

## *Lakeville Christian Fellowship*

**“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”** II Peter 1:16

Sunday August 17, 2008  
Morning Worship at Williams Camp  
Lakeville, Massachusetts  
[www.lcfbaptist.org](http://www.lcfbaptist.org)

Daniel J. Casieri and William Kujanpaa, Elders  
Russell Protentis, Deacon  
Sermon by Daniel J. Casieri

**Reading: II Peter 1:15-2:3**

**“Careful to ensure you always”**

**v.16. “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”**

There was a saying I coined when I was younger, “When in doubt, read First Peter”. Doubt about what? Doubt about anything pertaining to faith, to this life, to sanctification, to escape from perdition. Anything pertaining to our immediate state of salvation and our ultimate glorification. All these things are addressed by this beloved

apostle, and his second letter is written to assure us of these same essential realities.

A few weeks ago we looked into the current trend of appealing to our culture by becoming as a church more flexible, more willing to accept alternative approaches to evangelism and worship. In a word, more willing to compromise to achieve a result that is not commanded of God, which is to cater to capacity crowds with an *almost* gospel presentation, and an *almost* biblical exegesis, by *almost* preaching the word with *almost* sermons by *almost* preachers. And then just when we may begin to feel like caving in to such things just to be a part of the massive new movement of Christianity, just so that we are not relegated to being a tiny enclave of disillusioned purists clinging to outmoded ideas, or a yelping lap dog nipping at the heels of a formidable juggernaut that we fear will relegate us to irrelevance and obscurity, we come to the teachings and exhortations of Simon bar Jonah, nicknamed by the Lord, Cephas, Petros, the Rock. And in him we find that the truth is simple, and naked, and powerful to save, useful for assurance, in need of no assistance, providing its own defense.

And at the same time we find that those who would alter it, change it for their own uses, add to it to achieve their own ends, and delete parts of it so as not to offend those who hate it, are in fact enemies of the truth, *bringing in destructive heresies....denying the Lord....deserving of swift destruction....dogs turning to their own vomit....sows to their wallowing....wells without water...hearts trained in covetousness....spots on their own love feasts....presumptuous and self willed....brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed....accursed children....speaking great swelling words of emptiness....alluring others with the pleasures of the flesh...slaves of corruption...clouds carried by tempests....for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.*

No friends, Peter is not one to leave us wondering as to his meaning. His simple but descriptive style leaves us no room for doubt. We are either with the Lord, preachers and defenders of His word, or we are

pathetic self-serving sycophants of a perverse society drunk on its own need of approval and addicted to its unquenchable thirst for affirmation.

We are not those called to fool the world with creative techniques, we are called to win them with blatant truths. To even consider changing the gospel to suit ourselves and the latest whimsies of a soft and sorry world is to risk our own chances of escaping it for he writes: *“For it would have been **better for them not to have known the way of righteousness**, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them (II Pet.2.21).”*

We speak so often of the two sides of the Apostle Peter. We remember him fondly before the infilling at Pentecost where he talked up the Lord, but stood down in the face of opposition. we read from Matthew: *“And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, ‘Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you.’ Then he began to curse and swear, saying, ‘I do not know the Man!...(Matt.26.73,74).”* Only a short time later we read from Acts: *“But Peter and John answered and said to them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard (Acts 4.19,20).”*

This transformation is well known to us and we have heard preachers speak many times on the power of the gospel and the difference in a man who is filled with the Spirit of God and the fearlessness that He inspires, and a man only moments before who is left to his own devices and fearful of the disapproval of men. I would ask the preachers and evangelists of our day which profile of Peter do they wish to emulate? Are they fearful that association with the true Christ will inspire hatred among their friends and associates in this life? Or are they willing to stand with Christ and for His gospel despite the controversies that it inevitably inspires? Which Peter will we be? The Peter of the gospels who is little more than the friend of the world, or the Peter of the epistles who is sickened by his old sin and the work of

compromisers of his day who take the role of prophet yet at the same time make themselves a friend of the world and thus the enemy of the gospel.

Will we emulate the steadfast apostle, the eyewitness of His majesty, or will we be the fearful apostle not only following but himself inventing *cunningly devised fables* regarding the Lordship of Christ? Will we stand close to the Lord and the simplicity of the gospel, or will we choose to distance ourselves from the unpopular truths of the day. And make no mistake, the things that make our society recoil in disapproval and disgust about our gospel are the same things that made Peter’s society recoil. We are not good listeners when the subject is our own sin. We are not fair and equitable to hear those who proclaim that our God, our Christ, is the only hope for our dying souls, and that our own wisdom, our own good works, our good intentions, and our self-styled philosophies will avail us nothing but hell, and torment for eternity. Those who love themselves too much will despise a God who could devise such a thing for such as they.

The opinions of our society are very high concerning ourselves but they are no higher than those of Peter’s day who considered themselves exemplary moral specimens, intellectual giants, who believe that serving themselves is the highest good, and that God should be happy that they saved Him the trouble of blessing them. By and large we are content with our lot in our society, and if not content with what we have and what we might achieve we are content to covet and complain that others have more. There is a perverse sort of pleasure in all these things and these things existed then as well as now. Confessing our sin would only slow us up and retard our progress toward self-fulfillment. Considering punishment when this world has already given us a share of grief is hardly fair play in the minds of the relatively good people that strive each day to make ends meet and to act upon some internal moral code that allows us to sleep at night to prepare for another day’s toil and to reach for another perishable treasure. To be told that we strive as we do and prosper as we do is due to our blindness for the real treasures, to be told that we

should live by faith, when living by sight is so enticing and has become our reason for living, is hard enough to swallow, without being told that the meager living we have made through our constant toil and reasonable fair play and lawfulness is not enough to earn the commendation of the Savior is an insult of unimaginable proportion. Will we really stand for a gospel that condemns the multitudes? Peter's answer is simple, unpretentious, easily interpreted, and not without eloquence. His answer is 'yes'.

He writes in the next chapter: "*For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgement; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness....*" Peter is developing this theme that the false prophets who come with destructive heresies who's end is the way of death are those who will intentionally leave out this essential component of the true gospel. That is, that God does not save by consensus, He does not hear arguments, He does not compromise with current trends simply because a vast majority of sinners have chosen to partake of a moral trend. He saves those who, like Noah, are *preachers of righteousness*, and condemns those who *exploit you with deceptive words*. I have been asked often in my life, even by Christians, 'Do you believe that God would create so many multitudes of people only destroy the vast majority of them?' I don't know. But I do know that He did it once before.

I have read from a survey recently that makes the point that Christianity's major competitor is not other religions but no religion. Another survey reveals that 70 to 88% of children from evangelical homes leave the church by the end of their freshman year in college. At that rate genuine Christianity will be greatly diminished by the time our children are grown. Even with the so-called church growth movement and the proliferation of megachurches evangelical Christianity is losing ground as a percentage of American population.

Now, I am quite certain that this fact is well known to the leaders of

those large churches, and that probably accounts for the yielding to the temptation to tweek the gospel by leaving out the known obstacles such as the nature of man being despicably evil in the sight of God, the fact that we are all conceived in sin which accounts for our need of a Savior, the fact that the only alternative to surrendering to Christ is an awful eternity in a fiery hell, and worst of all that all other paths claiming to lead to God are satanic counterfeits and lead us precisely in the opposite direction. And so how can we describe these well-intentioned departures from the true gospel? By appealing to *cunningly devised fables*.

**v.15. "Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease."** Peter, as well as the other apostles, are not unfamiliar with the tendency in man to corrupt for our own purposes what God has graciously purified and offered to the world. He would not have us *short-sighted to blindness*. But rather he will emphatically remind us that he is no mere teller of tales, no purveyor of mysteries, no artistry or fiction is in his agenda at all. But rather to proclaim what he has experienced of God, and to note that his personal encounter was not something entirely new and unexpected, but rather occurred at the end of a long chain of events and prophecies of an ancient religion and should have been expected, and was expected by some, even heralded and exclaimed by those who heard the voice of angels, or of the prophet John. Peter himself is such a prophet who is not creating but reporting what he saw and heard and felt. And so he writes:

**vs.18-21. "And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."** The whole of the next chapter is an ominous reminder of the price we pay for listening to those who

tamper with these truths. What a blessing that we still have in our possession the very words of such men, and yet so many who would claim to serve God will not tell the story, will not give the essential details, will not sound the fearful warning, and yet will stand and preach to massive crowds and to the applause of men.

careful to ensure

These apostles were great men, men of whom the world was not worthy. Yet for the most part they died in obscurity and history is silent leaving only legend to tell us that Peter was crucified upside-down, and that Paul was beheaded in Rome. These men spent their lives as lonely itinerants preaching a strange message, bearing the insults and the injuries of the very ones they were sent to save, the very ones Christ Himself did love and died for.

But in our sterile little worlds we need to take the blood out of the message, we need to take the offense out of it, and so *we exchange the truth for the lie and worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever. Amen!*

No, Peter's generation was not so different than ours. I wonder how many today really believe what Peter writes in these verses. Did he see Christ transfigured in His heavenly glory on the mountain? Did they hear the voice of God? Are they the special envoys of Christ? Is their testimony enough to believe that their message is true and all others are false, all other gods false, all other prophets false, all religion only false ways? Do we dare to be as exclusive as the gospel calls for, excluding every other path to God but through His Son, other "witnesses" of Christ but the apostles, the other gospels and the other Jesus?

Somehow I can only find safety in the words this bondservant of Christ with whom I share a like and precious faith, by whose words I may receive all things that pertain to life and godliness, and by whose example *I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things. Amen.*