

We do not have to look very far to see false teachers and false religions – on Hartford Road, one main street over there is a Mormon “Church” – it calls itself another branch of Christianity while denying essential tenants of the Christian faith ... also in Mt. Laurel is church that teaches that it doesn’t matter what your sexual orientation is – God still loves you. In Maple Shade is another cult, the Christadelphians. And just yesterday two Jehovah’s Witnesses came to the door and they don’t believe that Jesus is God – the 2nd person of the Trinity.

This does not include the main-line protestant denominations that teach that there is another way of salvation other than the Lord Jesus Christ along with other heresies, such as ordaining adulterers as pastors and bishops and proposing same sex liturgies.

But again, this is nothing new. There has always been false prophets and teachers. Those of you who are reading through the Bible might remember as we read through the Old Testament that there were many false prophets and teachers – who said they were proclaiming the way of God, but were in reality false prophets in the midst of the true prophets of God.

As Peter continues his letter to the pilgrims of the dispersion – remember that one of the reasons that he is writing to them is to warn them about false prophets and teachers – and that is exactly what he is doing at the beginning of the 2 Peter 2:1-3, so I ask that you turn with me there (READ).

What Peter is referring to is what he said at the end of Chapter 1 – 1 Peter 1:16-21 (READ). The point of it all, is that even though they had the prophetic word confirmed ... even though he has told us that no prophecy came about by the will of man or that is of private interpretation and that holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit – false prophets were still active, as we see at the beginning of chapter 2.

These false prophets and teachers were there in the Old Testament during the time of the true prophets – like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and so forth. And there were there to the people that Peter was writing to. In addition there have been false prophets during the entire history of God’s dealings with His people.

You might not know, but the early church councils in the 1st three centuries of the Christian church were called to address false teachers. One of the reasons that we have the Nicene Creed is to address the person and work of Jesus Christ – that he was truly God and truly man. Consider the words as we confess it each week.

Again, as I have said, we don’t have to look very far to see false prophets and teachers in our midst. They are in the formerly Bible believing traditional churches... and they are in multitude of cults and religions that exist all over the place.

As we look at our text, this is exactly what Peter reminds us of. Think about what he says they bring in – “*who will secretly bring in destructive heresies ...*” They bring in these heresies secretly – that is, they look good on the outside ... or at first glance. And because they look good on the outside, they are accepted by some of the people – mainly those who are not firmly grounded in the faith.

These *destructive heresies* or *damnable heresies* as some translations put it are dangerous to our faith and to our salvation. Consider the fact that the presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church says that Jesus is not the only

way of salvation.

This is both destructive and damnable – telling people that they don't have to trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. This is both destructive and damnable in that it calls Jesus Christ a liar because he himself says: *"I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the father except through me."* This is both destructive and damnable because it leads people astray and basically into hell. This is both destructive and damnable because it makes evangelism a moot point – if Christ isn't the only way of salvation, then there is no need to tell others about him.

This is both destructive and damnable because it makes our Savior's suffering and death for the sins of those who believe in him a mockery. And I could go on and on.

This is what Peter then continues to say in his letter – *"even denying the Lord who bought them..."* The Scriptures – the inspired Word of God, tells us that our salvation has been bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

If you deny this or negate this important truth – you make our faith useless – because why are we here. If we are not here to worship God through the Lord Jesus Christ, then why are we here? We might as well sleep in on Sunday morning ... we might as well throw our Bibles out ... and we might as well give our money to Good Will and not the church.

But, all is not lost. Peter tells us the end of their destructive and damnable heresies as he continues in verse 1 – *"and bring on themselves swift destruction."* If we think of the cults that have risen in our time – we have seen that they often, if not always, have an end.

While I was in seminary, Jim Jones had his cult all commit suicide in Guyana, by drinking poisoned Kool Aid. The Branch Davidians reached their end in a raid by the FBI – whatever you think of that.

And when Peter and those first Christians were proclaiming the gospel, we have the prophetic words of Gamaliel in Acts 5:34-39: *"Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while. And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed. And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it — lest you even be found to fight against God."*

Notice the closing words of his argument: *"And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it — lest you even be found to fight against God."*

In other words, even though we are surrounded by false teachers and prophets – if it is God and the way that God has revealed in His Word – then the truth will prevail, even though some will be led astray.

Again, remember the words of our Savior, when he asked Simon Peter – this same Peter – who he was and we read in Matthew 16:16-18: *“Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”*

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is built on the foundation of this belief – that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. This is the truth that we hold to ... the foundation of our faith. This is the reason we gather here each week – to worship God ... to support this branch of Christ’s church ... and to try to live our lives in accord with the Word of God.

Yes, others have tried to deny the truth of the Gospel – in the time of Peter and in our time. But he tells us there end – both then and now: *“And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.”*

Yes, they have denied the truth of the Gospel ... yes, those who hold to the truth of the gospel are blasphemed – we are considered narrow and bigoted ... yes, they exploit the gullible with deceptive words – that is, words that sound good on the outside, but are false – but their destruction is coming and it is sure.

It happened in the time of the prophets ... it happened in the time of Christ ... it happened in the time of the Apostles ... it has happened throughout church history ... and yes, it will happen in our time.

People will follow these false teachers ... some people are always looking for something new and different. But their end is sure – God will judge them for their heresy.

But then the question remains – how can we keep ourselves by being led astray by these false teachers ... because remember, I said, that they sound good ... they quote scriptures, albeit out of context?

First, we need to pray that God will keep us faithful to Him and His Word – the Holy Bible. It is my continual prayer that everything that I teach and say is that the truth. I pray that I will never lead you astray.

Second – we all – you and I need to know what God has revealed in His Word. Remember what Peter said at the end of chapter 1 – 2 Peter 1:16-21: *“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”*

And what Paul said: 2 Timothy 3:16-17: *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

As I said last week, God has not given us His Word for our opinion, but for obedience. We have, preserved for us, God's inspired Word – how to live our lives in this world and how to get to the world to come.

I have told you the question that I was asked when I was interviewed for entrance into our Seminary – “do you agree to test everything that we teach by the Word of God?”

The Word of God ... the Scriptures ... the Holy Bible is our foundation ... our standard ... our sole rule of faith and practice. All that we believe and hold to is in there. We don't need other writings ... we don't need new interpretations.

As we compare Scripture with Scripture we will stay firmly grounded in the truth of God's Word.

And so, let us pray that God will always keep us faithful to Him and His Word ... pray for me that I will never lead you astray ... pray that God will keep us from all the false teachers that abound.