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## The Second Epistle of Peter

*Wising Up to Evil*

*October 1, 2017*

**Sermon Text:** 2 Peter 2

**Scripture Reading:** John 17

2 Peter 2:1-3 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. (2) And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. (3) And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

We heard Peter warn us last time in these verses – *just as it has always been, false prophets will come in among you and work to lead you away from Christ. Expect it. Be on guard for it. See these people for who they really are.*

And we saw the characteristics of these evil wolves:

- They are “teachers.” They set themselves up as pastors or church leaders or in some kind of capacity that enables them to spread their poison
- They do their evil secretly, disguising themselves as the most pious saints
- They teach destructive heresies. They are not harmless.
- Their teaching denies Christ. It denies the gospel. Even if in their words they affirm sound doctrine, in their practice and application of it they deny it – they say, for example, that a Christian can live a fleshly,

lustful, sinful life and it is ok because of grace

- Their message is one of sensuality. It appeals to the flesh and thus is quite popular
- Many will follow them.
- They cause the world to mock Christ
- God is against them. They are reprobate, having an appointment with eternal destruction

Listen to Thomas Adams (a Church of England Calvinist pastor in the 1600's) introduce this second chapter:

*“The opening of this chapter begins with a discovery of error: damnable doctrine bound up in a fair cover [a pleasant, “Christian” disguise]. Here is a true prophecy of a false prophecy: I tell you truly, that some shall come to teach you falsely. The church of God cannot escape this danger, so long as there is a sheep-skin to be gotten for a wolf to mask in; or a sorcery Elymas can put on the name Bar-jesus (Acts 13:6). These have been; these will be; as it was then, so is it now (Gal 4:29); and so it will continue, until time has housed all God’s friends, and imprisoned all His enemies; till it has melted with world in a furnace and cast it into a new mold. You have a sure word, sit fast in your adherence: there will come furious champions to thrust you from your standing; beware*

*that they do not weaken your faith in Jesus Christ.*

Now, in the course of this description, Peter, as we saw last time, makes this remarkable statement and it is vital that we thoroughly understand or we will not really grasp how wicked these people are, we will not understand what kind of enemy we face, nor will we see why Scripture uses such intense, wrath-filled words against them. Here is this important phrase:

*“...even denying the Master who bought them.”*

What makes this statement rather puzzling at first glance is that word, “bought” and how Peter applies it to these false teachers who are reprobate, whose day of judgment is appointed and for whom (vs 17) *“the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.”*

**How is it that Peter can say that Christ (the Master) “bought” such people?**

That is our purpose this morning – to answer this question.

Christ’s True People Can Never be Lost – Then How Can a Person “Bought” by Christ Deny Him and be Appointed to Hell?

We are Christians who adhere to Reformed theology, the theology of the Protestant Reformers, the theology of Luther, Calvin, and so many others who preceded them. We maintain that Reformed theology is a correct and accurate statement of the doctrines Christ and the Apostles have given us in Scripture.

And one of the fundamental doctrines of Reformed theology is what we call the “perseverance of the saints.” Or “eternal security.” This doctrine says that a true Christian, that is a person who is in Christ, has been regenerated (born again), and is indwelt by the Holy Spirit can never be lost. Never. You have it in so many texts of Scripture:

John 10:27-29 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (28) I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. (29) My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

Romans 8:29-30 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (30) And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also

justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Romans 8:33-39 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. (34) Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. (35) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? (36) As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." (37) No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (38) For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, (39) nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Scripture never contradicts itself. Verses like these teach clearly that not a single one of God's elect will end in hell. Not one.

Therefore, whatever Peter means when he says that these false teachers deny the Master who bought them, he cannot mean that they are elect ones, people regenerated by the Spirit, and yet become apostate, become

reprobate, and end in hell. “Bought” has to mean something else here.

Christ Died Effectually Only for the Elect – Yet Peter says these reprobates were “bought” by the Master

Still another foundational doctrine of Reformed theology is that of *limited or definite atonement*. This doctrine says that Christ actually effected the redemption of the elect when He died on the cross for them. *Definite atonement* you see that really accomplished the salvation of His people. In contrast, the Arminian notion is that Christ died for the sins of every human being who ever lived and those who choose to believe in Him are saved. We reject that idea and we believe the Bible rejects it.

So once more we must ask what Peter’s meaning here is. It sounds like he is telling us that these evil ones were “bought” or redeemed by Christ on the cross. But that cannot be. Christ only died for the elect and those for whom He died will all be saved, will never be lost.

Therefore we are brought back to the very same question – what does Peter mean when he says that these wicked false teachers deny the Master who bought them? The answer is very, very important for us to see.

## The Light and Privileges These Evil Ones Have Received

Before we come to a definitive answer, we must consider just what privileges, light, and grace Christ has shown them. That is to say, *if we are going to fully understand just how evil these people are that Peter is warning us about, we must first understand WHO they are.*

Matthew 13:18-23 "Hear then the parable of the sower: (19) When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. **(20) As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, (21) yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.** (22) As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. (23) As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

Hebrews 6:4-8 For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been **enlightened**, who have **tasted** the heavenly gift, and have **shared** in the Holy Spirit, (5) and have **tasted** the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, (6) and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. (7) For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. (8) But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.

And then right here in this very chapter of 2 Peter:

2 Peter 2:20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

What do we see then in regard to the great privileges these reprobates have enjoyed by God's grace?

- They had come to an accurate knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- They were even enabled by grace to cease following the wicked course they were on

That is to say, there are people who we are warned to watch out for, who for all appearances look like Christians. They "know" Christ. They evidenced a real transformation of life, turning away from the evil path they once followed – for a time.

Thomas Adams again:

*"Some are so impudently bold of their salvation, and presume themselves so familiar with God, that they dare challenge Him to talk extempore with him. They may think themselves God's darlings and favorites, that never had their names registered in His book."*

These kind KNOW. They have experienced the power and truth of the gospel in such a way that not only do they know intellectually, they *sense and feel and taste it to be true*. They *KNOW Christ is good*. And yet, in time their faith is shown to be a temporal one, a false one, as they knowingly choose to embrace the world and their own way. They willfully and knowingly pervert the gospel to their own sensual, selfish, greedy ends and work to lead others

away from Christ. *You find them in the church, among the ranks of those who profess Christ.*

This of course, as you see, makes their wickedness all the more wicked.

### How These Evil Ones Were “Bought”

It is of these very kind of people then that Peter is warning us against. It is these of whom he says they were “bought” by the Master. How? What does Peter mean?

1. There is a sense in which Christ died for the whole world. Not in an effectual, saving way as He did for the elect, but as the Savior of the world. You see this theme in verses like these:

John 3:16-17 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (17) For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

And yet as we have seen in John 17,

Jesus said –

John 17:6-9 "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. (7) Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. (8) For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. (9) **I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.**

Christ's death on the cross is *sufficient* to save every sinner who ever lived, but it is not *efficient* to save except the elect. Christ “bought” these wicked false teachers in the sense of His all-sufficient price paid for them.

2. Second, Christ “bought” them in a similar way that every single Jew in Israel, while enslaved in Egypt, was redeemed out of that slavery into freedom. And yet-

1 Corinthians 10:1-12 For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were **all under the cloud**, and **all passed through the sea**, (2) and **all were baptized into Moses** in

the cloud and in the sea, (3) and **all ate the same spiritual food**, (4) and **all drank the same spiritual drink**. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. (5) **Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased**, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

(6) Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. (7) Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." (8) We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. (9) We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, (10) nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. (11) Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. (12) Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

These reprobates Peter is exposing to us are "in the church" among and part of (in outward appearance) the redeemed, bought, people of God.

3. They claimed they were bought

by the Master. Here is Thomas Adams again:

*"They are said to be redeemed in respect of their own opinion; they thought themselves to be redeemed, and did apportion [have a share in] Christ. There is a temporary faith, which for awhile believes, and in time of temptation falls away."*

*"This truth then remains, that Christ only bought His church, and salvation for His church."*

- *Feed the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28)*
- *Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it (Eph 5:25)*

*For the rest, 'they went out from us, but they were not of us' (1 John 2:19); howsoever the price was paid for them, and there was a sufficient ransom in the blood of Jesus, if their faithful apprehension had made it theirs. The king has granted a pardon for all criminals at the parliament; we say, they are all pardoned; yet perhaps some afterwards are punished because they never sued out this pardon nor took the benefit of it.*

*Therefore, consider what God has done for them, then what they have*

done against Him; the height of His mercy adds to the weight of their iniquity.”

Hear the same judgment pronounced in these familiar (yet largely disregarded) words from Hebrews:

Hebrews 6:6 ...and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

And once more in the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter:

Hebrews 10:29-31 How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by **the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?** (30) For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." (31) It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

It is my conclusion that MANY of these very kinds plague most every single local church today. We will see more of the details and nature of the doctrines they teach by word and example as we continue on through

this second chapter, and even into the third. For now however, we conclude with this challenge:

*We must all strengthen our faithfulness and loyalty to Jesus Christ. We must persevere in faith in Him until the day we leave this temporal life, and we must each one and as an entire church be on guard against these evil emissaries of the enemy of our souls who are always working, always watching, looking to introduce their destructive lies among Christ's people.*

2 Peter 2:2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.

Do not pity them. Their end is destruction. It will be swift, and it is of their own making.



