

Date of sermon: 5/22/2021  
Speaker: Pastor Tyler Hanke  
Bible passage or verse: 2 Peter 2:1-3 and 3:17-18  
Title of Sermon: Deep Fake - Guard Yourself Against False Teaching

**2** But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. **2** Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. **3** In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping. **3** **17** Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. **18** But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

I have a few questions for you, so just raise your hand where you're seated if this applies to you, because I want to show you how widespread a certain issue is. Raise your hand if you have ever had your credit card or debit card information stolen. Just raise your hand. Okay, a few of you. Keep it up. How many of you have ever received a letter or an email or a text notification from a big box store like Walmart, Target, Home Depot, saying, "Our information was hacked. You shopped here. Therefore, your information was hacked." Okay. A few more hands went up. Couple more questions and then you can put 'em down. How many of you have been traveling to another state, another country, and your traveling information, your passport, your hotel information was taken? Like, Marriot last year saw 380 million visitors hacked of their information. How many of you there? And last question -- how many of you in the past month have seen on social media -- Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tik Tok -- one of your friends say, "Please don't receive a friend request from me. My account was hacked"? Okay, that was almost every single person in the room. Identity theft, financial theft is a massive problem in our day and age. Not just for America, but around the world. But America, according to the FBI last year, saw a loss of 15 billion dollars because of personal identification theft -- 15 billion in one year. And companies like LifeLock exist and are actually booming right now because they understand the problem, and they understand that they are meeting a huge need in the world. Because they know it's not a matter of "if" - it's a matter of "when." It's not a matter of "if" your information is going to be hacked, it's a matter of "when." And so, we're not trying to stop all the attacks -- we can't do that. This problem is inevitable. What we have to do nowadays is keep the damage from being maximum and keep it at the minimum.

When I was first married, Audrey and I -- our account was hacked into, my card information was stolen -- and someone spent \$3,000 at Home Depot in Mexico. Now, that is something that I would do. I would spend \$3,000 at Home Depot, but not in Mexico. So, we shut down all of my accounts and it was a mess. We had to call insurance companies and call the bank. And I learned from that -- and set up safeguards so that that wouldn't happen to me again. And for example, a few months ago, I was traveling with the Corban baseball team to California, and I swiped my card at a gas station, and no sooner had I left the building but my bank called me and said, "Mr. Hanke, are you in California? Because your card is." And I said, "Thank you, I am in California." But I have to do things like that because I know that it's not a matter of "if" it's a matter of "when."

And it's with that same spirit of warning that Peter writes a letter -- his second letter -- to a group of churches as he was in Rome, talking about an evil that had entered into the church, and it was so big, it was so promiscuous, and it was so rampant that he said, "This thing is so big you can't stop it. What I need to do is train you to keep the damage minimal. You can't stop what is here," Peter said. And the evil that he was talking about was false teachers. So, that's what we're talking about this evening. We're

talking about false teachers, and not so much how to stop them, because you can't. The language that he uses, he says, "It's inevitable." He said, "This problem is actually ancient." He tells the church -- he goes, "We used to call them 'false prophets' because Isaiah dealt with them. Jeremiah dealt with them. Daniel dealt with them." He said, "Jesus had to deal with them, and you, the modern church, will have to deal with false teachers. And it's not a matter of 'if' it's a matter of 'when.'" And he writes this letter specifically because people were lying about him. People were saying to Peter, "I don't think you actually met Jesus, and even if you did, I don't think that he was actually the son of God. That whole transfiguration thing -- that seems too farfetched." He said, "The reason that you fell for that, church, is because you don't know how to spot false teachers. And they made their way into the church and they lied about Christ, and they lied about me, and now you're confused and you're seeing a church split." That's what's at stake here, is family relationships, is marriages, is church splits -- if we don't learn how to identify false teachers, and how to deal with them and how to move forward, we're going to get hurt, badly.

And so, what Peter walks us through in 2 Peter is essentially three things. He says, "I want to teach you how to identify false teachers, because they're going to be here, and you need to know how to deal with them." Secondly, does God have an opinion on this? And Peter says He does. He's not silent on this issue. And third, what do you do about it? Because you could identify them, but then, what do me and you do? So, jumping into the text, Peter says, "Here's the first thing that I want to teach you. What do these people do?" Okay -- I'm not gonna stand up here and start naming names or other churches. That's not the point of this message. Nor is it to bring about a spirit of fear. It's not, at all. It's learning how to identify a problem so that we don't get hurt. So, Peter says, "Here's what they're like, because all false teachers," he said, "are going to fall into certain patterns. And you can recognize language, you can recognize attitude, you can recognize ways of operating." So, he says, "Here's the first thing that you need to see. These individuals are masters of manipulation. False teachers are masters of manipulation." In verse one of this chapter, he says, "Here's how they're gonna operate. They're gonna operate secretly. They're gonna operate subtly." See, false teachers aren't walking around with a neon sign or something on their shirt that says, "I'm a false teacher, and I'm probably gonna lie to you." No, they're subtle. It's gonna show up in the form of a sermon. "Hey, watch this -- there's this new pastor and he's really, really good. Watch this sermon." "Hey, there's this new book that came out. I want you to read it and tell me what you think." It's subtle. And why is that the first thing that he says? It's the first thing that he wants me and you to understand, and the reason I think he starts with it is because there has to be a level of personal responsibility with you. Because Pastor Mark isn't in your home every day, all day, screening your conversations. That would be weird and inappropriate. He has his own house. I'm not in all of your Bible studies. Neither will any other pastor be. You are responsible as an individual to know when you are being lied to. You're responsible to know when someone is lying about Scripture or about your King. You should know enough about your King that if someone starts speaking lies, you go, "That doesn't sound like my King. That doesn't sound like Scripture." How easy would it be for someone to lie to you about your spouse? Pretty hard, because you know them intimately. Peter says, "Know Christ the same way. Know Scripture the same way. Because false teachers are subtle."

So, now you know how they operate, but who do they target? Does a false teacher have a specific target? And they do. Peter says they're going to exploit, they're going to entice, and they're going to seduce. He uses those three words: They're going to entice, they're gonna exploit, and they're gonna seduce the vulnerable. So, we need to define who the vulnerable is, and Peter does later in the letter. Near the end of chapter two he says that these teachers are going after the vulnerable. Who are the vulnerable? Those who are escaping -- just now escaping the condemnation of the world. Meaning, new believers. People that are just coming into church. People that are exploring who Jesus is. False teachers go for them. Why would they do that? Why does that make sense? Who would be easier for you to lie to -- Pastor Mark or someone who's been a Christian for a couple months? A person who's been a Christian for a couple months. If you're going to lie to someone about Christianity and about Christ, do you go after the person who's been a Christian for decades, or do you go after the young one,

who doesn't really know their stuff yet? Who's the vulnerable? New believers. It's why we have new members' classes to teach you and to protect you and to let you know what we believe. It's why we have a class called "Christianity 101" where Pastor Jim walks you through the basics of Christianity. Because we want to protect you. New believers are vulnerable.

Who else in the church is vulnerable? Well, when I look at the church, I think young people -- like, physical age. Young people are vulnerable. The Better Business Bureau put out some stats of last year of who got attacked financially. They said if you are under 25 years old, you are 51 percent more likely to be targeted for identity theft. Fifty-one percent more likely! How come? Because it's so much easier to go after someone who's only been watching their finances maybe for a few months or a few years, versus the seasoned individual who's been watching their bank statements, their money, for years -- for decades. It's easier to go after someone that doesn't know their stuff. It's why we put so much time and effort and energy and resources into youth programs -- it's not because we don't value seniors, but who falls away from their faith in droves? Is it seniors, or is it college students? It's college students. And it's not because they're dumb, it's because they're young in their faith, and they're easier to manipulate. And false teachers know this. They will exploit the vulnerable.

Now, why am I -- why are we building this list? I think it's our responsibility as maturing believers to make a list of people in our community that are vulnerable, that in that way we might circle the wagons. Because those of you that are rooted in your faith have a responsibility to those that aren't -- to protect them. Who else in the church is vulnerable? I'd say single parents are vulnerable. I'd say divorcees are vulnerable. Would it be easier to lie to me and manipulate my views of marriage, or someone that just got divorced? I think it would be easier to manipulate them. Go talk to a woman who's just been divorced and start manipulating her views on all men, because she's hurt. Go manipulate someone's views on marriage that just got divorced. They're emotionally raw. He says these individuals are going to go for the vulnerable. So, what do they tell them? We know how they operate and how they target, but what does the false teacher tell these individuals? In verse 19, he says that they will preach a gospel of freedom. They're gonna preach a gospel of freedom. And the thing is -- they have to do this. False teachers have to preach a gospel of freedom. Here's what I mean by this. Later on, he says that they desperately hate authority, they hate the authority of Scripture. And Scripture has given me and you a number of boundaries for life. Scripture has said God wants to give you marriage, but He said, "Let me define marriage for you. It's one man and one woman." *Arghhhh. I mean, if sex with one woman is great, wouldn't sex with multiple women be even better?* Scripture has given a definition of gender. He said, "There's a male and there's a female." *Arghhhh. That's a little restrictive. I mean, if God loves me and He's generous, wouldn't he want me to be happy? Why can't I have more?*

See, there are core tenets of Scripture, and they'll grab onto it but then they'll begin to twist it. And they'll begin to manipulate it, and they'll preach a gospel of freedom. But Peter says something specific about where they're preaching this from. He says, "They're preaching freedom, but they're preaching it from a place of enslavement." These people are already trapped in sin. And the reason they're preaching freedom is because they have to. If you're stuck in sin, the only way to feel good about yourself in that place is to change the definition of what sin is. *It's not bad if I've defined it as good, so I can sit in it.* He says that they're going to sin without remorse. Verses 13, 14, 18. Peter wants to identify where these false teachers get stuck, and the reason he does this is not to shame individuals struggling in these areas. He does this that we might better understand where the red flags are of a false teacher.

In verse 13, he says that they carouse openly in the daylight without remorse. What is carouse? They drink copious amounts of alcohol into a drunken stupor with no remorse. He says they don't have any problems with getting drunk in public. More than that, he says in verse 14, they are experts in greed. This is where they operate. And they'll teach you about financial wisdom, but really, it's just manipulating your taxes. They'll teach you about how to move and hide money so that you can hide it from the

government, and they'll call it wisdom. And in verse 18, he says, "Not only do they enjoy lust, they appeal to you and use it." They don't just enjoy manipulating marriage, they call you into it, too.

Now, I was doing some research on these three areas -- on alcoholism, on greed and gambling addictions, and on sexual addictions. The largest rehab center in Europe -- the largest one puts these three addictions in their top three most common addictions for people that they see every year. Is it a coincidence that these three areas where human beings fall in and are trapped in most are the three areas that a false teacher's going to say, "Live in this area -- it's positive"? Is that a coincidence? I don't think so at all. In the areas where we are most trapped, they will sit and they will preach a message of freedom in that area. *It's not alcoholism -- you just enjoy having a good time. It's not sexual immorality, you just love more people. It's not greed, you're just doing with your money what you want to.* See, there's bits -- there's bits of truth, tiny -- tiny parts of the gospel, but then they twist it. And they do this for a reason. As I said before -- he says in verse 10, "The reason they do this -- false teachers do this -- is because they hate authority." And where is the chief place of authority that we draw our boundaries of life from? It's from the Bible. But what they're saying is that you don't really need this. And here's where they say this. One of the leaders in the Progressive Christian movement right now recently wrote a book, and I bought it and I read it because I'm a masochist. But -- I was reading it, and I was getting near the end, and he writes about how you are to read Scripture. Now, he's been endorsed by the leaders of the Progressive Christian movement, and he says -- "When you read Scripture, take the parts of it that inspire you and use them, and take the parts that don't inspire you and ignore them." "Take the parts that inspire you and use them, and take the parts that don't inspire you and ignore them. Because you don't need that in your life." Now, when you do this -- when you put all of that together, Peter says, it's going to take you somewhere. It always, always takes you somewhere. And he tells you in verse one -- "These people will secretly introduce these heresies, ultimately denying the sovereign Lord who bought them." If I've taken the authority of Scripture away and it means nothing to me and you, and if I've taken sin and I've minimized it so much that I've no need for a Savior, then I don't need Jesus. If Scripture means nothing and sin has no consequences, then I don't need a Savior. Where does a false teacher want to take you? I don't care what cult, what sect of religion, where do all of them want to take you? To the place where you don't need Jesus. He said, they are going to get to the place where they deny the sovereign Lord that bought them.

Now, you might wonder at this point, who -- who in the world believes this stuff? Where does this take people? And Peter predicts that you would think this, and he says, "Actually, this isn't the minority -- this is the majority." He says many, many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. Why does he tell you this? Because, friends, you and me should not be surprised when heretical churches are really, really, big. You shouldn't be surprised when churches like this make millions of dollars and are doing quite well and when people like them. You shouldn't be shocked at this. Why would you be? If all restraint is off on your life, that sounds beautiful. These pastors, these teachers will do really, really well, but the scarier part, he says, it's gonna bring the way of truth -- what me and you believe -- into disrepute. What does that mean? It means that we're gonna be the bigots. We're gonna be the bad guys. We're rude, we're not open-minded, we're not accepting enough of people. It will bring the way of truth into disrepute. Let me put it to you this way in a question -- and don't raise your hand, this is rhetorical. How many of you have lost a relationship with a family member or a good friend because of your views on marriage or gender? I'm willing to bet a number of you. How many of you have endured or gone through a church split because a false teacher, an idea, a pernicious idea made its way in and just ripped the church in half?

I was counseling a young lady when I first got the job here. She was a young adult student at one of the universities here, and her sister was transitioning to a male. And she was trying to figure out, "How in the world do I emotionally deal with this? I don't know what to do with it." So, we talked for years. And I assumed things were going quite well. But one day she emotionally had had enough -- the girl that I was speaking to -- and she just, she had to give in, because she was tired of fighting in, and she said, "You

know what -- I have a brother. I have a brother, I just need to go there in my mind." And I said, "I'm really sorry that you feel that way, because I don't think you have a brother. I think that you have a sister and she's really hurting." And she left that conversation, and she wrote me one of the ugliest letters I have ever received in my entire adult life. That I was rude and cruel and unintelligent enough to interpret the Scriptures, and that I was a poor listener. After we had talked for four years. It will bring the way of truth into disrepute, and you're gonna get hurt. And so, then, the question in your mind might be -- "Well, if it's this bad -- if it's ripping families apart, and it's splitting churches, then God, do you actually care? Because you seem oddly silent on an issue this bad." And Peter again predicts that you would feel that way, and he goes, "Whoa -- don't go there in your mind. I know that you're tempted. You are sad. You're angry and you're hurt. But don't shake your fist at God." And he jumps into three stories, three examples. And he's like, "You want to know what God thinks about false teachers? Let me tell you. Here's three stories."

The first one is about angels. The second one is about the pre-flood world. And the third one is about Sodom and Gomorrah. He's like, "Let me tell you about these things." He says, "The angels when they rebelled with Satan -- God said, 'Leave. Get out of Heaven. You're going to go to hell and you will sit there until I judge you later.'" God kicked angels out of Heaven because of this issue. Here is the second one. Read in Genesis six, seven, and eight -- There was something that happened. God was looking at people and He tells us, He says, "Things were so bad -- things were so bad that all the thoughts of humanity were evil and violent." And He said, "Noah, take your wife and your three sons and their wives and get in a boat, because I'm wiping the slate clean." God says, "Don't tell me I don't care about this issue. Don't tell me that I don't take this seriously. I wiped the planet clean because of this issue."

But then he goes to another one, and he gets really, really personal and really emotional. He ends with Sodom and Gomorrah, which you would think that you would end with wiping the world clean. But he ends with Sodom and Gomorrah, and I think he does this because you and me can identify with Lot really, really, really well in this respect. He says Lot was tormented. He was tormented in his righteous soul because he lived in an area where there was rampant sexual immorality and lawlessness. You don't call the cops -- you just deal with it. You deal with the abuse, you deal with the rape. You deal with all of the ugliness of life. And it said that he just grieved. And so, God sent two angels to tell Lot, "Get out of this city, because we're about to burn it to the ground." And after that, God said, "I did this -- I did all of that that you would know what I plan to do with false teachers. That you would know what I plan to do when I judge people. I wiped the slate clean, I kicked angels out of Heaven, and I burned cities to the ground because I take this issue very, very seriously." And he gives you a promise in verse 13. He says, "I will give harm to those that have harmed. I will give out harm for those that have harmed." Now, this is interesting to me, because in this letter of 2 Peter, there's so many verses to me and you about a certain topic -- and I'm gonna get there. There was only one promise of destruction. Only one verse on the promise of destruction. What does that tell you? It means that God doesn't want you -- He doesn't want you sitting there with revenge in your mind. He's like, "You don't have the capacity for that." He just says, "Let me promise you one time, I will deal with them."

So church, it's not your and my job to attack false teachers. It's not our job to end them. He says, "This is inevitable. The church will deal with this always. I don't need you attacking them -- I need you enduring them. I need you outlasting them." I'm not saying you don't call out what is false, but he says, the attacking, the revenge -- that's mine. That's God's. He says, there's something else that I have for you, and it's not revenge. He said, "I need you to grow." Let's go there. So -- he ends in chapter three -- this is why I had them read chapter two and chapter three. He writes this in chapter three, verse 17: "Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned -- so, everything I just told you was a warning -- be on your guard." How do we do this? Be on your guard. What does that mean? It means that the spirit that God has called you to is one of defense. So, let's define that. He says, "Grow in grace and knowledge." So, if we're looking at this issue of false teachers, you're like, "So, all I have to do is grow in factual information about God?" That's a very shallow understanding of that text. He actually is quoting

himself from the first chapter. So, if you go back to chapter one, he gives you this list, and he's writing about what the mature Christian is going to look like. And he gives you this list of how he wants you to enhance your faith. This word "knowledge" is not one of factual information -- this is one of relationship. As I mentioned before, how hard would it be for someone to lie to you about your spouse? I would argue it'd be very difficult, because you know them intimately. In the same way that you know your spouse or you know your best friend, he says, "Know Christ." It is not on me and you to defeat all cultish information. It's not on me and you to memorize all false teaching that we might better attack it. It's on me and you - - the responsibility we have is to grow in love for Christ. And so, in chapter one, he says, "Here's what I want you to add to your faith. I want you to add to your faith goodness, and to goodness knowledge, and to knowledge self-control, and to self-control perseverance, and to perseverance godliness, and to godliness mutual affection, and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure" -- and this is the most important part -- "they will keep you and me from becoming ineffective and unproductive in our knowledge," he says again, "of Jesus Christ." Knowledge is so much more than factual information. The word really should just read, "Relationship." "That you would grow in your relationship with Jesus."

So, let's just rifle through the list. I know it's a lot, and we're going pretty quick. Because you could preach a sermon on this section alone. Grow in goodness. Grow in good deeds. Grow in your ability to see a need and meet a need, that you might bless other people. Grow in goodness. Grow in knowledge. So, this one is factual information -- grow -- just nerd out with a good commentary. Memorize more and more Scripture. Listen to sermons of pastors long-passed away. Grow in factual information about Jesus, about your God. Grow in knowledge. Grow in self-control. Some of you came for this one right here, tonight. This is why God got you to church on Saturday evening. Or why you're watching this morning on Sunday. Grow in self-control. Because for some of you, you're mastered by something. You're mastered by porn. You are mastered by greed. Mastered by laziness. And you're not reading the Bible, you're not praying. Not because you don't think God is good, but because you feel that you're too dirty to do so. And God says, that's absolutely not true. Grow in self-control. Learn to say "no" to yourself. I'm not saying that that's gonna be easy -- it's gonna be hard. But make a plan to win in whatever area is mastering you. And I love what he puts next. He says, Grow in perseverance. This isn't a short thing. This isn't a sprint, this is a marathon. Stay in the game and learn to be a long-distance runner with people. Grow in self-control. Grow in perseverance. Grow in godliness. That you would read the stories of Jesus and that you would understand more and more about Him, and how He operated. What God does and that we would do our best to copy that. The staff and deacons and deaconesses just had a unity forum this morning. And the speakers did an amazing job. They took the life of Jesus, and they showed how He communicated. Because I came in the morning, and they were like, "We're gonna have a conversation about how to have a conversation." And I was like, "Okay." It wasn't that I wasn't excited, but I was like, "This seems too simple." But they laid out who Jesus was and what He did, and how He communicated. And it was simply brilliant. And if we would learn to communicate the way that He did, we wouldn't have half the problems that we do. Grow in godliness. Grow in mutual affection and love.

I was talking with a young adult guy a few months ago, and he was agitated and angry. He wasn't going anywhere in life, and he knew it, so he said, "I just -- Tyler, we need to talk. I don't know what's wrong." And I said, "Buddy, lay out for me your average day. And lay out your average week, and lay out your average month." So he did. And at the end of it, I said, "I'm not God, okay? But I think I know what's wrong. As I listen to you describe your day and your week and your month, nobody else but you was in there. You serve no one. You don't bring anyone to your home. You don't counsel anyone. You don't serve anybody. You do everything for you! You work out for you, you go to work for you, and you go home and play video games for you. Nobody else is in your calendar. Could it be that you're agitated and angry not because you're a horrible person, but because the one thing God told you to do -- go love people -- grow in mutual affection -- you just refuse to do?" When was the last time you brought someone over -- not to show off your house, but to make sure that they were okay? Grow in

mutual affection and love for people. See, Peter has warned you, and he's warned me. He says, "Friends, you can't stop evil. You can't stop false teachers. They will always be here -- to introduce another book, to introduce another lie about Jesus, to bring you more doubt on the authenticity of the Scriptures -- they're always going to be there. But it's not how much you can memorize about them -- it's how deep you can grow with Jesus." Because friends, false teachers will always fall at your faith. False teachers will always fall at your faith, because your Christ is infinitely more powerful than any lie someone's going to write a book about.

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