

I. Introduction

- A. *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 Peter 2:1, NKJV).*
- B. We believe in this power, the force on earth, called grace. Grace is the heartbeat of God himself.
 - 1. Grace is God doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves.
 - 2. Grace is the kindness of God, the love of God, the provision of God, and the power of God.
 - 3. Grace is undeserved favor. You can't earn it, you can't pay for it, you don't deserve it, and you can't repay it. Not in ten million years.
 - 4. Grace is inseparable from the death of Jesus on the Cross. Because it is that death that makes it legit for a holy and righteous God to draw into relationship with himself unholy and unrighteous beings like us.
 - a) No cross, no grace.
 - b) You are not entitled to grace and never will be.
 - 5. But God gives grace anyway. Grace flows from his heart like the gravitational pull of the sun, always drawing us closer to him.
 - 6. Grace is a power, a force in our world, and by his grace, God holds all things together.
 - 7. Grace is the great potential in your life, every single day. It is always latent, and always possible, and always offered, and always right there under the surface of things.
 - a) How do we make what is potential actual, and what is possible real?
 - b) How do we activate that latent grace and bring it to the surface.
 - c) Here is how we state Law of Grace, like physicists state the Law of Gravity:
 - (1) Grace comes to life at the intersection where theology meets psychology.
 - 8. When grace takes hold of your inner world, your psychology, your heart, your mind as the Bible says... that's when all this latent grace becomes activated in your life.
 - 9. Until that happens, you might talk about grace, but it's just academic. It isn't a living, vibrant, dynamic grace.
 - 10. It's got to take hold of your heart and mind.
- C. God gave us two great vehicles to transport grace from his heart into our heart.
 - 1. The Vehicle of the Word of God.
 - 2. The Vehicle of the Holy Spirit.
 - a) The sword of the Spirit — the weapon that decimates the lies, and labels, and legalisms that mess with us — the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God.
 - b) You cannot separate them, but in today's world, so many try.
 - c) They are always talking about the Spirit. Spirit come now. Spirit fill me. Holy Spirit we feel you.
 - d) All I can say is the Holy Spirit does very little in your life apart from the Word of God.
 - e) There is a war on theology, today, because the devil hates it. The devil knows that theology is how God brings grace and healing and power to your soul.
 - f) Every Christian has the Spirit of God, but not every Christian has the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God (Eph 5:17).
 - g) So take up that sword every single day.
 - 3. Because if you are every day handing the Holy Spirit the sword of Scripture, he will cut through the lies.
 - a) He will bring the power of grace to your soul.
 - b) He will heal your inner world.
 - c) And grace will become to you the force to heal and empower your life... this is the way of life, the Grace Pathway.
 - d) Grace comes to life at the intersection where theology meets psychology, the Spirit plus the Word.

II. Enemies

- A. The devil hates grace.
- B. He has launched an all out war on grace.
 - 1. He cannot attack the Holy Spirit directly, because the Holy Spirit is God.
 - 2. But he can attack the Word of God. He can attack truth.
 - a) And that is exactly what he does.
 - b) The verse we read talks about False Prophets, and False Teachers. These are the devil's minions. They look good. They look hip. They're cool. They're nice. They claim to care.
 - c) But that's how evil works.
 - 3. False teachers and false prophets twist your mind away from truth. They say there is no truth. They declare that truth isn't always true. And they declared, in 2014, that we now live in a post-truth age.
 - a) When your mind is twisted away from truth, the Spirit has no sword.
 - b) When the Spirit has no sword, then the delivery system for grace breaks down.
 - c) And when the delivery system for grace breaks down, there's no chance for theology to interact with your psychology...
 - d) And the result is mental confusion and emotional breakdown.
 - (1) The war on grace is a war on truth.
 - (2) And the war on truth is an all out attack on the one force that brings healing to the human psyche.
 - e) Welcome to our post-modern, post-covid world.
- C. Will you think with me today on this topic:

III. Wardens in a Mental Prison

- A. Our passage of Scripture today is disturbing. It is St Peter's wake up call. Cast off these false teachers, he says. Quit listening to them. They call themselves your friends, but they are your enemies.
- B. They claim to set you free, but they are wardens in a mental prison.
- C. They will bring you into bondage... which is the Bible's language for addiction, despair, dysfunction, dependency, cravings, compulsions, and every other disorder you've heard of. Bondage.

IV. So now, we have a seven markers of a false teacher:

A. Arrogance

- 1. *His judgment is chiefly reserved for those who have indulged all the foulness of their lower natures, and have nothing but contempt for authority. These men are arrogant and presumptuous--they think nothing of scoffing at the glories of the unseen world. Yet even angels, who are their superiors in strength and power, do not bring insulting criticisms of such things before the Lord. But these men, with no more sense than the unreasoning brute beasts which are born to be caught and killed, scoff at things outside their own experience, and will most certainly be destroyed in their own corruption.* (2 Peter 2:10-12, Phil)
- 2. Healthy pride is a good thing. Ego is a good thing.
- 3. But when you mix ego or pride with disrespect for authority, you get arrogance. When you mix ego or pride with a spirit that cannot take correction, you get arrogance. When you mix ego or pride with a ignorance of God's Word, you get arrogance.
 - a) And arrogance is the devil's narcotic.
- 4. These Wardens are two dimensional masters in a four dimensional world.
- 5. Four Dimensional World
 - a) The Outer Word of the Streets
 - b) The Inner World of the Psychology
- 6. They are arrogantly dismissive of the two most consequential dimensions:
 - a) The Invisible World of the Heavens.
 - b) The Bedrock World of Eternity.
 - (1) "They think nothing of scoffing at the glories of the unseen world."
 - (2) Go into any university classroom, and tell them there is a God, at whose right hand sits a resurrected Savior as the king of glory.
 - (3) Go into the boardrooms of Facebook and Twitter and tell them that heaven is real and hell is real and each place is everlasting.
 - (4) Go into the backroom meetings of American politicians and judges, and tell them there is a Judge Above All and they will give account.
 - (a) You will be laughed out of the room.
 - (b) You will be cancelled.
- 7. Not even the angels, and not even the fallen angels are this arrogant.
- 8. But false teachers are. They're this arrogant. They are power-hungry lords of "settled science" and they know better than God.
- 9. The truth is they have lit the fuse of their own self-destruction.

B. Shamelessness

- 1. *Their wickedness has earned them an evil end and they will be paid in full. These are the men who delight in daylight self-indulgence; they are foul spots and blots, playing their tricks at your very dinner-tables.* (2 Peter 2:13, Phil).
- 2. This is another one of those places in the Bible that's hard to preach. That's probably why so few preachers preach it. I guess this is not a feel-good moment brought to you by Disney-church.
- 3. These false teachers delight in "daylight self-indulgence." They do stuff in broad daylight that a person with a conscience and a moral compass would only do under the cover of darkness. That's the idea.
- 4. They are shameless in their evil. They parade it.
- 5. Like the brazen corner drug dealer, they are pushers of public alcoholism, dealers of public indecency, and public retailers of the dark side.
- 6. Here's the reality God's Word urgently wants you to understand.
 - a) False teachers aren't just factually incorrect, they are morally evil.
- 7. Here's the companion reality and it is equally crucial.
 - a) **False teachers make their evil not look like evil.**
 - (1) They make it look like compassion. They make it look like kindness. They make it look like anybody who disagrees with them is a hater.
 - (a) *And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.* (2 Corinthians 11:14, NKJV).
- 8. So they stand in an open field, in the middle of an electric storm, shake their fists in God's face, and say "God I am good, but you are the evil one here..." and they think they can get away with it forever.
- 9. God is just loading up...
- 10. Shameless promoters of what God calls sin, under the guise of compassion, kindness, and liberty.

C. Sexual Revolution

- 1. *Their eyes cannot look at a woman without lust, and they miss no opportunity for sin. They captivate the unstable ones, and their technique of getting what they want is, through long practice, highly developed. They are [accursed children]...* (2 Peter 2:14, Phil).
- 2. Three dark riders are driving western culture right now: Money, Sex, and Power.
- 3. Here, it's the sex-gods.
- 4. Never underestimate the power of the sex gods. Our country endured a sexual revolution in the 1960s and 70s. We're enduring another one right now.

5. Preachers did not make up that term. Culture did. Culture said, Revolution. Culture said Sexual Revolution. And they rebelled against the Creator God and installed the sex gods on the throne of our society.
 - a) They call themselves mature, but they are emotional “children,” Peter says.
 - b) They call themselves righteous and happy, but they are emotionally broken and cursed.
6. I have huge compassion for a younger generation caught in the crossfire of these revolutions.
7. The result of this revolution is today’s hookup culture. The result of the hookup culture is sexual experimentation.
8. And the result of the hookup culture and sexual experimentation can be summed up in one word: **depersonalization**.
 - a) A professor at Boston College was shocked to discover that *none* of the students in her senior seminar had *ever* gone on a date. Lots of sex, but no real dates. So she created a final assignment called Go On A Date.
 - b) When asked why so many young adults lost the ability to form relationships this is her answer:
 - (1) “Because the ‘social script’ they hear most often tells them that having fun means engaging in physical relationship without emotional attachment.”
 - (2) That’s plain depressing.
 - (3) Physical relationship without emotional attachment is actually the opposite of love.
 - (4) And emotional attachment is not safe outside of a committed lifelong bond, ratified in public by God and/or the State, called marriage.
 - c) A researcher named Donna Freitas, after interviewing hundreds of students, concluded this about today’s hookup culture:
 - (1) It “creates a drastic divide between physical intimacy and emotional intimacy.” It teaches young people not to “reckon with someone’s personhood.”
9. There it is. From secular research...Depersonalization.
10. Peter says they “captivate the unstable ones.” They are wardens of a mental prison and their prisoners are those who are not well-grounded in the Word of God. Grow up in Christ so you don’t get captivated.
11. Peter says their eyes cannot look up on a woman without lust.
 - a) Because in that moment, she is no longer a woman, she is an object. She is a toy.
 - b) And it works both ways, women objectify men too, as a means to an end, not as a person whose soul is sacred and precious and vulnerable, and therefore off limits to everyone except a spouse in marriage.
12. Even so, thousands of today’s false teachers stand in classrooms, and in recording studios, and in entertainment outlets, and in political offices and on movie screens, AND in so-called pulpits... to declare that any decent person would never place limits on sex because that is a limit on love, they say, and they don’t have a clue what they’re talking about.
 - a) The God of Creation is dead, they say, long live the sex gods.

D. Greed (Frantic Search for Happiness)

1. *for they have abandoned the right road and wandered off to follow the old trail of Balaam, son of Beor, the man who had no objection to wickedness as long as he was paid for it. But he, you remember, was sharply reprimanded for his wickedness--by a donkey, of all things, speaking with a human voice to check the prophet’s wicked infatuation!* (2 Peter 2:15, 16, Phil).
2. Peter is referring to a weird story that goes back over a thousand years from his day. God’s people were in a war. The opposing king hired a false prophet. His name was Balaam. The king hired Balaam to put a curse on God’s people, so they would lose the war.
3. Balaam the false prophet had no objection to wickedness as long as he was paid for it. Balaam signed the contract, collected his money, and road off on his donkey to find the Jewish armies and curse them.
4. But suddenly an angel blocked the way.
5. Balaam didn’t see the angel, but the donkey did. And the donkey spoke, and rebuked Balaam and it’s super cool to realize that a false prophet is dumber than a donkey.
6. Greedier too.
 - a) Money sex and power are utter tyrants, and evil prison-wardens when you put them on the throne.
 - b) Money sex and power and wonderful gifts from God, when God is on the throne of your heart, and your theology is everyday dripping grace upon grace into your psychology.

E. Bogus Evangelism

1. *These men are like wells without a drop of water in them, like the changing shapes of whirling storm-clouds, and their fate will be the black night of utter darkness. With their high-sounding nonsense they use the sensual pull of the lower passions to attract those who were just on the point of cutting loose from their companions in evil.* (2 Peter 2:17, 18, Phil).
2. These preachers of unholy theories declare they have just the message the world needs. They actually have nothing that can give hope instead of despair. Nothing that can give forgiveness for a troubled conscience. Nothing that can elevate the animal instincts to a transcendent realm of spiritual magnificence and power — which is our birthright.
3. They preach all these high sounding words, even as they slouch beneath their God-given dignity.
4. They are like wells without water, or clouds without rain. They can raise your hopes, but only disappoint. They have no water to quench the thirst of an aching life.
5. But they are so persuasive, and so coercive, and so contagious and shrill...

F. Bondage

1. *They promise them liberty. Liberty!--when they themselves are bound hand and foot to utter depravity. For a man is the slave of whatever masters him.* (2 Peter 2:19, Phil).
2. Here is where I got the title for my talk today.
3. Wardens of a Mental Prison. They are genuinely out to get you.

4. What is freedom? What is true freedom?
5. True freedom happens when the best part of you — your spirit, your redeemed ego — is at the driver's seat of your life. You choose your course, and you captain your life under the mighty Lordship of Christ.
6. That is freedom. It is biblical. You — the best part of you — has dominion. The best part of you reigns in life (Romans 5:17).
7. That's God's plan.
8. But who is actually running your life?
 - a) Money... you don't have enough, so your pile of debt is running your life, or your fear over money is running your life, or your emotional drives are fracturing your soul and wrecking your marriage, and all you do is fight. This isn't freedom.
 - b) Sex might run your life... addictions to porn you can't stop, hooking up, getting more physical pleasure and less emotional intimacy every day till your heart is so hard you can't feel at all. This isn't freedom either.
 - c) Power might run your life... always trying to be in control and to boss people around and to never show your weakness...
9. You are not free. You are a slave to whatever masters you.
10. Jesus came to set you free. Jesus gave you his Word and his truth to apply that freedom to your soul, because until you are free in your psychology you will never be free in your life.

G. Walked Away.

1. *If men have escaped from the world's contaminations through knowing [about] our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and then become entangled and defeated by them all over again, their last position is worse than their first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of goodness at all, than after knowing it to turn their backs on the sacred commandments given to them. For them, the old proverbs have come true about the "dog returning to his vomit", and "the sow that had been washed going back to wallow in the muck". (2 Peter 2:20-22, Phil)*
 - a) Peter is talking about false teachers, not true Christians. They have never been saved. They have looked at Christ, studied Christ, and walked away.
2. He is talking about the custodians of the messages of our culture — media, social media, entertainment, arts, education, politics, religion — the massive fountain of deception spraying us with toxic lies every single day.
3. Peter says...
 - a) They may have accepted parts of Christianity as a philosophy, but they have never accepted the Lord Jesus as their Savior.
4. By hearing of Christ, and then rejecting Him, they have hardened their hearts. When you hear of Christ, and reject Him, you make it harder for yourself the next time you hear.
5. When you see the prison door of sin open, and start to step out, but then step back, your position is worse than before.
6. It would be better to have not heard the first time... because you only get one "first time", and each time after, your heart gets calloused more and more.
7. And you begin to love the vomit.
8. You prefer wallowing in the muck of a sensual, two dimensional world, and you stop sensing your utter and desperate need of grace.

V. Conclusion

- A. We believe in this power, the force on earth, called grace. Grace is the heartbeat of God himself.
 1. Grace is the great potential in your life, every single day. It is always latent, and always possible, and always offered, and always right there under the surface of things.
 - (1) Grace comes to life at the intersection where theology meets psychology.
 2. There is a war on Theology.
 - a) This war on theology is actually a war on human psychology. Because when you subtract God's truth, you subtract God's healing grace for a world gone mad.
 - b) The result is despair. The result is hopelessness. The result is settling for a half-life, and emotional numbness, and a frantic search for happiness.
 - c) The result is giving up on ever finding true love.
 3. The war on theology is the devil's plan to break the spirit of the human race.
 4. Grace comes to life at the intersection where theology meets psychology.
 5. Isn't that where you want to live? There? In the realm of grace... at that glorious intersection of truth and heart?
 6. This world is infested with Wardens of a Mental Prisons hellbent on keeping you as far away from that intersection as possible.
 - a) But here we are. And here you are.
 7. **You are opening your Bible.** You are gathering with God's people. You are praying. You are asking the Spirit of God to use the Word of God to cut away the lies you've picked up this week. To peel back the labels of defeat you have accepted this week. And to unlock the bars of legalism that have entrapped you this week. You are taking steps along the Grace Pathway.
 8. **Keep doing this.**
 9. You are opening your Bible, and every time you do that, you tell God and the angels and the demons that the false teachers will not be your warden, and they will not imprison you, because you know the truth, and the truth will continually set you, and keep you, free.