

Sunday, January 7, 2024 pm

STUDIES IN 2 PETER (8)

False Teachers Among You

2 Peter 2:1-3

As we continue our study through 2 Peter, we have noted how Peter has encouraged them to grow in their faith and have confidence in the word of God they had received (both from Peter and prophets previously recorded). We now come to application of these teachings – beware of false teachers. Today, we begin an examination of what Peter warns about this.

The subject of false teachers and their teachings is challenging and often controversial. That is because we have to determine whether something is false teaching or not. There are the motives behind those teaching errors and the error itself. What one views as error, another might see as truth. And there are many who advocate that motives supersede the message (i.e., as long as one is sincere, he should not be called a false teacher). These are challenges as we deal with this subject.

With this lesson, we will examine Peter’s textual warnings and in the process address the subject of false teachers and their doctrines.

I. There were false prophets among the people

- a. The Old Testament has many examples of false prophets. Some were driven by false motives, while others taught errors, or both.
 - i. Balam – Numbers 22-25 - While limited by God and blessing Israel rather than cursing them as Balak, king of Moab wanted, he found a way around God’s word. More on him in a later lesson.
 - ii. The prophets of Baal – 1 Kings 18:19-20 – 950 prophets of Baal and Asherah who had been leading the Israelites further away from God.
 - iii. The prophets of Ahab – 1 Kings 22:10-13. Prophets who sought to silence Micaiah, a true prophet of God and tell Ahab what he wanted to hear. The chapter ends with Ahab dying in battle.
 - iv. The prophets of Jeremiah’s day - Jeremiah 28:1-5ff – Hananiah said from Gideon told Judah that within 2 years God would break the yoke of Babylon and return the people from their captivity. It seems that even Jeremiah believed him, but the LORD spoke to Jeremiah that it was a lie (Jer. 28:15-17).
 - v. Against Nehemiah – Shemaiah & Noadiah – Nehemiah 6:10-14. Prophets that tried to get Nehemiah to flee to the temple, and thus sin.
- b. False prophets taught error, telling the people what they wanted to hear.
 - i. Jeremiah 6:13 – they were often greedy, cf. 2 Peter 2:15 speaks of Balaam who loved the wages of unrighteousness.
 - ii. Peace when there is no peace – Jeremiah 6:14, Ezekiel 13:9-10, etc.
 - iii. Smooth things – Isaiah 30:8-11, Micah 3:11 – they declare, is not the LORD among us?
- c. They were warned about
 - i. Deuteronomy 13:1-3 – if they tell you to go after other gods (that which is obviously false) , even if their “signs” came to pass; Deut. 18:20-22 – he presumes to speak in the name of the LORD, but his words fail.
 - ii. Jeremiah 23:16-17, *Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the Lord. They continually say to those who despise Me, ‘The Lord has*

said, "You shall have peace" '; And to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say, 'No evil shall come upon you.' "

II. There will be false teachers among you

- a. Peter knew it, and the sad reality is that it is still true today – there will be “false teachers among you.” Of note in this expression is that, at least some, were a part of their number – possibly members of the Lord’s body. Consider Acts 20:30 where Paul warned the Ephesian elders that “from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things...
- b. The New Testament lists many who were false teachers:
 - i. Paul dealt with Judaizing teachers, some of whom could have been believers in Jesus, but they rejected the Gentiles (cf. Acts 15:1, 5).
 - ii. Hymenaeus & Philetus were teaching that the resurrection was already past (2 Timothy 2:17-18)
 - iii. John in his 1st epistle spoke of those who denied that Jesus came in the flesh and called them antichrist – 1 John 2:22
 - iv. Revelation 2:20-21 – to the church at Thyatira, “that woman Jezebel” who called herself a prophetess was teaching error and seducing servants to follow her.

III. Who will secretly bring in destructive heresies (1-3)

- a. The rest of vs. 1-3 describes how they work.
- b. ***They secretly bring in destructive heresies*** – rarely will one come out and say, “I am about to teach you false doctrine”.
 - i. AND many, who know that what they believe is going to divide the body AND be challenged by godly, knowledgeable leaders (cf. Titus 1:9-13 – a work of elders), will work “behind the scenes” to gain a following. There have been documented movements among brethren who have been known for this (advocates of the house-church movement, 70AD doctrine, etc.).
 - ii. Matthew 7:15 – Jesus warned about “false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing.”
 - iii. Jude 3 & 4 warns us to contend earnestly for the faith and gives a reason why in vs. 4
 - iv. 2 Corinthians 2:11 warns us to not be ignorant of the devices of Satan. We must understand that his “servants” use them too – cf. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 speaks about how Satan and his ministers transform themselves into angels of light.
- c. NOTE: The word “***heresies***” is a transliterated word (αἵρεσις, haireisis) that actually describes the party spirit (throughout Acts – 5:17, 15:5, etc.), is a word that means to hold to and advance a different teaching. As used by Peter (and Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:19 – factions & Galatians 5:20 – heresies), the word implies one who is bringing a doctrine that is DIFFERENT and contrary to the doctrine of Christ (cf. Galatians 1:6-7, Romans 16:17, 1 Timothy 1:10, etc.).
- d. These are “***destructive***” meaning they do great damage to the cause of Christ. The text describes some of their destructive ways. Those who advance false doctrine ARE doing damage to the cause of Christ in so many ways.
- e. ***Even denying the Lord who bought them*** – this expression implies that what they are teaching is contrary to what Christ wanted. I am reminded of Hebrews 10:29 which describes those who have “*counted the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified a common thing.*”
- f. ***And bring on themselves swift destruction*** – in summary, they WILL be judged by God – again consider Hebrews 10:29-30 AND 2 Peter 2:20-22 would clearly include these false teachers. More in the next section of our text.
- g. ***And many will follow their destructive ways*** – a false teacher is harmless UNLESS and until he gathers a following. Sadly, there are many who will follow false teachers. Continually, we are warned to be alert for false teachers and their doctrines.
 - i. 1 John 4:1 calls for us to test the spirits whether they are of God;
 - ii. Acts 17:11 – we need to search the scriptures daily;

- iii. Ephesians 4:12-15 – we are to be grounded in God’s word so that we will not be “tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine...”
- iv. Acts 20:32 after warning them, Paul commended them “to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”
- h. **Because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed** – as false teaching prevails, God’s truth is damaged. How many in the world that reject God and the Bible mock us because of our divisions? How many will leave a congregation because they see us “biting and devouring one another” (Galatians 5:15). Others, may also be deceived into thinking that whatever false doctrine is being advanced is the way Christians believe.
- i. **By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words** –
 - i. 2 Peter 2:18 further describes this. We will address that in another lesson.
 - ii. 2 Timothy 4:2-4 – people have “itching ears”.
 - iii. False teachers typically appeal to your carnal desires. They look for the weak and exploit them. In this, let us not forget 1 Timothy 6:9-10 – if one is driven by material pursuits, they can more easily be swayed to follow someone who tells them their materialistic lifestyle is acceptable the way they are.
 - iv. Just like Jeroboam with the golden calves at Dan and Bethel seduced the people with convenience, etc.
- j. **For a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber** – Peter is clear that a day is coming when they WILL be judged and condemned – both those who teach these errors and those who follow their destructive ways. Matthew 12:36 – Jesus noted that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment (is false doctrine “idle words”?). James 3:1 also warns that teachers will receive a stricter judgment – we are accountable for what we teach AND the results it produces!

IV. What about today?

- a. False teachers today – we need to understand that we still have to deal with false teachers, some closer than we care to admit.
- b. One concern that I want to address as I conclude this lesson. There are many who see texts like this and declare that motive is what makes one a false teacher. The premise is that, one may teach error in a given subject, but because they are sincere (not hypocritical or deceptive or greedy, genuinely believe what they teach, etc.) that they should not be called a “false teacher”. There are many problems with this:
 - i. By its very definition, what makes one a false TEACHER is that they are teaching error. Sincerity does not matter. Paul was sincere as he persecuted Christians – Acts 23:1, 1 Timothy 1:13 – he did it ignorantly. NOTE: Sincerity WILL be a factor when one is confronted with the truth! Apollos taught FALSELY the baptism of John (Acts 18:24-26), BUT when he was shown the truth, he repented “and taught the way of God more accurately”.
 - ii. To make this argument means that we have to make a judgment based upon one’s heart. John 2:25 – Jesus could read hearts. I CANNOT! And neither can you! Matthew 7:15-20 notes how we discern whether or not one is a false teacher – LOOK at their fruit! 1 John 4:1 – we need to test the spirits!
 - iii. To make this argument is to declare that we cannot with absolute certainty know what is truth – which is what many want you to believe; especially advocates of “unity in diversity”. 1 Corinthians 4:6 – calls for us to not think beyond what is written. Ephesians 5:17 commands us to “understand what the will of the Lord is. 2 Timothy 2:15, with diligence we are to “rightly divide the word of truth.” “accurately handling the word of truth” (LSB, NASB, ESV, etc.). 2 Corinthians 11:3-4 – Paul was concerned about this very thing!

- iv. Finally, how will we be able to close the door on error? There are those teaching erroneous plans of salvation, methods of worship, approaches to inspiration, interpretation and authority of scripture who sincerely believe what they teach. If we let them alone AND LET THEM IN OUR MIDST, what will become of the TRUE church in the next generation. Ephesians 5:11 – have NO fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness... Jude 3 (again) calls for us to *“contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”*

Peter was warning his audience that false teachers are prevalent and we ALWAYS need to be on alert for them. That is why we must continually study God’s word with sincere hearts AND open minds. False teachers are around, but we do NOT have to let them have any influence on us. What about you? Are you fully confident in your beliefs? Think about it!