

ATTACK FROM WITHIN

INTRODUCTION

Last week pastor Dave spoke to us from 2 Peter 1 about the progression of our faith. We must add to our faith virtue, knowledge, self-control, patient endurance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. We are personally responsible for this growth and spiritual maturity and if we do so, we will grow and the work of the church will also be achieved.

1 and 2 Peter have interesting contrasts:

1 Peter was written to encourage and comfort the people who were fairly new to the faith so that they would endure amidst persecution - **attack from outside the church which was simple to identify.**

2 Peter speaks to a church that has grown in the faith, it deals with maturing as Christians and it warns against **attack from within the church – not easy to identify and yet more dangerous!**

In a sentence, 2 Peter 1 which Pastor Dave spoke about last week, speaks of **“maturity to be attained”**.

Then as you look at 2 Peter 2, it speaks of **“morality to be maintained”**.

Of course, the enemy hates this so he will do whatever he can to tear down this morality. He will do this by bringing deception from within the church through false prophets and teachers. This is a real challenge today so let us spend some time addressing it!

MESSAGE

FALSE PROPHETS & DESTRUCTIVE DOCTRINES

Jesus stated in Matthew 24 that at the end of the age false christs and false prophets will rise up in the last days and show great signs and wonders **to deceive, if possible, even the elect**. In this chapter, He mentions the word “deceive or deceives **four** times.

This deception started long ago!

2 Peter 2:1-3 (NKJV) But there were also false **prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you**, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 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.

- False prophets and teachers among the people!
- They would secretly bring in destructive doctrines.
- They would deny the Lord and blaspheme the way of truth.
- They will exploit the people with deceptive words!
- It will lead to judgement!

HOW TO DEFEAT THOSE WHO HAVE GOD ON THEIR SIDE

In Numbers, chapter 22-24, Balak, the king of Moab, employs Balaam, a diviner from Mesopotamia, to manipulate the God of Israel so that He will curse the Israelites, rather than bless them. His hope is to weaken the nation Israel militarily, so that the Moabites and Midianites might defeat them in battle and drive them out of the land. In spite of cursing Israel, this false prophet consistently pronounced blessings on Israel and cursings on Israel's enemies. But Baalam finally came up with another, much more subtle way to remove God's blessings from Israel.

Balaam was a prophet, and he knew both the LORD's standards of morality, as well as His jealousy against worshipping any other gods. He used this knowledge to tempt the Israelites into sin so that God's protection would be removed from them and make them weak!

The advice of Balaam was to send the women of Moab out to the Israelites. They then offered the men sexual favours **if only they would worship their god with them**. The god was Baal Peor.

Numbers 31:16 (NKJV) Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.

THE SPIRIT OF BAALAM (COMPROMISE)

The spirit of Baalam lives on, and is referred to in Revelation:

Revelation 2:12-17(NKJV) "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: 13 "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.

- The doctrine of Baalam – to put a stumbling block before God's people.
- The stumbling block is COMPROMISE!
- Interesting that this stumbling block has to do with idol worship and sexual sin!

My first challenge to you today is this: Are there areas in your life where you have begun to compromise your faith? Is there some form of idol worship, or sexual sin going on in your life?

IT SOUNDS GOOD, BUT IT'S NOT ALL TRUE!

With all deception, there is an amount of truth involved, but it is mixed with enough falsehood to make it a dangerous doctrine. Too much emphasis on one area, or not taking a scripture in its context and comparing it with the rest of God's word is where deception starts.

Two beliefs were changed by the false teachers in 2 Peter 2:

1.They denied Christ!

- "Even denying the Master" – in other words some people were denying the lordship of Jesus of Christ (2:1) and ridiculed the promise of his return (3:3-4).
- Doesn't this sound familiar? Some prominent preachers are now no longer preaching Christianity, they are preaching a combination of Christ and Mohammed – it's called Chrislam. Jesus said, "I am the Way and the Life, no man comes to the Father except through Me!".
- Others get carried away with a combination of Christianity and Judaism – they call themselves Judeo Christians or Messianic believers and they lure people back into the bondage of the law that Jesus Christ made us free from! Some are "Jesus only" teachers and deny God the Father and the Holy Spirit.
- Then there are church leaders who believe in multi-faith – all roads lead to God. They say that the Christian, the Catholic, the Muslim and the Buddhist all serve the same God!

My question is how well do you know God's word? Is your only source of knowledge of God what others have to say or are you studying the Word of God daily so that you can discern between truth and error?

2. They had a sentimental view on the grace of God!

They believed it did not matter how you lived because you were no longer under law, but under the grace of God.

This same view is widely proclaimed and practiced today. People use selective scriptures to justify this COMPROMISED grace teaching and choose to ignore what the rest of God's Word has to say! It is known as "hyper grace".

- Such a view leads to an "anything goes" attitude and it corrupts Christian morality!

- God will always be concerned with how we live as Christians, and He will hold us accountable. This is why in the Lord's prayer He teaches us to ask for forgiveness!

The sneaky, underlying snare and deception will be based on destructive ways. We get an idea of these ways when Peter writes of those who were previously punished and then adds to it a list of behaviour that should never be found in us:

2 Peter 2:4-11 (NKJV) For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; 5 and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; 6 and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; 7 and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked 8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)— 9 then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, 10 and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, 11 whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.

- The angels rebelled against God – the sin of pride!
- The world in the time of Noah - Genesis 6:11-12 "Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth." However, "Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (verse 8) – lust of the eyes!
- Sodom and Gomorrah – in Genesis 18 it says, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave" – we assume it was homosexuality, but that was not the only sin there – their sin was sensuality! - The lust of the flesh.
- **2 Peter 2:10** and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, 11 whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.

Too many Christians today have been deceived into believing that this kind of sin is okay because of God's grace. They have had acceptance of sin shoved down their throats by society and have begun to accept it. This is deception!

- Go and read what people say about Angus Buchan – they say he is a bigot, homophobic and sexist – **why, simply because he chooses not to compromise!**

- The real risk is that we will be worn down by this constant barrage and start to accept a compromised version of our faith! Then we become those who have been deceived by the doctrine of Baalam!

How much have we backed off? How much compromise is in our lives. How much sin are we comfortable with? God is calling us to repentance!

THERE IS A PRICE TO PAY!

God held the angels, the people of Noah's time and the populations of Sodom and Gomorrah accountable. He is a just God. We are taught that He doesn't change, He is still just. The blood of those who were punished for sins in the past cries out against those who are compromised today.

2 Peter 2:9 (NKJV) then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,

- A day of judgment is coming for the compromised!
- 2 Peter goes on to say, "it would have been better for them if they had never known the way of righteousness.

CONCLUSION

2 Peter 2:7-9 (NLT) But God also rescued Lot out of Sodom because he was a righteous man who was sick of the shameful immorality of the wicked people around him. 8 Yes, Lot was a righteous man who was tormented in his soul by the wickedness he saw and heard day after day. 9 So you see, the Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials, even while keeping the wicked under punishment until the day of final judgment.

- Let us never slip into compromise.
- Let us remain sick of the shameful immorality around us.
- Let us remain righteous, even tormented by the sin we see around us.
- And when we feel we are slipping, let us remember that the Lord knows how to rescue us from temptation and keep us as His righteous ones!

AN EXAMPLE OF SUBTLE DECEPTION:

- JUNE 20 -
THE REASON BELIEVERS ARE SICK

Have you ever wondered why some Christians are weak and sick, and die young? I thank God that the Holy Spirit gives us the reason as well as the solution. In 1 Corinthians 11:29–30, He tells us clearly that the **one** reason some Christians are weak and sick, **and die prematurely, is that they don't discern the Lord's body when they partake of the Holy Communion.**

Many believers don't understand that the pierced, striped and slightly burnt

bread, which represents the Lord's body, is for their health and healing. And when they partake without discerning this truth, they partake in an unworthy **manner. The reverse is true: If they discern accurately the Lord's body, then** they will be strong and healthy, and live long.

Unfortunately, the church down through the years has misconstrued this teaching and taught that if you have sin in your life, you are unworthy and cannot partake of the Holy Communion, lest you become weak and sick, and even die! We have turned a blessing into a curse. Because of this, many Christians are **afraid to come to the Lord's table and are therefore robbed of** the health-giving power of the Holy Communion.

My friend, there is no such thing as a worthy person! The best of us still miss it and fail. So unworthy people are the only people who partake **of the Lord's** Supper. But because Jesus died for unworthy people, He has qualified those of us who take Him as our righteousness to partake of every benefit that He died to give us.

So it is not a matter of whether you are worthy or unworthy to partake, but **how you partake. Come to the Lord's table with boldness and partake because Jesus has qualified you with His precious blood. Don't treat it as a ritual, but release your faith for health and healing as you discern that Jesus'** body was broken so that yours can be healthy and whole today. When you partake like this, you are partaking in a worthy manner, and you will not be weak or sickly, or die prematurely!