

Facing the Modern Deceivers

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:1-2

Code: 61-1

We have the wonderful privilege tonight of embarking upon a new adventure, the study of the second epistle of Peter. I would encourage you to turn there in your Bible now as we begin, and I say begin because we're not going to get very far in the text, but we will at least introduce it. Second Peter chapter 1, let me just read you the greeting which opens this epistle. "Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ, grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."

When I was a boy I remember my mother looking for products which had the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval, some of you remember that. If a product had the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval it verified its genuineness, its quality, its price and its reliability. That was the early precursor to what today is known as Consumer Protection. Since those days Consumer Protection has become a major enterprise in our culture. Even the government has very sophisticated consumer bureau operations. And the purpose of all of this is to protect the buyer. A man by the name of Ralph Nader has become a household word to most adults. Ralph Nader started, invented really, a new profession, the media consumer advocate. He has been followed by numerous other people, perhaps the most well-known in our city is a man named David Horowitz. He has pioneered this consumer protection kind of advocacy into a television show. Weekly you find him there, that program is devoted exclusively to testing everything, toys to make sure that they're safe for your children, tires to make sure that they give you the mileage that the manufacture claims they will give, soaps to make sure they will clean the way they say they will clean and not somehow poison you or leave scum all over you, bleaches that are designed to get everything that isn't white out of your white clothes and not destroy the material in the process, toothpaste to make sure it doesn't leave blue and green stripes across your front teeth, batteries which will last longer than about ten minutes. He tests frozen meals to make sure they are healthy. He tests appliances to make sure that they function without setting your house on fire. It's a constant effort made to protect the consumer from substandard products, false claims, hazardous materials.

And frankly an immense amount of money goes into this process. It is an enterprise of massive proportions economically because, frankly, to some people it is unconscionable to get a bad tire. It is unthinkable to have a lousy frozen dinner or to get an inefficient toothpaste. In fact, if your soap isn't everything its cracked up to be, you might just sue the soap company. And it is frankly in my mind amazing how serious people are about protecting us from these products. It is also equally amazing

to me how little concern the church has to protect people from products that are much more disastrous than any of those, spiritual products being sold daily to millions of unwitting gullible people whose understanding of God and whose understanding of divine truth is frankly at stake, and whose eternal destiny may be in the balance. And while the government is completely committed to this consumer advocacy, I'm not sure the church has awakened to its need for consumer protection.

I remember being on an interview with Paul Moyer who is an anchor person on ABC news here in Los Angeles, and we were discussing some of the scandals. In fact it happened to be on an Easter Sunday television program. He was talking to me as a representative of the religious community and he asked me a pointed question which I have never forgotten. He said, "With all of the stuff that's pumped out in the name of religion, why doesn't someone police your movement?" I've never forgotten that question. Where are the spiritual consumer protection advocates? Where are the people who will warn you about products, spiritual products, that will negatively adversely impact your life? Frankly, religious bunk is much more tolerated in our culture than any other inadequate product, it is pumped out frankly like a flood, charlatans and incompetent teachers abound across our nation and in our media. And the church does little or nothing to protect the consumer. And if we do speak up, they cry foul and accuse us of being judgmental and unloving.

I have always been a sort of self-styled consumer advocate in the spiritual realm, as you well know. It has always been of concern to me to follow the pattern of the Apostle Paul who ceased not to warn his people night and day with tears about the things that could adversely affect their spiritual life. Consequently I have seen a sort of decrease in popularity through the years. Now some of the stuff is just so self-evidently goofy that you can figure it out yourself obviously. I picked up a recent L.A. Times and there was a half-page ad in the L.A. Times announcing that Jesus and Mary had predicted a great earthquake in Los Angeles. Not very novel, frankly everybody else has too. But Jesus and Mary said the way to be protected from the earthquake hitting you is to keep a crucifix attached to the outside of each door and it has to be a crucifix with a corpus on it, with a body on it, a crucifix, a barren cross without a body on it is not acceptable to God. So the first thing you do is put a crucifix on the door then pray the rosary daily, read the Bible for fifteen minutes a day, only the Catholic editions before 1964, and keep the Ten Commandments. And then the ad said this, "Just in case, keep a supply of canned foods, blankets, water and blessed candles." You may have missed one of the commandments along the way and you need to be ready just in case your house comes down around your ears. Then the ad said, "Should this warning go unheeded by a universal lack of repentance, God will then send to the world a great chastisement of fire consisting of nuclear World War III and our being planet struck by the ball of redemption, a fiery comet sent from God. In the meantime we are now facing a world monetary crash and with this instability riots, hunger and revolution all of which will pave the way for a communist invasion of North America. The tragedies in elemental disturbances will now increase in volume, spreading throughout the world but the Blessed Mother has given her promise that all who listen to her will be protected and cared for in the coming days and will be saved."

That's not too subtle. There's much more subtle substandard false deviated spiritual product being marketed. A new book has come out published by Moody Press called "The Agony of Deceit." That book chronicles for us the false and substandard teaching which is being poured out on these poor bewildered souls who lack the knowledge and wisdom of God's Word to discern. The book takes on some of the most popular teachers today who by the way almost all are Charismatics, and shows the tragic deception that they perpetrate. As I read through the book twice, I read it before it was published as the publisher sent it to me to read it, and as I read it after it was published, it was curious to me that it contained many of the quotes that I have collected in my files through the years. The book is written, by the way, by about ten or twelve writers, each writing a different chapter. Some of the Charismatics have been so upset by the book, namely Paul Crouch, that on television the other night he brought on a man by the name of Chambak(?) who noted that they reject what is in that book and in fact one of the writers, he said, who wrote one of those chapters is already dead, referring to Walter Martin, and making the connection that he was dead because of what he said against these false teachers. So they're fighting back.

I have listened to this. I have collected massive files on this kind of stuff through the years and as you know, periodically have spoken or written on it. But I want to give you some of the error that is daily being perpetrated on the church as well as the unbelieving in our society. It is mostly reflective of an element in the Charismatic Movement, it is not representative of the whole Movement, but it is an element of the Charismatic Movement which is so over exposed on television. It is very very important for you to understand what people believe. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "Tell me what a man believes and I'll tell you what he'll do." People act on their convictions. They live according to their belief system. It is important for you to understand what people believe. What one considers as true will control their behavior. And if we do not have the right substance of truth, then we can come up with a deviated course of conduct. A book that just came out called, "Let Us Make Man," written by Lindley Roberts sort of sums up the principle with these words, "At the outset we need to realize there's no substitute for knowledge. Christian virtues are important and we must give diligence to cultivate them in our lives but it is futile to attempt to do so apart from a knowledge of the truth. It is impossible to grow the flowers of grace and love without the soil of truth. In other words, virtues do not exist very long out of their proper context or environment." That is correct.

So what a person believes is crucial to the way they behave. The moral implications of error are as frightening as the error itself. Do you understand what I'm driving at? The error is one thing, the moral implications of that error compound the problem. And you don't need a lot of illustrations of this. Some of the most widely heard teachers of error are guilty of the most scandalous conduct...including immorality and unabashed materialism. The Christian must realize that most of the Charismatic media preachers and teachers have an erroneous belief system that cannot restrain sin and the flesh and rather tends to feed pride, materialism and spiritual shallowness that all begins with the basic standard. And for us the standard is the Word of God rightly interpreted. For them

they would say it is the Word of God but sadly not rightly interpreted. For us it is the Word of God rightly interpreted as objective truth. For them it is the Word of God wrongly interpreted as subjective truth.

Let me go into that a little bit. Biblical Christianity says that the Scriptures rightly interpreted are the ultimate and only standard for all spiritual truth. Sound doctrine out of the Bible is foundational and is brought to us through our minds, through rational process, through reason, through thinking. That is why we must be renewed in the spirit of our minds. Sadly these contemporary Charismatics have an inadequate understanding of the nature, function and interpretation rules that govern Scripture. And because they do not understand the processes of interpreting the Bible, they have become victims, victims of their subjectivity with only mindless feelings, self-authenticating emotions, vivid imagination. They have developed a non-rational mystical approach to spiritual truth.

I heard one of them singing a song the other night on television and the song had a lot of different lyrics but the one line that summed it up is, "When there are no answers there is Jesus." In other words, when you've gone the rational route and you can't get any rational answers, then leap into Jesus. Which is some kind of subjective mystical emotional experience. This historically is found in Roman Catholicism and in theological neo-orthodoxy primarily. And the people who take this subjective approach to Scripture where they interpret it on the basis of their feelings and their emotions and their self-authenticating experiences think they're spiritual. They think they have ascended to the comprehension of the truth of God. But they are not because they do not understand the Word of God. And so, with an aberrant process, a mystical spiritual subjective process of interpretation, they come up with error. The foundation then of their conduct is in error and their conduct will follow. In place of study, careful precise interpretation of Scripture based on the historical grammatical method, they approach Scripture with an inward subjective non-rational intuitional sort of impressionistic approach. In fact, very often they will deny any intellectual approach as being stiff and unspiritual.

Kenneth Hagan, for example, who is the father of much of this Positive Confession Movement said, quote: "The mind is something that might trip you and cause you to fall," end quote. Get your mind out of this thing. Paul Crouch, whom we all know from TBN during a Praiseathon said, and I quote, "There are those who spend a life time, we call them apologists, they spend their whole lives apologizing for the Scripture," which by the way is not anything to do with what apologetics is. And he said this, "They spend their whole life time defending the orthodoxy of the doctrines of the church." And as I said a while ago, what is orthodox to them is what is in agreement with their opinion of what the Bible says. "You can spend a life time gazing at the orthodoxy of the church and let a world go straight to hell and never hear the message of Jesus Christ," end quote.

Now see what he's saying basically is look, orthodoxy and doctrine is just somebody's opinion. Why does he say that? Because with them that is exactly what it is, that is exactly what it is. So let's not

mess with that or the world may go straight to hell, let's give them the message of Jesus Christ. The irony of the whole thing is how in the world can you give them the message of Jesus Christ unless you understand what the Bible teaches about that?

They don't want you to judge them. Earl Paulk(?) who is one of their foremost leaders, defending himself said, "A prophet is not to be judged." And they're always quoting, "Touch not the Lord's anointed." The Bible says this in Deuteronomy 13, "If a prophet appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and through it leads the people astray, you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer, the Lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love Him with all your heart and with all your soul. As for the prophet, that prophet or dreamer must be put to death." If he's ever wrong, kill him. Now that has a way of eliminating false prophets.

Since these people make error public and since it's coming constantly like a flood on the airwaves, I feel I need to react publicly. And I want to say this. I don't really believe that these people through a very careful tedious structured honest process have come to error. In other words, they've just come through the right method to the wrong answer. Nor do I believe that there is something in them that compels them to teach what is wrong. I just believe it's unwitting, it's ignorant because they lack the proper tools and they lack the proper methodology. They even get revelations direct from God mystically. Kenneth Hagan(?) writes, "We cannot communicate with God mentally for He is a Spirit, but we can reach Him with our spirit and it is through our spirit that we come to know God." Now you see what he said there is you have to bypass the mind. You come to know God through your spirit without your mind. "This is one reason," he writes, "God put teachers in the church to renew our minds." Now he's back to saying we need to renew our minds. The confusion. "Many times those who teach do so with only a natural knowledge that they've gained from the Bible, but I am referring here to one of the ministry gifts, those who are called an anointed by the Spirit to teach."

In other words, if you really want to know the deep things you've got to go beyond the Bible to some kind of spiritual contact with the Spirit of God and your spirit that is super- arational(?). "God has given us His Word," he writes, "and we can feed upon that Word. This will renew our minds but He also puts teachers in the church to renew our minds and to bring us the revelation of the knowledge of God's Word." Frankly, folks, that is double talk from start to finish. It's double talk. We can't communicate with God mentally but we need teachers to renew our minds. God gives us His Word and we can feed on that and that will renew our minds but we also need teachers who go beyond that in some mystical way to touch the Spirit of God in a way that the Word of God doesn't do. He doesn't deny the Bible as God's Word but it's nothing but mysticism. In order to understand the Bible we need something beyond the natural, something beyond the mental, something transcendent, something mystical.

Historically identified these are the neo-agnostics, the new- gnostics with the secret ascendent knowledge. When I was in New Orleans for our Shepherds' Conference recently, I turned on a

television there and for the first time in my life I saw a man by the name of Robert Tilton. Some of you have had that experience. Robert Tilton claims a direct pipeline to divine revelation. This is a quote, "God showed me a vision that almost took my breath away. I was sucked into the Spirit, caught away and I found myself standing in the very presence of Almighty God. It just echoed into my being and He said these words to me, exactly these words, 'Many of My ministers pray for My people but I want you to pray the prayer of agreement with them.' I have never seen the presence of God so powerful. This same anointing flooded my spirit-man. It's inside of me now and I have super-natural faith to agree with You. From that day forth as I have been faithful to that heavenly vision, I've seen every kind of miracle imaginable happen when I pray the prayer of agreement with God's people," end quote.

What does it mean to be sucked into the Spirit? What does it mean to have your spirit-man flooded? I have no idea. It's sheer mysticism, it means nothing. Paul Crouch and Kenneth Hagan, Kenneth Copeland, Robert Tilton and these other people have revelations from God all the time. Even Pat Robertson has questioned the inerrancy of Scripture, I quote, "I can hardly think that the Bible which was transmitted through human beings is totally perfect. I believe it to be the Word of God and a fully inspired book but not perfection." Well then are your revelations more perfect than Scripture? We would be led to believe that. Charles Kapps(?) in "Can Your Faith Fail?" says that Job was sure not under the anointing when he said the Lord gives and the Lord takes away. In fact, Kapps says, that was a lie. You see, the prosperity gospel will say the Lord gives but it won't say...what?...the Lord takes away.

Some of the media salesmen have an already rejected view of God. I don't know if you listen to their theology but for example, a quote from Jimmy Swaggart, "Many people conclude that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are all one and the same. Actually they are not. These people take 1 John 5:7 to mean one in number and this is not what is meant at all. They evidently have not studied this in the original Greek language to get its actual meaning. The word one in this passage means one in unity." That is double talk also. Then he says this, "You can think of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit as three different persons exactly as you would think of any three other people. Their oneness pertaining strictly to their being one in purpose, design and desire. When Genesis says," he writes, "that God made man in His own image, I'm convinced that it meant not only in the spiritual image but also in the physical image. I realize many Bible scholars would chuckle at this statement but this is the way I see it. I believe that God has a spirit body, I believe His body is in one place at one time, wherever that may be," end quote.

Those are heresies. That's a denial of the historic doctrine of the trinity and the essence of the nature of God. When it comes to the nature of Christ, they're equally deceiving. In a prophecy during a three-day campaign in Dallas, Kenneth Copeland heard these words to him from Jesus by direct revelation and I have it, a Xerox copy out of his own magazine where he put this, this is what Jesus

said to him by direct revelation. Quote: "Don't be disturbed when people accuse you of thinking you're God...capital G...don't be disturbed when people accuse of you a fanatical way of life, don't be disturbed when people put you down and speak harshly and roughly of you. They spoke that way of Me, should they not speak that way of you? The more you get to be like Me, the more they're going to think that way of you. They crucified Me for claiming that I was God, but I didn't claim I was God. I just claimed I walked with Him and that He was in Me," end quote.

Jesus didn't claim that He was God? And don't be disturbed when people accuse you of thinking you're God? Kenneth Hagan, Kenneth Copeland and others say this, "Jesus died on the cross," and his wife has said this also, Gloria Copeland, "Jesus died on the cross and took on Satan's nature, ceased to be God and went to hell for three days and nights and was tormented. Jesus then became born again in the underworld, defeating the powers of darkness thereby completing the atonement begun on the cross but finished in hell." It doesn't sound like it is finished to me. We laugh at these things because they shock us.

Most of this comes from a man by the name of E.W. Kenyon, most of this mystical kind of teaching. He was a false teaching mystic of a century ago who began the Positive Confession Movement. And if you want to get back to the source of it, just read E.W. Kenyon...K-e-n-y-o-n.

Now many of these media preachers with millions of followers also skew the doctrine of salvation. For example, Kenneth Copeland writing in the Word of Truth magazine says, quote: "Every man who has been born again is an incarnation. The believer is as much an incarnation as was Jesus of Nazareth," end quote. Where in the world did that ever come from? We are as much an incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth. You mean there is no line between the incarnate God in Christ and us?

An outstanding book called "Faith Misguided," which deals with the encroachment of mysticism into the evangelical movement, written by a man named Johnson. In that excellent book he says this, "It seems that the mystical experience often involves a feeling of union or oneness with either the totality of the universe or some aspect of it. This may take the form of a feeling of union with God."

They have gotten so carried away with this mystical union that when the believer comes into union with Christ, he becomes God in their system. The Bible, however, never blurs the line between the nature of man and the nature of God...never. But to these teachers and their followers, the separation is abolished through mystical experience...your spirit touches God's Spirit, you get sucked into the Spirit, your spirit-man touches His Spirit, you are made in His...the image of His Spirit body. None of this is in the Bible. Kenneth Hagan in his book, "Zoe, the God kind of life," writes this, "Even many in the great body of Full-Gospel people do not know that the new birth is a real incarnation. They do not know that they are as much sons and daughters of God as Jesus. They only have a hazy concept of what God has done, of what He is to them and of what they are to God. Jesus was first divine and then He was human. So He was in the flesh a divine human being. I was first human

and so were you. I was born of God and so I became a human-divine being," end quote.

Paul Crouch says, "Do you know what else has settled in tonight? This hue and cry and controversy that has been spawned by the devil to try to bring dissension within the body of Christ that we are God's, I am a little God, I have His name, I am one with Him, I'm in covenant relation, I am a little God, critics be gone." They are in to deifying man.

Casey Treat(?), pastor of Seattle's Christian Faith Center, tells us in his tape series "Believing in Yourself" to come to the point where we feel comfortable claiming our Godhood. This is what he says, "The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost had a conference and they said, 'Let us make man an exact duplicate of us.'" Is that what the Bible says? "Oh, I don't know about you but that does turn my crank," he writes. "An exact duplicate of God, say it out loud, I'm an exact duplicate of God." Then in parenthesis it says, "The audience repeats it a bit tentatively." "Come on, say it. He leads them in unison. I'm an exact duplicate of God, say it again, I'm an exact duplicate of God...I'm an exact duplicate of God...yell it out, shout it." And he does this repeatedly. "When God looks in the mirror He sees me. When I look in the mirror I see God. O hallelujah. You know, sometimes people say to me when they're mad and want to put me down, 'You just think you're a little God.' Thank you, hallelujah, you've got that right. 'Who do you think you are, Jesus?' Yep! Are you listening to me?" he says, "are you kids running around here acting like Gods, why not? God told me to since I'm an exact duplicate of God I'm going to act like God."

Robert Tilton asserts, quote: "You are a God kind of creature. Originally you were designed to be as a God in this world. Man was designed or created by God to be the God of this world. Of course man forfeited his dominion to Satan who became the God of this world."

Kenneth Copeland says, "Man had total authority to rule as a God over every living creature on earth and he was to rule by speaking words, his words would carry the power and anointing of God that was in him from the time he was first created." And Copeland further says, quote: "You don't have a God in you, you are a God."

This doesn't sound any different to me than the Worldwide Church of God, Christian Science, Unity Science of Mind, Religious Science, New Thought Metaphysics or any other metaphysical religion. This isn't Christianity, this is...to put it in its classical form...Hinduism. It is a form of mystical Hinduism. It is nothing but the core of the New Age system. Man is divine. Read Shirley Maclaine, quote: "I am God." That's the New Age, that's Hinduism, that's Eastern mysticism, that is not Christianity. There is a clear line between a man and God.

Bill Hymer(?) who is now dead wrote a book called "Destined for the Throne," he was a Charismatic patriarch, he says in his book this, "But this is not all. We tread softly here. With baited breath we read in 1 Corinthians 6:17, 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.' The union goes beyond a mere

formal function or idealistic harmony or rapport, it is an organic unity, an organic relationship of personalities. Through the new birth we become bonafied members of the original cosmic family, actually generated sons of God, partakers of the divine nature, begotten by Him, impregnated with His genes called the seed or sperm of God and bearing His heredity. Thus through the new birth, and I speak reverently, we become the next of kin to the trinity, extensions of the Godhead.

"According to 1 John 3:2," he writes, "that is just what they are, true genetic sons of God and therefore blood brothers of the Son. Christ is the divine prototype after which this new species is made, they are to be exact copies of Him, true genotypes as utterly like Him as it is possible for the finite to be like the infinite. As sons of God begotten by Him, incorporated into their fundamental being and nature the very genes of God, they rank above all other created beings and are elevated to the most sublime height possible, short of becoming members of the trinity," end quote.

They are guilty in some cases of reducing Jesus to a born again man and elevating man to an incarnate God. Their view of sin is also metaphysical. It is dualistic. The sin belongs to the bad god, Satan. And righteousness belongs to the good god, God. That is why, for example, Jimmy Swaggart's fornications and liaisons with prostitutes were cured. You remember when he said they were cured? You remember how they were cured? They were not cured through repentance. They were not cured through a broken and a contrite spirit. They were not cured through holy humble penitence. They were cured by Oral Roberts. Oral came along, saw these demons, he said, with their claws imbedded in Jimmy's flesh and he threw the demons out. You see, it was the bad demons that caused the sin. That's a metaphysical view of sin. That's a dualistic view of the universe that separates good from evil. And so Jimmy Swaggart's sin wasn't his problem, it was these demons. And you hear that repeatedly in that Movement, don't you? The devil and the demons get blamed for everything. That's dualism.

Fred Price right here in our own city and I quote, "When you say you're a sinner saved by grace, you're still confessing that you're in the same state you were in before Jesus saved you. No, I am no longer a sinner. You may be a sinner but I am not a sinner saved by grace," end quote.

Pat Robertson, describing original sin, says and I quote, "Man has a moral handicap, he is lame in his spirit, this is original sin," end quote. That is not original sin. Original sin is not a moral handicap. It is not lameness in your spirit. It is the residence of wickedness living in you.

Robert Schuller who has another form of mystical thinking said this, quote: "The most serious sin is the one that makes me say I am unworthy. I may have no claim to divine Sonship if you examine me at my worst," end quote.

Well the sum of all of this is to let you see that there is a new wave of error and it's being pumped out in the name of Christianity. It is foreign to the Bible. It is exotic. It is mystical. It is from intuition and

fantasy and imagination, subjective. And it touches every area of their theology. Even the doctrine of justification, this might surprise you, Jimmy Swaggart in fact says it is a lie to believe that the believer's sins are already forgiven past, present and future and that his sins are not taken into account. That, he says, is a lie. Swaggart teaches that justification rather than being a once-and-for-all declaration of righteousness in Christ requires constant renewing. Each time the believer falls morally, these same acts of grace are available and again instantly the Lord cleanses him and justifies him again. By the way, that's precisely the sort of language against which the Protestant Reformers launched their polemics. According to Swaggart, "God will continue to justify believers if they will cooperate. The durability of this justifying grace is on the basis of obedience to God," he says, "thus a person can lose his salvation through neglect and disobedience, can fall back into sin and lose his Sonship, believers can stay free and pure in Him but only by that continued cooperation." So he says it is a two-fold work, a two-fold work takes place here, God's redemptive work in our heart and our cooperation in that work. "We teach and believe," he says, quote, "that all of God's promises are conditional, nothing as far as God's dealing with mankind is concerned is unconditional." Everything is condition on your obedience. You disobey, you're out. You have to get justified again. This literally devastates a proper doctrine of salvation by grace and substitutes salvation by...what?...works. Sustained obedience saves you.

What is so interesting to me about this mystical intuitive subjective inward emotional approach to truth is that it is so old...it is so old. As Hinduism is reborn pantheistic mysticism now called New Age Truth and purveyed by a new generation of Yuppie shamans, so this brand of Charismatic Christianity is a new dose of the old Gnosticism. Gnosticism was a very dangerous heresy that came full-blown into the church in the second century. It came from the Greek word gnosis which means to know because these people came along and claimed a higher knowledge, they claimed you had to transcend your mind, you had to transcend the written page. The Bible was not enough, you had to get sucked into the Spirit, moved into the spirit-man, you had to transcend ascend into the higher non-rational intuitive esoteric secret knowledge. They were the ones who were elevated above everybody else by their higher deeper knowledge of God into a privileged class. They were dualistic. They had a wrong view of Christ. They had a wrong view of God. They had a wrong view of sin. They had a wrong view of salvation.

Some of this mystical higher non-rational knowledge was also around during the New Testament time. And there's very little doubt in my mind that some of it was attacking the people to whom Peter wrote this letter. All of that to get us to touch base with this letter. Peter faced the same stuff. Peter wrote this epistle to help believers face a world of subtle spiritual deception. It isn't easy because they fight back.

Three nights ago on TBN somebody had given Paul Crouch a copy of the book Agony of Deceit and this in general is what he said, "All of the denominations, the Pentecostals, the Charismatics, the Lutherans, the Methodists, the Baptists are fighting among themselves and saying that they can't be a

part of each other's groups because of their doctrinal stand on this issue and that issue and what they don't realize is that none of that really matters. What really matters is Jesus." You see, you sweep all doctrine away and that means you don't have to be responsible for proper interpretation. And then you just leap into Jesus. Then he says this, "I'm so upset about this new book, The Agony of Deceit, that criticizes of all people Brother Kenneth Copeland. How could they possibly criticize Pappa Ken Hagan? And I also was listed as a heretic and I'm proud to be included with the other men in that book that they criticized." And then in words similar to this he said, "Any book that's been written recently that divides the body of Christ is evil. I hope the authors of books like these burn in hell with these books." That statement came right after a passionate plea for evangelism.

Now how do you face this? How do you face this jaded confused kind of environment? I think Peter's going to help us. Peter's epistle is a warning with regard to false teachers assaulting the church in his day with some of the very same kind of approach. Peter is our apostolic consumer advocate. He is the New Testament Ralph Nader for us in our study, or better yet since he's Jewish, David Horowitz. And like Jude, the goal of this letter is to expose and defeat the invasion of false teachers into the church.

I'm sure some of our modern people who are confused are unwitting dupes of Satan. I'm sure some of them are deceived themselves. But nonetheless they have to be dealt with. And Peter is not going to pull any punches and he's going to give us some insights that will help us. Chapter 2 unfolds a description of false teachers that is so powerful and we're not going to get into it tonight obviously, but that's the heart of the letter. In chapter 2 he says they teach destructive heresies, they twist Scripture. He says they bring the true faith into disrepute. They despise authority. They don't want to answer to anybody. They're dominated by lust. They're characterized by immorality. They are covetous exploiters of people. They are arrogant. They entice people with sensual pleasure. They promise the good life and can't give it. Very familiar sounding descriptions. What we're going to learn about false teachers is directly applicable into our own times.

We don't really know the specific error that Peter addresses. We don't know whether it had a name or a label but he tells us enough to be able to confront any kind of false teaching. You say, "Well, if that's the heart of it in chapter 2, what are chapters 1 and 3 about?" Chapter 1 and 3 tell us how to defend ourselves against this. Chapter 1 says, "Examine your own spiritual condition." Chapter 3 says, "Make sure your spiritual progress is moving in the right direction in the light of the coming of Christ." If you understand the beginning, your salvation, and you understand the end, the coming of Christ, you can deal with what's going on now. This is a masterpiece of instruction for dealing with false teachers. We will embark on what you will find as one of the great adventures in equipping you for what we face in the church today. Let's bow together in prayer.

Thank You, Father, for the time of fellowship tonight around Your Word, time to consider not so much the solution tonight as the problem. We pray that we might have had our appetites wetted to the degree that we are ready and eager to learn so that we might properly discern and that we might set our defense by knowing our true spiritual condition, salvation, and being assured that we are in Christ and by living in the light of His return and growing in grace. Equip us, Lord, to be protectors of Your people and of those who aren't Your people who also can be so easily deceived. And we seek not to condemn people while they might say they would wish those who criticize them to go to hell, we can only say we would long for them to go to heaven. We would pray for their true salvation that they would know the truth and they would teach and preach it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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