

"Characteristics of False Teachers"

Part 1

2 Peter 2

Introduction: Tonight in our study of 2 Peter we are stepping into chapter 2, and it will be in this chapter that we will get the most detailed description of false found in God's Word. Peter is going to go into great detail in this chapter to help his readers to know what to watch for as time moves on.

In the first chapter Peter reminded us and his original readers the importance of spiritual growth.

Notice 2 Peter 2:14

We see here that false teachers prey upon unstable souls. Notice what Peter writes later in his letter.

2 Peter 3:15-16

¹⁵ And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

¹⁶ As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

The unlearned are unstable and are the ones who fall prey to the false teachers and Peter knew this. This is the very reason he gave the first chapter over to the subject of spiritual growth. Now as we come to chapter 2 Peter is going to warn his readers concerning how the false teachers will operate.

I. The Warning of their Arrival

Notice 2 Peter 2:1

Peter reminds his readers that in times past there were false teachers. Satan has always raised up false teachers anytime the Truth is taught. His goal is to distort the Truth and to cause people to believe the lies of the false teachers so that he can lead them down the path of destruction.

Matthew 7:13-14

¹³ Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

¹⁴ Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

The BROAD WAY is the religious path. It is a path which Satan marks with a sign that says, "This way to heaven." He knows that people will not get on a path marked "This way to hell." So when the Truth is proclaimed concerning the strait gate and the narrow way, Satan is quick to raise up false teachers who will spread their lies to lead people to hell. We see evidence of them in the Old Testament as God sent His prophets to warn of the Babylonian captivity.

Jeremiah 23:14-17, 21

¹⁴ I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness; they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.

¹⁵ Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.

¹⁶ Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD.

¹⁷ They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace: and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.

²¹ I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.

These prophets were countering the message of Jeremiah who warned of the coming judgment. They were saying there would be no judgment but only peace. Let us notice how wrong they were.

Lamentations 1:3-4, 15-16

³ *Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude: she dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits.*

⁴ *The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness.*

¹⁵ *The LORD hath trodden under foot all my mighty men in the midst of me: he hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men: the LORD hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, as in a winepress.*

¹⁶ *For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed.*

Ezekiel had to also deal with the false prophets.

Ezekiel 13:3, 6

³ *Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!*

⁶ *They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word.*

These prophets presented a false hope when they prophesied that the captivity would not last very long and all would go back to normal. They were exposed as the captivity extended out for 70 years.

Just as there were false prophets among the people, Peter tells his readers there will be false teachers among them.

II. Their Stealthy Ways.

Notice 2 Peter 2:1 again.

Peter tells his readers that they will come in PRIVILY and when they come, they will bring "damnable heresies." This means that what they teach will be very destructive. They will not come in carrying signs to announce who they are. They will keep their destructive doctrine quiet until they get in and little by little, they will begin to sow seeds of poison. When they come their language will sound just like everyone else in the church. But they are stealthy, and they will be content to wait until they have opportunities to share their

doctrine. They will prey on the unlearned and on the unstable. Let us notice how this unfolded just as Peter said.

Jude 1:4

⁴ For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us notice Paul's conversation with the elders from Ephesus.

Acts 20:17-18, 27-32

¹⁷ And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

¹⁸ And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

²⁷ For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

²⁸ Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

²⁹ For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

³⁰ Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

³¹ Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

³² And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

Now let us notice what Paul wrote to Timothy.

1 Timothy 1:3-7

³ As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine,

⁴ Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.

⁵ Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

⁶ From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling;

⁷ Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

The words "vain jangling" means "empty words." Some at Ephesus had turned away from pure doctrine and they were teaching things that had absolutely no spirit value or Truth. I show you this to help you to see that the saints at Ephesus who had been trained by Paul were led down the path of false teaching.

Do not ever think that the false teachers will not come in here because they will. Do not ever think that you cannot be deceived by their teaching because you can be.

1 Corinthians 10:12

¹² Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

The false teachers will come in unannounced, and they will be content to wait until they have an opportunity to teach their false doctrine. I want to take this a little further to see how serious a matter this is. Let us look at how the Bible views false doctrine.

2 Timothy 2:15-18

¹⁵ Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

¹⁶ But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

¹⁷ And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus;

¹⁸ Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

There are two points to see here concerning false teaching.

1. It will eat like a canker. Let us notice the definition of "canker."

"A gangrene, a disease by which any part of the body suffering from inflammation becomes so corrupted that, unless a remedy be seasonably applied, the evil continually spreads, attacks other parts, and at last eats away the bones."

False teaching will spread like a cancer in the body. If cancer is not treated it will overtake the body and in the same way when a false doctrine gets into a church it will corrupt the entire body. Extreme measures must be exercised against false doctrine because if not the false doctrine will bring about extreme "sickness" in the church.

2. It will overthrow the faith of some.

This does not mean they will lose their salvation. It means their Christian walk will be turned upside down. Many believers have become entangled in false teachings only to then struggle the rest of their earthly lives struggling for stability.

Notice also that these whom Paul is speaking of say the resurrection is past. This is a teaching of the Gnostics. They emphasized a spiritual resurrection thus denying a physical resurrection. This then took away the hope of the believer. The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is the basis for all our hope. But the Gnostics denied a bodily resurrection because they believed the body/the physical was all bad.

Conclusion:

Let us understand just how serious a matter false teaching really is. The church needs to stand strong against any false doctrine because if it gets in it will spread like a cancer and it will overthrow the faith of many.