

2 Peter 2:1-3
September 17, 2017

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Have you ever encountered false teaching? If so, how did you know it was false teaching?
[Let people engage.]

Q: What happens when false teaching is not challenged? [It's allowed to grow like yeast. It infiltrates our minds if we're not spiritually sensitive to what we're hearing.]

Transition: If you joined us last week, you will recall that Peter emphasized that true prophets spoke from God as they were “carried along by the Holy Spirit.” Peter could have stopped right there and trusted that his fellow believers would latch onto these truths and remember the prophets who only spoke what the Holy Spirit had told them to speak. But he doesn't. He is getting ready to prep them about false teachers. And I'm not talking about a few sentences. He spends a whole chapter on this issue.

We need to pay close attention to what Peter shares with us. We need to understand how false teachers like to operate. Believers in all ages must be constantly on guard against its attack. So as we study today's text, it is my hope that you will be strengthened in your ability to discern false teachings by understanding the WAYS false teachers introduce falsehoods among the body of Christ. Let's begin. Would someone read 2 Peter 2:1-3 to get us started?

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.1:

- But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce (*pareisaxousin*, “bring in alongside” (cf. “infiltrated.”)) destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves.

V.2:

- Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.

V.3:

- In their greed these teachers will exploit (*emporeusontai*) means to commercialize (“buy, sell, trade”; cf. *emporeusometha*, “carry on business,” in James 4:13). you with stories they have made up (*PLASTOS*, from which we get our English word *plastic*). Their condemnation (*krima*, “judgment”) has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.1: Peter mentions that there were false prophets among the people. Can you think of any examples of a false prophet in the OT? [Elijah had to deal with Baal; Jeremiah had to deal with false prophets (Jer 8:4-17); Ahab had false prophets give him false assurance of victory]

Q: Who is the author of falsehoods? [Satan] And how far back can we trace his activity in the Bible? [Garden of Eden!]

Q: So if we had been living during OT times, how would we know if we were hearing from a false prophet or not? [X-Ref: Deut 13:1-5; Deut 18:20-22]

- The prophet speaks in the name of other gods
- The prophet presumes to speak in God's name when God has not commanded him to speak.
- A prophet announces a miraculous sign or wonder that does take place, but then says, "Let's follow other gods."
- Ultimately, a prophet who proclaims something in the name of the Lord, but it doesn't take place or come true.

Q V.1: Will there be a time when our world is free of false teachers? [No!]

Q: So if we know how to discern a false prophet had we been living during the OT time period, how do we discern a false teacher in our lifetime? Let's take a look at two Scripture passages: X-Ref: 1 John 2:18-23; 4:1-6)

- The test of any religion is, "What do you say about Jesus Christ?" If a religious teacher denies the deity of Christ, then he is a false teacher.
- Test the spirits to see if they are from God. Every spirit that acknowledges Christ came in the flesh is from God.

Q: What are their WAYS for introducing falsehoods? [they secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them]

Q: How does one "secretly" introduce destructive heresies? [Instead of openly declaring what they believed, they came into the church under false colors and gave the impression that they were true to the Christian faith. "They secretly bring in alongside" is the literal translation. They do not throw out the truth immediately; they simply lay their false teachings alongside the truth and give the impression that they believe the fundamentals of the faith. Before long, they remove the true doctrine and leave their false doctrine in its place.]

Q: What faces a false teacher who denies the sovereign Lord who bought them? [swift destruction on themselves]

Observation: False teachers are better known for what they deny than what they affirm. They deny the inspiration of the Bible, the sinfulness of man, the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross, salvation by faith alone, and even the reality of eternal judgment. They especially deny the deity of Jesus Christ, for they know that if they can do away with His deity they can destroy the entire body of Christian truth. Christianity is Christ, and if He is not what He claims to be, there is no Christian faith.

Q V.2: When people follow false teachers, what is the outcome? [They bring the truth into disrepute. They bring disgrace to the name of Christ. The Christian faith gets a bad name because of their filthy lives. “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Titus 1:16).]

Q V.3: Peter suggests that false teachers are motivated by greed. Greed for what? [Perhaps making money. They exploit (“make merchandise of”) ignorant people and use their religion as “a cloak of covetousness” (1 Thes. 2:5).]

LOOK:

I hope this lesson inspires us to reach the lost. They face eternal separation from God that will be tormenting. The true minister of Jesus Christ has nothing to hide: his life and ministry are an open book. He preaches the truth in love and does not twist the Scriptures to support his own selfish ideas. He does not flatter the rich or minister only to make money. We need to be alert and refuse to support ministries that exploit people and deny the Savior. Religion can be a tremendous tool for exploiting weak people, and these false teachers use religion just to get what they can. They are not ministers; they are merchandisers.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 447–448). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

BEWARE OF COUNTERFEITS

2 Peter 2:1–9

One of the most successful rackets in the world today is that of selling “fake art.” Even some of the finest galleries and private collections have been invaded by paintings that are clever counterfeits of the great masters. Publishers have also had their share of hoaxes, purchasing “genuine” manuscripts that weren’t so genuine after all.

But counterfeits are nothing new. Satan is the “great imitator” (2 Cor. 11:13–15), and he has been hard at work ever since he deceived Eve in the Garden (Gen. 3:1–7; 2 Cor. 11:1–4). He has false Christians (Matt. 13:38; John 8:44), a false gospel (Gal. 1:6–9), and even a false righteousness (Rom. 9:30–10:4). One day, he will present to the world a false Christ (2 Thes. 2).

The nation Israel was constantly being led astray by false prophets. Elijah had to contend with the prophets of Baal, but they promoted a pagan religion. It was the *Jewish* false prophets who did the most damage, for they claimed to speak for Jehovah God. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel exposed this counterfeit ministry, but the people followed the pseudo-prophets just the same. Why? Because the religion of the false prophets was easy, comfortable, and popular. The fact that the false prophets preached a false peace did not worry the people (Jer. 6:14). That was the message they wanted to hear!

The Apostles and prophets laid the foundation for the church and then passed from the scene (Eph. 2:20). This is why Peter wrote about false *teachers*, rather than false prophets, because there are still teachers in the church. It is not likely that church members would listen to a “prophet,” but they would listen to a teacher of the Word. Satan always uses the approach that will succeed.

In order to warn us to be alert, Peter presented three aspects of this subject of false teachers in the church.

The False Teachers Described (2 Peter 2:1–3)

This is not a very pretty picture! When you read the Epistle of Jude, you will find him using similar language, and vivid language it is. Peter knew that the truth of God’s Word and the false doctrines of the heretics simply could not coexist. There could be no compromise on his part, any more than a surgeon could compromise with a cancerous tumor in a patient’s body.

Deception (v. 1a). This theme runs throughout the entire chapter. To begin with, these teachers’ message is false; Peter called what they taught “destructive heresies.” The word *heresy* originally meant simply “to make a choice,” but then it came to mean “a sect, a party.” Promoting a party spirit in a church is one of the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:20). Whenever a church member says to another member, “Are you on my side or the pastor’s side?” he is promoting a party spirit and causing division. A false teacher forces you to make a choice between his doctrines and the doctrines of the true Christian faith.

Not only was their message false, but their methods were false. Instead of openly declaring what they believed, they came into the church under false colors and gave the impression that they were true to the Christian faith. “They secretly bring in alongside” is the literal translation. They do not throw out the truth immediately; they simply lay their false teachings alongside the truth and give the impression that they believe the fundamentals of the faith. Before long, they remove the true doctrine and leave their false doctrine in its place.

In 2 Peter 2:3, Peter pointed out that the false teachers used “feigned words.” The Greek word is *PLASTOS*, from which we get our English word *plastic*. Plastic words! Words that can be twisted to mean anything you want them to mean! The false teachers use our vocabulary, but they do not use our dictionary. They talk about “salvation,” “inspiration,” and the great words of the Christian faith, but they do not mean what we mean. Immature and untaught believers hear these preachers or read their books and think that these men are sound in the faith, but they are not.

Satan is a liar and his ministers are liars. They use the Bible, not to enlighten, but to deceive. They follow the same pattern Satan followed when he deceived Eve (Gen. 3:1–6). First, he questioned God’s Word—“Yea, hath God said?” Then he denied God’s Word—“Ye shall not surely die.” Finally, he substituted his own lie—“Ye shall be as gods.”

Keep in mind that these apostate teachers are not innocently ignorant of the Word, as was Apollos (Acts 18:24–28). They know the truth but they deliberately reject it. I read about a liberal pastor who was asked to read a paper at a ministerial conference on “Paul’s views of justification.” He read a paper that superbly presented the truth of the Gospel and justification by faith.

“I didn’t know you believed that,” a friend said to him after the meeting.

“I don’t believe it,” the liberal pastor replied. “They didn’t ask me for *my* views of justification. They asked for Paul’s!”

Denial (v. 1b). False teachers are better known for what they deny than what they affirm. They deny the inspiration of the Bible, the sinfulness of man, the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross, salvation by faith alone, and even the reality of eternal judgment. They especially deny the deity of Jesus Christ, for they know that if they can do away with His deity they can destroy the entire body of Christian truth. Christianity is Christ, and if He is not what He claims to be, there is no Christian faith.

It must be made clear that these false teachers are unsaved. They are compared to dogs and pigs, not to sheep (2 Peter 2:22). Jude describes these same people, and in Jude 19 he clearly states, “having not the Spirit.” If a person does not have the Spirit of God within, he is not a child of God (Rom. 8:9). He may pretend to be saved and even become a member or an officer in a fundamental church, but eventually he will deny the Lord.

In what sense were these people “bought” by the Lord? While it is true that Jesus Christ died for the church (Eph. 5:25), it is also true that He died for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). He is the merchant who purchased the whole field (the world) that He might acquire the treasure in it (Matt. 13:44). When it comes to *application*, our Lord’s atonement is limited to those who believe. But when it comes to *efficacy*, His death is sufficient for the whole world. He purchased even those who reject Him and deny Him! This makes their condemnation even greater.

Even good and godly Christians may disagree on fine points of doctrine, but they all agree on the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is the Son of God and God the Son. He is the only Saviour. To deny this is to condemn your own soul.

Sensuality (v. 2). *Pernicious ways* simply means “licentious conduct.” Jude accused the false teachers of “turning the grace of God into lasciviousness” (Jude 4). Now we understand why they deny the truths of the Christian faith: they want to satisfy their own lusts and do it under the guise of religion. The false prophets in Jeremiah’s day were guilty of the same sins (Jer. 23:14, 32).

The fact that *many* follow the evil example of their conduct is proof that people would rather follow the false than the true, the sensual rather than the spiritual. These false teachers are very successful in their ministry! They have glowing statistics to report and crowds gather to hear them! But statistics are not proof of authenticity. The broad way that leads to destruction is crowded (Matt. 7:13–14). Many will claim to be true servants of Christ, but will be rejected on the last day (Matt. 7:21–23).

What happens to their followers? For one thing, they bring disgrace to the name of Christ. The Christian faith gets a bad name because of their filthy lives. “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Titus 1:16). “For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you” (Rom. 2:24). Few things hinder the cause of Christ like the bad reputations of professing Christians who are members of orthodox churches.

Greed (v. 3). False teachers are interested in one thing: making money. They exploit (“make merchandise of”) ignorant people and use their religion as “a cloak of covetousness” (1 Thes. 2:5). Our Lord was a poor Man, and so were the Apostles; yet they gave of themselves to minister to others. These false prophets are rich men who cleverly get others to minister to them! Micah described these false prophets in his day: “Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, her priests instruct for a price, and her prophets divine for money” (Micah 3:11). Certainly the laborer is worthy of his hire (Luke 10:7), but his motives for ministry had better go beyond money. It has often been said that immorality, love of money, and pride have been the ruin of many people. These false teachers were guilty of all three!

They use their “plastic words” as well as “great swelling words” (2 Peter 2:18) to fascinate and influence their victims. They flatter sinners and tell them the kind of ego-building words that they want to hear (see the contrast in 1 Thes. 2:5). They will scratch the itching ears of people who reject the truth of the Bible and turn to fables (2 Tim. 4:1–4). Religion can be a tremendous tool for exploiting weak people, and these false teachers use religion just to get what they can. They are not ministers; they are merchandisers.

The true minister of Jesus Christ has nothing to hide: his life and ministry are an open book. He preaches the truth in love and does not twist the Scriptures to support his own selfish ideas. He does not flatter the rich or minister only to make money. Paul described the true minister in 2 Corinthians 4:2—“But [we] have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” Contrast that description with what Peter wrote in this chapter, and with what Jude wrote, and you will see the difference. How we need to be alert and refuse to support ministries that exploit people and deny the Saviour.

The False Teachers Destroyed (2 Peter 2:3–6, 9b)

Peter saw no hope for these apostates; their doom was sealed. His attitude was different from that of “tolerant” religious people today who say, “Well, they may not agree with us, but there are many roads to heaven.” Peter made it clear that these false teachers had “forsaken the right way”

(2 Peter 2:15), which simply means they were going the *wrong* way! Their judgment was sure, even though it had not yet come. The trial was over, but the sentence had not yet been executed. It would not linger or slumber, Peter affirmed; it would come in due time.

Raymer, R. M. (1985). 1 Peter. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 869-870). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

IV. The Christian's Warfare: The Attack of False Teachers (chap. 2)

When the Edict of Milan was passed in A.D. 313 the church was then free to move into the world, legally and openly propagating its doctrines. But at the same time, the world also began to move into the church, diluting its message for the next 1,200 years until the Reformation broke forth on the scene. But it is obvious from 2 Peter 2 that the world was already in the church well before the time of Constantine. Believers in all ages must be constantly on guard against its attack.

A. Deliverance from false teachers (2:1–9)

The word “rescue” in verses 7 and 9 speaks of God's willingness and ability to deliver His people from assorted difficulties and dangers even when they themselves (like Lot) do not overtly seek deliverance. But depending on the Lord's ability to rescue is no excuse for failing to enter the warfare against false teachers and false prophets.

1. exposure of false teaching (2:1–3)

2:1. Satan's counterfeits with their insidious activities are always present. They appeared in Israel during the days of the writing prophets spoken of in 1:19–21, and they were present in the first-century church. Though Peter switched from writing about **false prophets** of the past to **false teachers** in the present, their teaching was the same—heresy. False prophets often rose out of Israel (cf. Jer. 5:31; 23:9–18), not from surrounding peoples. Similarly false teachers appear from the midst of the church. They **secretly introduce** their false teachings which are **destructive heresies**. “Secretly introduce” translates *pareisaxousin*, “bring in alongside” (cf. “infiltrated,” which translates the related noun *pareisaktous*, in Gal. 2:4). “Heresies” transliterates the Greek word *haireseis*, which in classical Greek simply meant schools of philosophy. But New Testament writers used it to describe religious parties or sects (e.g., the Sadducees [Acts 5:17] or the Pharisees [Acts 15:5]), or factions probably based on false doctrine (e.g., 1 Cor. 11:19, “differences,” “factions,”). Such heresies are “destructive,” for they lead people away from Christ and thus to spiritual ruin (*apōleias*).

The focus of their heresies was **the sovereign Lord**, Christ, whom they denied (cf. Jude 4). This in turn led to their own spiritual **destruction** or ruin (*apōleian*; cf. 2 Peter 2:3; 3:16), which will be **swift** (*tachinēn*, “sudden”; cf. *tachinē* [“soon”] in 1:14). How can these false teachers, who were said to be **among the people**, and whom the Lord had **bought** (*agorasanta*, “redeem”), end up in everlasting destruction? Several suggestions have been offered: (1) They were saved but lost their salvation. But this contradicts many other Scriptures (e.g., John 3:16; 5:24; 10:28–29). (2) “Bought” means the Lord created them, not that He saved them. But this stretches the meaning of *agorazō* (“redeem”). (3) The false prophets merely *said* they were

“bought” by Christ. This, however, seems to read into the verse. (4) They were “redeemed” in the sense that Christ paid the redemptive price for their salvation, but they did not apply it to themselves and so were not saved. Christ’s death is “sufficient” for all (1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2), but is “efficient” only for those who believe. This is a strong argument for unlimited atonement (the view that Christ died for everyone) and against limited atonement (the view that Christ died only for those whom He would later save).

2:2. The tragic fact about **many** false teachers is that they are successful—people listen to them and **follow** them and **their shameful ways** (*aselgeiais*, which Peter also used in 1 Peter 4:3 [“debauchery”]; 2 Peter 2:7 [“filthy”]; v. 18 [“lustful”]). (Cf. *aselgeia* in Rom. 13:13; 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 4:19; Jude 4.) It refers to debased sexually immoral practices.

2:3. Ministerial charlatans and quacks have often troubled the flock of God. **In their greed** (cf. v. 14) they use others for their own mercenary purposes and turn the church into a dirty marketplace. **Exploit** (*emporeusontai*) means to commercialize (“buy, sell, trade”; cf. *emporeusometha*, “carry on business,” in James 4:13). **Stories they have made up** is literally, “fabricated words” (*plastois* [whence the “plastic”] *logois*). They are artificial, not genuine. And **their end is condemnation** (*krima*, “judgment”) and **destruction** (*apōleia*; used twice in 2 Peter 2:1 and also in 3:16). They fall into the same doom which God has planned for other violators of truth and righteousness (as Peter stated in vv. 4–6). Their destruction **has not been sleeping** (*ou nystazei*, used only one other time in the NT, to describe the sleepy virgins in Matt. 25:5). God’s justice does not sleep and it is never late.