

FALSE TEACHERS

Text:

Introduction:

- A. 2 Pet 2:1-3 -- "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be **false teachers** among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. ² And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³ By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber."
 1. Note: "**false teachers**" is a translation of *pseudodidaskaloi* and this is the **only passage** in the Bible where the word is found.
 2. The "false teachers" in this passage **teach false doctrines** (v1 -- "destructive heresies").
 - a. But the "false teachers" of this passage are also **dishonest** and of **low character**.
 - 1) v1 -- they "**secretly** bring in destructive heresies"
 - 2) v3 -- "By **covetousness** they will exploit you (exploit: to make use of selfishly or unethically) with **deceptive** words"
 3. Some of our brethren have concluded from this that "**false teachers**" are (1) **dishonest men**, (2) of **low character**, (3) who **teach false doctrines**.
 - a. Therefore, a "false teacher" is **not just someone who teaches a false doctrine**, but (1) a **dishonest man**, (2) of **low character**, (3) who **teaches false doctrines**.
 4. And, in the interest of fairness, I would admit that those who are called "**false prophets**" are often described in the Scriptures as being **dishonest** and of **low character**.
 - a. Matt 7:15 -- "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but **inwardly they are ravenous wolves**."
 - b. Matt 24:24 -- "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders **to deceive**, if possible, even the elect."
 - c. 2 Cor 11:13 -- "For such are false apostles, **deceitful** workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ."
 5. I would admit also that those who **teach false doctrines** are often described in the Scriptures as being **dishonest** and of **low character**.
- B. You may be asking yourself: "What is the reason for **re-defining 'false teachers'**? Why is this point being raised?"
 1. And my answer would be: Some who are trying to make this point may be doing so simply in the interest of **Biblical accuracy** . . . wanting to **use Bible terminology accurately**.
 2. But it may be that others are trying to make this point in order to **justify continuing to have fellowship** with some who are **teaching false doctrines** -- they may be wanting to **broaden the parameters of fellowship**.
- C. Speaking for myself, I am very much **interested in Biblical accuracy**, and I want to **use Bible terminology accurately** -- and that should be your desire as well.
 1. In 2Tim 2:15, Paul admonished Timothy to "**rightly divide**" (KJV) -- "**handle aright**" (ASV); "**handle accurately**" (NASB) -- the word of truth.
 - a. That's what I want to do . . . and that should be what you want to do as well.
 2. Furthermore, in 1Pet 4:11, Peter says, "If any man speaks, let him **speak as the oracles of God**."
 - a. And that's what I intend to do.
- D. But I am much more concerned with **our attitude and behavior** toward the one **who teaches a false doctrine** than I am with **what we call him**.
 1. And I am persuaded that we **cannot be faithful to God** and have a **lax attitude toward any false doctrine** or **anyone who teaches a false doctrine**.
- E. In a few moments I'm going to make a **statement** concerning false teachers, and I'm going to express an **attitude** toward false teachers, that I believe is in complete harmony with what the Bible teaches -- but before I do that I want to remind you of (1) **the importance of truth** and, (2) **the danger of error**.

Body:

I. **Nothing is more important than truth.**

A. Nothing is more important than truth, because . . .

1. We are going to be **judged by the truth**.

a. Psa 96:13 -- "For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with His **truth**."

- b.* Rom 2:2 -- "But we know that the judgment of God is according to **truth** against those who practice such things."
- 2. Those who are saved are **saved by the truth**.
 - a.* Prov 16:6 -- "In mercy and **truth** atonement is provided for iniquity."
 - b.* 2Th 2:13 -- "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the **truth** . . ."
 - c.* Jn 8:32 -- "And you shall know the **truth**, and the **truth** shall make you free (from the bondage of sin, bw)."
 - d.* 2Th 2:10 -- ". . . and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the **truth**, that they might be saved."
- 3. Those who are sanctified are **sanctified by the truth**.
 - a.* Jn 17:17, 19 -- "Sanctify them by Your **truth**. Your word is **truth**.¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the **truth**."
 - b.* 1Pet 1:22 -- "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the **truth**"
- 4. Those who worship God acceptably **worship Him in truth**.
 - a.* Jn 4:23 -- "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and **truth**; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.²⁴ God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and **truth**."
- 5. Those who **reject the truth** will be **condemned**.
 - a.* 2Th 2:12 -- ". . . that they all may be condemned who did not believe the **truth** but had pleasure in unrighteousness."
- B.* With all this in view, the apostle John, in his third epistle, said: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children **walk in truth**" -- 3Jn 4.
- C.* So we would do well to heed the admonition of the wise scribe of the book of Proverbs: "Buy the **truth**, and do not sell it . . ." (Prov 23:23) -- because nothing is more important than truth.

II. Nothing is more dangerous than error.

- A.* Proof:
 - 1.* Rom 2:8 -- ". . . but to those who are self-seeking and **do not obey the truth**, but obey unrighteousness -- **indignation and wrath** . . ."
 - 2.* 2 Th 2:11-12 -- "And for this reason God will send them **strong delusion**, that they should believe the lie,¹² that they all may be **condemned** who **did not believe the truth** but had pleasure in unrighteousness."
- B.* **Error** will not do for us what truth will do; **false doctrine** will not do for us what true doctrine will do.
- C.* And because it is so dangerous, we must have a **militant attitude toward false teaching**.
 - 1.* Psa 119:104 -- "Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore **I hate every false way**."
 - 2.* Psa 119:128 -- "Therefore all Your precepts concerning all things I consider to be right; **I hate every false way**."

III. Having said all that, I now want to make a statement about those who teach false doctrine that I believe is in strict accord with what the Scriptures everywhere teach.

- A.* Statement: One who **teaches a false doctrine**, and by the influence of his false doctrine causes others to sin, **jeopardizes his relationship with God** and is in **need of repentance** -- whether you **call him a "false teacher" or not**.
- B.* Proof:
 - 1.* Matt 18:6-9 -- "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if **a millstone were hung around his neck**, and he were **drowned in the depth of the sea**.⁷ Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but **woe to that man by whom the offense comes!**⁸ If your hand or foot causes you to sin, **cut it off and cast it from you**. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire.⁹ And if your eye causes you to sin, **pluck it out and cast it from you**. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire."
- C.* Examples:

1. 2 Tim 2:16-18 -- "But **shun profane and idle babblings**, for they will increase to more ungodliness. ¹⁷ And **their message will spread like cancer**. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, ¹⁸ who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; . . .
 - a. **Effect of the false doctrine:** v18b -- ". . . and they **overthrow the faith of some.**"
 2. Ac 15:1-2, 22-24 -- "And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' ² Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question." . . . ²² Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren. ²³ They wrote this letter by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. ²⁴ Since we have heard that some who went out from us have **troubled you with words, unsettling your souls**, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law" -- to whom **we gave no such commandment-- . . .**"
 - a. **Effect of the false doctrine:** Gal 5:2-10 -- "Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, **Christ will profit you nothing.** ³ And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. ⁴ You have become **estranged from Christ**, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have **fallen from grace.** ⁵ For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. ⁷ You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸ This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. ⁹ **A little leaven leavens the whole lump.**
 3. Matt 15:1-14 -- "Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, ² 'Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.' ³ He answered and said to them, 'Why do you also **transgress the commandment of God** because of your tradition? ⁴ For God commanded, saying, "Honor your father and your mother"; and, "He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death." ⁵ But you say, "Whoever says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God' -- ⁶ then he need not honor his father or mother." Thus you have **made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.**"
 - a. **Effect of the false doctrine:** v7 -- "And **in vain they worship Me**, teaching as doc-trines the commandments of men."
- D.** Therefore:
1. Matt 15:14 -- "**Let them alone.** They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."
 - a. Rom 16:17 -- "Now I urge you, brethren, **note** those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and **avoid them.**"
 2. Gal 1:8-9 -- "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, **let him be accursed.** ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, **let him be accursed.**"
 3. Gal 2:10 -- ". . . he who troubles you shall **bear his judgment**, whoever he is."
 4. 2 Jn 9-11 -- "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ **does not have God.** He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰ If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, **do not receive him into your house nor greet him;** ¹¹ for he who greets him **shares in his evil deeds.**"
 5. 1Tim 1.3 -- "As I urged you when I went into Macedonia--remain in Ephesus that you may **charge some that they teach no other doctrine, . . .**"
 6. Tit 1:9-11 -- ". . . holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to **exhort and convict those who contradict.** ¹⁰ For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹ whose **mouths must be stopped**, who **subvert whole house-holds, teaching things which they ought not**, for the sake of dishonest gain."
- E.** Isn't it interesting that the way you **test a prophet** to determine if he is a false prophet is by **examining his prophecy** -- not just by **examining his character.**
1. Deut 18:21-22 -- "And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' -- ²² when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, **if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken;** the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him."

2. 1Jn 4:1-3 -- "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits**, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.
- F.** The fact is: anyone who accepts the role of a preacher or teacher is accepting a **very serious responsibility . . .** and he will **be held strictly accountable by God . . .** and he ought to be **held strictly accountable by his brethren.**
1. Preachers and teachers must live **exemplary lives** -- but they must also **teach true doctrine.**
 - a. 1 Tim 4:11-16 -- "These things command and teach. ¹² Let no one despise your youth, but **be an example** to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. ¹³ Till I come, **give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.** ¹⁴ Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. ¹⁵ Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. ¹⁶ Take heed **to yourself and to the doctrine.** Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you."
 - 1) That last verse (1 Tim 4:16) certainly emphasizes the teacher's **responsibility and** his **accountability.**
 - 2) And Jas 3:1 underscores that: "My brethren, **let not many of you become teachers**, knowing that we shall receive **a stricter judgment.**"
- G.** We ought to be **impartial** in opposing false teaching and false teachers.
1. We are to **"hate every false way"** and **withstand every false teacher.**
 - a. It's very easy to make the mistake of **hating some false ways** (homosexuality, for example) and **being tolerant of others** (adulterous marriage relationships).
 - b. It's very easy to make the mistake of **vigorously opposing a false teacher with whom you've had little or no past association** or a **false teacher who is relatively unknown** in the brotherhood, and being **very gentle and tolerant toward a false teacher who is a close friend** or a **false teacher who is very popular in the brotherhood.**
 2. We need to follow the example of Paul.
 - a. Gal 2:11-13 (**Paul withstood even Peter**, an apostle; **and Barnabas**, a beloved evangelist).

Conclusion:

- A. Before we bring the lesson to a close, I want to give **a final word of warning.**
 1. **Any church that has a tolerant attitude** toward false teaching and false teachers is in danger of being **cut off from the Lord.**
 - a. Example: the Lord rebuked and threatened **the church at Pergamos** because they were tolerating false teaching
 - 1) Rev 2:12-16 -- "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: ¹³ I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴ But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. ¹⁵ Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolai-tans, which thing I hate. ¹⁶ Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.'"
 2. **Any Christian who has a tolerant attitude** toward false teaching and false teachers is in danger of being **severed from Christ.**
 - a. 2Jn 9, 10.