

L 5 ... Recognizing False Teachers

2 Peter 2:10b-16

Times change, people change, but some things never change. Among the things that never change are characteristics of false teachers. Another thing that never changes is the inspired Word of God that reveals how to recognize false teachers. There are at least **three** unchanging characteristics that enable us to recognize false teachers ...

Their Arrogance (2:10b-12)

False teachers are *presumptuous* and *selfwilled* ([2:10b](#)). They are daring and arrogant to the point *they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities* ([2:10c](#)). The exact meaning of the word translated *dignities* (DOXA, dox'-ah) is uncertain. It probably refers to fallen angels. Fallen angels or demons, like fallen mankind, retain some of their previous glory and power.

The false teachers of Peter's day boldly and arrogantly acted as though they were more powerful than fallen angels or demons. Many false prophets of today's prosperity gospel make millions of dollars casting out demons.

How does [Proverbs 21:24b](#) describe *proud* and *haughty* men?

False teachers do things even righteous angels would not do. Peter explains: *Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord* ([2:11](#)). Fallen angels are blasphemed by the false teachers, but even righteous angels, who *are greater in power and might*, would not slander fallen angels. Angels know it is not their place to pronounce judgment because only God can do that. For example, *Michael the archangel* had a dispute with the devil about the body of Moses ([Jude 9a](#)).

What does the rest of the verse tell us?

In contrast, false teachers boldly and arrogantly claim to have power over demons. We should never do what even *Michael the archangel* did not dare to do—bring a slanderous accusation against Satan. However, the Bible teaches a further restraint. As Christians, we must remember that speaking evil of and slandering other people are serious sins.

What does [Titus 3:2](#) command us?

Faithful pastors and teachers are to point out false teachings and deception with God's Word. However, we must leave the judging—even of false teachers—to God.

False teachers are *natural brute beasts* ([2:12a](#)). Animals operate from instinct, rather than with rational decisions. Like wild animals in a jungle, false teachers are only concerned with satisfying their appetites. Therefore, they are *made to be taken and destroyed* ([2:12b](#)). As with wild animals, they are caught, or trapped, through their eagerness to satisfy the appetites with which they are *made*, but have never conquered. Therefore, they will be *destroyed*, not escaping God's judgment.

False teachers are also guilty of speaking *evil of the things that they understand not* ([2:12c](#)). Though they claim to have a higher level of spiritual knowledge, *they understand not*. They also blaspheme things they do not *understand*—namely the Bible and those who properly preach and teach it. Of these blasphemers, Peter writes, they *shall utterly perish in their own corruption* ([2:12d](#)). False teachers follow their unrestrained passions. In so doing, they are led to destruction, or eternal punishment.

The first characteristic that enables us to recognize false teachers is **their arrogance**. The second is ...

Their Luxurious Living (2:13-14)

Peter explains: They *shall receive the reward of unrighteousness* ([2:13a](#)). The word *reward* means they will be paid what they deserve on the Day of Judgment. Because they are guilty of so much *unrighteousness*, their judgment will be very severe.

How does [Galatians 6:7](#) declare this fact?

False teachers and preachers *count it pleasure to riot in the day time* ([2:13b](#)). The word translated *riot* (TRYPHĒ, troo-fay') means "luxuriousness" or "delicate living." The same Greek word is translated *delicately* in [Luke 7:25](#). False teachers take *pleasure* in their personal jets, expensive cars, and lifestyles of luxury that are supported by their deceit.

Peter writes of them: *Spots they are and blemishes* ([2:13c](#)). They are like dirty stains on a clean, white shirt. They are *sporting*, or delighting, *themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you* ([2:13d](#)). The phrase *feast with you* may refer to their presence at the Lord's Supper or the love feasts.

Because of their obsessions, they have *eyes full of adultery* ([2:14a](#)). This means when they see a beautiful woman, they commit *adultery* with their eyes. They have lost all moral control. They have unquenchable desires for *sin* and therefore, never stop sinning ([2:14b](#)).

These predators gain a following, *beguiling unstable souls* ([2:14c](#)). The word translated *beguiling* (DELEAZŌ, del-uh-ad'-zoh) means "to trap" or "catch by bait." Like fishermen using bait to catch fish, false teachers catch spiritually *unstable* people by teaching what these people want to hear.

How are people enticed, according to [James 1:14](#)?

These false teachers have hearts *exercised with covetous practices* ([2:14d](#)). The word translated *exercised* (GYMNAZŌ, goom-nad'-zoh) is the word from which we get our word "gymnasium." It means they train, or practice, like athletes to be good at deception. They are experts at deceiving people to get their money. In His blistering sermon to the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, Jesus says such teachers are like a cup and dish that are *clean on the outside* ([Mt 23:25b](#)).

Then, what does He say ([23:25c](#))?

Finally, Peter says these false teachers are *cursed children* ([2:14e](#)), which refers to the certainty of God's judgment.

Characteristics that help us recognize false teachers are their **arrogance, luxurious living**, and ...

Their Exploitation (2:15-16)

Again, Peter goes to the Old Testament for an illustration applying to these false teachers. He writes, *Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness* ([2:15](#)).

Because of greed, Balaam became a prophet for hire. He was paid by Balak (bay'-lak), king of Moab, to *curse* the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness ([Num. 22:1-21](#); [Deut. 23:4-5](#)).

According to Jesus in [Revelation 2:14](#), what did Balaam teach Balak [Balac]?

Balaam was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet ([2:16](#)). Balaam became so insensitive that God used a *dumb* animal to rebuke him. Like Balaam, false teachers sin so long their greed and immorality become a form of *madness*, or insanity. They are like the unsaved Gentiles about whom Paul writes: *Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God* ([Eph. 4:18a-b](#)).

Why, according [Ephesians 4:18c](#)?

Spiritual *ignorance*, or *madness*, is the result of insensitivity to God and His Word, which the Bible calls hardening of the heart. Refusing to listen to God eventually results in a petrified heart.

What happened to Balaam because of his hard heart? During a war between the Israelites and Midianites, Balaam was killed with a sword ([Num. 31:8](#)). In the same way, false teachers will be paid back for their *unrighteousness* ([2 Pet. 2:13](#)), which is the *wages of unrighteousness* ([2:15c](#)).

One important lesson we can learn from the story of Balaam—if God can use a donkey, He can use you! Why, according to Jesus ([Luke 18:27b](#))?

Three characteristics that enable us to recognize false teachers are their :

ARROGANCE,

LUXURIOUS LIVING,

EXPLOITATION.