) But they were morally out of control. The people had long since rebelled against God. This played out in every area of life, especially sexually.
 - (1) When two angels disguised as men came to visit the town, the men of Sodom and Gomorrah demanded that they be brought out and turned over as sexual objects, men with men. In fact, mob refused women who were offered to them.
 - (2) It was a man named Lot, a nephew of Abraham, who interceded for the angels.
 - (3) The mob violently took Lot to assault him, but the angels intervened. They struck the mob with blindness. But that was just the beginning.
 - (a) *Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. (Genesis 19:24)*
 - e) Peter says God turned these cities into ashes.
 - (1) *When it comes to the judgment of God, no nation is too big to fail.*
 - f) These are the same things that are happening in our society.
 - g) It is sometimes said that people who reject alternative sexual expressions are haters.
 - h) I think that the explanation is the other way around. I think that the reason that this growing menu of sexual expressions are so demanding of acceptance in our society, the simple reason is that they cannot accept themselves. They're working overtime not to hate parts of themselves.
 - i) *"There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked."* And Paul says, the wrath of God is already doing a slow burn in them (Isa 57:21, Romans 1:18, ff).
4. *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)-- (2 Peter 2:7, 8)*
- a) Here comes that complicated man Lot. Righteous in his position before God, but so up and down in his practical life before the world. He set his life in a corrupt city, and his soul was oppressed over it, and tormented, because a believer living beneath their dignity is a believer still, but can never be really happy.
 - b) And still the Lord delivered him.
 - c) So what does all this mean?
 - d) If God did not spare the angels that sinned, and if God did not spare the ungodly civilizations of the Flood, and if God did not spare the deviancy of Sodom and Gomorrah, but if God did deliver Noah and Lot from these darkened dying worlds...
 - e) Then... always remember that God is good at two things...
5. *then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of [trials] and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the Day of Judgment, (2 Peter 2:9)*
- a) *Your Father in heaven has both the wisdom and the power to deliver the godly out of trials.*
 - (1) Before you say, well I'm out. I'm a Christian, but I'm not that godly, consider the example of Lot.
 - (2) Peter mentioned Lot for a reason. He was saved, but he was a mess. He was a mass of contradictions. He stayed in a horrible place and made some horrible choices.

- (3) If God has the wisdom and power to deliver Lot, then he has the wisdom and power to deliver me... and you too.
- (4) What is your trial today? What is your tribulation? What breaks your heart and makes you wring your hand and drives your joy away?
- (5) God knows. God knows how to deliver you. God has the power to deliver. And he will, in his own way, and in his own time, and his deliverance probably won't look like you thought it would.
 - (a) The Lord hasn't brought you this far to let you down now.
- b) Remind yourself and your children and your children's children. *The Lord knows how to deliver the godly from their troubles.*
6. But the second thing is equally important.
 - a) *He knows how to reserve the unjust under punishment for the Day of Judgment.*
7. What do you want me to do with this? Do you want me to soften it? Do you want me to skip it?
8. This is what makes preaching through books of the Bible so absolutely essential.. because the preacher can't skip the hard stuff. When preachers pick their own topics, we skip the hard stuff.
9. This hellfire and brimstone is the Word of God because this is the heart of God.
10. No disclaimers. No reframing it. No explaining it away. God does not need to justify his ways to us. God does not need to adapt to us. We need to adapt to him.
11. And the greatest need in any person's life is to be adjusted to the justice of God through this amazing gift called salvation.

IV. The Justice of God

- A. People say they want what's fair.
- B. Do you know what fair is?
 1. Condemnation from the justice of God for any deviation from perfect holiness ever. That's what's fair. That's what's just. That's justice.
- C. The Bible speaks of hell. The Bible speaks of the Lake of Fire. The wrath and fury of God. Of Judgment Day. These things are part of revealed revelation.
- D. God's justice is the ultimate reason for hell. If God were not just, there would be no hell. Evil would create no imbalance in the universe that needed divine correction. Everyone from axe-murderers to genocidal Hitlers to child abusers would get off totally free. Evil would win in the end.
- E. If justice loses, evil wins.
- F. Consider the alternative to hell:
 1. Do you really want to live in a universe where evil goes unpunished? Imagine a universe where the Supreme Being accepts evil or tolerates it. Imagine a universe where God is indifferent to evil, cruelty, or abuse. Do you really want that kind of God or that kind of universe?
- G. We instinctively know love can't win if holiness loses.
- H. *But God's love is holy, and God's holiness is loving and the two cannot be separated. God will not make war in his own character to make peace with even one sinner.*
- I. If you were constructing a universe, and really thinking about it, you would construct a universe in which God was holy, and the moral evil-doers of the cosmos got punished. Any other universe would be intolerable. That is exactly why the Bible makes so much sense. It echoes our heart's deepest instincts.
- J. Hell means that evil has a far-away parking place. Hell means that God is fair forever.
- K. The bad guys get away with nothing. The force that hurt you, the person who exploited you, and the powers that consumed you, get their due. Hell proves that God takes it personally when people hurt people (sin); he doesn't just yawn at sin.
 1. If you're evil's victim (and you are), you might take comfort in that.
 2. If you're evil's perpetrator (and you are), you might find terror in that.
 Welcome to the biblical worldview.
- L. Enter Jesus who solved both sides of evil's equation. He took the hit for evil's perpetrators that he might liberate evil's victims. He endured, in three dark hours on the Cross, the infinity of God's wrath against evil. He absorbed the hell we deserved, legitimizing the heaven we don't deserve. He entered the cage match against evil, and won by a knockout. He made it legit for a sinless God to welcome sinful people into his company—even people who shouted Hosanna one day and Crucify him the next.
- M. This is the Cross of Christ. This is the value of his shed blood. This is Calvary's love.
- N. Thank God for the shed blood of Jesus, Amen?
- O. So the Bible can promise: "*So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus*" (Romans 8:1, NLT). The question God wants echoed over every rooftop is do you belong to Christ Jesus?
- P. So, this is me, echoing God's question to you: do you belong to Christ Jesus?
- Q. And one last thing...
- R. *If you worry over the doctrine of hell, or if you're bothered by it, then donate your life to proclaiming the gospel.*
- S. Invite people into His family. Love people. Care for people. Serve people. Share your life with people. Above all, let the gospel/ good news of Jesus ooze out of your life through words and deeds.
- T. Your corner of the world desperately needs to hear about Jesus Christ; that's why God put you there.
- U. The answer to the difficulties of hell is helping people find and follow God. Thank you for joining Pathway church and all of us in this mission.