

For Pete's Sake
True or False
August 20, 2017
2 Peter 2:1-3, 12-22

Life is full of choices isn't it. You can take a simple lunch of salad and apple pie and order it thousands of different ways. And there seem to be so many more choices than there were years ago. With globalization and technology advancements, that salad can have all kinds of different vegetables from far reaching areas of the planet that weren't even known to us a hundred years ago. From the moment we get up in the morning, we are faced with choices. Toothpaste – Colgate, Crest or Aquafresh? Coffee – let's not even go there. (Half caf, decaf, soy, skim, almond or coconut?) And that's all before you encounter people in your lives or head out to work. All of these choices can be overwhelming sometimes. It's exhausting to look at a menu and try to narrow it down or decide which activity to participate in. And as crazy as this sounds, the choices in our lives can become so common place that we forget we are even making a choice in the first place.

So, let's look at how our choices effect our faith. And consider how we can flip that statement around so that our faith affects our choices.

So, this morning we're in 2 Peter chapter 2. And I just want to point out that 2000 years ago they had fewer choices than we do but, no matter the time period one thing is constant...choices still impact our faith in huge ways. Peter is saying something we all need to hear...how not to make bad choices. This is Peter's caution to all of us on the choices that we make if we have ears to hear.

READ 2 Peter 2:1-3, 12-22.

This scripture is a warning for our lives and a reminder on what to choose and what not to choose. It starts out in v. 1, ***"But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach destructive heresies and even deny the Master who bought them."***

Now we don't say things like "false teachers" but there are people in our lives and influencers in our lives that very easily can act like a false teacher. It could be friends who help us make bad choices and get us to think it's okay because it's fun or cool or everyone is doing it. There are the bad choices we make because of our own wants or desires. The choice to play too many video games and desert our relationships. OR the choice to work too many hours and abandon our families. Or the choice to judge people by what they wear or by the size of their house. Or maybe the choice to try and create the 'perfect' family and deny everything else. These are the false teachers in our lives that help to drive us astray. Verse one says, ***"They will cleverly teach destructive heresies and even deny the Master who bought them."***

People have been burned at the stake for following false teachers and heresies. But in this context the word for heresy literally means to choose. These false teachers are teaching destructive options and making them seem like they're from God. The first characteristic of a false teacher is that they tell people what they want to hear, not the Truth. These those little choices in our lives that can lead to destruction. Those choices that gradually pull you away from your faith or pull you away from your relationship with Jesus Christ. Those incremental choices could be about listening to what others tell you and to participate in the gossip. Or to be judgmental about those around you...to turn up your nose. Choices about where you spend your time or your money. And these are just a few of the hundreds of choices we are faced with each day. So, let me ask you something...

WHAT CHOICE IN MY LIFE PULLS ME AWAY FROM JESUS? _____

"They will cleverly teach destructive heresies and even deny the Master who bought them." (2 Peter 2:1 NLT)

Verse 2 goes on to say ***Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality. And because of these teachers, the way of truth will be slandered.*** Now that last phrase, 'the way of truth will be slandered.' To slander is translated in other versions as to blaspheme. The Merriam Webster definition is to defile or defame 'the truth or the faith.' We often use blaspheming as speaking or acting against God. Peter is saying that our choices in life, the way we live can defame or defile God. Way back at the beginning of this sermon series we had an entire sermon on holiness because that is Peter's reason for writing these letters. He wanted the followers of Jesus to live holy lives – lives that are set apart and lives that are living as Jesus lived. Now here six weeks later and near the end of the series Peter is again reminding us of how to live in a way that makes God look good...and to not slander God's image by the choices we make. To follow false teachers or idols in our lives, or to make poor choices is to slander God. When we choose poorly we speak against our faith. It is, in a way, turning away from God and people around us notice when we do it. So, let me ask you another question that we all need to consider this morning:

DO PEOPLE SEE JESUS IN MY CHOICES?

Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality. And because of these teachers, the way of truth will be slandered. (2 Peter 2:2 NLT)

That's a tough question, right. I mean think about it. Do people see Jesus when I choose to do something, anything? The smart decisions and the dumb ones. Peter describes how we, like the false teachers, choose to go off the path of faith. In v.13 it says: ***They love to indulge in evil pleasures in broad daylight. They are a disgrace and a stain among you. They delight in deception even as they eat with you in your fellowship meals.*** One commentary on this verse outlined a few ways these teachers were teaching falsehoods. The first one is just making stupid choices. That's modern language for they are a disgrace and a stain. But this about it, how often do you make those stupid choices in life. Those you know you shouldn't make but yet seem to so easily choose. I would say one of my biggest stupid little choices is when I forget or don't have time to pray. Those common little actions in our lives, those small choices, have large consequences when they add up.

The second one is lusting and feasting. They love to indulge and that has the connotation of lust as we so often think about it. And the end of the verse where it says, 'eat with you' more accurately translates as feasting. This is the sense in our lives where we overindulge. And it doesn't just have to do with overindulging in sexual desire or eating. These are the choices in our lives where we overindulge in everything. I know these two words are part of the 7 deadly sins – gluttony and lust. They both incorporate the idea of overindulgence in life itself. Where do you overindulge in life? Sometimes it is in work or tv or video games or escapism through a book or an addiction. And when we overindulge in something, another part of our life can suffer. When you overindulge in work, your personal life and your family suffers. When we overindulge in gaming, tv or reading our social media sites all the time we falter. And then all so easily your relationship with Jesus suffers.

OVERINDULGENCE CAUSES OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS TO SUFFER.

They love to indulge in evil pleasures in broad daylight. They are a disgrace and a stain among you. They delight in deception even as they eat with you in your fellowship meals. (2 Peter 2:13 NLT)

Earlier in the chapter, Peter highlights this same overindulgence in v. three by saying 'in their greed.' Our overindulgence is a way of putting our greed into practice. The Greek is *plonexia* and it gives the sense to desire to possess more. And that Greek word is most commonly used to refer to athletes in training. When athletes train for their sport they *plonexia*. They covet the prize so much that they physically train for it. Now image, Peter here uses that word for our actions in desiring more. When we desire more (covet) we are literally training our minds and bodies to make the poor choices that pull us away from God. We train our minds and then we act it out in our overindulgence.

We choose so often to desire more that it becomes like training. We choose to be at the office 100 hours a week to succeed. We desire more money from the job, more success or power that it becomes a training ground for us to choose those things in our life which are not Jesus and not a part of the faith.

Sometimes it is overindulgence in our choices. Barreling up to the buffet. Having too much dessert or too much of anything. I like this translation because it reminds us that our life of faith always begins with what is in our hearts and our minds. It isn't just the physical choice or partying too much and forgetting about God. Or working too hard that we push everything aside. Those actions, those choices are because we haven't turned our hearts and minds over to God. We love something greater than we Love God.

Peter lays it out in v. 20 ***For you are a slave to whatever controls you.*** Wow, do you hear that. Stated so simply, all of those choices have the power to enslave you. And yet this isn't the end for us, there is good news. Peter writes all of this to help us Choose God instead. And even as we recognize the poor choices in our lives, see where we have been enslaved or controlled by the choices of this world, Jesus comes racing in to save us. At the beginning of second Peter, he states that he is a slave to Jesus. What are you a slave to? Will you be a slave to stuff or be committed to following Jesus every day?

EVERY MOMENT IS A CHOICE TO FOLLOW JESUS.

And as a part of recognizing our poor choices and naming them before Jesus, we always have the ability to be offered forgiveness. We do this through the ancient discipline of confession. You have already named what pulls you away from Jesus, and so now we will lift that up to him and ask and receive his forgiveness. Will you join with me in the following confession of our sins.