

2 Peter Chapter 2A

On the night that he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus offered up what we affectionately call His Great High Priestly Prayer. At this point, He knew that He was returning to the Father and THE passionate cry of His Heart was for His Beloved People.

John 17: 13 **But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.**

- Jesus faithfully proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom and now he is leaving His disciples behind to continue the work and so on this his final night He petitions the Father saying:

15 **I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.**

- This morning I want to draw your attention to one simple statement: Jesus said: **“Your Word Is Truth!”**
- Simple yet profound, Jesus testifies to the fact that the revelation of God in Holy Scripture is Divine Truth! And we see this fact confirmed throughout the Bible.

Psalm 33: 4 **For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth.**

Colossians 1:5 The Gospel is called **“The Word of Truth.”**

2 Samuel 7: 28 **And now, O Lord GOD, you are God, and your words are true,**

1 Thessalonians 2:13 Paul writes: **And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God,**

King David writes: Psalm 19:9 **the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules (the judgments, precepts, the Words) of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.**

Again in Psalm 119:160 David says: **Thy word is true from the beginning:**

When we look at the Book of Beginnings, the book of Genesis we see NOT only that the Word of the Lord is true from the beginning, but also from the beginning the truth of God’s Word has come under fire, Divine revelation has been repeatedly challenged and consistently corrupted by the one we know as “The Father of Lies.”

It has been a few years since we have studied the Book of Genesis, do you remember the Word that God spoke to our first Parents?

Genesis 2: 15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

- God speaks clearly, there's no need to question his meaning or search for secret insight, God speaks our language, "*The day that you eat of it you shall surely die.*"
- And shortly after God speaks to Adam we have the appearance of the first false prophet.

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" 4 But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die."

- And so it is that from the beginning the Word of God has been challenged, the Word of God has been twisted, the word of God has been wrongly interpreted by generation after generation of false prophets.

Jesus confronted the Pharisees of his day saying: *You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.* John 8:44

It is with this tension in mind, the ongoing struggle to uphold the truth of God's Word that we return to our study of 2 Peter moving from Ch. 1 to Ch. 2.

This morning we will focus our attention on the first three verses and we will see.

- The Pervasiveness of False Prophets (Throughout history)
- The Profile of a False Prophet (How can we recognize them)
- The Place of False Prophets in the sovereign plan of God. (Why does God allow)

Remember from last week, at the end of chapter one Peter gave us a clear and powerful affirmation of the divine origin of Scripture. He said:

2 Peter 1: 20 *knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

- Scripture was not produced, it did not come into being by the will of man, But men spoke as they were carried along, moved like a ship across the sea driven by the wind. Only here in 2 Peter, the wind is the Holy Spirit leading, inspiring the human writers of Biblical text.

- So the Scripture, in its original autographs, (original writing) every letter, every syllable, every word, every sentence of every book conveys the fullness of divine revelation.

As we enter into chapter 2 Peter Highlights on the distinctions between the inspired Word of God and the corrupt word of False Teachers and that contrast is made very clear by the word “BUT.”

2 Peter 2:1A **But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you,**

In stark contrast to the origin and authority of the “**More Sure Word of Prophecy,**” there has always been a counterfeit word, lies that are propagated by false prophets.

- From the beginning in the garden, the truth of God has been challenged by the Father of Lies.

Here in Vs 1, When Peter says “**false prophets also arose among the people**” He is referring to the people of Israel. Evidence of this ongoing struggle is documented all throughout the O.T. Most notably in the Book of Jeremiah.

When Israel was chasing after the idols of their pagan neighbors, and the elders of the land were practicing immorality; when the priests filled the Temple of the Lord with images of Baal, when they bowed down in worship to the rising sun, GOD sent his prophets to declare his judgment. HE would raise up the Army of Babylon and use them to discipline his idolatrous people. *Listen to the words of Jeremiah:*

Jeremiah 6: 22 **Thus says the LORD: "Behold, a people is coming from the north country, a great nation is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth. 23 They lay hold on bow and javelin; they are cruel and have no mercy; the sound of them is like the roaring sea; they ride on horses, set in array as a man for battle, against you, O daughter of Zion!"**

- God’s righteous judgment was coming upon the people in accord with the covenant that he made with them.
- Because they had broken His commandments and worshipped the Idols of their neighbors, he would give them over to the hands of their enemies and remove them from the land.
- He sent his prophets to warn them and call them to repentance. BUT false prophets arose speaking lies and filling the people with false hopes.

Jeremiah 23: 16 **Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. 17 They say continually to those who despise the word of the LORD, ‘It shall be well with you’; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, ‘No disaster shall come upon you.’"**

Instead of confronting the people in their idolatry, these false prophets encouraged them in their complacency. Instead of proclaiming God's righteous judgment, they glibly danced around the city singing, "Don't worry Be Happy."

EVEN TODAY, Unregenerate people don't want to hear about God's righteous judgment. They want to have their ears tickled, they want to bolster their self-esteem, they want psychology and entertainment.

- And there are plenty of false teachers who are willing to oblige them. Peter says:

2 Peter 2:1A **But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you,**

- As it was in the O.T so it is in the N.T. The truth of God's Word is continually resisted, corrupted by False Teachers. Consider Paul's warning to the Elders of Ephesus.

Acts 20: 28 **Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.**

- We learn from Paul here in Acts 20 that faithful Elders are responsible to guard the flock of God from the assaults of false teachers. This is why Elders need to know sound doctrine; this is why Elders must be apt to teach the Word of God.
- Paul warned the Ephesian Elders that False teachers would come from inside and outside of the church.
- How can we recognize them? Peter provides us with a profile, a description.

2. The Profile of a False Prophet. First listen to the words of Jesus:

Matthew 7:15 **"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?"**

- Jesus warns us of the stealthy camouflage that is employed by false prophets. From a distance they appear to be sheep, it is only when they begin to devour the flock of God that their true nature is revealed.
- Jesus helps us with an illustration: From a distance, the little black berries on the buckthorn could be mistaken for grapes and the flowers on certain thistles might deceive one into thinking that figs were growing. BUT a closer inspection, of the fruit reveals the true nature of a Prophet.

Peter describes False Teachers in this way:

2 Peter 2:1B **who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their**

sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 And in their greed they will exploit you with false words.

So that we might identify the corrupt fruit of a false teacher more readily and recognize them more easily, Peter describes three of their characteristics.

- Secrecy
- Sacrilege
- Sensuality

Secrecy

2 Peter 2:1B **who will secretly bring in destructive heresies**

False teachers are always deceptive in their dealings; frankly they have to be. Why? Because no one would follow them if their error, their schemes and their motives were brought out for everyone to see.

Jude tells us: 4 **For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation,**

- They slip in under cover, they sneak in under false pretenses. They join in the worship of the saints, and because Christians tend to believe the best about people we warmly, even joyfully welcome them into the Family.
- They know the right words to say, they greet you with a smile and a hug, they know the songs that we sing and they even raise their hands in worship.
- BUT they are NOT God's elect, they are not the sheep of His pasture, they are wolves who long ago were designated for destruction, and not salvation.
- The original words used by Jude describe a cleaver defendant attempting to fool a judge in a legal proceeding, or a criminal who secretly returns to the place from which he was banished.
- IN his letter to the Galatians, Paul speaks of false brothers who were secretly brought into the fellowship of the Saints.

Galatians 2: 4 **Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in - who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery - 5 to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.**

- The goal of the False Teachers in the church at Galatia was to bring those who were set free from the bondage of sin through faith in Jesus Christ, under the slavery of Jewish legalism.
- And even though the believers in Galatia were Gentiles, These false teachers insisted on strict obedience to the Law of Moses. They would say, SINCE you have come to faith in Christ you have to follow the dietary laws that were given by God to Moses and of course you will need to be circumcised.

Listen, Whether it is legalism or lawlessness, like wolves in sheep's clothing, false teachers enter into the church with subtlety in order to introduce their destructive heresies distorting the Word of God.

- Legalists distorts the Gospel by focusing on human effort and the will of man rather than the glorious grace of God that brings salvation to repentant sinners.
- On the other hand, there are false teachers who promote Lawlessness. They say "Since your soul has been saved by grace and not by works, it doesn't matter how you live. After all the flesh counts for nothing so you can live in immorality. Indulge your flesh without worrying about your eternal destiny.
- Some went so far as to separate the flesh and the spirit of man, Teaching as long as your spirit is saved it doesn't matter what your body does. (So live it up!)
- What is common to all of these Destructive Heresies is the sacrilege, the blasphemous rejection of the Lordship of Christ. That's our next point:

Sacrilege Peter continues:

Even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

- These false teachers boldly, firmly and continually (present participle) reject the Rule, the authority, and Lordship of Christ.
- The word "Even" heightens the level; it raises the magnitude of the false teacher's rejection of Christ as Lord, owner and master.
- Jude speaks of this rejection:

Jude 1: 8 in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones.

- For Peter the supreme sacrilege of the false teachers is seen in the fact that they deny the sovereign lordship of Christ. Although they may NOT deny his deity, or the legitimacy of his death and resurrection, they adamantly refuse to submit their lives to his sovereign rule.
- They may possess a knowledge of religious facts, they may appear to know the Bible. And their outgoing personalities and influence help them to gain positions of prominence.
- But they are unregenerate (Not Born of God) They do not possess a new heart, they are not indwelt by the Holy Spirit so they do not, no they cannot submit to the Lordship of Christ.
- One notable sign, one defining attribute of the False teacher's rejection of the Lordship of Christ can be seen in their immoral lifestyle. (I will elaborate on that later)
- Inevitably their continual rebellion leads to swift destruction. We see this also in the Proverbs:

Proverbs 19:3 When a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the LORD.

Contrary to what many Christians falsely believe today, people who reject the Lordship of Christ, and live in lawlessness are NOT merely second class Christians.

- There are churches who falsely teach that people can receive Jesus as Savior but reject him as Lord. Insinuating that there are two levels of belief.
- My friends, that's simply not possible. Jesus is either Lord of all or he is not Lord at all.
- The Bible reveals two kinds of people in the world, there are sheep and there are goats and sometimes they end up in the same corral. (Wheat and tares)
- Peter speaks of their denial and their destruction

Even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

- Now for those of you who enjoy digging deeper into the Scripture, Peter's wording may raise a theological question in your mind.
- Is it possible that someone who was Bought, Purchased by the Master could finally and fully fall away into eternal destruction?
- A straight forward reading of this verse seems to say that some who were bought by the Master, subsequently denied him and were damned forever.
- IS that even possible?
- Can genuine Christians commit apostasy? Is that what Peter is saying?

I have to ask: How does that fit with what Peter said in Chapter 1?

2 Peter 1: 3 **His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,**

1 Peter 1: Peter speaks of believers as those: 5 **who by God's power are being guarded (KEPT) through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**

In 1 Corinthians Paul says that the Lord JESUS **will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

- And Paul prays for the Thessalonians that:

1 Thessalonians 5:23 **Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.**

How can we reckon these seemingly different ideas?

Although these false teachers had entered into the community of the Saints and were thought of as those who were bought with the precious blood of Christ, their denial of His Lordship reveals that they never actually belonged to Him.

- The Apostle John speaks of those who left the church because they were never really part of the church.

1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

IN every church there are those who appear to be believers, the seed of God's word at first springs up in them but as time elapses and difficulties arise it becomes apparent from their lack of fruit that although they called Jesus Lord their disobedience proves that He never knew them. Listen to the Words of Jesus:

Matthew 7: 21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

- Even though they appear to exercise spiritual gifts of Prophecy and Power they do not belong to the Lord. Their hearts remain tied to the pleasures of this fallen world and they chase after those pleasures continually.
- They are not interested in promoting the Kingdom of God, all of their efforts, all of their energy is spent in building their own kingdom, fulfilling their own lusts.

And that brings us to Peter's final description: Sensuality

2 Peter 2: 2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 And in their greed they will exploit you with false words.

- The Word that Peter uses the word translated "Sensuality" is a very strong word, a plural word that refers to multiple forms of unrestrained habitual sexual immorality.
- Peter helps us understand the mind and motives behind these false teachers:
- Denying the lordship of Christ, rejecting the doctrine of coming judgment these false teachers abandon themselves to a life of lawlessness chasing after the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life.
- Jude captures our attention as he compares False teachers to the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah:

Jude 1:7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. 8 Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones.

When Jude says that these people rely on their dreams he is referring to the foundation of their erroneous beliefs the substance of their teaching.

- The doctrine that they espouse the error that they teach is as imaginary as their dreams as creative as their wild imaginations.

- There is no foundation of truth because they reject the more sure word of prophecy and teach their own fanciful ideas.
- Their teachings are carefully crafted in order to manipulate people for selfish gain, for sexual gratification and financial benefit.
- NOW my final question is WHY?

WHY would God, who is sovereign over all things allow these wolves to penetrate His precious flock?

- There are some who observe the Charlatans within the visible church and use their behavior as an excuse to malign the character of God.
- BUT those of us who know the Word, know that God is good.

In speaking to the rich young ruler Jesus asked, “Why do you call me good, No one is good except God alone.” Mark 10:18

- Not only is God good but he works all thing together for the good of those who believe:

Romans 8:28, we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Knowing that God is Good and that He truly does work ALL things together for Good for those who are called according to his purposes.

- HE must have some good reason for allowing these false teachers to exist, to continue their deceptive work.
- Where do we look for answers? We look to the Book.

Deuteronomy 13:1 "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, ‘Let us go after other gods,’ which you have not known, ‘and let us serve them,’ 3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

- The continual presence of false teachers among the people of God serves to test, to try and to prove their faith, whether it is genuine or not.
- When you listen to a preacher on the radio, when you tune into a podcast or watch an evangelist on TV and He says something that raises the hair on your neck, what do you do? Do you believe everything that you hear?
- Or do you dig into the Word of God? Look at the context? Ask to borrow a commentary? Discuss what you heard with one of the elders....
- When you do that YOU grow in faith and in the knowledge of the Lord.

LISTEN God doesn't TEST us in order that He might discover what is in US?

NO! He tests us for our own Good so that WE would know what is in our own hearts?

Deuteronomy 8: 2 And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.

In the wisdom of God he allows false teachers to infiltrate the flock because they serve to separate the sheep from the goats, their erroneous doctrines draw the chaff away from the grain and actually purify the church.

- Because Christ will have a Bride who is without spot or wrinkle.