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## The Second Epistle of Peter

### *Calling the Word to Mind*

*September 24, 2017*

**Sermon Text:** 2 Peter 2

**Scripture Reading:** Jude 1

The anchor of a ship is one of its most important tools. A ship that is set adrift is headed for disaster. The anchor must hold and it must particularly hold when a storm comes. The same can be said for the ship's rudder. No way can the ship stay on a safe course if the rudder goes bad. Holding and steering, you see.

Peter has been calling us to be certain our anchor holds and our rudder effectively guides us, and it is the Word of God that fulfills these roles in the Christian's life. Storms come our way that strain the anchor lines and

work to knock us off the path Christ has called us to walk. And so Peter gives us these encouragements:

2 Peter 1:5 **For this very reason, make every effort** to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge...

2 Peter 1:10 **Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent** to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.

2 Peter 1:12 **Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities**, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.

2 Peter 1:15 And I will make every effort so that after my departure **you may be able at any time to recall these things.**

2 Peter 1:19 And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, **to which you will do well to pay**

**attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place**, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,

What is this “prophetic word” which we must pay diligent attention to in the darkness of this world? We are not left to wonder:

2 Peter 1:20-21 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. God’s Word. It is our anchor and our compass.

As we come to the second chapter of Peter’s letter, the threat to our faith is identified – in other words, this is why Peter has been exhorting us so strongly to hold and stay on course. Here is the storm that comes against us:

2 Peter 2:1-3 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, 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. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

It is absolutely vital that we learn to automatically compare things we read or hear, and probably in particular, things we read or hear that claim to be speaking for Christ, with Scripture. That is to say, we must *think biblically*.

It is not at all hard in these days to find many examples of people who claim they are Christians but who make incredibly preposterous statements that the most baby Christian could recognize as error. These Le kind of people have failed to heed what Peter is exhorting us to – diligence in paying close attention to what the Lord has told us.

Hebrews 2:1 Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.

### Learn From History

*“But false prophets also arose among the people...”*

Peter has just been speaking about Scripture not being a matter of a human’s own invention. Scripture is

God's Word because God "moved men by the Holy Spirit" in such a way that they spoke from God without error. None of it is a product of an "act of the human will."

Hebrews 1:1-2 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, (2) but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

Now, what happened in those days? In the days of Israel? False prophets arose. From where? From *among* the people of God. It is not hard to think of examples:

Jeremiah 23:9-18 Concerning the prophets: My heart is broken within me; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, like a man overcome by wine, because of the LORD and because of his holy words. (10) For the land is full of adulterers; because of the curse the land mourns, and the pastures of the wilderness are dried up. Their course is evil, and their might is not right. (11) "Both prophet and priest are ungodly; even in my house I have found their evil, declares the LORD. (12) Therefore their way shall be to them like slippery paths in the darkness, into which they shall be driven and fall, for I will bring disaster

upon them in the year of their punishment, declares the LORD. (13) In the prophets of Samaria I saw an unsavory thing: they prophesied by Baal and led my people Israel astray. (14) But in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery and walk in lies; they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns from his evil; all of them have become like Sodom to me, and its inhabitants like Gomorrah." (15) Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets: "Behold, I will feed them with bitter food and give them poisoned water to drink, for from the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness has gone out into all the land." (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.'" (18) For who among them has stood in the council of the LORD to see and to hear his word, or who has paid attention to his word and listened?

And now Peter tells us something incredibly important, yet something that most professing Christians today seem to totally disregard:

*“just as there will also be false teachers among you”*

Typically, who were the false prophets that we see in biblical history? *They were the clergy, the prophets and the priests, the Pharisees and Saducees and scribes.* Listen to Jeremiah again:

Jeremiah 23:25-36 I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!' (26) How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart, (27) who think to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, even as their fathers forgot my name for Baal?

(28) Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the LORD. (29) Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

(30) Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, declares the LORD, **who steal my words from one another.**

(31) Behold, I am against the prophets, declares the LORD, who use their tongues and declare, 'declares the LORD.' (32) Behold, I am against

those who prophesy lying dreams, declares the LORD, and who tell them and lead my people astray by their lies and their recklessness, when I did not send them or charge them. So they do not profit this people at all, declares the LORD.

(33) "When one of this people, or a prophet or a priest asks you, 'What is the burden of the LORD?' you shall say to them, 'You are the burden, and I will cast you off, declares the LORD.'

(34) And as for the prophet, priest, or one of the people who says, 'The burden of the LORD,' I will punish that man and his household. (35)

Thus shall you say, every one to his neighbor and every one to his brother, 'What has the LORD answered?' or 'What has the LORD spoken?' (36) But 'the burden of the LORD' you shall mention no more, for the burden is every man's own word, and you pervert the words of the living God, the LORD of hosts, our God.

Take very, very careful note of verse 30. The false prophets were typically “stealing ‘my words’ from one another. I take this to mean words which these false ones *claimed* were God’s words. And look what they were doing – *they so called prophecies they claimed were the Word of God were nothing more than the rote phrases and ideas and falsehoods that the*

*other lying prophets were speaking.* Why do I emphasize this? *Because this is precisely what is happening in our own day.* I could give you example after example. Pastors and teachers and theologians in the church are very typically claiming to be declaring God's Word but in fact they are simply passing on the falsehoods and perversions of Scripture that they have heard from other false teachers. I heard it just this last week. A lady who was the victim of terrible and prolonged domestic abuse sent me an audio of the church service in which she was disciplined, leading up to ex-communication, because she filed for divorce. And in that audio you hear the pastor so piously and confidently telling the congregation what God has to say about it all:

- God hates divorce (of course, you knew that one was going to be there)
- Matthew 18 is the Lord's procedure that is to be followed in dealing with every unrepentant sin in the church
- Adultery and desertion by an unbelieving spouse are the only reasons God permits divorce

And there the people sit in that very large church soaking it all in, listening to the very kind of falsehoods Scripture warns us against, and

accepting it without question. Where did this pastor get these teachings that he is presenting as God's Word? I can tell you. He didn't get them from diligent study of Scripture. He got them from the other lying prophets of our day who crank out books and podcasts and sermons and seminars, who gain celebrity status, and who are consulted with every question.

I had an email from a fellow this week who was studying a horrific coverup of abuse at a well-known Christian college and he said something that is very true. He said "we need to be done with conferences and seminars that put celebrity figures up on a stage while the masses soak in their every word." He is absolutely correct.

Here is another example. I read a blog last week that talked about "the dumb sheep" sermon that has been so often preached in churches. The writer did a good job showing how completely false this is:

- Isaiah 53 says "all we like sheep have gone astray" (that is where the dumb sheep sermon begins).
- Therefore, all of us Christians are dumb sheep
- Our bent, our nature, is to go astray
- Our heart desire is to turn away

from Christ and go our own way

- So Jesus, the Good Shepherd, has to drag us back and sometimes if we are particularly obstinate sheep he has to break our leg so we can't stray
- Sheep are quite helpless in the face of a wolf, rather defenseless in fact

This of course denies the very core of the gospel:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, (10) nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Yes, Christians battle the flesh, *but we battle it and we do so by the Spirit who is in us, actively leading us.* And what about this defenseless bit? What about the armor of God we can take up!!

Of course the dumb sheep sermon goes wrong right at its opening premise.

Isaiah 53 is not speaking of New Creation, regenerated, Spirit-led Christians! It is speaking of the sinners Christ came to die for.

Now, Peter's powerful application:

2 Peter 2:1-3 But false prophets also arose among the people, **just as there will be false teachers among you**, 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. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

*"...just as there will be false teachers among you..."*

Once again, take very careful note of that word "among." I think that most Christians, when they think of false teachers, primarily think of the cults (Mormons, JW's, etc) or of the liberal denominations that reject the inerrant Word of God. And to a degree you could say that these at least originally *started from among* us in the church. But the typical origin of the false teachers we deal with arise *from within the church.*

2 Corinthians 11:3-4 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (4) For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. (14) And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. (15) So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

As I have often encouraged you, just consider how much of the New Testament (and really the entire Bible) was given to us because false teachers had arisen from within the church. This requires constant diligence on our part, diligence in “calling these things (Scripture) to mind.”

If you study the history of many institutions – universities, hospitals, churches – what will you find? That though they began well by following Christ and serving Him, these creeps

crept in, as Jude puts it, and introduces what Peter calls “destructive heresies.”

Now, what characterizes these evil ones? What are their identifying marks?

- They operate in disguise, *secretly* doing their work.
- They are anything but harmless. They destroy the work of Christ and lead people away from keeping their eyes on Christ
- And they are quite successful! Many will follow them
- Their false teaching is characterized by “sensuality.” It is carnal and it appeals to people who crave to have their fleshly desires fed (thus showing that they do not really know the Lord)
- They are *greedy*. That is their purpose. Self-gain and Self-glory.

Over the years in the ACFJ ministry we have had contact with many people who claim to be “serving the Lord” in various “ministries.” And I cannot tell you how common it has been to see “self” being promoted. Greed is their motivation. They want fame and notoriety – a name for themselves. They lead people away from Christ.

They use (exploit) people (most of

whom claim to be Christians) to achieve the self-glory and worship they crave. Secretly, deceptively, they introduce false and evil doctrines, teachings that appeal to the sinful flesh, and MANY follow them. This, I have no doubt, is the explanation for the mega-church phenomenon. But make no mistake, many smaller sized churches are infected with this same plague.

I have been convinced for quite some time now that we need to reject the “Christian celebrity” figure because this is one very common way false teachers exploit us. Let me give you some examples:

- A well-known “Christian” blogger offers his services by announcing that in a particular week he is inviting people to “ask me anything about anything.”
- Very, very commonly you have the conferences and seminars in which Christian celebrity big-names are up front on a stage expounding to the crowds. *The same celebrity figures keep appearing at conference after conference and people accept about anything they say as “Bible.”*
- Another well known celeb figure who has written horrid books and

articles that enable the wicked and further oppress victims of evil, is now (with her new husband) “live on the air” being interviewed about how she and her husband operate in their marriage. And it is presented as truth which listeners are encouraged to follow. It’s God’s way” after all, right? *Think about it, what kind of mentality and motivation are evidenced by such a thing? Humility? Hardly.*

Now, understand what Peter is telling us about this “secret introduction” of destructive heresies. It is *secret*. That is to say, these wicked ones present themselves as sound, Christian, biblical people. They wear a disguise. And as a result, they deceive many. “Oh, don’t you dare say anything negative about him/her. They are wonderful, godly people.” That is the common response you get when you point out what such people really are.

So we see that Peter’s warnings here are largely going unheard and unheeded by many, many churches, pastors, and professing Christians today.

Here is a tip on how to spot one of these wicked ones. *They crave and*

*love and exist for the “ministry” they are doing.* For example, I knew a false pastor once many years ago who wrote a book about how his many years as a pastor could be described as “carefree and loving it.” And you don’t have to look far to see other examples of the same thing. These are the people who absolutely “live” for their “ministry.” Many of them write books about how to be a successful, biblical pastor. I used to read that stuff sometimes and consistently I would never make it to the end of the book because it depressed me. At first I thought I was the problem because I wasn’t anywhere near what they were describing and I didn’t want to be.

The same can be true of you. You read the books of these kind or listen to them at a conference. And if you are honest with yourself, you are thinking, I don’t even begin to reach the goals they are talking about and I must really be sinful because I really don’t even have a desire to live like they are saying I am supposed to, in my marriage or in my family or in my own private thoughts.

But what is really happening? The Spirit of Christ in us is rejecting the secret, deceptive, destructive heresies these people are using to try to use us, to exploit us, to lead us away from Christ, which cause the unsaved we are

trying to be witnesses of Christ to to think negatively of Christ. Because such wicked ones are really teaching evil, ungodly, unscriptural things that cause the true Christ to be maligned and rejected. In other words, the “gospel” that many professing Christians are presenting to the unsaved is a false gospel that drives people away from Christ.

Peter is not even close to being finished with the Lord’s pronouncement of judgment against these evil ones and we will continue to hear him as he warns us further about them.

But before we do that, next time we must think carefully about this phrase in 2:1 –

*“...even denying the Master who bought them”*

What is the issue here? Well, we believe that Reformed theology is a correct teaching of Scripture. And we know that this system is often represented by TULIP.

- Total depravity (man is completely fallen with no supposed island of goodness left in him)
- Unconditional election – The

Lord does not save us because of any merit in ourselves

- Limited (definite) atonement. Christ actually died for and effected the redemption of His people
- Irresistible Grace – nothing can stop the Lord from saving His elect
- Perseverance of the saints – Christ’s people cannot ever be lost.

Now, if Christ died on the cross as the Christian’s Redeemer and effected our salvation, a salvation that can never be lost, then how can Peter say here that the judgment of these false teachers is from long ago and that they deny Christ, *and at the same time say that they “deny the Master who bought them?”* In what sense then are these reprobate wicked ones “purchased/bought by Christ?” Is this not an example of the very opposite of the fundamental 5 points of Reformed theology that we believe are biblical teaching?

That is the question we must turn to next time.