

2 Peter
A Portrait of False Teachers

2 Peter 2:1-3

9-8-24

HDBC

Chances are good that we have all been swindled at some point in our lives. Maybe you were tricked into given up a baseball card that you did not know was as valuable as it was. Or maybe you purchased a car that the seller knew was a lemon. Or you lost money on some investment scam.

Of all the cons that you might fall prey to there are none more destruction than religious phonies. Men or women who would deceive you when it comes to spiritual things that have eternal consequences. **Hari Krishna movement in the 60's deceived hundreds. Sun Myung Moon and the Unification church swept thousands into their deception.** Those are extreme examples and are relatively easy to recognize.

There are others which may be more difficult to spot. Some are considered part of Christianity. They say just enough truth to make you think they are legitimate. Just because a group uses the word **church**, **meets on Sundays**, and **claims to be Christian**, does not mean they are. I remember driving into Memphis to go to seminary four days a week and driving through a pretty sketchy area. **There were a couple of strip clubs along the way. How do I know? They clearly advertised what they were.** They were easy to spot.

The enemy uses a different tactic when it comes to false teaching. He tries to make it look like what it is not.

In 2 Peter 2 Peter warns us about false teachers. Today we will focus only on the first 3 verses. In those verses he provides a description of false teachers that will help us see and reject them. This morning we're going to go phrase by phrase and note eight things about false teachers. What was true of false teachers then is true of them today. So, let's go.

1. Their Presence

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you.

The first thing to note is that false teachers have always been around, were around in Peter's day and will always be around until Jesus comes. They are present in every generation, including ours.

Peter has just reminded us of the trustworthiness of the Word of God. Now he turns to address those who pervert and distort the Word of God, leading some away from true faith and toward their destruction.

Throughout history true followers of God have had to remain vigilant to detect the presence of false teachers and to protect their own minds as well as the minds of their families. It was true of Israel in the Old Testament generations. It was true during Jesus' day. It was true during the first generation of believers after Jesus. It is still true today.

2. Their Deception

Who will secretly introduce destructive heresies

False teachers will not wear a name tag identifying them as false teachers. They must use deception to succeed.

Secretly introduce – To bring in or to bring forward. But it often has the idea of introducing or **bringing in something that is smuggled in**. To bring in with deception. These false teachers appear to be legitimate pastors and teachers, but they are not. They have the right look and even the right credentials, but they are false teachers.

Not all false teachers are purposefully deceptive. Some truly believe what they are teaching. But behind their teaching is a foundation of deception that began with the great enemy of the truth, Satan. He entered history deceiving Adam and Eve. It's still a favorite weapon.

3. Their Heresy

Who will secretly introduce destructive heresies.

Destructive – utter ruin. It speaks of the final and eternal condemnation of the wicked. In this context it simply means that false teaching has horrific eternal consequences for them and for those who follow them.

Heresies – denotes an **opinion, especially a self-willed opinion which is substituted for the truth**. These false prophets have set aside the truth of God's word and replaced it with their own self-made opinions.

How do you recognize heresy? Test it by the Word of God, not your feelings, your experience or your personal desires.

4. Their Destruction

Even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

Peter has alluded to the destructive nature of their teaching. Now he gets right to the point.

Denying – *to refuse, to be unwilling, or to firmly say no!*

Master – *Sovereign, ruler, lord.*

Who bought them is a reminder of the sacrifice that Jesus has made to purchase our redemption. The false teachers claim to belong to the Master yet act and teach as if they are completely independent of Him.

Bringing swift destruction upon themselves – makes it clear that these false teachers are not saved.

Swift means imminent or quick.

Destruction once again speaks of eternal condemnation.

5. Their Success

Many will follow

The Bible repeatedly reveals that many people will take the wrong road. There is a **broad way** that will attract many people and a narrow way that few will follow. But it is the narrow way that is the way of truth and life. Have you ever wondered why more people will move away from Christ and the truth than toward Him? False prophets and teachers account for at least some of the reason.

6. Their Sensuality

Their sensuality

Sensuality is a strong word referring to habitual sexual immorality. It speaks of **unrestrained, depraved conduct**. Because they have rejected the sovereign Lordship of Jesus over their lives, anything goes. This word speaks of **unrestrained lawlessness**. Jude compares the sins of these people with those of Sodom and Gomorrah. Jude 4, 7.

7. Their Distortion

And because of them the way of the truth will be maligned

The way of the truth refers to right doctrine and the accurate proclamation of the gospel. Because false teachers distort the true gospel, the true gospel is often reproached by the world. New Testament scholar, C. H. Lenski puts it this way:

True Christianity is blasphemed, reviled, cursed, condemned by outsiders who see professed Christians running to all manner of excesses. If that is Christianity, they will say, curse it. When many follow such excesses, outsiders are unable to distinguish and so blaspheme the whole way. These false exponents seem true products of the way to them. (MacArthur's commentary)

To overcome this, the church must be pure in its doctrine and pure in its behavior. The world needs to hear the truth in our words and see the truth in our actions.

8. Their Greed

And in their greed they will exploit you with false words.

Peter now gets to the heart of what motivates most false teachers . . . money! They are greedy. The word for **greed** speaks of **uncontrolled, covetous desire for money and wealth**. He will later describe false teachers as those *having a heart trained in greed*. They crave money.

Exploit – To traffic in or to realize gain from. Their method for getting rich or gaining power and influence.

False – *plastos*. We get our word *plastic* from this word. It originally meant something not quite authentic. **Plastic items are often manufactured to look like they are made from another substance, wood, metal, etc.** Because of this, plastic, at first glance, can often deceive.

One of Satan's goals is to deceive people inside and outside the church. He understands the power of the truth to change lives for good. He fights hard against that. Until the end of the age, he will always send false teachers to confuse and mislead. So, we must be vigilant.

Reading from Max Anders' commentary on 2 Peter

No one ever expected it to happen, especially with this model congregation. They provided a heated swimming pool for underprivileged kids, horses for inner-city children to ride, gave scholarships for deserving students, and provided housing for senior citizens. They even had an animal shelter, medical facility, an out-patient care facility, and a drug rehabilitation program.

Walter Mondale wrote that the pastor was “an inspiration to us all.” The secretary of health, education and welfare cited the pastor’s outstanding contribution: “He knew how to inspire hope. He was committed to people in need; he counseled prisoners and juvenile delinquents. He started a job placement center; he opened rest homes and homes for mentally handicapped; he had a health clinic; he organized a vocational training center; he provided free legal aid; he founded a community center; he preached about God. He even claimed to cast out demons, do miracles and heal.”

Lofty words. A lengthy resume for what appeared to be a mighty spiritual leader and his church. Where is that congregation today? What is it doing now? The church is dead . . . literally.

Death occurred the day the pastor called the members to the pavilion. They heard his hypnotic voice over the speaker system, and from all corners of the farm they came. He sat in his large chair and spoke into a hand-held microphone about the beauty of death and the certainty that they would meet again. The people were surrounded by armed guards. A vat of cyanide-laced Kool-Aid was brought out. Most of the members drank the poison with no resistance. Those who did resist were forced to drink.

First, the babies and children, were given the fatal drink. Then the adults, women and men, leaders and followers, and finally the leader, Jim Jones. Everything was calm for a few minutes. Then the convulsions began; screams filled the sky; mass confusion broke out. In a few minutes it was over. 909 dead, including 302 children.

That is an extreme illustration of a false teacher, but it is a graphic reminder of the danger that false teaching brings. Sure, most false teachers don’t lead their people to physical death, but they often do lead their followers to spiritual death.

Truth matters

Relationships are important. Feeling of acceptance is good. Ministries and activities for kids are great. But nothing is more important than truth. Your kids can have a great time and love going to church on Sundays. But if they are being deceived by the teaching of that church you are not only doing them a disservice but are pointing them toward the wrong gate and the wrong road. **Don't let trappings hide the deception.**

Taking girls to fancy restaurant. It was all about the presentation. But I did not leave with a full stomach.

Three steps to help guard against being deceived.

1. Pause

When you hear a new teacher, be careful not to plunge headlong as a follower. Take some time. Reject the temptation to buy in just because a person's teaching appears to be good. This is especially true if there seem to be trappings of entertainment or external allurements to get people to come and hear. STOP long enough to get a good sampling of what is being taught. Don't be quick to jump into the water!

2. Look

Observe the life of the person doing the teaching. Does the life mirror that which is consistent with the teaching of Christ? Is there accountability and transparency? Do they live an extravagant life?

3. Listen

Listen carefully to the words they say. Are they Scriptural?
Listen to other teachers you trust. Do they recommend this person?
Listen to the Holy Spirit. If there is a check in your spirit, be careful?