
Into Thy Word Bible Study in 2 Peter

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2 Peter 2: 1-3: "The Problem of False Teachers!"

General idea: We are living in a time where the pulpits and airways are filled with impiety, licentiousness, vain prophecies that do not come true, and shameful counterfeit truths by false teachers and their distorted teachings. It is a darkness that is unprecedented; those who love the Lord and are following His precepts in servanthood become more and more rare while shallow thinking, seeking hidden meanings, emotionalism, social trends, and the latest and greatest ideas take center stage. False teachers are a way of the Christian life. Not THE Way; rather, it seems they have always been with us and they will always be with us. There is something wrong with human nature, as we want to put ourselves in the story as the main character. We want to be the center of attention and thus lead others to ourselves and not to Christ. We tend to do this in life and in ministry. We love to proclaim our ideas, fantasies, and dreams and rationalize them as truth, conniving others into following them, while Christ stands at the door and knocks.

Peter is giving us a "false teacher detector" in this chapter. Peter is warning us of how deceptive and tricky they are, so we can be on guard and root them out. Consider that a true follower of God is humble and operates in the virtues Peter has already set in the first chapter as a template for us. A false teacher sneaks and schemes in our churches, and starting to manipulate others, seeks to lead others to their camp, which is pitched in deceptions and falsehoods. God is put down and they are lifted up. Fanciful ideas and personalities are shown rather than Christ crucified or as LORD. The end result is the destruction and desolation of the church—those people who followed even though they knew better. But take heed; the false teachers will get their judgment in the end. In the meantime, we have to be on security alert to protect the flock, not allowing them in to get a foothold on His sheep. Sheep will run astray. As shepherds, we are called to guard the sheep—even when they do not want to be guarded!

Vs. 1: Heresies come from the minds of people who are not in Christ, who refuse to know Him, or who do not have the conduct of Christ, even though they may be Christians, saved by grace. They rely on opinions and not facts. The end result is divisiveness and conflict in the church while Christ and the work He has called us to do goes unmet and undone.

- *False prophets* refer to people who make up stories of future events, claim to have visions when they did not, or confuse a vision from their imaginations as being from God. In contrast, real prophets were humble and proclaimed what God had clearly revealed, His heart to ours without contradiction or personal gain and power (2 Kings 18:19; Isaiah 9:13-17; Jer. 5:31; 14:14; 23:16-32,

Ezek. 13:3-10).

- *False teachers* refer to counterfeit or blatant heresy as teaching what was not revealed by the Apostles at that time or by God's Word for our time. False teaching is not just about doctrine; it is also about character, virtue, and faithfully following Christ and living for Him. True teachers correct what is false and do not appeal to people's vanity; rather, they seek to glorify Christ (Matt. 24:4-5, 11; Acts 20:29-30; Gal. 1:6-9; Phil. 3:2; Col. 2:4, 8, 18, 20-23; 2 Thess. 2:1-3; 1 Tim. 1:3-7; 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-8; 1 John 2:18-19, 22-23; 2 John 7-11; Jude 3-4).
- *Among you.* God, in many places, warns of false teachers. They are already amongst us and will still come to us.
- *Destructive* refers manly to moral, spiritual, and social damage because of the failure to have good Christian conduct.
- *Heresies* is a Greek term meaning to convey a truth that is not aligned to accepted truth, or another group is proclaiming something different or referring to different sects of religion. Peter and Paul used this term to illustrate that our responsibility is to real Truth and we must fight anything that departs from what Christ has modeled and taught, or it will lead to judgment (Acts 24:5; 1 Cor. 11:9; Gal. 5:20)!
- *Denying the sovereign Lord/Master.* This means denying who and what Christ is and has done. They were teaching and practicing immorality. This is not about losing our salvation; if once saved, you are always saved (John 10:28-29; Rom. 8:28-39). This means their profession of faith was possibly spurious at best, or fictitious at worst (1 John 2:3-4, 19). Some have used this passage to mean Christ's death was for all, not just the elect, which would allow for universalism. This view falls away from other passages (John 6:37-40; 10:14-15; 27-29; 11:51-52; Rom. 5:8-10; 8:28-29, 32; Gal. 2:20-21; 3:13-14; 4:4-5; 1 John 4:9-10; Rev. 1:4-6; 5:9; 22:17).
- *Who brought/accept them* refers to people who are in Christ, saved by grace. These are Christians who were once of the faithful, but who turned their backs on correct doctrine, denied His Lordship, and/or did not continue in faithful living. This is betrayal to Christ Himself, to receive the Blood of the Lamb and then throw water on it to dilute it and wash it away (Heb. 6:4-9; 10:26-29; 2 Pet. 2: 10-19; 1 John 2:3-4)! This is what we call *backslidden* in doctrinal or moral mindsets (Prov. 14:14; Acts 21:21; 2 Thess. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 6:4-6; 10:38, 39).
- *Swift destruction* refers to judgment and accountability to God that will happen, not necessarily in a human, immediate, timely way but in God's perfect timing. The *calamity* can mean physical death or our Lord's second

coming (Matt. 24:50-51; 2 Thess. 1:9).

The references to false teachers, or those who follow such teachings, do not necessarily mean that people who follow them were not real, sincere, saved Christians when they got hooked, as many true followers are led astray and even good teachers can be misled. And, there are those who purposely seek to be deceiving, claiming to be believers when they are not. Good intentions or not, be warned. When we do get hooked in to what is false, Christ is the One who is pushed away! The end result is the same; people are led astray. If this happens to you, run—do not walk—away from them! If you are a leader, confront them. If they refuse to heed, get rid of them until they stop and make obvious repentance.

Vs. 2-3: False doctrines are extremely destructive! Why is the teaching of false doctrines wrong? Because it distorts Christ, and God is a God of Truth. When we do not realize His truth, we will error in other ways too, thus leading us away from His Ways and Truth while bringing disrepute and chaos to all we do.

- *Shameful ways/sensuality* means “debauchery” as in reckless, incorrigible, unrestrained, sensual indulgences of sexual immorality. This is about seeking sinful, physical gratification, or giving into one’s desires. This leads to being merciless and unscrupulous in one’s dealings with others! When we fight against one another, especially in the church, it is hurtful and even pathetic in God’s eyes (Gen. 4:8; Duet. 25:17-19; Joshua 7; Matt. 21: 1-17; Luke 9:54; Rom. 13:13; 2 Cor. 12:21; Eph. 4:19; 1 Pet. 4:3).
- This also refers to “shame,” something that is often foreign in our society. It means we feel guilty because of our sin or our failure to live as Christ has called, and it affects our self-identity. This, in context, is profiteering at another’s expense, oppression, and gaining profit from twisting truth, stealing, or manipulating like pirates of the sea (Gen. 3:7-8; 2:25; Psalm 31:17; 35:36; 44:7; 119:30-31; 132:18; Rom. 3:23-24).
- *Disrepute/blasphemed* means we dishonor Christ and His Church. Because of immorality, a lack of accountability, and rationalizing that the sin is OK, we miss the point of Christianity.
- *Greed* means to love the gain of wealth over all else. It refers to being motivated by the desire for money and seeking whatever means to get it, as in “fleecing the flock.” Today, it can mean to commercialize the Christian faith for personal gain rather than to glorify Christ. This abuses the church, abuses the position of leadership, brings distrust to the standing of the church, and brings dishonor to Christ (1 Cor. 9:14-15; 12:17-18; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; 6:5; 1 Pet. 5:2).
- *These teachers* referred to people who traveled from one place or church to another and charged fees to perform divinations, visions, occult practices, or

held new theories in theology that did not come from the Apostles or the Old Testament. They were about exploiting people for the money and glory by perverting the truth (Prov. 28:23; 29:5; 1 Thess. 2:1-6)!

- *Not been sleeping.* It seems false teachers have the money, fan base, and advantage, but God is not asleep; judgment is at hand for them!

The Bible warns us that when the clever lie, appealing to people's lust for what is new and counterfeit and appealing to vanities by fake flattery, and the deceit of the false teachers does not take hold, they will resort to claiming that what is true is false. Because their ideas are divorced from sound reason or scriptural foundation, they will scoff and scorn the real Truth and the tenets of the faith. They will make fun of it and twist it so the truth becomes the lie and the lie becomes the truth. Their goal is to take you away from Christ as Lord and enslave you to vain philosophies and ideas that glorify people and the self rather than Christ. Christ is their enemy. It is all about control. Will it be God, you, or them (Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:1-2)?

How can you tell if someone is a false teacher? Simply by the fact that what they teach is not rooted in the precepts of God's most precious Word! Just as a bank teller must learn what a real hundred-dollar bill looks and feels like so when the fake comes he/she will be prepared, so it is regarding false teachers. However, most Christians may not be able to tell what is truth compared to what is fable or false. There is also another way to tell, and that is how they are in disposition and Fruit. False teachers are typically self centered, egotistical, and manipulative; life is all about them. The Fruit of the Spirit is not flowing, and in its place are pride and strife. They tend to have charismatic personalities so people become enamored by their celebrity and persona while they ignore their goods. In contrast, our example is humbleness and virtue, love and kindness, as well as strength under control—and that is our Lord Jesus Christ. Is he/she acting like a servant, or positioning self for power and prestige? Rather than in flashy manipulative personalities, in bait and switch, or in secretive or scheming teachers, the truth of God is revealed in the character and in words that are spoken by the teacher. Rarely if ever have I seen a false teacher be humble, caring, or loving, or have a servant's heart. It is all about them; God may be proclaimed, but the message will be so rare or watered down, it is diluted beyond being usable.

What is to stop false teachers is our discipleship and accountability with others? Being immersed in the Word so we follow His precepts, not ours or those of another person.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see [Inductive Bible Study](#)):

1. What does this passage say?

2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What do you consider to be false teachings? Why do you suppose they have always been with us?
2. How would you describe shallow thinking? Why do you suppose people prefer not to think or examine something carefully to see if it is true or not?
3. What teachings are in the Church that, in your opinion, need to be confronted and countered?
4. Have you ever been attracted to false teachings? If so, how and why? If not, how have you guarded yourself from them?
5. Why do you suppose that many pulpits and airways are filled with false prophecies and false teachings?
6. Why would a church be taken in by social trends, fanciful ideas, personalities, or the latest and greatest ideas that are contrary to God's Word? How do false teachers connive others into following them?
7. How do false teachers work to undermine the real work of Christ? What is an example of their use of deception and manipulation? How do they twist God's truth?
8. What is an example of what they teach? What is the difference between what is essential and orthodox, what we can agree to disagree about, and what is counterfeit that needs to be fought and removed?
9. What does it mean to be motivated by the desire for money? How are false teachings a betrayal to Christ Himself?
10. How do people become enamored by a false teacher's celebrity and persona while they ignore their goods? What can the church do to better educate people to avoid them?

11. When we fight against one another, especially in the church, how is this impacting our communities for the gospel? It is important to know when to fight and when to let it go so it does not divert others from Him.
12. What can you do to be on guard against false teaching? What should your church do if a pastor or any other person teaches what is false and misleading and refuses to repent? True teachers correct what is false and do not appeal to people's vanity; rather, they seek to glorify Christ. What are you going to do about this?

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