

## STUDIES IN 2 PETER (9)

### False Teachers Among You - 2

#### 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. Last month, we began an examination of Peter’s warning about false teachers.

In that lesson we noted this is a challenging subject, because we have to determine what is and what is not false teaching, as well as dealing with the ones teaching error – will they persist in teaching their error OR will they repent when they learn the truth? Also, what impact does the sincerity have with one teaching error?

Last month, as we began examining the text, we noted that Peter made reference to false prophets in times past. We noted a few of these false prophets from the Old Testament as well as the warnings from the Law of Moses about them (Deuteronomy 13:1-3, 18:20-22).

Peter then warned that just as there were false prophets among the people, even so there “WILL BE false teachers among you.” Peter was giving a current (and simply historical) and ever-present warning. And just as the OT gave numerous examples of false prophets, so NT passages warned of false teachers in their midst, including (and perhaps foremost back then) the Judaizing teachers, whose prejudice demanded that Gentiles conform to parts of the LOM to be saved. We also noted the examples of Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Timothy 2:17) and Alexander (1 Timothy 1:20, poss. 2 Timothy 4:14), individuals that Paul warned Timothy about (BY NAME!); the false teachers of 1 John who denied that Jesus came in the flesh (John called the antichrist – 1 John 2:22), and “that woman Jezebel” in Revelation 2:20-21, whom the church at Thyatira tolerated.

After Peter warned of this he began to describe their impact. He noted that they would “secretly bring in destructive heresies” – false teachers typically do not openly declare their motives or the divisive nature of what they are going to teach. HOWEVER, error is DESTRUCTIVE! It does great damage to the cause of Christ and those who are deceived and influenced by them. Peter further warned that they would bring upon themselves swift destruction meaning they would be judged for their conduct (cf. Hebrews 10:29-30, 2 Peter 2:20-22, James 3:1, etc.). We concluded by noting that “many will follow their destructive ways.” The sad reality is that there no shortage of those who are gullible and/or willing to follow after false doctrines. That is why we are warned to “test the spirits whether they are of God (1 John 4:1), and study God’s word so that we will be grounded in the truth (2 Timothy 2:15, Ephesians 4:12-15, Acts 17:11 & 20:32, etc.).

That brings us to where we will resume our study today.

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

- a. ***Because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed*** – as false teaching prevails God’s truth is damaged.
  - i. NOTE how Peter makes reference to “the way of truth”. It is a path that we must choose!
    1. John 14:6 – Jesus declared Himself, “I am the way, the truth and the life...”
    2. Acts 9:2, “the Way” was one way Christians were perceived in the book of Acts (cf. 19:9, 23, 22:4, 24:14 – NOTE: often it was used derogatorily).
    3. 1 Corinthians 12:13 – the way of love is described as “a more excellent way”.
    4. Acts 18:26, “the way of God” which was “more accurately” explained to Apollos.
    5. Romans 3:17 – “the way of peace”
    6. Hebrews 10:20 – “a new and living way” with which Jesus consecrated us by His blood.
    7. 2 Peter 2:21 – “the way of righteousness” which they had rejected

8. It was this way that these false teachers had maligned.
- ii. The word **blaspheme** means to slander, to speak against someone in a manner that brings harm to one's reputation
  1. How many in the world that reject God and the Bible mock us because of our divisions? Romans 2:24, while Paul is dealing with hypocritical behavior he notes, "For *the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,* as it is written."
  2. How many will leave a congregation because they see us "biting and devouring one another" (Galatians 5:15)?
  3. Others may also be deceived into thinking that whatever false doctrine is being advanced is the way Christians believe.
- b. **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. Romans 16:17-18 warns us to mark those who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine... Such serve their own bellies and with smooth and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.
  - iv. False teachers typically appeal to your carnal desires. They look for the weak and exploit them, Cf. 2 Timothy 3:6 – they "make captive of gullible women..."
  - v. 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.
  - vi. Just like Jeroboam with the golden calves at Dan and Bethel seduced the people with convenience, etc.
- c. **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!

## II. 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. Tied to the previous point, to make this argument, one gets to set his own standard of what he determines to be worthy of fellowship. Most, if not all, of us draw a line of truth somewhere. One who makes the argument from sincerity of heart (and unhypocritical) gets to determine where he wants that line to be. That is VERY self-serving. If you want to have fellowship with someone whom you disagree with on some doctrine, simply MOVE THE LINE to where you want it to be. This is “will-worship” Colossians 2:23 (KJV). “Self-imposed religion” (NKJV), “self-made religion” (LSB, NASB, ESV).
- v. The alternative to this is to declare that absolute truth is irrelevant. I have known of some who acknowledged that a brother in Christ was teaching error on a given subject, but because he was sincere he should still be recognized and fellowship extended. I again appeal to the examples of both Pergamos (which tolerated those practicing error – Revelation 2:13-16) and Thyatira (which not only tolerated erroneous practices but also those who taught the errors – Revelation 2:20ff). Did the fact that error was being practiced and taught matter? They were BOTH told to repent! Ephesians 5:11 warns, *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.*
- vi. 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!