

1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; 3 and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

It's natural for a small church family to want their church to thrive. Right? I understand that. I'm painfully aware that visitors will come, often more than once, and then they vanish.

And I know you can't help at least ask yourself the question; if we had a different preacher would they have stayed. Would the church experience growth if Jim could tone it down. A little, maybe.

It's OK to ask the question. I ask the question. And I've got a couple of answers derived from my own soul searching.

First; I'm not very fuzzy. It's the way God made me, I'm never the popular guy. People enjoy me after they get to know me. They find out I have a sense of humor. An intelligent twinkle. But at first, I put people off by my natural shyness. God made me decidedly not the life of the party. It is what it is. I'll never be Billy Graham.

Second, and more importantly, the Bible is what it is also. It's a lion, and when you let it out of the cage, it frightens some, and eats others for lunch. How do you tone down a lion? Well, the answer is obvious. You leave it in the cage. Something I am not willing to do.

Timothy was under pressure in Ephesus. He may have had an ulcer. He was intimidated by men who were more powerful, perhaps more eloquent, and who were also older than him. It was taking a toll.

And Paul, who knew he would not be around this time next year, wrote to Timothy to encourage and uphold him. Here's what Paul told Timothy; 2Tim 4:1-5

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Let me see a show of hands. Who here likes to be reproved? Rebuked? Exhorted?

I rarely do that individually. But sometimes the Lion does. The word of God when it is taught with authority, has that effect on people. The Bible is a book that is in direct conflict with our natural fallen flesh.

From Genesis to Revelation, the lion of the Word of God constantly shows us ourselves in a mirror, and there is conflict. The conflict of the God of heaven and a sinful world. A perfect recipe for a small church to stay small.

We Americans are pragmatic folk. Especially in the 21st century. We are results oriented. Results sell big. Results are a multi-billion dollar business. Thousands of books and millions of words, to tell us how to get the result we want.

And evangelicalism is right at the front of the results oriented pack. All of the same seminars that corporate America pays huge money for their leaders to attend and get better results, get Christ-i-fied and repackaged for the christian crowd.

Christianized success seminars. Christianized leadership conferences. Christian books are a multi-billion dollar business. But the lion is a problem. People don't like the lion. So . . . what to do? Tame the lion? Pull out his teeth? Leave him in his cage? Maybe put a curtain around the cage so he'll sleep most of the time.

Talk a lot about the lion, but leave him alone. Don't wake the lion up. Let sleeping lions lie. Tell lots of stories about how ferocious he is, but leave it at that.

Well, there's nothing new under the sun. And the folks in Timothy's and Peter's day were just the same as folks are now. Paul says; *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.*

What happens when there's power and prestige and money available and all that's required is to jettison the Bible? Since Peter's time until our time there is no shortage of people who will fill that role. Teachers who will back away from the scandal of the conflict of sinful people and righteous God.

But the problem is; we aren't talking about christian lite. We're talking about something less than real christianity. Ultimately, the teachers and most of the taught, will go to destruction.

This is serious business. We're talking eternal destruction. Jesus said; Mt.13:13 *Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life, and only a few find it....*

What all of these passages have in common is a christianity and a gospel that has stopped short of a salvation that is regenerative. Of course, that's an oxymoron. There is no salvation without regeneration, but that accounts for much of what Jesus taught in the Matthew 13 parables.

Wheat and tares growing together. Seed that sprouts but never produces any fruit. The real and the phony. It gets choked out by weeds or burned out by sun or eaten by the birds, and no increase ever comes. Seed that does not bear fruit, and tares mixed in with wheat; are not real christians. They look like christians, but they are not.

We've talked about the schemes of Satan before. He runs the cosmos. The world systems. I've often thought he runs his money scam all day long and his sex scam all night long. And booze and drugs. Drugs are getting big these days. All that stuff is the world's stuff.

But for the church of God, he runs a far more subtle scam. False teachers. Teachers who introduce a psuedo-christianity that is attractive to non-christians.

And in true form, he has all different styles and colors of christianity without Christ. Something to appeal to all the different types of customers.

Everything from high-church religiosity, complete with the christian versions of pharisees, to low church name it and claim it and mail your money off to Creflow Dollar christianity and a thousand other schemes in the middle.

Because it turns out you can poison a man a tiny bit at a time or all at once. Either way, he's just as dead. And as we'll see, this has been going on for as long as God has had a people set apart to be His own.

The jews had it, and the church has it. And Satan's filling up hell with religious people. And as a bonus, from time to time, he'll blow up his own false people and it hits the news like a poop bomb and the real church is dis-credited. Again. And again and again ad infinitum ad nauseum.

That's what this second letter from Peter addresses. And that's what the entire parallel book of Jude addresses. And there are many many other places in the New Testament and the old that address false teachers and false prophets. It is a problem that will never ultimately be solved until Jesus returns and crushes all evil.

So, let's dive in and learn about false teachers from Peter.

I But . . . stop right there. The reason for the conjunction right at the beginning of chapter 2 is that when Peter wrote this, there were no

chapter and verse breaks. And what Peter says here is directly part of the discussion at the last of chapter 1

1:19 So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. 20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

Peter is telling us how real scripture happened and then he says, but there were phony counterparts to the men moved by the Holy Spirit who brought us the real scriptures.

That's how Peter launches us. There was the real; but *false prophets also arose among the people,*

Satan never has an original idea. He traffics in counterfeits. Real prophets, false prophets. Real scripture. Heresy that sounds like real scripture, written by false prophets and false apostles and taught by false teachers. This is how Satan rolls. From ancient times to today. Nothing new here.

He has counterfeit christs and counterfeit mother and child religions and counterfeit saviors who died and came back to life 40 days later, and on and on.

but false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you,

Peter uses a most interesting choice of words here to define Satan's method with God's people; past and present.

Two distinct groups and two distinct types of method to introduce error.

pseudoprophētai false prophets is used to define Satan's method with God's people past tense. The term 'the people' refers to Israel.

pseudodidaskaloi false teachers is used to define Satan's method with God's people present. In this sentence the pronoun; *you* represents the church.

It's absolutely consistent that Satan sows false doctrine wherever God reveals truth. Israel received the oracles of God by direct revelation through the agency of angels, and directly through Moses who was a prophet, and all of their writings were called the law and the prophets.

So, for them, Satan used false prophets. *pseudoprophētai*

But the church is different. Apostles, chosen by Jesus the Christ received the new covenant oracles of God and the church is set up with teachers who teach the apostles doctrine. So we have *pseudodidaskaloi* false teachers.

Satan is so consistent. The prophets were the moral compass of Israel, and teachers, who we see in Paul's exhortation to Timothy, teachers who are also preachers, are the moral compass of the church.

Satan's attack is on the truth. Truth is the rudder that steers. Satan uses other things to get the world into hell. With God's people he attacks the truth. False prophets. False teachers. And by extension fake preachers teaching fake truth.

who will secretly introduce destructive heresies,

Fascinating words, and we do well to work slowly and carefully here. False teachers *who will **secretly introduce***; the word is only used but one time in the new testament, and it is *pareisagó* it is a conjunction of two words, *para* which means to come from behind, and *eisago* which is to introduce.

These men sneak up behind the church. They come stealthily. They

don't come in the front door with guns blaring. They come in the back door, un-noticed. They use stealth to get into a place of enough authority that they can begin spreading; next words . . . destructive heresies.

Destructive is a word used more often in different forms. Here it is *apōleias* and the meaning is ruin, loss, perishing; eternal ruin.

You'll recall that in Revelation 9, in the fifth trumpet we see a form of this word. *...10 They had tails with stingers like scorpions, which had the power to injure people for five months. 11 They were ruled by a king, the angel of the abyss. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek it is Apollyon.*

False teachers who stealthily come into the church, they sneak up from behind, and their doctrine is the doctrine that destroys. Apoleias doctrine from Apollyon, the king of the abyss. Doctrines from hell. Different form of the same word.

And final word here; heresies And the greek word here has within it's meaning, not only error, but an error which encompasses a self-chosen opinion, a religious or philosophical sect, discord or contention.

So the picture is complete. You have a teacher who comes in stealthily, comes in the back door, and teaches destructive error, and causes a split. He tries to get the people to follow him in his error and to separate them from the truth. A false shepherd that leads the people into hell.

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

And here's the common denominator of all false teaching; in some form or another, in a thousand different ways, they deny Jesus. The word for deny is to say no to. Leave the Lion in the cage.

I suppose books could be written about all the different ways Satan concocts to strip Jesus of the real power of His resurrection. Let me just throw out a couple in order to give you an idea of how this works.

(1) The Mormons have Jesus. But it isn't the biblical Jesus, it's a Jesus they've invented. They've got a fantasmagasmical Jesus that's actually, if you get right down to it, he's the brother of Lucifer.

But their Jesus doesn't forgive sins. He doesn't give you His perfect righteousness and take your sins away in His body to the cross. In Mormonism, it's up to you to be righteous. But Jesus is big. Many mormons have a picture of Jesus on the wall. Helpless brother of Satan Jesus. Their sin remains. Do not be fooled.

(2) Much of modern evangelicalism has Jesus who is Saviour Jesus who will save you and let you live any way you want because he doesn't require you to recognize him as Lord. This is very subtle. But that is a denial of the Jesus of the bible who IS Lord of everything. Saviour-but-not-necessarily-Lord, Jesus is A different Jesus. A Jesus foreign to the Bible.

(3) If we ever study Galatians together (and I hope we do) we'll find a Jesus who takes second place to legalism. First you have to be a legalistic jew and then Jesus will have you after that. Legalism Jesus. Work your way to heaven Jesus.

(4) Spoiler alert. I'm going to pick on Catholics. The Romish Jesus is a corporate symbol hanging all over the place on his cross, but it's baptism and church magisterium and good works and the pope that ultimately get you to heaven.

And Mary can help in that. She almost overshadows her son in some places. We don't own the place or I can tell you just about how fast the ridiculous picture up on your right would come down. Corporate symbol Jesus.

A thousand different ways and a thousand different Jesus's than the biblical Jesus is Satan's method to steer religious people onto the broad road that leads to hell. Error is rooted in hell. Error takes religious folks to hell.

And Peter says; *bringing swift destruction upon themselves* The heresy brings destruction to teachers and hearers as well. And Peter says it's swift. He'll expand that in the next section so we'll leave it at that this morning.

Vs.2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;

Often, but not always, the defining mark of heresy is a relaxing of biblical morality.

In our day and time we're witnessing a mass exit. The evangelical and main line protestant churches, and even the pope is squirming all over the place trying to find some way to be on the so-called "right side of history".

The bible is clear. God created us as sexual beings. Binary. Male and female, made He them. And within that context, biblical morality never wavers. It is crystal clear. Sexuality is by God's design and enjoyed ONLY by one woman, one man, in the context of marriage, which is a life long commitment.

Anything outside those clear boundaries is sin. Period. Purity is believing and following that crystal clear biblical mandate. And that's always been difficult. Because the world thinks that's nothing short of comical. Rediculous, and getting more bizarre by the day.

So one of the signs of false teachers is to relax biblical morality. Lower the standards. Wink and let the worlds morality come in. People who do that, are false teachers.

Relaxed morality is a destructive heresy. Galatians 5:19 *Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

When a teacher in the church allows those fleshy things Paul lists for the Galatians to be practiced, it is destructive heresy.

The key word there is practice. James says we all stumble in many ways. We sin and there is forgiveness. But if these things are the ongoing practice in your life . . . we can only surmise, you're not a christian at all.

Then notice the second part of Peter's statement about sensuality and immorality in the church; *and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned*;

This is value added bonus for Satan and he loves it. Besides the end result of destructive heresy, which is not to inherit the kingdom of God, which is a nice way to say; hell, satan enjoys an added bonus.

He regularly blows this type of sin up so that the on-looking world actually maligns the church. That word maligned is poignant. We think of a malignant tumor. A cancer that causes a sickness unto death. The whole body is sick and realing.

Peter says, thanks to those folks, the world will call the church malignant. The world blasphemes, or speaks evil against the church. Satan just loves that.

If you're bored like me sometimes at work and you look through the Bing latest headlines feed last week there was a story about Andy Savage, of Highpoint Church in Memphis who abused his power as a youth pastor 20 years ago, he was 22 and the girl was 17, and it blew up last week. He resigned his position of ministry in the church.

I'm not here to say any more about that. It could be that the sin was dealt with and never happened again. But Satan used it last week in order to bring blasphemy against the church. Current headlines. By association, the church is full of power abusers who are getting sex. That's how the world reads it, right or wrong.

And we see that weekly. Satan has a double standard. The world is

hypocritical and holds the church to a different standard than they hold themselves to. Someday God will judge them by their own standard they judged others with.

Meanwhile, the church is blasphemed by the world because of sensuality in the church. Weekly headlines. Brought to us sometimes by false teachers who teach a different Jesus that allows immorality. That's a sure sign of a false teacher. And Peter's going to introduce another sure sign;

Vs.3 and in their greed they will exploit you with false words;

Remember, early on, I said that with the world it seems Satan's main scheme is money and greed all day long and sex all night long.

Well, by verse three we have both schemes, practised in the church, or what claims to be the church, by false teachers. Sex and money.

Two main motives of false teachers who sneak in the back door, unawares, get in a position to teach, and syphon off folks with the underlying motive of getting rich, or getting sex, or allowing relaxed moralities in both areas that are attractive to those who would follow them.

*3 and in their greed they will **exploit you** with false words;* Creflo Dollar, and others in that same ilk, I always think of him first because his name is easy to remember. Just one example of a false teacher who is exploiting peoples money.

He's flying around in a million dollar private jet. If you'll just send money to him, God's going to open the windows of heaven and dump out money on you. And little old ladies are mailing money to him and eating dog food. And in the bargain they'll get hell.

It's a sickening thing to watch. And our gut reaction is, why does God allow that to go on. Why doesn't He squash those guys like a bug. And Peter says, don't you worry, God is going to squash those guys like a bug.

their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

But maybe not today. Peter is sympathetic to our gut reaction. Squash those guys God. Please. But meanwhile, Creflo is fueling up his jet. Actually he's having lunch at the airport restaurant while the flight crew is fueling up his jet.

You say, it seems like God should do something. These guys are bilking people out of their money. Often, people who can't afford to be bilked. And it looks like God is having a snooze. Where is the judgement.

Peter reassures us here. *their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.* God isn't asleep. Peter will remind us later that with God, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like one day.

God isn't asleep. The judgement for false teachers is already set, and that harvest will be reaped, in God's time, very soon. Peter's going to expand many of these ideas, beginning with this one, judgement, in the next sections. Stay tuned.

False teachers are from the gates of hell and they ascend on the church, they sneak up with stealth, they come in the back door, and they cause havoc within the church of God. They're like the guy in the Allstate commercial. They bring mayhem.

Sometimes we look around the vast canopy, the enormous tree that calls itself the church, and we are astonished. Sometimes it seems like a malignant sore, beyond healing. Sometimes we feel overwhelmed. Is Satan winning?

We have this promise. *Upon this Rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell **will not** prevail against it.* Mt.16:18

I look around and I have to ask myself. What is the percentage, inside

this giant tree canopy that calls itself Christendom, identifies as the church, that will be leaving when Jesus comes in the clouds and says; *Come up here.* Rev4:1

Personally, I lean towards pessimism. My guess is somewhere between 2% and 10% and I'm way closer to the 2. I've been told by many that I'm too pessimistic. Jesus just said the gate is narrow to life and the way to destruction is a broad road. He didn't give numbers.

Too pessimistic? I hope so. Meanwhile, beloved, we must individually and corporately study the truth so that when Satan sends his messengers and they try to come in the back door in this place, they will be met with strong resistance in this congregation.

Never forget God's recipe for destruction among His people; Hosea 4:6 *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.*