

2 Peter 2:1-3
Hope in the fight

Secretly Introducing Destruction!



The next few sermons from 2 Peter are going to seem negative! They are not! Peter uses the entire next chapter dealing with the pressing issue of false teachers! Would you snidely accuse negative?! No – He was simply going where the Holy Spirit see, the issues brought up in chapter 2 are issues that pressing issues to the church, because Satan does never will until at the end of all things on this creation – an new heaven and a new picture for good, and confined in again! But for now, he does



earth – Hell for all not tire of his part of that is that he inspires **people** to become his accomplices! I have watched good people go from passionately declared and busily dedicated Christ-followers - valuable contributors in the church - to being trouble-makers with rotten attitudes and recruiters for an opposition group in the church. They are literally able to bring momentum in a particular church to a halt! Even those that do not join their little alliance of the disagreeable and discontent, are shocked and saddened to the point that their spiritual energy levels are greatly diminished. Morale is **a thing** in any organization. *A sports team that rarely win a game is a beaten before they begin the game. They do not play as hard! Their competitive edge does not show up when it should! They see themselves as losers, so when it is crunch time, even if they are ahead, they usually find a way to lose! *My daughter-in-law, Sonja, finally had achieved her goal! It had taken her about 4 or 5 years to work her way up through the ranks at a major banking conglomerate, and then she was given the equivalent of a bank presidency. At 26, she had achieved a goal that should have taken another 10 years! But the local branch that she was assigned to preside over had been a problematic bank for some time. The previous president of that bank had been lax in his job and things were not going well there! That particular branch no longer functioned as a team and would not listen to authority. They liked their previous branch manager particularly because he didn't do his job - so they didn't have to do theirs! I have to say that Sonja is just about the most pleasant, upbeat person in the world! Yet, the workers at that fail branch resented her and found ways to sabotage their production – which of course made her look bad! She had been sent there to fix that bank, but the workers there had a true loser's mentality and they simple refused to be fixed! They had a chance to salvage the reputation of that bank as well as their own, but they conspired together to stand against Sonja and continue to be losers!

There are **multiple** scenarios where a team, a business, a school class, can be demoralized and become listless.

Churches can go down that same slippery slope! When one of us falls morally, and it becomes public knowledge, **everyone** is disheartened, and a disheartened church is not an energetic one! Speaking of energy - when only a few show up for an event, from a missionary presentation, to a movie night, and perhaps especially to a church "work day", those few that **do** attend and participate are discouraged! At the annual Spring Work Day, (actually it is only a half day), I've heard on a number of occasions, people complain and say "*How come we are the only ones at work day year after year?!*" On the other hand, do you know what encourages these same people greatly?! When a bunch of newer people, or people that have not shown up before, show up, roll up their sleeves and work alongside! That is huge for morale! Let me ask you this - when you consider whether you are going to attend/participate or not, do you ever think about the fact that your support lifts the morale of the church body, and your lack of support discourages the others?! You should consider it before you easily blow it off! **BTW – church work day this year is Saturday, May 22, 8-ish to 12-ish.** A list of tasks that need to be done around the buildings and grounds will be provided, and you can sign up for one or more of them, so you can work alone and complete the task any day of that week, or the next one, especially if that weekend is spoken for, or if the COVID virus is still of concern to you.

*Here is another "for instance". We used to have musician/evangelists come and perform here at Bethany in the past, and most of the time attendance was truly embarrassingly low. I used to ask people why they didn't attend. Their response staggered me. "*Because it wasn't my style of music.*" Well,.. if everyone thought like that – and most seem to – then we simply cannot have concerts here, because **everyone** prefers a different style of music! No one seems to consider coming simply to support the others – about coming for **their** sakes! Few considered how discouraging it is for the planners and attenders to host a concert and just a smattering of people show up. So we stopped! The musician/evangelists that **could be** encouraging us – where we could invite a friend who needs Jesus to hear an exciting and appealing rendition of the gospel in testimony and song,.. well, it just doesn't happen any longer! It beats up our morale when there is poor participation, and morale in a church is really an important thing! So we stopped doing that and tried other things that maybe people would support better.

demoralize
(dĭ-môr'ă-līz') VERB
TO DEPRIVE (A PERSON OR PERSONS) OF SPIRIT, COURAGE, DISCIPLINE, ETC.; DISHEARTEN; CORRUPT; BEWILDER; CONFUSE.

Churches really don't need false teachers, gossips, and troublemakers to self-destruct – to do ourselves in! We can easily do it to ourselves by being selfish and unsupportive of the church efforts and ministries! When enough of us are unsupportive, we effectively kill momentum, hurt optimism through feeding discouragement in others. You really have to ask yourselves – if everyone attended church, and gave tithes and offerings, and supported church events the way that I do, what kind of a church would this be?! Would we even have a church?! Would it be a church I would want to attend? Can you ask yourself those important questions? Then ask one more question. Ask yourself what kind of church you want. Then make it that church by your own behavior in support of it!



But Peter is actually addressing another source of discouragement in the body. False teachers and those who follow them! It seems that while apathy and selfishness is what we battle against in the churches today, that was not *their* problem. The churches struggled mainly against the people that went against the apostles teachings. The apostle Paul, for instance, had many detractors who would literally make it their life's mission to follow behind him on his journeys from city to city and seek to discredit him after he had moved on to the next church. Now, remember that these early Christians did not have the scriptures in their hands. Even the Old Testament writings only existed in huge, richly ornamented scrolls, hand copied in Hebrew, in the Jewish synagogues! What the early churches had of the O.T. was what some of them, usually Jews, had memorized. But the New Testament was scarce. It was just being written, and only existed in bits and pieces. A church might possess a copy of a single Gospel if they were lucky, or a copy of an apostolic letter or two. They were just as likely to also have fake letters and gospels in their possession, letters falsely credited to apostolic authorship that would mislead – adding to the gospel or taking away from it.

Some of the ideas that were floating around at that time were that Jesus was a great man, but He was not God. Or, Jesus was a spirit and therefore God, but He was no man! Men are evil therefore Jesus could not have actual human flesh! Another one was that Jesus rose from the dead, but only his spirit rose! His body was hidden away by His disciples. Or,.. Jesus never actually died, but survived His crucifixion, and the resurrection was a hoax but a God-blessed hoax! Others claimed that they knew that Jesus was an angel and not a man.

I mean, there are endless variations of how Jesus could/can be misrepresented and distorted! And without the New Testament being written, collected together, the false writings weeded out and branded as false, and the authentic writings stamped with the approval of church leaders and compiled into one book – without that – well, you can see how easy it would be for false teachers to mislead, and for people to follow a false shepherd! So it was happening and it was debilitating to the churches as people were siphoned off to go their own way, victimized by fraudulent leaders! And,.. they would try to take others with them before they left the church! They would say, *“We have the true gospel – the fuller version of the gospel! We have the truth! Come join us!”* Every cult that has ever been has echoed those words! Then those people would cop an attitude, because they were warned by their pastor to not teach such garbage, and their dark attitudes would bring discouragement and then lethargy into the church! It greatly affected church morale and when it did, churches became listless, lifeless, and inactive! That is why Peter is imploring the people not to follow aberrant teachings or those who taught them, but to adhere strictly to the apostles teachings! They were not to deviate to the right or left.



Nowadays, Christian pastors and teachers on TV, primarily, even on Christian radio deviate from the apostles teaching and delve into speculation and theological theory with impunity, because even though Christians today have Bibles coming out of their ears, these false men and women know that most people **do not read their Bible**, and so,.. they can get away with it! The Christians and Christian leaders that know better, protest. But who is listening? Certainly not the people who are already following the false preacher/teacher. They are ensnared and they no longer have ears to hear any warnings! Peter says that there is immanent destruction awaiting false teachers – **AND their followers!** God gives people a free will, but then He holds people responsible for how they use their free will! I mean this is serious stuff! Life-eternal in heaven or death-eternal in hell! Now, Peter is not saying in Vs. 3 that they will be killed by God immediately. He is reminding us that life is short. Then we die – all of us. Then we get what we have coming to us,.. or not! If we are truly in Christ, then we **don't** get what is coming to us because Jesus suffered, bled, and died in our place! But those who are outside of Christ – they have to pay for their own sins, and for their opposition to God, or even for their apathy toward Him! There is a day of reckoning coming for those outside of Christ, and it is racing toward us at breakneck speed! That is what Paul is saying here! No one gets away with it in the end! God knows all things and is keeping track, and you do not want to be found outside of Christ on that great and terrible day! False teachers really have lost faith – they no longer believe in Christ or the last judgment! They have become cynical. The Book of Revelations, the last book of the Bible, tells us that on that day a great book will be hauled out and opened, the Lamb's Book of Life, and everyone whose name is not found listed in it will pay for their sins by being permanently separated from God, cast into a place of eternal suffering with the Devil and his demons, **and forgotten about!** Serious stuff! Believe it! Or don't! But **it is** the apostle's teaching!

