

Beware of False Teachers

By Paris Reidhead*

II Peter, Chapter 2. I am not going to read the entire chapter at one time. I am going to read it in portions, because I believe that it breaks up naturally and logically into divisions of thought, which enable us to grasp and lay hold upon the Word that is for us here.

“But there were false prophets also among, the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not” (II Pet. 2:1-3).

A year ago at this time, we were studying the Book of Revelation. At that time, we were considering among other things the plagues by which a certain percentage and portion of the world’s family would be destroyed. They were going to be plagues that would result in a third of the earth in one case. We have always thought of these plagues as, either being sickness or judgment with the sword, or something else which is going to touch the physical, mental, body, being, and take away life. I suggested then, and hold until the present, that these plagues are to be viewed probably in primary intention as philosophies, ideas, and teachings.

If we understand the Word of God correctly, it teaches that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. And this is the reason why we of the Christian and Missionary Alliance have 850 and some missionaries around the world. And many of these have gone to India, Pakistan, or other areas of India, to Jordan, Israel, China, Japan, and in of these countries there is highly organized and developed religion. Some might say, Well, why should you send missionaries to lands that already have such religions of such high ethical standard, and high cultural standard as these lands? Well, we believe there is no other Name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, the Name of Jesus, and only the Name of Jesus.

This means that Mohammed, with his pen, inscribing on parchment the visions that he claimed to have had, was able to destroy more people by these ideas that he promulgated than all that have been destroyed by the swords of all the Mohammedan soldiers and followers across the centuries. Very few people today are being killed by Mohammedan armies. At one time, they swept across North Africa, Christian North Africa. They would come into a village, gather the leaders, hold up their book and say, Well you are to become a follower of this way. And someone would say, No, we won’t. So they would just take the scimitar and nip off his head neatly. And say, now you are. No, I won’t. So there is another. By this time, the people began to realize that this had become quite a habit and contagious, and as they would look at two or three and say, Well, will you? About that time he would have a change of mind. Yes, I have just decided that I will. Because he knew that there was no end when the soldiers were there. So two or three would die, the whole community would convert, the whole area would convert, the whole region would convert, and far more were destroyed by the ideas that were promulgated, the philosophies that were communicated than were by the swords and by the spears of their armies.

We could take the same thing to the present and say that Marx with his pen, developing a concept of government without God. Lenin and his followers. Stalin. The Communist international conspiracy that is said to control a third of the earth’s people has succeeded in doing more to destroy men if they have actually been able to get them to renounce God in favor of atheism than all the guns that they have used, because, after all, a bullet takes a physical life, but if the person is a Christian, as is the case of the 400 thousand that were slain in North Korea, all the bullet does is to serve as a ticket into the presence of the risen Lord, and the person is not hurt. He is just transported. He is just carried into the presence of the Lord he loves. But, whereas the bullet can do nothing to the one who knows Christ but just send him earlier into the presence of the Lord, the philosophy, the idea imbibed like a porcupine quill getting into the mind and thought and heart can destroy, eternally destroy that person. And so I am saying that more people have been destroyed, that is eternally destroyed in hell by philosophies, and teachings, and ideas than have been by all the armies of all the ages.

I think, if you will read the plagues of Revelation again, when you read of the great smoke ascending from the pit that obscures

the sun, you might do well to think of philosophies of humanism, materialism, and sensualism, that have risen up to obscure the Son of Righteousness, the God of grace, the God of the Bible, in our own land. And we are in a fair way to having our people destroyed. We do not realize what is happening actually, but if you read those that are becoming alarmed about it, not Christians necessarily, but just those who have seen the disintegration of cultural value, you will find that many are alarmed at the great erosion of standard, of morals and ethics in our land. And could it be that this actually is what Revelation means, that across the ages there have been these plagues poured out. We could go back and think of what happened to the Church under Catholicism, back in the 4th century, and how it produced that period of history called the Dark Ages, when ceremonialism and ritualism replaced the risen Christ and reality in Him. How many multitudes were absolutely, eternally destroyed because they put their faith in ceremony and ritual, in ordinance, sacrament, rather than in personally meeting the Lord Jesus Christ. Could it be that in those days religion, even so-called Christian religion, was the actual instrument of the eternal destruction of multitudes? I think so. And that began in the 4th Century, because if we actually are consistent with our Faith, we believe that the only thing that has saving significance is a personal reception of Jesus Christ. And anything that stops short of that is damning in its influence.

Move on then from the 4th century, to the 10th, the 11th century, to the time of Mohammed, and here down in the Southern Arabian Peninsula, this man had these visions that he recorded and incorporated into the book we know as the Koran. How many multiplied millions since then have imbibed this from their mothers and fathers, have been initiated at the age of 12 into the life of the community, have taken the vow of the five pillars, including the death to the infidel to anyone that converts to any other religion. And do you realize that today (Some of you do, you have heard it from this pulpit) that nine people are being converted to Islam for one being converted to Christianity. Now think of this a minute: 9 people in the world are being converted to Islam for 1 being converted to Christianity. And yet we believe that there is no saving significance to Islam, and that a lifetime of fasting, tithing not 10 per cent of income but 2 per cent of possessions annually, all that is in the Islamic religion has no saving value, because there is no other name given under Heaven among men whereby we must be saved.

Then we come down still further to communism, as we have said, and even parallel with that to religious liberalism. One hundred years ago, and it is not any older than that actually it is hardly that old in its American expression. Do you realize that in the time that Dr. Simpson¹ started this church eighty years ago there was not such a thing in America, to our knowledge at least, as a liberal? There were not liberals. There were denominational hacks. There were little church politicians. There was narrowness and bigotry. But theological liberalism was just a faint little odor that was being wafted across the sea, and they were hearing about these daring philosophers in Germany that were taking some of the principles of Nietzsche and other philosophers and incorporating them into their theological expressions; and it was confined there to Germany Seminaries. It had not really found any expression on the America continent. Thus, in the time of Dr. Simpson, it is safe to say that liberalism as we know it, that is the denial of the inspiration of the Bible, a denial of the deity of Christ, the necessity of Blood atonement, the denial of the bodily resurrection, these that we associate with hard core liberalism just did not exist. It was not here. That was not an issue in the forming of this church and testimony at that time. It had not become one.

So, in the last hundred years, and that is generous in terms of time, we have had the importation from Europe, from the German Seminaries, through those men who became our Seminary teachers — Look, we have had it imported first into our major seminaries, then into our secondary schools, and into our entire educational, religious educational structure, until at the time that some of the schools were established for the expressed purpose of providing a climate where one could have an orthodox, a religiously orthodox education. Now there have been, we are glad to say, those among the denominations, the old line denominations that have remained true to the Word of God and we are grateful for every one of such. We would not in any wise make blanket inditement. But, could it be that more people have been slain by the pernicious teachings that it is not necessary to repent and savingly receive Christ, that Jesus Christ was just a good man, a teacher, but not God in any unique sense? I think of my own Pastor from a little church in Minnesota whose father was an outstanding evangelist, a dear man. I was in his home in Iowa, Davenport, Iowa, a Pastor of a large church. And he said, You know You are foolish. You ought not to be with these fundamentalists. They haven't anything to offer you. They haven't any possibilities. He said, Look at this. You have as much talent and ability as I have. Why play around with them? Why don't you get in where the pasture is? Why don't

¹ Albert Benjamin Simpson (1843-1919) founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance

you stay there? Why? Be wise. You only live once. Why live it with that crowd you are with. I said, Well, how far are we from being of one mind? How near am I to being with you? I said, Let me ask you a few questions. Do you believe in the inspiration of the Bible? Now this was my former pastor, moving from Minnesota to Iowa. He said, Believe in the inspiration of the Bible? Of course I do. I would no more deny the inspiration of the Bible than I would deny the inspiration of Shakespeare. That was not quite what I expected, I assure you. His concept of inspiration and mine were some miles apart. I said, Do you believe in the Deity of Christ? He said, Of course I do. I would no more deny the Deity of Christ than I would deny my own deity. And that was not what I expected. I said, Do you believe in the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ? Oh yes, he said, I believe that the death of Jesus Christ is every bit as vicarious as the death of these men dying out on the shores of Guadalcanal. I said, Do you believe in heaven? No, he said, not as a place. He said, Perhaps in spirit there may be some little essence of personality that gathers and coagulates like vapor gathers in a cloud, but conscious personality after death. I looked at him and said, Wes, we are so far apart that if what you have is what it takes to get where you are, I will just have to stay with my crowd, because I can't go with you. We've nothing in common.

How many multitudes of people have been slain by this? How many will be in hell because they sat in churches and listened to man who said things like this. Now we are in the climate of II Peter 2. "There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damming heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason or who the truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you."

You understand, do you not, that there is a sense in which people are a merchandisable quantity. You hate to think of yourself as a statistic, do you not. I do. I remember driving a little faster than I should. My friend, the Dean of Taylor University, looked at me. He said, You know, if you don't stop that, you are going to just be a statistic on the outside of one of these little insignificant Indiana towns. And I slowed down. I said, If there is anything I don't want to be, it is a statistic in Indiana. And so I took my foot off the accelerator. Who wants to be a statistic? But you understand, of course, that there is a sense in which people are merchandisable.

I think this was brought to a horrible focus years ago down south, and it is no reflection on the South. The South has far worse things than this to criticize, and far better things to commend it. So, don't feel that it is regional. But this particular church had a working agreement, with their pastor that every time a new member came into the church they would give him a \$10 bonus in his paycheck the next day. Their idea was, They would all be tithers, and we will get that back the first two weeks. And after all, we believe in free enterprise, and the incentive system, and so he had the church organized into groups, the purpose of which was to get people into the membership of the church, and for everyone that came a \$10 bonus. Now, I hope that people as they became members did not think of themselves as being a \$10 bill in the eye of their Pastor, but there was a sense in which he might have had a little confusion of mental vision and image.

Brethren, Sisters, people are merchandisable. A dear friend of mine, now a Seminary professor, came from Ireland years ago to Minneapolis, Melville Chatfield, had one of the most delightful sense of humor that I have ever known. I was never quite sure that he was aware of it, but it was perfectly delightful, and such occasions as when he was being given an honor at school, he was actually given a scholarship, and they asked for a few words, in reply. He started to thank the congregation for their kindness, and then be thanked the Lord. And he said, I want to thank the Lord for all the good things of my life, my mother, my typewriter, and he never got any further than that. Well, dear Melville had a great anointing of God. One of the first young men that I ever met that had an anointing of God so that when he spoke you were conscious of God. You lost sight of him. His face just glowed with the presence of the Lord. And he preached with anointing and preached with power. But he believed in reality, and I saw him and his good wife out in Modesto, California, and I said, Melville, are you still in Bible Conference and Evangelism? And he said, No, no. I said, Why? Well, he said, you know the American churches only have one criterion of success and that is numbers. And I just could not bring myself to stoop to do the things that were necessary for me to get the kind of numbers that they demanded. And so he said, I just found fewer and fewer invitations, so now I am going into seminary teaching. It was not that he did not have an anointing, and it was not that he did not have a message; but, you see, he did not have the merchandise. He could not produce the goods, the statistics that were necessary in the climate in which he was working. This was the criteria. People are a merchandisable quality. There is a numeric value that can be set upon them. And this is what we have in this 3rd verse. And through covetousness they shall with feigned words make merchandise of you. And,

therefore, we can expect that in the last days there will be damming heresies, and there will be a using of people in the context of religion to the end of pursuing personal gain through them.

Now I think this is true. We see this being done with other things. We see, for instance, the Mohammedans sending out 27 thousand missionaries from various countries that train them, business men who go, self-supporting, during the last 15 years. They have gone all over the world and are having phenomenal success. The reason is, they see that if they can get these African countries, they have got power, they have got commerce, and they have got economic control. There is a value that is in it. Communism is as much a religion as Christianity. And so we find that this religion that has God in the center by His absence is making a bid for all of these countries, because there again it represents political power. It represents economic power, merchandise through the communication of philosophy.

Now let me ask you. What ought to be the proper motivation in our witness? I remember years ago hearing this, not as much anymore, He ought to be saved, because he would be such a wonderful witness. He ought to be saved, because he has got such great talent. This person surely ought to come to Christ. They have such high connections. Are any of these valid reasons for one to come to Christ? There is only one proper reason, and that is that Jesus Christ be glorified by the complete repentance of a hell deserving sinner. That is the only proper reason for anyone coming to Christ. And so, whenever our minds go to any other thing than this.... I think it was brought home to my heart, the idea of merchandise, when I was witnessing to Roy Logan in Loring Park in Minneapolis one warm summer evening in 1936. I was working in a restaurant, he and I together, and after we had gotten off at 3 we had worked the early shift, had dinner together, and he wanted to talk with me about Christ. So we sat there in the shade until about ten o'clock, and he asked a lot of questions. And along about 9 I began to suspicion that maybe he would make some kind of a decision, and from the moment that I began to suspicion that I lost sight of Roy Logan coming to Jesus Christ for the glory of Christ. In my heart was this, the next time I go to Chapel, every Monday we had at Bible School Testimony Chapel, I will have a testimony to give. I felt so self-conscious and so embarrassed that I had not been able to report as some had done so many converts. And as I looked into Roy Logan's eyes he changed from someone that was coming to glorify Jesus Christ, and if I could have seen it would have been a metamorphosis, a change going on, that he was actually just a little pedestal upon which I was to climb so that I could be seen over the heads of my fellows. Merchandise. Oh, how subtle is this, how absolutely subtle, and how easy it is for us if this becomes a motivation to reduce and reduce and reduce, down and down and down, the standards, the conditions, so salvation becomes a formula, becomes something that we can get guaranteed results. I heard one man say, If you are not winning souls, it is because you are not trying. Winning souls is like selling Fuller Brushes; if you make calls, you will make sales. And he whipped and berated this people, because they were not winning souls. And he said, I will teach you in five minutes the formula; and, if you will just go and knock on doors, I guarantee that it is a law of averages and you will get results.

Is salvation nothing more than the law of averages, is it nothing more than a response to a formula? Is it nothing more than just this? Is this all it is? Then anyone can do it. Or is salvation something that God does, supernaturally, and gloriously, marvelously, miraculously, upon that which was dead, to make it alive, not a response to my formula, but in response to the heart meeting each condition in succession, until there in that place where God can, consistent with Himself, perform this transforming miracle. And so we discover already in our consideration of this second chapter that we have two points of view. The one is, the truth as it is revealed in Christ; the other is, heresies. The one is that the purpose of salvation is the glory of Jesus Christ through the repentance of the sinner. The other is that they become merchandise.

Now let us recognize then as we go on from verse 4 that there will be a day when all is going to be disclosed and unveiled.

“For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment, and spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly, and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished” (II Pet. 2:4-9).

Now this is the point of this portion. God has given to us in the Word clear examples that judgment is not always immediate. It

is postponed. Noah preached for 120 years, saying, It is going to rain. And it did not rain. You can imagine how wearisome his congregation must have gotten of this fellow up there, hammering, sawing, building, pounding, just decade after decade, and all to... What is happening? Why? What is he doing? And yet he was the one that had the message of God for his day and generation, and his success was only among his own family. And it was not swift in coming. If it had come the next day... But here, it went on and on and on. But you see, the testimony is that though it was delayed, it was certain. And then we find that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah could resist the rebuke that the presence of Lot would give, and whatever testimony he might have, for there is every evidence to me that Lot was in the wrong place, but at the same time his attitude was right toward God, and that there was undoubtedly, from what the Scripture has to say, a certain testimony going out from Lord. And God was able to pick out Noah from his generation, and pick out Lot, but He was certain, inexorable in His judgment. It did come. It did fall. He knows how to deliver the godly out of the testing. He knows how to deliver the godly out of that which is going to try them, (not only out of temptation, but out of that which is to be the test.). And so, This is the testimony II Peter 2 to you, that is, that you cannot be swayed by the philosophies of the day, and you cannot be swayed by expediency, that somewhere along the line you have to get your instructions from God and you have to make an eye single to His glory and a path that you choose, not because it is profitable, not because it is expedient, not of opportunism, but simply because it is right. It is right. And here I am going to stand. Noah picked the wrong side. Everyone was against him. Lot picked the wrong side. Everyone was opposed to him. Everyone was doing something else, but he had a revelation from God. He had truth from God, and he hung on to it.

Now the days into which we are coming are days in which you have got to know what you believe, and why you believe it, lest you should be as children, driven about by every wind of doctrine. Have you thought your way through? Why do you hold what you hold? This is the issue of II Peter. Do you hold it because it is what you grew up with? Do you hold it because it is what you have been taught? Why are your opinions what they are tonight and your convictions what they are tonight? What motivated them? What moved them? What gave them to you? Why are you the kind of a person you are? This is the teaching of II Peter. There is going to be a day of judgment. If you are motivated by expediency, if you are motivated by opportunism, if we do this because it looks good and profitable, then we are going to find that in that day He is able to discern between that which is right and wrong.

Are you following the crowd? Are you simply a mirror to reflect those around you? Or have you actually thought your way into your living and achieved certain convictions, and you can say of an honest heart, On this I believe, here I stand, I can do no other. There never would have been a Protestant Reformation if the cult of adjustment had prevailed in the time of Martin Luther². There, bless God, was one of the most maladjusted men we ever had record of. He was in total maladjustment to his environment, to his culture, to every other thing that was there. He had come to the place where he had a revelation of God and a revelation of His Word, and he said, there as he stood in the cathedral, Here I stand. I can do no other. I have convictions. This I believe and I am going to stand where I believe.

Now I believe that this is the approach you must make because it is certain. There is no question about it. Oh, it looks good for the time, but remember, He knows how to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished. And so, we are, therefore, to recognize that as heresies come, whether they be heresies or philosophy or principle or ethic, whatever it may be, we are called of God to come back to an absolute standard, to chart our course according to it, take our stand, and just stand there, and hold this, and believe this, and grip onto it, and say, I know the day is coming when God is going to divide, and as far as I am concerned, this is what I believe He wants me to be and He wants me to do, and here I am going to stand. It is a very costly thing to have conviction in a convictionless day. It is a very costly thing to believe something that is not commonly held. It is a very lonely thing to see what others do not see. One of the loneliest men of history was Noah. And another lonely man was Lot. And a lonelier man still was Jeremiah. And I assure you of this, that you are going to discover a loneliness. We have spoken of that at length and won't enlarge upon it now. But there is great loneliness. But you have to be sure.

A student up in Canadian Bible College came to me when I was there several years ago for meetings, and said, Brother, how can you be sure when everybody is saying something else and teaching something else, and the whole environment and atmosphere and current is in another direction, how can you be so sure that what you have is right, and you are willing to

² Martin Luther (1483-1546) German monk, former Catholic priest, who wrote the Ninety-Five Theses.

stand and just face the day and fact the generation and say, I just can't do anything else. How can you be so sure? And I gave him several rules. First, it has to be in complete agreement with the Word of God, for that which is current and novel is usually in contradiction to some clear part of the Word. Secondly, it has to be consistent with the teaching of the Church; not always, but by honored men, and that God honored in the past. Thirdly, it has to be held by others in your day. You reach a conclusion and you find that good and honorable and upright and men owned of God do not in some wise share it, then you want to bring it under examination. And then I say, Of course, the fourth things is, You must be inwardly convinced that this is right. And then you have to be prepared to stand and pay the price. And so it has to be that a great many things are left. A great many things that you have to just leave. You take your position. You stand on your position. And I am entreating you to do it, because as I see anything in the future I see that tomorrow is going to carry tests on you that you did not know about yesterday. If I understand any of the things that are happening to us in our day and generation, what I am saying is preparation for the kind of tests that you will be asked to go through. You say, You think it is communism? I hope not. And I think not. But I believe if communism does not come to the United States there are sufficient other pressures that it could make a person lose his moorings and he could become just a little chip on tide. It takes a lot of courage and intelligence and purpose to stand-for in political it is getting now in some places that it is almost unpatriotic to be patriotic any more. You have to make up your mind as to what you are going to be in relation to your country, in relation to your nation. And so there are so many pressures that are coming to bear, that it seems to me that it behooves you to learn from this that there is a day of judgment, there is a day when everything seems wrong when it may be most right. Everybody is against you. You may be on the side of God and the angels.

Let us move on. Vs 10:

“But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; and shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceiving while they feast with you; Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wage of unrighteousness; But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet” (II Pet. 2:10-16).

Now I believe this is the portion we will see. It has reference now to a climate of religious experience. This has to do not with the atheistic world, but Peter is describing what is going to take place, and has I am sure. It is not something we are waiting for. This has been true in the past, and it is undoubtedly true in the present. But what he is really saying in this portion is that the time will come when prophets, or preachers, or religious leaders are going to be for hire. One of the most pathetic things that you find in the Old Testament, Major Thomas brought out to us at Missionary Convention a year or so ago, when he told us about Micaiah, the Israelite, that had a little more money than he knew what to do with, and so he hired himself a Levite for ten shekles and a shirt. I thought that was one of the most telling things. Just think of being a hired prophet, ten shekels and a shirt, He had his own little private Levite that could tell him what and how. And this is what he said: There will come a time when those who ought to be speaking out of conviction are going to be motivated by expediency. And you will find with that there will come a deterioration of standard, in conduct, in morals, because the fact that they have other interests than just the will and word of God.

I will never forget the experience I had in Atlanta, Georgia, some years ago when I had lunch with a dear Pastor friend. I hope he has changed from that time. But he had heard that something had happened to me; I had changed relationship, and so on. And when he saw me, he said, Now, I want to have lunch with you and I long to see you; but I want to tell you right now, I don't want to talk about any of the things you have come to believe. He said, I see what it has cost you; and, he said, frankly I have worked too hard to build this church and build my position, and I've got too much to lose to consider any novel doctrines. And even he said, I don't want to talk to you about it; because, as long as I don't know, I don't have to do anything about it. But, if I talk to you, and I find my mind and heart says it is true, then I'll get in trouble with God if I don't seek the truth. So you just let me do the talking, and you listen. I am not interested. And he thought thereby he could protect himself. But, my friend, the time is going to come, and Peter tells about it, when we have got to recognize that religion is going to become a profession.

And you are going to have to go back to the Word of God like the Bereans to find out if these things be so; because there will be, as in the case here it cites of Balaam, tired prophets loving the wages of unrighteousness. And, if I see anything that is happening, and if you remember I spoke to you last Sunday and once in January concerning Ecumenism, it is that in the next few years this is going to become a closed shop and people are going to be preaching from the standpoint of having taken, if you please, the mark of the beast, or having had their thinking sealed by authority, so that they will think and say that which is innocuous and pleasing to the authorities. It is such a little; it is such an easy thing. Oh, my friend, to look down in your congregation and see someone, and say, This is what God says, tells me to say, but I know how he will feel, or she will feel. It is such an easy thing to become a man pleaser. And when that happens, then the desk has become nothing more than a huckster's counter. When it ceases to be the place from which the Word of God is spoken, without fear, without favor, Thus saith the Lord, it can no longer be trusted. When any motivation than to please God enters into the personality that stands behind the desk, the utterances over it are just merchandised words. And this is what he said.

And so, the warning that we get is this, Listen, but in your mind you have got to say, What is there to gain, What is there to be... , Is this God's word? Therefore the net effect of II Peter is this: Heresies are going to come that are going to deceive and destroy. They are going to be in the realm of Christianity, as well as in the realm of pagan religion. There is going to become a time when men shall be merchandise, and be so viewed. But God has appointed a day of judgment in which He will judge those who so dealt with people, and the people that have been so dealt with. But as a way of warning, you must ask your heart, What is the motivation? What is the reason? Why is this being said? And, because the time is going to come when prophets, preachers, religious leaders are going to be "wells without water, clouds carried with the tempest to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever" (II Pet. 2:17).

And so we come to the last portion, and with it we close:

"For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in mire" (II Pet. 2:18-22).

And what is the statement here? To whom is he referring? To the teachers? I think he is referring to the readers. I think he is referring to us. I think he is referring to that constant temptation that comes to us along the way of the path of life to just deviate. You know, leaving Montclair to come to New York to the services, there has to be one thing; you have to head your car toward New York. You will never get here if you go the wrong way on New Jersey 3 or 46. You go west, and it will take you a long time to get to New York. There are barriers, so you have got to be headed right. But it is not enough to set your nose toward the Empire State Building. The nose of the car, that is. You have got to make continuous adjustments. It is imperative that when the car begins to drift with the wind you correct the drift. Or that little drift, if not corrected, is sufficient to put you in the ditch. Do you understand? And this is the warning. As long as you live, there is going to be pressure on you to drift by attitude, drift by emotions, drift by motive, drift just a little; and any drift uncorrected, said the text, is sufficient to put you in the ditch. And so the warning of II Peter to you and to the church is, Little driftings can cause great calamities. Little changes in philosophy, little changes in attitude, little changes in direction, if not corrected to the compass, can wreck.

Oh, don't you see how imperative it is that you should know what you believe, why you believe it, the foundation on which it rests, and be prepared, even though there be great pressure in persecution and price to be paid, to stand uncompromisingly for that which you have; and any little tendency within or without to cause you to drift be corrected at the moment. Because, uncorrected, it is going to mean a major change. Oh, how easy it is for a person to begin well, and after a little time to just drift away. I believe very few people make shipwreck of their life because they sit down in the quiet of their room and say, I am going to ruin my life. That is not how it is done. It is just done by a little thing, a little sin of bitterness, a little sin of lust, of lasciviousness, undealt with, unforsaken, unconfessed. Just a little love of praise of men, a little compromise for prosperity, a little, just a little, just a drift, and that drift, uncorrected, can mean wreck.

This is the teaching. And as the day becomes nearer the end there is going to be more hurricane pressures, more deep tracks, more roots, more barriers, and more road blocks. It is a difficult day to live in, and I am calling you that love Jesus Christ tonight, and you that are considering coming to Jesus Christ, to come with a purpose that you are going to give attendance to reading, to doctrine, to prayer. You are going to give yourself to becoming an intelligently informed and purposeful Christian. The day is past when we can take things for granted. I do not believe we should become belligerent, fighting everything. What is the use? I think we should become intelligent, purposeful, moving in the direction of our mature conviction, and we have one goal. Oh, I am so glad the compass only has one north. If it was like us, it would have North A, North B, North I, North II. Thank goodness, there is only one North on the compass; and when the helmsman relates his shift to north, he has an absolute point. And I believe that if you want to successfully make this voyage through time you have got to relate yourself to one north.

Dr. Bieber from down in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, came to Minnesota and he said, There at the North Star there is a hole in the sky. No stars around it. And all the heavens seem to revolve around it, Polaris. And he said, The amazing thing we are told by astronomers is that that one star in the hold in the north is rushing toward the earth. Ah, he said, I think that's the heaven of heavens, and the Lord is there, that that is the place of His dwelling, and He is coming. Well, I am not at all sure that Dr. Bieber was right about Polaris, the North Star, but I am sure of this, that when you have your eye single to His glory, and you test every pressure and every inducement, every enticement, and every proposition by this, Is it to that to which I have committed my life, the glory of God in Jesus Christ?, you have a compass point as secure as the North Star is to the helmsman.

This is a Chapter of warning, but a Chapter of great encouragement. Are you a committed Christian? Let us bow in prayer. Our Father, we have seen tonight that there are rising great plagues out of hell to destroy multitudes, and even the very elect can be deceived. We have seen that there are merchandisers of human spirit, human flesh, that sacrifice men to the vanity of their own ambition. We see, our Father, that there are those that become hirelings like Balaam for wages, are willing to adjust and accommodate their message to suit the ears of their hearers, and of their employers. And we realize, therefore, Thy dear children must know Thy Word, must understand its principles, must-being alert to the day in which they live and the danger of that day-stand uncompromisingly on that truth that Thou hast revealed and made clear to them, lest they should be blind, followers of blind leaders, and both be in the ditch. O Father, might it be that in the hearts of this people today there comes a passionate desire to live in utter commitment to Jesus Christ, absolute abandonment to His sovereignty and His Lordship, and the one consuming purpose the glory of Christ. We believe that if there are those here that know not the Lord Jesus, tonight seeing Him eminently worthy of their repentance and faith and the abandonment of their life, will open their hearts to Him, they will find Him all sufficient, satisfying, precious, wonderful Redeemer and Lord. For Thy children we pray that, should any here be drifting this way or that, allured, just following the tracks around them in their thinking, the subtleties of their own heart, Oh, might they realize how dangerous these can be. For, if the wheels get in the track, it is so hard to get out. How many have made shipwreck of their souls. And so we pray, Lord, that there may be this constant correction to this one point of reference, the glory of Jesus Christ. Does this glorify Him? Does this glorify Him? until our lives are lives with an eye single to His glory. Should there be those among us tonight... O dear friends, I turn to you who do not know our Lord, I invite you to consider His claims, this wonderful Redeemer, this altogether lovely One who will forgive your sin and fill your heart and satisfy you and become your guide and your strength through the days of your years. Open your heart to Him. It is going to cost you everything to follow Christ. But it cost Him everything to redeem you. He is worth everything.

Dear Christian friend, if you find that there has been a drift in your life, why not make the correction now, right in your heart of hearts, and if anyone would like to have special prayer, have us talk with you further, we invite you to Wilson Chapel for prayers.

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jud. 1:24-25).

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Evening, May 6, 1962 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.