

2Peter 11-12-02a

This is Friday the 2nd of December 2011. We're in the book of 2nd Peter chapter 2, and we're concluding that chapter, the section in verses 19 through 22, moving into chapter 3. We'll take a moment at the outset to exercise our priestly prerogative by going to the Lord in prayer. Father, we thank you for this evening and this opportunity to spend time in fellowship, to seek a better understanding of your word and to elucidate from it these truths that are so important for our lives in the present day.

And although they were written nearly 2,000 years ago, we know that they have been pertinent for every generation of believers and never more so than for us. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will superintend, that he will minister these things to our hearts and enable us to see their application, their meaning for our personal walk before you as we see the day of the Lord's return drawing ever closer. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Let's review this section. You remember that this is Peter's second letter, and he's going to remind us of that here pretty shortly.

But the subject is false teachers. Peter says he is going to be checking out soon, and he wants to put the believers of his generation in mind of the important truths that they will need to sustain them after he is gone. And that is true for those who were alive in his day and for everyone since.

And he could have said a lot of things. He could have said, watch out for ethical disintegration, watch out for the government, watch out for the Romans, watch out for any number of things. But his subject here in this entire second chapter is false teachers.

The biggest threat to success and to growth and maturity and fruit is the successful infiltration of false teaching into the hearts and fellowships of believers. And so he warns about it, and he gives it in great detail. And you'll remember he says this isn't an innovation.

Satan has been using this ploy since the days of the prophets when he would instigate and empower false prophets. And it is one of his favorite strategies, and he does it in the church. And he says in the same way that there were false prophets, there are going to be false teachers who will sit down beside you and suddenly be in your midst.

They're going to infiltrate, and they are sneaky, and you've got to watch for them. They're not going to come in with a great big false teacher hat. They're not going to come in cackling and twiddling the ends of their mustache and saying, ha, ha, ha, here I am.

They're going to be subtle. They're going to appear to be legitimate. They will insinuate themselves into the confidence.

Notice they are attending feasts and fellowship gatherings, and they are welcome there. They

don't have a bouncer at the door saying, false teacher, no entrance for you. They are part of the group.

This rises up from within. An infinitude of churches have split because dissension and division arose in the fellowship from somebody who suddenly espouses a different view, a false understanding, a false emphasis comes in. Now, how do you know if it's false? What if there's just a legitimate difference of opinion? Well, I think Cain was a believer.

I think Cain was an unbeliever. Well, me and my friends all think he was a believer. Well, me and my friends all think he was an unbeliever.

Well, we're going to sit on the left side, and you all sit over on the right side. Well, we're not going to sit at all. We're leaving.

These things get blown out of proportion. They are made into essentials when in many cases they are non-essentials. So there are two elements involved in the appearance of false teaching that Peter delineates here.

As you move through, after he gives his examples that we looked at earlier, he says, these like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, and we saw what that means, that they have abandoned the use of reason that distinguishes us from the animal world. The thing that makes us different is that we can think, we can reason, we can deal with abstractions, we can draw logical conclusions, we can process and assimilate information, and this is part of our image of God. But they remove themselves from that realm and instead choose to operate at the animal level.

What is the animal level? I feel like doing this. My bladder is full, the dog says. I'm going to go find something to lift my leg against.

I'm hungry. I'm going to find something to eat. I'm disturbed.

I'm going to reach out with my claws or my teeth. It's instinct. It is animal impulse.

And they abandon the use of reason in preference for impulse. And he describes this in the verses we looked at last time in 13. They will receive the wages of unrighteousness as those who count it pleasure to carouse, to pursue pleasure.

Basically, carouse sounds like it's all full of alcohol and scantily clad women or something. It just means to pursue their personal pleasure all day long. There are people who work hard during the day and now it's Miller time.

Now it's time to do something different. And they segregate. They do hard work and then they play hard.

There are other people who say, well, let's forget the work part. Let's just play all the time. And this is what Peter is talking about.

They pursue pleasure in the daytime. There is no cycle. There is no alternation.

It's I want to please myself all the time. They are spots and blemishes. And of course, this is what Jesus wants to eliminate from his bride.

He wants to present to himself a glorious church, not having spots and blemishes, wrinkles, any such thing. Holy and without blemish. So this is exactly the thing that the Lord Jesus will expel, expunge and purge from the church.

They once again reveling in their own deceptions. And this is deception to the point where you believe it yourself. You've convinced yourself that it's true because it is a pleasurable and enticing and attractive fiction.

I just finished a book called The Bright Siding of America or something like that. And it was published a couple of years ago. It's a very interesting analysis of the deleterious effects of the positive thinking movement in this country.

The last chapter, chapter seven, is called How Positive Thinking Destroyed the Economy and details the slap happy, giddy, devil may care, unrealistic message that everyone believed that the housing market can only go up. You know, these financial instruments are all good. And anybody who gave case after case after case of people who tried to raise the alarm and were fired because they were negative.

You're not on the team. You're not supporting the company here. And very, very detailed, very sober, very fact based analyses were submitted.

Person gets fired. You're not the kind of person we want around here raining on our parade. And of course, when it came true, these people can say, well, see, I tried to tell you, but they're still out of a job.

And the companies that they had worked for are also all out of job. But this false. Optimism, false analysis that says everything is fine when it isn't refusing to acknowledge or address issues and problems.

This is not the word of God. This is not Christianity. And it has swelled itself all in, through and around the church today where there is positive confession.

There is we want our worship to be upbeat. We don't want to talk about sin. We don't want to talk about judgment.

We don't want to talk about problems. We want everything to be a rosy glow. We want everyone

to leave feeling uplifted and more more positive about themselves.

We want to build up their egos and restore their confidence. And we don't want to say negative things. We know we're not going to cover any of these thou shalt not and and dire predictions of punishment.

Oh, no. Let's. God wants to bless you.

God wants to open the windows of heaven. And of course he does. But it's a twisted truth if you only give it partially.

Having eyes full of adultery or an adulteress. And this what's interesting here is it doesn't say arms full of adulterous, does it? It says eyes full, because this is the pleasure in prospect. You haven't actually if your eyes are full of the adulterous, you this is before anything has actually happened.

This is if you're old enough to remember this, this is sort of a Jimmy Carter moment. This is this is anticipation. This is the expectation and the pursuit.

The allure of something is just beyond reach. Eyes full of adultery. Eyes full.

I'm looking for it. I'm watching for it. I'm anticipating it.

I'm I'm dreaming about it. I'm getting vicarious pleasure remembering it. It isn't even talking about the practice.

It's talking about the prospect and the the allure that occupies the mind in times when really nothing is going on. And eyes that cannot cease from sin. It's just looking here and looking there.

And it's a feeding frenzy. Enticing unstable souls. It's one thing to fall into error yourself.

It's something else to drag others along with you or entice others to join you. And there is a great judgment on teachers who not only espouse false teaching, but lead others into it. And it's one of the hazards of the teaching call is if you mess up, your judgment is greater than average because you have led other believers astray.

And when your job is to is to attempt to lead in the direction of Christ and in the straight path, lead people to pasture where there is water and grazing. And instead, you're trekking across the desert promising them a bigger lake and taller grass. And you've instead led everybody into fruitlessness.

Peter spends this entire chapter on the hazard, the danger, the description, the destruction associated with false teachers. He doesn't say clean up your immorality per se. He doesn't say become more faithful in your good works per se.

He doesn't say get out there and witness and evangelize per se. He says, by way of implication here, you have got to be centered on and fed from the truth. And if error creeps in, if it is insinuated in by these false teachers, it will destroy everything.

Our life is built on the word of God, the truth of God. And it has to be true truth. Small compromises can end up making big differences.

Because as soon as you begin to shave off the corners, as soon as you begin to omit portions, you lose balance. You lose the intrinsic properties of the word of God that correct, rebuke, and instruct us. You're only going to take a part.

How would you like to have a strong prescription medicine that only told you the good stuff on the label? If you take this strong prescription medicine, it will cure your headache. It will take away your chest congestion. It will clear your head and you'll be able to read.

This is most wonderful medicine in the world. So take it in good health. And that's the whole instruction.

No hint of, oh, by the way, don't mix this with certain other medications. Don't drive while you're taking this. Don't take too much or it will have a very bad effect on you.

We don't want to hear any of that bad stuff. We only want to hear the good. Well, that's dangerous.

Even when the thing itself is good, we've got to hear all the sides. We need all the information, right? So, these who are false teachers have a hard practiced, exercised, gumnado. They've been to the gym and worked out on this.

In covetous practice. In setting their eyes on short-term, materialistic, pleasurable satisfactions. I do this all day long.

I don't wait for the evening to get some pleasure. I do it all day long. Everything I do.

Everybody I talk to. All of my pursuits are designed to please me and make me feel better. Covetous practices, they are accursed children.

And you think about that Semitic cultural value going back thousands of years. Of having sons that you bless. You're on your deathbed.

You're Jacob. You call your sons before you. And you lay your hands on them and you bless them.

Judah is a lion's whelp. Joseph, the double portion. You know, all of these things.

And yet when there is failure, there is a cursing. Remember when Reuben comes up to Jacob?

He tries to say some good things about Reuben, but he doesn't get the leadership. He doesn't get the double portion.

He doesn't get the priesthood. Why? He defiled his father's couch. The next two in line, Simeon and Levi, could have had the double portion.

Could have had the leadership. Could have had the priesthood. Either one of them.

And Levi actually ends up with the priesthood, but kind of as an ironic twist. Since you love chopping up the animals of your enemies so much, you're going to chop animals for God. And so Levi ends up with the priesthood, which should have gone first to Reuben and then to Simeon.

But it ratchets down to number three. The rulership that should have been either Reuben's or Simeon's or Levi's drops down to number four, Judah. The double portion that could have been any one of the first ten brothers goes all the way down to number 11, to Joseph.

But what is the ideal? The ideal is when the father calls his son, as Jacob does with Joseph, and actually Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and crosses his hands, but he pronounces, blessing. Blessed children. Children are a blessing from God.

The fruit of the womb is his reward. And you want children to be blessed. The worst thing in the world is for a child to be cursed instead of blessed.

Ham's fourth son, Canaan. Cursed be Canaan. And Canaan was cursed and is a curse all the way down because of his association and implication in the debauchery following the flood and the planting of the vineyard and Noah and all of that.

So, accursed children. This is the worst possible outcome. Why be a child if you're going to be a cursed child? And this isn't a happenstance.

It's not an accident. This is brought on their own heads. They chose this.

They have pursued it. They have made a practice of it. They have worked out to get better at it.

This is one of the stranger things I read somewhere. I hadn't really thought about this, but the propensity for fitness among young people. And somebody remarked somewhere that people are basically doing this because they are toning their bodies for sex.

And I thought about it for a long time. I just thought people were working out because they wanted to live longer or be healthier. But if you think about it, in our culture, people mainly want to be toned up.

They want to attract an opposite. That's a lot of the motivation. I want to be attractive.

I want to be alluring. I just hadn't really thought of it in that light. I'm sure it's not true in every

case, but it's a component.

I just never had it crossed my mind. Practiced. Spending time and energy devoted toward the cultivation of personal pleasure.

Now, this next part. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Baor. I think in your King James it says Basor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.

And we saw that this self-gratification is why God stopped Balaam, even though he had given him permission to go. Because he was going for the wrong reason. He was rubbing his mental hands together, already spending the money he was going to get from Balak, caring nothing about the people of God, when he knew they were the people of God.

And God had told him that those people were marked for blessing and not cursing. Yet he's heading in that direction because he says, I'll figure out a way. I'll say something ambiguous and it won't actually be a curse, but I'll get paid.

Oh, what I can do with these shekels and these silks and these fineries and these riches. This has gotten so many people in trouble. You remember Gehazi.

You remember when Naaman the Syrian gets healed. And Naaman had brought all of these riches to the prophet. And the prophet said, I don't want any of that.

Take it back. Well, Gehazi goes running over the hill. No, the prophet changed his mind.

He will take some of that. And it's the allure. People just see that and they think, I've got to have me some of that.

And that's what he's talking about here. But look at it. It's not that alone that is condemned.

What is this chapter about? This is being preached. It's being preached as okay. And the section we're going to look at tonight is going to really bring this home.

We've talked about the dumb donkey restraining the madness of the prophet. We've talked about wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. I want to give you the Greek on this just quickly.

It says, for whom the gloom of the dark. This is the Zophos. Z-O-P-H-O-S.

That's the gloom. This, by the way, was the same word that was used back in verse four. God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to Hades and delivered them into chains of Zophos.

Now, you remember, those angels are not like a fire angels. Those were angels that were given a

specific mission. They compromised that mission.

They were disobedient. They were not rebellious. They didn't follow the dragon's tail out of heaven.

Separate issue. There's so much complexity in the angelic civilization that we know not of. Their hierarchy, their government, their history, their doings, the things of God.

There's a whole Bible full of angelic history that we aren't qualified to even look at and study yet. But we will. But we just get tastes, and we get little tidbits.

A lot has gone on with the angels. They're not just a freeze. They're not a bas-relief.

They're not just a little statuette. They're not a plastic-winged creature in your window for Christmas. They are sentient.

They are active. They are a civilization with a long, long history, much longer than ours. And all kinds of stuff has gone on with the angels.

All kinds of stuff. This is one episode that we just have a glimpse of. And these angels were disobedient.

And there's not a uniform, one-size-fits-all judgment. Well, if anything goes wrong, it's hellfire for you. This was something that went wrong, but it was of a different sort, of a different kind.

They have free will. We have free will. Why are we being left in this world to train our free will to not mess up in the future? These angels are an example.

They messed up. They misused their free will. They're not going to be consigned to the lake of fire.

They are imprisoned in Zophos. This is not a sin unto death, if you will, for the angels. But notice, the very same Zophos is what is reserved for these accursed children.

They are children. Unbelievers are never called children of God. Mankind, in general, is never called the children of God.

Never. Not once, not ever, in Scripture. Only misguided, misinformed people try to say, you know, the family of man, the brotherhood of man.

We're all brothers, therefore we're all sons. No, we're not. And these are children of God, but they are under a curse.

These angels, do you think being imprisoned in the darkness is not a kind of curse? It's a judgment. It's a punishment. Curses are a judgment and a punishment.

That's what they are. Blessings on Mount Ebal. Cursings on Mount Gerizim.

Blessings and cursings. Benefits and detriments. Right? So, nobody should be shocked when it says that sons of God, children of God, can be cursed.

You can be. If you make a consistent, practiced, gymnazo series of bad decisions, you will put yourself in the darkness. And it says that it is reserved.

This is a perfect from tereo. T-E-R-E-O, which means to keep or to guard. And this has been kept.

This fate has been reserved. It has been put in a protected area and saved. Nobody's in it yet.

Nobody is there yet. It's reserved. You don't teach five false things and God grabs you by the hair of the head, lifts you up over the city, and drops you into the darkness.

It's reserved. All the way up until your last breath and your last moment. You can repent.

You can recover. You can do something different. I wouldn't wait until my last breath.

But this is the fate that is reserved for those who never repent, never recover, never get with the program. And who teach others also. They pursue this.

They're sprinting to the tape of disobedience. So it is reserved for them. It is yet future.

Hasn't happened yet. So this is a future state. And what future would that be? This is post-resurrection, post-rapture.

Paul says many different places. All of the apostles say you don't want to be ashamed at his coming. You don't want to show up at the judgment seat and have a flash fire of your wood, hay, and stubble.

We've got to take this seriously. There are dire, bad, possible outcomes at the judgment seat. And this is one of the worst.

For whom the Zophos of Skotas. It's the Zophos of Skotas. S-K-O-T-O-S.

This is darkness. And Zophos really means gloom. It's shadowy, unbright status.

This is the middle of the night with a five-watt nightlight. Just enough to get around and bark your shins on things. The gloom of darkness has been reserved.

Now, what is the gloom of darkness? Well, darkness is relative, isn't it? There's all kinds of optical illusions you can see where you take a gray disc and put it against a white background. And right next to it, you take that same gray color disc and put it on a black background. And when you

look at it, the one on the black background looks much lighter than the one on the white.

And they're exactly the same color. The level of gloom really depends on what you're comparing it to. Compared to being lost, compared to being separated from God, it's brighter than that.

But compared to the celebration in the feasting area where God the Father is throwing the bride and bridegroom, this wonderful party and the friends of the groom are there celebrating, you are in the gloom which is outside, the darkness which is outside. And compared to what you could have had, compared to the white raiment, compared to the hidden manna, compared to walking with Christ in white ruling, returning with him to judge the world and help set up the millennial kingdom, and all of the rewards that are beyond what we can ask or think, this is pretty darn gloomy. You're in the rear with the gear.

You're sitting there, this little light of mine. You've got a birthday candle where you could have been in the illuminated center stadium of the forward progress of God's plan. You're outside like a virgin who let her lamp go out.

You're frantically striking cardboard matches trying to get it relit. That's the gloom. You're useless.

You're helpless. You don't appreciate. You don't understand.

You can't be involved. It is a gloom and it is reserved. And I am happy to tell you that in your new King James, and if you've got a King James, the word forever isn't there.

It is the gloom of darkness has been reserved, period. The unto the ages idea is only found in your later westernized texts. It's not in your pristine older texts.

It's just not there. Somebody thought they'd add a little punch to it, but it creates a theological problem because now what's the use of sending out the healing leaves from the tree of life in the kingdom of the Father if you're stuck in the gloom forever? People assumed that the gloom of darkness, in fact, the Bible knowledge commentary from this place right here says that the gloom of darkness must be hell. They don't say it is hell.

They say, well, this must be hell. That's what it says. Look it up in the Bible knowledge commentary.

Well, no, it's not. It is a judgment. It is part of the curse, but God can lift curses.

If there is change of mind, and as long as we've got free will, there is the possibility of change of mind. You can go into the future now. You're never going to be where the people were who were faithful in this life, but you're not in the blackness of darkness forever.

It doesn't say that. It says that the blackness of darkness has been reserved. It is being held in reserve now as a waiting penalty, a waiting judgment, for those who actively lead astray the

people of God.

What would you expect? Here you are, a blotch, a blight, a sower of discord, a deceiver, a renderer of fruitlessness, a purveyor of corruption and disintegration, and when Jesus comes back, oh, hail fellow well-met, come into the feast, sit down, have some manna, here's a white stone, here's your new name. Does anybody seriously think that you could be a complete ne'er-do-well and reprobate and false teacher, deceiver, partaking of the lie that comes from Satan, who was a liar from the beginning, and that there would be no consequence when the Lord comes back? It's unthinkable. Of course there will be a consequence.

What is that consequence? God has it reserved. You're going to be sitting in the gloom while God's plan and purpose moves forward with those who walk in the light because He is in the light, and who have fellowship and who have their sins cleansed and purged because in humility we claim the grace of God and the blood of Jesus Christ. It makes a difference what we choose in this life.

It makes a difference at the judgment. It makes a difference in the future. It can't help but make a difference.

It's the justice and righteousness of God. And of course gloom and darkness are going to be reserved for reprobate, disobedient, self-interested enemies of the cross who have cut themselves off from Christ and are actively seeking to lead others down that same destructive road. Of course there's going to be a judgment.

You would expect nothing less from a holy God. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray. They are wells without water.

When they speak, look at verse 18, when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, this is really a funny, if the subject weren't so serious it would be funny in Greek, because when it says great swelling words, the word in Greek is overinflated. It's hooper agka. It means overinflated, it's overblown.

And the very next word is mataiotes, which many of you know is the Greek word for a vacuum. So it's with great overinflated words of vacuity. It's overinflated emptiness.

It's a great big balloon full of nothing. It's really, it's almost an oxymoron in Greek. Overinflated nothingness.

It's a cheese puff instead of a steak. It's real big, but there's no beef. Well, this is where we're going to pause and take our break.

But this is the characteristic. It is the nature of false teaching to promise much and deliver nothing. To overinflate what your profits will be.

If you'll just invest in this wonderful little Ponzi scheme that I've got going, you're going to be rich. You're going to be well off. You'll be able to leave an inheritance to your kids.

And in fact, there is nothing there. It is empty. It is a false, illusory concept.

Well, we'll pause here and take our break and come back. But this next section gets really, really interesting, especially when you balance it against its parallel in Jude. So that's what we'll look at when we come back.