

Letters From a Fisherman
Week 24
2 Peter 2:1-3
“The Enemy In The Camp”

Introduction

For some people, who were designated for this judgment long ago, have come in by stealth; they are ungodly, turning the grace of our God into sensuality and denying Jesus Christ, our only Master and LORD. **Jude 1:4**

Peter wished to give the persecuted church some lasting advice as he was preparing to meet his own coming martyrdom. He begins his second epistle by encouraging all Believers to add to their faith all that is required for godliness, explaining to them that God had richly provided everything that was necessary for them to do so. Then he reminded them that the faith we all share is bolstered by very credible witnesses, including but not limited to the Apostles, the Prophets, and most importantly The Holy Spirit Himself.

After listing these *bonafides* of the faith, he then entered into a discourse concerning those who would, in spite of all the proofs of the gospel, seek to undermine them. Namely the false teacher who would undoubtedly infiltrate the flock. Peter wished to issue a final warning so that the church would be made aware once more of the devil's unrelenting assault on God's people. And while we would expect to face spiritual attacks from outside the body, we often forget that our worst enemy could actually attack from the inside.

A cancer in the human body is made up of a person's very own cells eating away at them from the inside. In short, they are being attacked from within, as opposed to without. False teachers operate in very much the same fashion. They pretend to be one of us, but all the while they are actually seeking to devour. I have had a front row seat to this type of behavior plenty of times in the church, and I can tell you that a false or pseudo-believer can wreak a great deal of havoc within the body in a short amount of time. They are much like a rapidly growing cancer, and if not eradicated quickly, will destroy the entire body in short order.

The Apostle Paul had already warned many times in his writings of such deceivers. But Peter wished to revisit the warnings as his life was drawing to a close. Jude, the half brother of The LORD, also issued a similar alert in his short epistle. In fact, the words of Peter in this Second Chapter and the words of Jude are eerily similar, leading some scholars to suggest that they were written by the same person. This, of course, is not true. Peter wrote *2 Peter*, and Jude wrote *Jude*. But the language of each is indeed related in nature to say the least. So why the need for such repetitive messages in the *New Testament*? I believe that Peter has already answered that question for us:

Therefore I will always remind you about these things, even though you know them and are established in the truth you now have. I think it is right, as long as I am in this bodily tent, to wake you up with a reminder, since I know that I will soon lay aside my tent, as our LORD Jesus Christ has indeed made clear to me. And I will also make every effort so that you are able to recall these things at the time of my departure. **2 Peter 1:12-15**

Truth be told, we, The Church, cannot be reminded too often of the forces that are arrayed against us. And these forces oft times come from places we do not expect. Enter the false teacher, one of Satan's most effective and devastating tools that he employs in his twisted desire to undermine the gospel of Christ. So today, let us look closely at Simon Peter's warning of the enemy within the gates, as it were, the false teacher who seeks to do Satan's bidding as an undercover agent. These people are *Deceivers in Hiding*, spreading *Destructive Heresies*, but they will not succeed in the long run for these wicked deceivers are *Destined for Hell's Fire*. So beware, and do not follow after their twisted deceptions. For they will inevitably take you down with them. But we cannot be deceived by them, if we know what to look for. Please allow me to explain.

Deceivers in Hiding (vs 1a)

There were indeed false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you... **2 Peter 2:1a**

First thing off the bat, I want you to notice a subtle use of wording here by the leading of The Holy Spirit. When Peter is speaking of *Old Testament* times, indicated by “*the people*”, meaning the people of Israel, he speaks of the rise of false prophets (*pseudoprofetes*, in the Greek). But when he shifts to the church age of the here and now, he speaks of false teachers (*pseudodidaskalos*). Did you catch that? Why the difference? Answer: Because in the church age, there are no more prophets! God spoke through prophets in the old days, but now, His methods have changed.

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors by the prophets at different times and in different ways. In these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son. God has appointed Him heir of all things and made the universe through Him. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of His nature, sustaining all things by His powerful Word. **Hebrews 1:1-3a**

Lesson number one, if anyone today calls themselves a prophet... get away from them as fast as you can! For there **are no** prophets today. We have The Son, The Word, and The Spirit of The Living God! By them, we have all the revelation that we need. No further prophecy is necessary. All that is required is sound Biblical teaching by *teachers* who accurately expound God's Word to us so that we can add to our faith, **“goodness, goodness with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness, godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.” (2 Peter 1:5b-7).**

So, although we do not have, or even have need of, a prophet these days, we desperately need great teachers. And Peter warns that in amongst the solid *Bible* teachers, the enemy will do his very best to slip in some phonies. As Jude has warned, these subtle purveyors of evil will creep into the church disguising themselves as one of the flock. We must be ever on guard for these people, for they are bred for one purpose, and that is to destroy the body of Christ. They are *deceivers in hiding*. Listen once more to the warning of Jude:

For some people, who were designated for this judgement long ago, have come in by stealth... **Jude 1:4a**

You see, the false teacher doesn't just show up on the podium or at the altar one Sunday morning and announce that he has come on behalf of Beelzebub. No, he is far more subtle than that! He pretends to be a devoted follower of Christ, knowing full well that the church, who have been commanded to love all the brothers and sisters in Christ, will welcome him in with open arms. It is then, that he begins to ply his trade, sowing division and teaching things that are blasphemous according to The Word of God. The mature christian will see him for what he is rather quickly. However, the immature may very well be deceived at first.

As Peter warns, they will come “among us”. And if they are not stopped forcefully in short order, then they can do great damage. In some cases, the harm they can cause is virtually irreversible, sending others haplessly down the path to their own destruction. We would do well to be forewarned and warned again, to beware the false teacher. Our television screens are filled with them, but sadly, very often so are our very own church pews. For these *deceivers in hiding* are very good at what they do.

Destructive Heresies (vs 1b)

...They will bring in destructive heresies, even denying The Master Who bought them... **2 Peter 1:b**

The KJV version translates this as *damnable heresies*. Peter is giving the warning that a more “palatable” or “watered down” version of the gospel of Christ is no gospel at all. In our time the most readily available heresy is the so-called “prosperity gospel”, which pretty much ignores sin and the need for repentance altogether and instead focuses on a positive self-image and material wealth. Let me be blunt, this is an abomination. People who subscribe to a so-called “Jesus”, who tells you that you are fine just the way you are and that you simply need to have more faith in yourself are not *Believers* at all. They merely have joined a positive thinkers club. Simply put, if your version of *Amazing Grace* doesn’t include the words “*that saved a wretch like me*”, then you have no earthly idea what *Amazing Grace* really is!

In Peter’s day, and even more so today, there are loads of charlatans who know that if they simply tell folks what they want to hear they can draw big crowds. Hence, we are left with more churches that are entertainment-based, rather than Bible-based. If you feel great about yourself when you’ve been “in God’s presence”, then you haven’t really been in the presence of the One True God! For He is **Infinitely Holy**, and to see Him is to realize how flawed we really are. Paul also warned Timothy of the false teachers who would infiltrate the church with their damnable heresies:

I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, Who is going to judge the living and the dead, and because of His appearing and His kingdom: Preach The Word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear. They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths. **2 Timothy 4:1-4**

The gospel of Jesus Christ requires us to turn away from sin and self to follow Him. He did not die on the cross to obey *us*, but rather, He died so that we may come to know and follow Him with our whole heart. Anyone who tells you that there is no cost involved in serving Christ is a liar and a despicable human being. Peter makes it abundantly clear that such as these are by no means Believers, but rather imposters come to lead the flock astray.

His next line has been somewhat controversial. He states that the false teachers “deny the Master who bought them.” This is in NO way suggesting that these charlatans have been redeemed. Peter is simply stating the obvious; Christ died to redeem us, and to try and use this truth in any way as a means to the dishonest gain of worldly wealth is to deny the very reason that He died. To be redeemed is to be bought with a price. It was a word used to describe the purchase of slaves, who were bought to be used in the service of their master. Imagine for a moment that a slave would think that he had been purchased so that the master might serve *him*?! What master in his right mind would spend his own personal wealth in order to become someone else’s property?

To deny that we have been purchased as the servants of The Living God is to deny the very purpose of Calvary’s cross. We were bought with Jesus blood in order to serve Him as *He* sees fit. This is the antithesis of what the so-called prosperity preachers preach. And to follow after these con-men is to mindlessly march toward your own destruction! Beware the pied piper, who plays your favorite tune as he leads you to the very gates of hell.

Not everyone who says to me, “LORD, LORD,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, “LORD, LORD, didn’t we prophesy in Your Name, drive out demons in Your Name, and do many miracles in Your Name?” Then I will announce to them, “I never knew you. Depart for me, you lawbreakers!” **Matthew 7:21-23**

Destined for Hell (vs 1c-3)

...and will bring swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved ways, and the way of truth will be maligned because of them. They will exploit you in their greed with made-up stories. Their condemnation, pronounced long ago, is not idle, and their destruction does not sleep. **2 Peter 2:1c-3**

The false teachers of this world have a horrible fate that awaits them. I believe that one of the most grievous sins a person can commit is to cause someone else to stumble. Listen to the words of Christ on the subject.

But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to fall away — it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses. For offenses will inevitably come, but woe to that person by whom the offense comes. **Matthew 18:6-7**

I believe that the worst part of hell is reserved for the false teacher who takes his disciples down with him to share in his doom. God will show no mercy to those who would lead others astray for their own personal gain.

Peter exposes the motives of the false teacher, and its the same old story... greed (**vs. 3**) and their own sexual lusts (later in **vs. 14**). These demonic “preachers” live only to please themselves and are more than happy to use people to their own selfish ends. Peter warns that in their greed they will *exploit you*. The KJV renders this passage, they will “*make merchandise of you.*” In other words, these wicked people have no qualms about using you as a commodity to serve their own selfish interests. One of the ways you can recognize a false teacher, other than their ridiculously twisted doctrine, is by the way they demonstrate no genuine affection for those whom they claim to lead. People, to them, are simply a means to an end.

Peter goes on to say they will deceive people with made up stories. The Greek is much more elaborate in its description. The word he uses, which is translated as “made up” in the CSB, is *plastos* in the Greek. It is a word that literally means “*moldable*”. It is where we derive our word for plastic, because plastic is a substance that can be molded into any shape in order to resemble something else.

Have you ever looked a beautiful wooden chair, or ornate piece of pottery, only to realize after closer inspection that it was made of plastic. It is only a cheap imitation of the real thing. Now imagine standing in the presence of a holy and righteous God only to find out that you have placed your hope in a “*plastic faith*”! This horrible realization will be followed by the words, “**Depart from Me, for I never knew you.**” This is the reason that every preacher, who is worth his wages, will stand and declare Biblical truth no matter how unpopular it causes him to be. We must always remember that lives are at stake! And God has required of us to teach His Word accurately and with all sobriety.

Not many should become teachers, my brothers, because we know that we will receive a stricter judgment. **James 3:1**

So, exactly how can we be able to accurately spot one of these phony teachers, who are destined for hell’s flames? **By being a careful and disciplined student of God’s Word.** For it is studying the real thing, that makes a counterfeit easily discovered. So I challenge you this morning to test everything that you are taught in this place, and everywhere else, against the teachings of God’s Holy Word, and you won’t be taken in by the charlatan, who views you as mere merchandise. As Peter says, we must come to know what we believe, for the more we know Christ, the less we can be taken in by a cheap imitation. Or as the Apostle Paul would say:

Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn’t need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the Word of truth. **2 Timothy 2:15**

TRUTH!!!