

# Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

Volume 30, Number 37

September 15, 2013



## The Fruits of False Prophets

*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. (2 Peter 2:1–3, KJV 1900)*

Before fretting the apparent the success of false prophets, we should observe a significant point that Peter makes in his setting the stage for this chapter. "...bring upon themselves swift destruction." Peter further emphasizes this point; "...whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not." While the Lord's destruction (Not annihilation) of the wicked at the Second Coming shall be just and certain, it is not swift, and, for the moment, it does linger. It has not yet occurred. Scripture reminds us that the Lord's return, though long delayed, shall surely come. So the final sentence that God pronounces against the wicked shall likewise await that time. The destruction of which Peter here writes is to be a "swift destruction." Scripture requires that faithful believers know the difference between truth and error, and that they "...earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." (Jude 1:3) When believers refuse to so contend for the faith, they actively contribute to the successes of the false prophets of whom Peter us. It is this neglect in godly believers that enables false prophets to spread their teachings and ways so effectively to others. I do not suggest that Peter here teaches that God stands at the ready to swiftly destroy every false prophet the minute that he wins one or two disciples to his ways. I do offer that the words that Peter writes are clear and to be respectfully believed. A false prophet may spread his errors for many years and attract many to his unbiblical ways, Peter's point, seemingly with success. However, we should be aware that the Lord abides as the righteous Judge over His people, and He administers righteous judgments based on His criteria and timetable, not ours. Often in Scripture, people who set themselves against the Lord and His Word continue their course for long seasons and think themselves immune from divine judgment. However, in the end, Scripture consistently demonstrates that the Lord does judge them as warned.

God gave even the New Testament Jezebel space to repent, but, when she refused to repent, He warns that He shall severely confront and judge her. (Revelation 2:20-23) Ponder this lesson. This

evil woman brought great destruction to the faith of at least the Church in Thyatira. But her time was measured and limited. "...and all the churches shall know..." It is my belief that the Lord often—perhaps ordinarily—suspends His judgment until the time and occasion when observers who witness His judgment cannot doubt or deny that He judged the matter—or the person. The events that unfold cannot be reasonably interpreted as "Unfortunate." In almost sixty years of ministry, I have witnessed a few events that amazed me at the clarity with which the Lord's presence and judgment intervened and prevented continuing damage by a false prophet. Surely false prophets with any sense of conscience must live with a deep fear of potential divine judgment, and the Lord doesn't disappoint them.

The Lord's judgments may not always take the sinner's life, but His judgments are nonetheless certain and righteous. Peter makes the point, and we should not downplay it. When a man chooses to refuse the Lord's counsel and lead the Lord's sheep astray, that man shall face a day of judgment with the Lord, a judgment that brings destruction upon him.

*And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.* Yes, for a season, the false prophet shall succeed and shall gain many followers. He is careful to cloak his motives and his departure from Scripture in a beautiful robe of convincing appearance. Just as the serpent in the Garden played out his game with Adam and Eve, so the false prophet will use similar strategies to gain his following. "Yea, hath God said..." (Genesis 3:1) His intent was not to question what God said, but what God meant by what He said. The false prophet succeeds by adroitly appearing to know Scripture and to have wise and insightful knowledge of its meaning, typically a meaning that is different from the understanding of the faithful. Notice the serpent's crafty twisting of God's words. "Ye shall not eat of **every** tree of the garden." (Emphasis added) The serpent implies that God is withholding the fruit of a tree in the garden. Think about his strategy. God created the garden. He planted every tree in the garden. And the serpent twists

this point to suggest that God refused to permit Adam and Eve to eat of a tree that He Himself created and planted there. Surely, according to the serpent's reasoning, God has a hidden truth or benefit that He is consciously withholding. He imposes his own crafty deceit onto God, as if God were the deceiver, not himself. The false prophet is often almost as adroit as the serpent in his twisting of Scripture to lead the naïve to believe that he is actually teaching a Biblical truth. And therein lies the mystery of his sad success.

Let me give you a concrete example that I encountered a few years ago. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a small group of men within our church fellowship embraced a radical view of Biblical predestination, teaching that God predestinated every event that occurs, not just the final resurrection of His elect in the glorious image of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> As advocates of this "Pernicious" error developed their ideas, they adopted an attitude and terminology that they could use to appeal to the naïve. "I'm such a terrible sinner. I can only sin and never do anything righteous, if left to myself. Therefore, if I do anything good at all, God must do one hundred percent of the doing." This twist might at first glance appeal to our sense of God's righteousness and of our sin. However, at the heart, it contradicts a fundamental Scripture, "...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Hebrews 13:5b) This error also wholly ignores the many teachings of Scripture that describe the moral and permanent change that the Holy Spirit effects in the new birth and through His permanent indwelling of every regenerated child of grace. Over the years, I met and became friends with a delightful man who had studied himself through the Scriptures into many of the beautiful doctrines of grace that appear in our Bible. We would meet about once a month at a nearby restaurant for lunch and often spend most of the afternoon in Bible discussion and fellowship. On one of these occasions, my friend asked if he could bring a visitor with him to our next lunch, a man whom he said shared many of our beliefs. Of course, I was happy to meet another believer, so I encouraged him to bring his friend. As usual, we had a good fellowship with the added man at the table. During our visitation, I learned that this man grew up in a particular region of the deep south of our country, a region in which this particular radical

---

<sup>1</sup> Our King James Bible specifically uses personal pronouns, "whom," not impersonal pronouns such as "what," in Romans 8:29-30 to teach the truth of this doctrine. Invariably, advocates of radical predestination ignore this simple King James truth and wax philosophical, or claim to know more about New Testament Greek than the King James translators, to rationalize their error and try to defend their blasphemous belief that God predestinated sin, but, because He supposedly did it, it must be a good thing.

predestination teaching gained quite a foothold. This man's grandfather was actually a member of a church that had embraced radical predestination. His only knowledge of Primitive Baptists came from his grandfather. Eventually, our visitor and I engaged in some discussion of his grandfather's beliefs. I was shocked when our visitor questioned, "Why do you Primitive Baptists not believe in the new birth?" I responded with a strong affirmation of my belief in the new birth and asked why he thought that we did not believe in it. He explained. According to his grandfather's belief—what he thought to be accepted Primitive Baptist belief—the new birth makes no moral change in a person. He is just as depraved, just as inclined to sin after the event as before. It is just as impossible for him to act righteously after the new birth as before, since "...left to myself, I can only sin." I had to struggle to contain my frustration that the false prophets had so twisted this grandfather's faith and caused the way of truth to be "...evil spoken of" two whole generations after the grandfather.

Biblical truth is a cohesive, consistent—and moral—affirmation of God's righteous and saving grace. The same Holy Spirit Who exclusively produces the new birth (John 3:1-8; notice Jesus' emphatic analogy of the Holy Spirit's work in the new birth, similar to the wind blowing "...where it listeth..."), according to Scripture, abides in those same people for the remainder of their life. He also effects a moral change in the people so born again. (2 Corinthians 5:17; Jeremiah 31:33-34; Romans 2:14-15; to name a few) I cite below a passage that makes this point with powerful clarity and emphasis.

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your **body**, and in your **spirit**, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; emphasis added)

This single passage, even if no other appeared in Scripture, confronts and wholly refutes the errant notion that my new acquaintance learned from his deceived grandfather. Paul affirms the point. Because of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we possess the ability to "...glorify God in your body...." Paul rejects the 100% view affirmed by advocates of this radical predestination doctrine.

Our ancestors in the faith who faced this particular error had to deal with it often. Sadly, once the seeds of such error are sown, they, like weeds sown in a garden, aggressively work to drain the soil of nutrients to support and advance their coverage, all the while choking out and starving the tender, fruitful vegetables that should be growing there. Peter warns us that the teachings of false prophets shall follow this course, and observation sadly confirms the point. It is for this reason that the Holy Spirit directed Peter to devote such a powerful warning in his letter against false teachers.

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church  
16434 Woodruff Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday 10:30 A. M.  
Joseph R. Holder Pastor