

Review

Peter has been telling us what he himself saw and heard on the Mount of Transfiguration. But then, he made a point of saying more sure than eyewitness testimony is the prophetic Word of God. And he emphasized that the Word is from God, not man.

Now, as we begin chapter two, we see why he has put such a big disclaimer on his own testimony...

2:1a False Prophets

Peter calls to our remembrance the false prophets who arose among the people of Israel.

False prophets looked like other believers, but were wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15). There were many of them, misleading many people (Matt. 24:11). They would sometimes show great signs and wonders to mislead (Matt. 24:24) people away from the faith (Acts 13:8). Unfortunately, they were often spoken well of (Luke 6:26), and many believers loved what they said (Jer. 5:31).

Often, they were guilty of bringing good news that wasn't true. News of peace when none was coming, news that God was happy when He was instead angry at sin. They usually were doing this for personal profit.

The Lord made it clear that He was against the false prophets (Jer. 23:30-40) and that they will be punished (Jer. 6:15).

False Teachers

Peter forewarned us that in the same way false prophets arose in Israel, false teachers would arise in the church. "Just as there will also be" tells us that their appearance, motivation, and behavior will be exactly the same.

They will look like Christians, but will mislead Christians. They will be spoken well of by Christians, but will ultimately destroy the faith of Christians. Their motivation? Personal profit.

2:1b Secretly Introducing

How could people with faith based on the written Word of God be convinced to believe things that are wrong? Peter tells us: their teachings are secretly introduced.

The Greek Word translated "secretly introduce" (**par-ice-AG-o**) literally means, "bring in next to." The false teachers simply place their false teachings next to the real stuff. And once these false doctrines are introduced, they are like weeds taking over a garden.

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and Scribes, saying,

Mark 7:6-9 ...“Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’ Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.” He was also saying to them, “You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.

First, a man comes up with something and teaches it as doctrine. Then, the real commandments are neglected, in order to pay attention to the new teaching. Ultimately, the Word of God is set aside completely.

What Does It Look Like?

What does strange doctrine look like? What are these false teachers telling us? Unfortunately, the answer is too vast to comprehend. It is much easier to learn the truth than to learn what all the lies are.

But there are a few trends common among many false teachers that you can learn to recognize.

Paul told Timothy,

1Tim. 1:3-4 ...instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.

As soon as someone says, "What if..." and then goes outside the Bible, they have entered into the realm of speculation and myths.

Paul also went on to tell Timothy,

1Tim. 1:5-7 ...the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. (But) some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers...

False doctrines often come from men "wanting to be teachers."

The longer I've been in ministry, the easier it has become to recognize men who are desperately trying to become teachers. They get angry because their church doesn't "recognize their calling" and start some subversive "study." They attract followers because they are so "deep" and "intellectual." They teach things that the church is "afraid" to discuss. In reality, it is fruitless discussion.

False teaching also commonly causes division:

Rom. 16:17-18 Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.

We need to keep our eyes on and turn away from these teachers. But what is probably most discouraging to me is that - as time passes - these kinds of teachers get more prominent and more popular.

The Scriptures foretold this:

2Tim. 4:3-4 ...the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

The body of Christ is becoming more and more guilty of tolerating and accepting false teachers - even more so than the Jews accepted false prophets!

Destructive Heresies

But they will do this to their destruction, because what they are taking in are "destructive heresies." As a matter of fact, the word "heresy"

means "to capture." By receiving false teachers, Christians are allowing themselves to be taken captive by a destructive influence.

What kind of destruction? Following false teachers usually leads to such a corruption of the truth that even while claiming to be "enlightened," they end up denying the Master Who bought them.

2:2-3 Greed

Do false teachers set out to do this? To deceive the body of Christ? To destroy the faith of others? Not most of them.

Most of them start by simply following down the path of sensuality and greed. Paul told Titus,

Titus 1:10-11 ...there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers ... who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain.

Sordid gain. So much of it comes down to the deceitfulness of riches (Mark 4:19) and the love of money (1Tim. 6:10). Men often go from unfruitful to evil simply because of greed.

The Truth Maligned

When people fall for the false teaching and follow the false teacher, it leads to the maligning of the truth. The word "**maligned**" is "**blas-fay-MEH-o**," which means "to speak evil of."

Think about it: Why is Christianity so hated by so many Americans today? Not too long ago, it wasn't like that. What's happened to the last couple generations to cause this?

The biggest reason that my generation was so turned off of Christianity was the televangelists in the 80's. They blatantly taught false doctrine because of their greed. Many followed them, and it became common for people to speak evil of them.

By default, they became the representatives to the world for all of Christianity. Now, everything Christians speak of is lumped together with their greed and sin. When we stand against evolution, or abortion, when we stand for prayer and marriage, we have the reputation that the

televangelists brought down on us. The way of the truth is maligned.

Their Judgment

These men who exploit Christians with their false teachings will pay a heavy, eternal price. Their judgment is coming. As we continue through chapter two of 2Peter, Peter will give us examples of those who have made people stumble through greed or sensuality, and what God did to them.

But for this morning, I'd like to commit to you the words of the apostle John:

2John 1:9-11 **Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.**

Watch out, be on the alert, and abide in the truth.