

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Last Sunday after Trinity, November 24, 2019

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 384, 237:1, 605, 611:5-7, 406:2.

Lessons: Jeremiah 23:16-32, 1 Timothy 6:3-5, Matthew 7:13-23.

Sermon Text: 2 Peter 2:1-10.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Beloved in Christ our Savior:

The last Sunday in the church year is often used to speak about the last days of the world. Therefore, what we hear from Peter's 2nd Epistle is most fitting.

The last days are everywhere described in the Bible as very evil days. One of the greatest evils is this that Satan has put it into the minds of people that they can worship and do church work together even though they are not agreed in what they believe and teach. This is due to the influence of the so-called ecumenical movement. So much evil has come from this movement. It has resulted in people no longer having respect for the Word of God as the final authority in all teachings in the church. It has resulted in this that errors in teaching are no longer recognized as errors, as few people study the Bible so as to know the difference between truth and error. And finally, through the years, the ecumenical movement results in this, that the Gospel of Christ is lost and is not proclaimed in the churches. A gospel of social-activism is substituted instead.

Just because of the false ecumenical movement so many people have been influenced to ignore the Lord's warnings against false teachers. That this not happen to us, let us listen carefully as Peter speaks:

A POWERFUL WARNING AGAINST FALSE TEACHING

- 1. They introduce heresies which result in much evil;**
- 2. They will be punished, as we learn from some terrifying examples in Scripture; but,**
- 3. The Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and tribulations.**

By inspiration of the Holy Spirit Peter wrote: *"There were also false prophets among the people"* (Old Testament times), *"just as there will be false teachers among you."* The Lord gives such warnings in different places in the Bible. Paul told the pastors at Ephesus: *"I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them."* Acts 20:29-30 To Timothy Paul wrote: *"The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons."* I Timothy 4:1 Luther said these warnings were not heeded before the Reformation began: "Now as forceful as these warnings were, we should surely have been wise. Yet it did not help. The warnings were ignored. Thus we always went along and let ourselves be misled." (Luther's Works., Vol 30, p. 169) So today also, we can be deceived if we do not listen to these warnings from Scripture.

What Peter tells us about the false teachers is most important: *"They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them."* Heresies are false teachings that are harmful to the soul and finally lead people to eternal damnation. Peter here is not speaking about atheists, who, for example, come right out and say that there is no God. We know clearly what they are teaching. He is not speaking about false teachers who openly deny the most evident and clear Bible teachings. Peter speaks of those who *"secretly introduce"* false teachings.

This is Satan's clever way of deceiving people through false teachers. He has them use such words as faith, Jesus, Savior, Son of God, Baptism, resurrection, Sacrament, and so forth. But when they use these words

they mean something else than what the Bible teaches about them. They might, for example, say that Jesus died for our sins and that only those who believe in Him can be saved. But, then, instead of teaching the full truth that we are justified by faith alone without the deeds of the Law, they bring in the idea of good works also being necessary for salvation as the Roman Catholic Church does. They might teach that the blood of Christ atones for sin, but add that it does not atone for all sins, as the Mormons teach. They might use words as Father, Son and Holy Ghost, but then add that the Holy Ghost is not the third person of the Trinity, but only a dynamic force of God, as the Jehovah's Witnesses do. They might speak of the resurrection of Christ, but by that not mean His bodily resurrection from the grave, but some kind of spiritual resurrection. They might speak Jesus' name freely in their preaching and singing, but then deny that He is the eternal Son of God and that He was born of a virgin, as many in main-line denominations teach today.

It is by such heresies, Peter says, that false teachers become guilty of ***“even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them.”*** The Bible teaches: ***“The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”*** 1 John 1:7 By their false teachings they deny and disown the Lord Jesus who paid for all the sins of all mankind by His holy precious blood and innocent sufferings and death.

Peter's warning is one that we ought to heed when he speaks about the false teachings being secretly introduced. The whole process starts out often with what we consider minor teachings of little importance. But that's the devil's sly way of deceiving us. False teaching, the Bible says, is like a leaven or yeast that spreads through the whole body of doctrine. ***“A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.”*** Galatians 5:9 We should, therefore, resist the very beginnings of any false teaching, and jealously guard the truth of God's Word as a most precious possession.

Another evil resulting from the introduction of false teachings is this: ***“Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.”*** That was something that Paul experienced in his ministry. At Corinth, for example, not all believed the Gospel. It says: ***“Some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way.”*** Acts 19:9 This is due to the influence of false teachers. The way of truth and the Gospel of Christ is blasphemed, that is, it is spoken of in an evil way. It is ridiculed and condemned.

Yet another evil Peter mentions in our text: ***“In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up.”*** Many a false preacher in our day has become wealthy by talking thousands of people out of their money. They promise to heal them. They get people to send millions of dollars to support their ministry, and tell the people that all will end in great glory when Christ comes to live on earth in Jerusalem in the millennium they have invented.

But all this deception will come to an end. These false teachers will be punished, as we learn from some terrifying examples in our text.

2.

Peter says the false teachers bring ***“swift destruction on themselves.”*** Again he says: ***“Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.”*** Lest we doubt this, here are three terrifying examples from the Bible that Peter uses. The first has to do with the evil angels: ***“God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment.”*** God showed no mercy to the angels who fell from their holy estate and disobeyed God at some time after creation before Adam fell into sin. They are reserved in hell until the day of judgment of all mankind.

The second example has to do with the people who perished in the great flood: ***“He did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people.”*** Luther says that “no harsher example is found in Scripture.” (Vol. 30, p. 175) The whole world was destroyed in the flood some 1600 years after creation. Only 8 people, Noah and his family, were saved, and every other human being, and all beasts, birds and creatures died in the flood.

The third example is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah: ***“He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly.”*** Ezekiel writes what God said about the people of those cities: ***“They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen.”*** Ezekiel 16:50

After mentioning these three examples, Peter continues: ***“If this is so, then the Lord knows how...to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.”*** The souls of the ungodly, the false teachers and all those they misled into unbelief, will be in hell from the moment of death, and their eternal damnation is assured.

But, for our comfort our text also teaches that the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from their trials and tribulations.

3.

Our text says: ***“But (He) protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others.”*** Think of what trials and tribulations Noah suffered when he built the ark and preached to the world for 120 years before the flood came! Oh how they must have mocked and ridiculed him, and made life miserable for him and his family! But God knew how to rescue Noah, and spared him and the seven others in his family who believed. They were safely kept in the ark while the others perished.

Our text also says that God ***“rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard) - if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials.”*** Lot was distressed by all the sexual immorality in Sodom and Gomorrah, in particular the sin of homosexuality. The people were so wicked they even wanted to molest the holy angels who appeared in the form of men at Lot’s house to warn him. Lot was tormented by having to live in such an evil place. But, is it any different today? For example, one of the most famous rock ‘n roll music stars, named Prince, is best known for his singing and dancing which glorifies sexual immorality. Millions of young people buy his records and honor him. Satan really has such people in his grasp!

As the Lord delivered Noah and Lot and his two daughters from their trials, so He knows how to rescue all the godly people today who are vexed by the wickedness and immorality of this world. We rejoice to hear that God has ways and means to deliver the godly people from all their trials and tribulations. Oh, how we look forward to that day when the Lord’s final deliverance comes, either when He takes us in death, or on the Last Day takes us home to heaven! What a happy day that will be!

Until that time, let us keep in mind that the Lord wants to deliver us from the deceitful false teachers who can rob us of the precious Gospel of Christ. Let us not foolishly ignore His warnings. But let us faithfully use His Holy Word and Sacrament that our faith may be strengthened and we abide in the truth that can save our souls. Amen.

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