

Roy's Sermon for April 3rd, 2022

2 Peter 2:1-3 'Beware The Poison Of False Teachers!'

We finished off chapter two last time by looking at verses 16 to 21. 'Not Cleverly Devised Fables, But The Truth About Jesus!' As Peter answered those allegations that had been aimed at him and the other apostles, he asserts that their accounts of Christ were not merely figments of their imaginations, but those things which they had seen with their eyes and heard with their ears! V16 "we came to you not following cleverly devised fables, but we were eyewitnesses." He states his authority as one who truly was an apostle. He had lived and breathed and ministered with, and for, the Lord Jesus, unlike those who had "slipped in among them," those "wolves in sheep's clothing."

I explained, that the significance of these being his final words to them shouldn't escape us. The danger of falling into error and the eternal consequences of doing so were all too real! I said also that these people were not weekend warriors. They took their faith in Jesus seriously. They grasped fully, what it meant to be brought from darkness into light. And the foundation and proof-text of his defence was his, John and Andrew's witnessing of Jesus' transfiguration upon the holy mountain in Matthew 17! He speaks of the "dunamis and parousia," the power and presence, or coming of Jesus made manifest before their very eyes. And v17 "the voice of God being born to him out of the Majestic Glory." That word "megalorepouse," referring to the magnificence and Deity of God speaking from the cloud. "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased." Those words that were prophesied in Psalm 2, inaugurated at Jesus' baptism, confirmed in Matthew 17 and completed at the Cross!

We saw in v19 that though God's word can't be "made more certain" as such because it stands forever, it can be made more clear by certain events unfolding. And finally v20-21 "above all" or of most importance "no prophecy ever had its origin in the will of man." 2 Timothy 3:16 "all scripture is God breathed." So, those things being clear, hold to the truth. The truth about Jesus!

And so we pick up the letter in 2 Peter 2:1-3 'Beware The Poison Of False Teachers!' So having just spoken about the authority of his own testimony and the origin of all true prophecy and scripture, Peter now deals with the other side of truth, which of course is falsehood and false teachers! And we need to remind ourselves that he is dealing with Old Testament realities that still existed in his, and indeed in our own times! Ch.1:21 "for prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God, as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Ch2:1 "But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you."

Beloved, for us to really begin to grasp the gravity of what Peter is saying here and the depth of this farewell warning to the churches, we need to be reminded of the foundation upon which he builds. Deuteronomy 13:1-9 "If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods, gods you have not known and let us worship them", you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The Lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. It is the Lord your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him, serve him and hold fast to him. That prophet or dreamer must be put to death, because he preached rebellion against the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery, he has tried to turn you from the way the Lord your God commanded you to follow. You must purge the evil from among you. If your very own brother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you love, or your closest friend secretly entices you, saying, "Let us go and worship other gods", gods that neither you nor your father's have known, gods of the peoples around you, whether near or far, from one end of the land to the other, do not yield to him or listen to him. Show him no pity, do not spare him or shield him. You must certainly put him to death. Your hand must be the first in putting him to death, and then the hands of all the people. Stone him to death, because he tried to turn you

away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. Then all Israel will be and be afraid, and no one among you will do such an evil thing again.” Remember, Peter spoke of “following cleverly divided fables” in ch 1:16.

And notice in Deuteronomy that God actually calls them prophets. And those who foretell by dreams. And again notice, that these people proclaim that a miraculous sign or wonder is going to take place, and then it does. And we know that this is a possibility and a reality because that's what pharaoh's magicians did. They counterfeited both Moses` and Aaron`s first signs that they did in the presence of the king, before he let the Israelites go!

Yes in Deuteronomy God is saying that not only will these people speak of these things, but they will actually take place. And yet even so do not follow them because they are leading you away from Me! Beloved, here is the simple but scary truth. The miraculous in someone's life has never been, or ever will be, any evidence of the salvation of that person's soul. And similarly such occurrences, do not mean that they are necessarily from God.

Brothers and sisters, we have seen it before throughout this series that there are many today claiming the ability to do many things in Jesus` Name. Legs grow longer, the lame walk, the blind see and cancers are cured. While never ever wanting to limit the power of God, such people are a cancer themselves upon Christianity, and they are liars! But here's the thing. God did say in Deuteronomy that there will indeed be people who can do inexplicable things. And yet that is not evidence that they are of Him. He basically says If they are of Me they will speak of Me. If they are of Me, they will give all glory to Me. And if they are of Me, they will point you to Me by what they say and do. But if this is not what they do, “put them to death,” times five!

V6 “if your very own brother, or son or daughter or the wife you love, or your closest friend secretly entices you, saying; Let's go and worship other gods. V8 Do not yield to him or listen to him show him no pity. Do not spare him or shield him. v9 you must certainly put him to death. Your hand must be first in putting him to death and then all the people. v10 stone him to death because he tried to turn you away from the Lord your God.” No there was no ambiguity in God's instruction about the danger of false prophets and falsehood being introduced among the people, which would entice them away from His truth, which of course would ultimately be away from Him. “Put him to death.” “Put him to death.” “Your hand must be first in put him putting him to death.” No the miraculous is never evidence of the authenticity of Christianity!

A case in point. My friend Vic Matthews who was an optometrist, then pastor of Moruya Presbyterian Church and then an optometrist again, had the terrible experience of telling one of his clients that they had an inoperable cancer in her eye. She was going to lose her eyesight and then her life. She wasn't a Christian! But she went along to some kind of Christian rally. Eventually the person up the front asked for people to come down who needed healing. He then pronounced healing on this woman's cancer. So she went back to Vic and told him that she had been healed of her cancer. Vic said “Praise God, let's have a look”. And I'm sure you know what I'm going to say. But may I suggest, that you would most likely be wrong. Because the cancer, was gone! So again Vic said praise the Lord. Are you going to give your life to Jesus now? And her reply was well no. I've been healed. What do I need Him for?

Friends it's astonishing isn't it. The woman was going to soon lose her eyesight and then her life. She's delivered from that pestilence and death and yet even that, did not convince her to come to Jesus. No Brethren the spectacular or the miraculous is not evidence of truth or salvation. Because the greatest miracle, yes the true miracle in all of eternity is the salvation of each and every individual soul! The miracles were never intended to be an end in themselves. They were always intended simply to point people to who Jesus is. The long awaited Saviour of humanity had come and those things declared His Sovereign power and authority over all things. No they were never meant to be an end in themselves, which as some of you would be aware, is the main thrust of what

many are falsely claiming today in Christ's Name! v1 yes "but there were false prophets among the people, just as they 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."

Beloved, as we have seen before, the greatest danger to the Christian (the true Christian) comes not from outside of the church from nonbelievers. Though certainly it is true that even in our own country of such freedoms, all of the things which we hold dear and in increasing measure, are under attack. But the greatest danger to the follower of Jesus comes not from without but from within! Out of the mouths of those who claim Christ, and yet in reality are of their father the devil. Even as Jesus Himself called the religious elite of the day to be. And the greatest of these dangers come not from those blatant out and out heresies, but from those slight twists and tweaks of God's truth. "They will secretly introduce destructive heresies." Literally, opinions of destruction.

The word for secretly introduced, is "pareisaxousin" and it means with stealth. To creep in with stealth. With cunning. Just like those jet fighters which can't be detected by radar. These people too fly in under the radar. As they steal their way in and cunningly steer the faithful away from the truth! Friends, let's again take note of the powerful language that he uses here. The word that Peter uses here for "destructive," is "apoleias" and it is the verb from which we get the words "to kill." And also interestingly and insightfully, it is where we get one of the names of Satan from. Apollyon. And it literally means, the Destroyer. Again it's powerful language. He is saying that such people will lead us down the path to the destruction of our eternal souls. Even into the hands of the devil himself!

And as I have mentioned before, even if they are sincere in their delusion the outcome is the same. "Deceivers being deceived" Paul calls them. No sincerity is no measure of authenticity. And the pinnacle of such heresies. "Even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them bringing swift destruction on themselves." Even as Paul said to the Jews in Acts 18:6, We call Him King. We call Him Lord. We call Him Master. If we do so, then surely we must submit to His authority! And just quickly, when Peter says, "denying the sovereign Lord who bought them bringing swift destruction on themselves," he is not saying that they were actually bought with Christ's Blood and then lost their salvation, no. We know that this is an eternal impossibility because Jesus Himself said, "of all that the Father has given me, I will by no means lose any." No what he is saying, is that the Blood of Jesus which purchased souls from heaven, (though they had the appearance of faith) never belonged to them! So in the reality of their life and the fruit of that life, "they deny the sovereign Lord."

Yes by their life and their teaching, they were a blasphemy. The frightening thing is brothers and sisters, that just like those "wolves in sheep's clothing" in acts chapter 20, they are dressed just like the sheep. They seem to have all of the hallmarks of faith but there is something missing. Nay, there is Someone missing. Father, Son and Holy Spirit! Yes like those "white washed tombs" which Jesus spoke of; their souls are empty of the Spirit of God!

And friends look at the scary reality in v2 "many will follow their shameful ways." The word is "aselgeiais" and it means licentious. This literally means having a special licence. And in this context, having a licence to sin. Again that's how these deceivers have "denied" Jesus you see. The slant and the slight that they bring upon His teaching that they had "secretly introduced." Yes "many will follow their shameful sensual licentious ways and bring the way of truth into disrepute." Beloved, the greatest disservice that we could ever do to Jesus, is to bring His truth and the way of His "truth into disrepute." The word is actually "blasphemo" to blaspheme. To cause the Name and the Word of God to be reviled, ridiculed and treated with a vulgar contempt.

Paul writes in Romans 2:24 "My name is blasphemed among the gentiles because of you." You see what these people were secretly doing was twisting God's truth in their promoting of a life of sensuality. A life that was to be lived in the fulfilling of the desires of the flesh, which is completely opposed to the Truth of God. And even bringing that truth into being blasphemed. And friends, this

is something today that is happening all over the world due to people who falsely claim Jesus! Kenneth Copeland, Benny Hinn, Creflo Dollar, Joel Osteen, Steven Furtick, Jesse Duplantis. The list is endless. They talk of serving the Lord, but they do it from 30,000 feet while they're flying their private jets. And they also do it while they live their lives of AUSTERITY in their mansions worth 10s of millions of dollars. It is a blasphemy of the greatest kind in both word and deed. And the "bringing of the way of truth" into ridicule and condemnation!

Friends how clearly this next verse speaks of so many of these so-called evangelists, these televangelists today. V3 "in their greed, these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up." Even as those ones I mentioned last time. They have been to heaven and back on many occasions. Played golf with Moses, had barbecues with Abraham and the angels and walked the golden streets of the celestial city. The interesting thing is of course, is that they never mention Jesus, the King and Lord of not only heaven but the entire universe! And of course they have no need to consult the scriptures no. They get the Word of God from His very mouth spoken to them personally. No they don't have to prepare sermons. Such is their intimate relationship with God!

But yes what blasphemy. "In their greed they will exploit you with stories they have made up." They and their kind actually are, (what Peter and the other apostles had been accused of) Ch 1:16 "followers of cleverly devised fables." Yes they are "deceivers being deceived" and we must beware of them! The original sheds light on this verse. "And by covetousness with fabricated words they will make merchandise of you. For whom the judgement of old lingers not and their destruction slumbers not." The Tenth Commandment, (which is not the least of course, but in effect the summary of the last six, the second tablet of the commandments) says "you shall not covet, your neighbour's house, or his wife, or his manservant or maid servant, or his ox or his donkey or anything that is your neighbour's."

Well here we can see that these false teachers are indeed governed by "covetousness." It's what compels them. It's at the core of their being. It's why they wake up in the morning and drives all that they do. "pleonexia" is the word in Greek for "greed" before us and it is literally to covet! In Colossians 3:5, Paul tells the people to "put to death therefore whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry." The word is the same "pleonexia" covetousness. So at the very core of the being of these false teachers is self-interest.

Unlike what Jesus said to Peter in John 21 on the beach, "feed my lambs" "take care of my sheep" "feed my sheep" As I've said before, these people don't want to feed the sheep they want to feed upon them. But not only this, they want to fleece the sheep as well, says Lucas! Again, listen to the original. "And by covetousness with fabricated words they will make merchandise out of you." So in reality it sounds like they are in the process of building an empire aren't they. Does it ring a bell? Listen again to the words of v2. "Many will follow their shameful (meaning licentious sensual) ways." The word "many" here means a great number.

And we need to realize also here, that Peter is not saying a great number of people in the relation of the people of the world to the church, no. He means many who are in the churches, will sadly be enticed away! And this is a sobering thought for us all. I've said it before, that we all know those who have seemingly walked with the Lord for a time and then for whatever reason, they have simply walked away. Yes the "many" that he speaks of here, are found under the roofs of church buildings. That is why his warning is so urgent and his characterization of these people so graphic and damning. Again, does this ring any bells? "And by covetousness with fabricated words they will make merchandise out of you."

According to Peter, such people as these false teachers, look upon the sheep under their care as a commodity ready to be trucked off to the sale yards. Yes once they have fed them and fatten them up with their falsehood, (like the man that the Good Samaritan rescued) they abandon them in the

wilderness leaving them bleeding, beaten and naked by the side of the road! Beloved, this is a scenario that has been played out so many times over the millennia. And in our age of the Internet, it is rampant. To the devastation and betrayal of those who trust in these devils. They are but con men coming in the Name of Christ. Yes Satan coming as angels of light But their day of reckoning is coming!

We will look more next week at the character of these people and their ultimate end. But to bring things to a close this morning, let us all seek to heed Peter's warning. And as we have been seeing all along throughout this series; let us seek to hold to those simple and yet eternally profound truths about Jesus and His love. And not allow the poison of falsehood and false teachers, to carry us with them into the abyss! V3 "for their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping."

And from the words of Martin Luther, 'It is faith alone that saves. But the faith that saves, is never alone.' Ch 1:21 "for no prophecy ever originated in the will of man. But men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." Yes let us always and only hold firmly to the things of God's word.

Let's pray.