2Peter 11-11-18b

This is Friday, the 18th of November, 2011. We're in the book of 2 Peter, chapter 2, and we resume this evening at verse 12. We'll take a moment before we begin to go to the Lord in prayer, focus our concentration, lay aside the distractions and things that might interfere with the ministry of God's Holy Spirit, both in the presentation and in the grasping of the truth from God's Word that we hope to look at tonight.

Shall we pray? Father, we are grateful for your watch care over us, your presence, your power that has been imparted to us through the Word and through the Spirit. We thank you for this passage from Peter and the message that it contains that is pertinent and applicable for each one of us. We ask that you will bless us as we study it together.

In Jesus' name, amen. Let's take a look at this passage. We left off last time in verse 11.

We'll pick up back at verse 9. Having given the example of earlier events in the Old Testament, Peter says, If you've seen these things, you know that the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment. And especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and who despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed.

They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, whereas angels who are greater in power and might do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand and will utterly perish in their own corruption and will receive the wages of unrighteousness as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls.

They have a heart trained in covetous practices and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Baor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but he was rebuked for his iniquity, a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice, restrained the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

Well, this is a dismal description. Not one of the more celebratory passages you find in scriptures. Pretty depressing.

However, it's quite interesting. I wish we all knew Greek. I wish I could just do this in Greek.

I will just hit a few of the Greek highlights without slowing down much. But there are many repetitions here that help us get the drift. But before I get down to the specifics, let's remind ourselves of why this is here.

What is Peter talking about? We remember, I've gone in great detail with who he is writing to. We know these people are immersed in a very depraved culture. And they might be asking themselves, why are we here? And not only that, but having gotten there, Peter is now warning them to stay true to the word of God that has been delivered through the prophets of old and through the apostles of not so old.

The Old Testament scriptures that they brought with them, they have established small synagogues in these Jewish Christian outposts in Pontus and Galatia and Bithynia and Asia and all these places they've gone to. And they've got scrolls of the law. And he says, don't neglect that.

You remember that these men wrote under the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the apostles of the New Testament, the apostles of the New Covenant, commissioned by the Lord Jesus Himself, have similarly brought God's word. So, he says, there are not only these outside influences that you've got to insulate yourself against and fortify yourself to deal with and try to fortify your children, but just as in the Old Testament, there were enemies from without, your Canaanites, your Moabites, your Ammonites, your Philistines, your Ne'er-do-wells of every shape, color, and stripe, but there were false prophets among the people. There were the ones that said, let's build a calf.

This is the God that brought us out of Egypt. There was Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. There's false teaching, false prophets, those who would lead people astray that are part of the group.

And that's who he's talking about. And this is very important because that level of dismal blackness of darkness forever that we just got through reading about, keep in mind, where are we in the letter? Who is Peter talking about? We had to do the same thing in Romans. Remember in Romans, when you've got the wages of sin is death and all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, who's he talking about there? Believers.

And you can really get muddled if you try to attack Romans without remembering who it is written to and what it is written about, all of which is given in chapter 1. I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It is the power of God for deliverance to them who believe. Paul, to the saints which are at Rome, he's writing to believers, saints and faithful.

So, same thing here. Peter is saying, look, there were false prophets among the people even as there will be false teachers among you. Now, we have to make a determination.

Is a false teacher going to be an unbeliever? It's possible, I suppose. Somebody would infiltrate the church and begin to teach untrue interpretations and false doctrines and twisted and misconstrued, cherry-picked scriptures, prosperity gospel, social gospel or whatever. They've got Reformation theology.

They've got all kinds of fancy theologies now that have action in the world as their goal. But

typically, if I'm an unbeliever, why would I say, I think I want to go get in there and become a leader and a teacher amongst the Christians? It just doesn't seem very likely. It seems like if I was an atheist and a godless infidel, I would want to go to a society of atheists or become scientific or become a philosopher or a movie director or something.

But I wouldn't decide. I think a real warm, cozy spot for me would be in a church where I can spend all my time twisting the Bible upside down. I suppose it could happen.

But false teachers among you, this is going to be believers who have deceived themselves and are now deceiving others. They believe in God. They believe in the scriptures.

But at some point, they have left the straight path. And in their delusion, they have created a larger delusion and sold it to a lot of people. Notice we saw this at the beginning of the chapter.

False teachers among you who will surreptitiously or without anybody realizing it, bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them. Jesus didn't buy everybody. His atoning work, His redemptive sacrifice is efficacious for people who express faith.

They are blood-bought saints. They're not so saintly, but they're blood-bought. So when we get down here, it's important to remember this because look at the level of judgment.

Look at the darkness in this passage before us tonight. It is sobering to say the least. We pick up just a little bit back in verse 10, remembering what we covered last week.

There are two major headings under which their error falls. One is the walking according to the flesh in unclean desires. So they are unregenerate in their walk.

Now they are regenerate believers, but their practice, their lifestyle is that of an unbeliever. If it is not aimed at heaven, if it doesn't have as its goal partaking of blessing and reward from God, what is its goal and aim going to be? Self-gratification. So the walk, the practice, the pattern of life is going to be driven by the unclean desires of the flesh.

Now, what are these? Of course, the first thing that leaps to everyone's mind is perversion and sexual gratification and that sort of thing. But what are the more common and more acceptable forms of desire of the flesh? Materialism, the desire to be well thought of, a sense of accomplishment at the personal level. I want to be recognized.

I want to be appreciated. I want to be well spoken of, well thought of. And to do this, I will throw the best party or drive the nicest car or wear the most expensive clothes.

I will do whatever I can to make sure people are aware of my gifts and talents and accomplishments. I will be competitive with others. I will try to rise to the top.

I will try to be notable, leave my mark, like Absalom trying to raise a monument to himself

because he had no son. Well, this is a desire of the flesh and it can creep in in the most subtle ways. It can make us touchy when we feel like we're not getting our due or these goals are not being accomplished.

If we're being hampered in our pursuit of recognition or if we're slow to accumulate material things or material things are taken away from us or whatever, whatever it may be, these are desires, unclean desires of the flesh and it is a pattern of life. It can be very innocuous. It could just be the pursuit of a sport or a hobby or an attainment of some particular pursuit.

But these people go one step further. Not only do they live this lifestyle, but they are a proponent of it. They will stand up and encourage others to join them in it.

So you have books that are written. You have tapes that are offered. You have radio programs and guest appearances and speaking engagements where proponents of whatever it may be, I've been listening to an interesting book about the history of the positive thinking movement and going back to Norman Vincent Peale, before that to Dale Carnegie and even before that to people who have been purveyors and promoters of this idea going back a couple of centuries.

Interestingly, the roots of Christian science are to be found in the early positive thinking movement. Material reality can be manipulated by your mind. There's really no such thing as disease.

There's no such thing. I read a Christian science epitaph. I've quoted it for you a few times in the past.

But when I was stationed in Lawton, I rode my bicycle out into town one Saturday just to do something different. And I rode through the cemetery and I came upon a very ornate headstone and it had this inscription on it. And back then I had a decent memory.

So I sat there for a couple of minutes. I memorized it. And it said, mind is the master power that molds and makes and man is mind.

And evermore he takes the tool of thought and shaping what he wills begets a thousand joys, a thousand ills. He thinks in secret and it comes to pass environment is but his looking glass. Well, this is Christian science.

Whoever's planted under that stone is probably not coming back up. Not until after the millennium. But, you know, man is mind.

He takes the tool of thought and shapes what he wills. And if he uses his thoughts effectively, it's a thousand joys. If he's a nerdy well, it's a thousand ills.

But he thinks in secret and it comes to pass. If you think it, it is so. Visualize, you know, they make vision boards.

I want a new boat. So I'm going to cut out a picture of a boat and stick it in the middle of the board. And I'm going to decorate it with anchors and fish and fishing rods and life preservers and things associated with boats.

Somebody had instructions for making a money vision board. And so you take the four corners off of a dollar and you glue those corners onto the corners of the vision board. Everything inside is money.

And it has mystical power. It's magical thinking. And it is impressed with itself.

I can think thoughts powerful enough to make stuff happen. The power of positive thinking. How to win friends and influence people.

Vincent Peale and so on. Well, these people, this is where it says in verse 10, they are presumptuous and self-willed. Self-willed doesn't really quite catch it here.

The word translated self-willed is authades. A-U-T-H-A-D-E-S. And this word partakes of arrogant stubbornness.

Arrogant stubbornness. If you look at the verb from which it comes, authadeia, or actually that's the noun, authadeia, is preoccupation with one's own interests. Arrogance, willfulness, and stubbornness.

So, but preoccupation with one's own agenda. This is what they are. It's not so much self-willed as self-centered.

Self-centered would probably be a better modern translation. Presumptuous is another good word. This is Tolmetes.

And the Tolme word group means bold and audacious to the point of hubris. You think nothing of going in where angels fear to tread. You're just so impressed with yourself that you figure whatever you do is right.

And so Tolmetes was used in Josephus, for example, when he says there are some people who are being falsely accused. They're standing there and they're overwhelmed at the false accusations brought against them. And he was one of a daring character combined with modesty, meaning he would speak up when others would not.

And he would advance when others would fall back. Audacious might be a good translation. Audacious and self-centered.

People look on and are somewhat shocked. And of course this audacity and self-centeredness is a big part of their desire to get in front of people and bring others with them. They think, wow, this is great.

Let me assemble a group. Somebody hits on a thing and now within the church they're going to rise up and their victims, their prospects are their fellow believers. Hey, I have figured something out.

And they rise up. They are not the recognized authority in the church. They're not a known elder or pastor or teacher.

These are false teachers. But they've got an audacious and largely self-centered desire to recruit others into their way of thinking. I had this happen once when I was a midshipman and there was a guy that was a Christian and actually from this town.

But he had done some study on his own and talked himself into being a Calvinist. Well, he wasn't content to be a Calvinist himself. He wanted any other Christians he knew to realize what a great thing Calvinism was.

And so he set his sights on me and we were stuck there for a three or four day weekend one time and we spent that entire weekend talking from dawn till dusk, ate together, sat in each other's rooms, stem to stern, pillar to post, Calvinism versus non-Calvinism. And he had been doing this for a while but he had never had the chance to talk to somebody that knew their Bible well enough to counter many of his cut and dried, sort of canned arguments which he had picked up from his wide reading. But there was something beyond an interest in seeking the truth.

He wasn't really questioning to say, well, is there a better understanding? He was like, I've got enough arguments that I can wear you down and make you one of us. And this is what it means by this audacious and self-centered goal. It's not an honest quest for truth.

Now, I've met other Calvinists that were in a completely different camp. Who were on an honest quest for truth and had found a lot of truth in Calvinism. And then eventually, because they were continually hungry, grew through and beyond it.

And all of us start from somewhere and are hopefully moving in the direction of the Lord. But these are happy with what they've found and now they want to rope others in. Therefore, they are not afraid to speak evil of literally glories as we saw last time, And the question here is, what are these glories? Because he goes on to say, whereas angels, greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.

And you get the idea that these glories might even be lesser angels, fallen angels perhaps. It's just not clear. It's odd to call them glories.

But they are powers above and beyond the human. And there's all kinds of glory. You can be a glorious failure.

You can be a glorious ne'er-do-well. You can be a glorious criminal. There's glory in the criminal

realm.

It isn't real clear here, except that their presumptuousness means that they attack things they don't understand. But now we pick up at verse 12. These like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed.

Now this seems kind of harsh, don't you think? These like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed. The Greek is really much more elegant here. And it's worth looking at.

The first word there, natural. This is phusikos, P-H-U-S-I-K-O-S. And you'll remember that U's turn into Y's a lot of times when they come across from Greek.

So what is this in English? Physikos, physical. So when it says natural, we're talking about the physical world. The word brute is also a bit of an exaggeration here.

This is a logos. You remember what an alpha privative is, right? You stick an A in front of something and it's a negative. So what's logos? Logos is thought.

This is the word. In the beginning was the logos. The logos was with God and the logos was God.

This is conceptual truth. So if it's a logos, what would they be? Unthinking. Irrational.

Illogical. Incapable of rational thought. A logos.

If Christ is the logos, they are a logos. And I think there's a double entendre here. Not only are they unthinking, but they're at the opposite spectrum from the logos, capital L. So they're physically oriented.

They're in the physical realm. They're unthinking, especially when it comes to the logos of Christ. And then it says beasts.

And this is simply Zoa. We've got a cat named Zoe. And Zoe in Greek means life.

So they're living things. Beasts, again, is kind of harsh. Other places it's translated living or living things.

So they are physically oriented, unthinking or thoughtless living creatures. And of course, you look at the animal realm in this regard. Animals can't really carry on a conversation.

They don't conceptualize in the abstract. Now they can conceptualize. A dog can have a real clear idea that he wants you to get his bone or let him out or to eat a squirrel.

It's a concept. He can think. He can imagine all the ways you watch them when they're sleeping.

They have a dream life. They can conceptualize, but they don't think about it. You've seen the movie where they just go, squirrel.

Well, that's about as far as their logos gets. And so the idea here is the comparison to these false teachers is that they have abandoned the image of God in which they are made. They have consciously surrendered it.

They have left it. And they're instinctual. Hey, if it feels good, do it.

I'm getting a feel-good experience here. And this is a real caution because what happens when you wind up with religion attainment where you go there and it is music plus visuals plus group psychology and it is all aimed at experience. Well, it's physical.

It references the spiritual. There's a lot of names of God and songs of praise and so on, but what does it hook into? People say, oh, I have such a thankful... God is not worshipped through emotion. God is worshipped through appreciation.

Emotion can be a part of appreciation, but appreciation cannot be emotion alone. Ask yourself this question. If they could give somebody a pill that would just fill them with love... There's been stories about this.

I'm going to put a spell on you and the next person you see you're going to fall madly in love with. And the person says, oh, this is great. I'm going to put this spell on my boyfriend and he's going to fall madly in love with me.

But they put the spell on and something happens and the maid walks in and now he's madly in love with the maid. Or a dog walks in and he's madly in love with the dog or whatever. An unthinking emotional appreciation isn't what anybody wants.

You don't want to just be emoted over and gushed over constantly and say, well, why do you love me? Well, I don't know. I just think you're great. And God doesn't want that either.

God has a name. He has a reputation. He has accomplishments.

He has attributes. And he wants to be appreciated for those attributes. And if you just wave your hands in the breeze in a rhythmic fashion and say, oh, we love you, Lord.

We love you, Lord. We just love you. We just really praise you.

We just thank you. We just glorify you. We just love you.

And I can imagine God in heaven saying, can you give me a single reason why? Oh, Lord. We just, you know, the music. This is an appeal to the physical and to the irrational.

And Peter says, these false teachers encourage that. They are leaders in it. It's their pattern of life.

And the animals that exist this way, it says they are made to be caught and destroyed. The word caught here is halosis. H-A-L-O-S-I-S.

Not halitosis, just halosis. And this doesn't mean so much. It has to do with the catching of animals specifically for food.

You're not out there hunting vermin. They're not vermin to be caught and destroyed. They're not coyotes or something that's a pest.

These are food animals. So you think about the American frontier. You want to catch something that you can eat.

And that's why the word destroyed is also something of an exaggeration. This is thora, P-H-T-H-O-R-A. And thora is a really interesting word.

I worked for hours on this word because it occurs several times in this passage. Its first and foremost meaning is to dissolve, to deteriorate, to be consumed away, to disappear through attrition. It's something that can corrupt away.

It can be dead and corrupt in that way. It can dissolve, decompose is a valid translation of this. It was used, by the way, in the Greek world.

It's not in the New Testament. But it was used of an abortion. A woman doing away with an unwanted pregnancy would be thora.

I was starting to swell up, and now I'm not swelling up anymore. It's going away. So it's something that goes away through a process.

Something happens. It's eaten. It decays.

It decomposes. Dissolution of some sort. And then that led to the conceptual use of it as ruination through immorality.

We talk about someone being dissolute, and therefore it came to mean depravity, and ultimately destruction. So, for example, in Galatians 6.8, we've memorized this verse. Be not deceived, for God is not mocked.

For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap thora, the wasting away, the disappearance of a thing. He who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

We saw this, by the way, earlier in our letter, 2 Peter 1.4. Remember when he was saying, By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the thora that is in the world through

cravings, through lust, through physical desires. So, all the way through this letter, Peter is contrasting. Here is the culture you've been immersed in.

It's physical, it's lustful, it is emotional, it is caught up in self-gratification and self-interest. What we have been delivered into, we've been delivered from that into heavenly things, things that partake of the divine and the internal and the incorruptible. So, what would a false teacher do? If the holy prophets and apostles are leading us to God and revealing to us the truth that partakes of those divine, eternal things, what is a false teacher going to do? Drag us back to the sensual and the temporal and the lustful.

And so, that's what they do. So, they're dragging you back to the animal world, back to the unthinking, consumable world, and we just escape that. Why would we want to go back? Like Paul argues in a different way in Romans, because the grace of God is so great in forgiving sin, what shall we say then? Shall we sin that grace may abound? God forbid.

Just because there is a way of escape, we want to move further into the way of escape, not return and see how much sin we can do that God will still forgive. Well, in the same way, if we've escaped these corrosive, corrupting influences, why would we want to go back to them? But there is an allure, there is an attachment that we have in our flesh to these things, and there is a resonance, there is a desire in all of us that we won't shake until we get our resurrection bodies, and these teachers tap into that. And it feels like truth.

It feels good. It feels like good, capital G. But you can't go by feelings. Feelings will deceive us.

Debbie Boone, my favorite example of this, it can't be wrong if it feels so right. You light up my life. It can't be wrong if it feels so right.

What are they thinking? She's a Christian, Pat Boone, her father is a Christian. It can't be wrong if it feels so right? All kinds of wrong stuff feels right at the moment. You can't operate on feelings, but that's the realm in which these false teachers operate.

Well, we've got to pause here and take our break, but when we come back, we're going to see that Peter is going to put this word Thorah to work. This word is going to get some use in the upcoming passage. So we'll pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we'll see how far we can get through here. I hope to get all the way through 17, but we'll see how it goes.