

Series: **A Firm Foundation** – week 4

CDOBC – beginning on 8/28/16

Today's Title: **“Beware of False Teaching”**

*September 18, 2016 ~ 2 Peter 2:1-3*

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**OBJECTIVE:** To help people be aware of the reality and threat of false teachers in the church and how to identify false teachers.

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### *Opening Prayer*

The headline this past week read: **“Uber debuts self-driving vehicles in landmark Pittsburgh trial”**

The technology a self-driving car requires is amazing. The advancements Uber has brought into a fully-automated, robotic car driving around the streets of Pittsburgh is an accomplishment to be celebrated.

But not everyone's celebrating - or eager to get into the backseat of one of the 4 self-driving Ford Fusions.

Why not?

Many don't trust the cars are safe.

We're a technology-loving culture - but a large % of people are apprehensive about getting in the back-seat of a robotically driven car and trusting the robotic technology with their safety and health.

Turn to **2 Peter 2:1-3** - **“Beware of False Teaching”**

Unfortunately, I'm not sure our culture has this same sort of critical thinking and 'prove it to me' mentality when it comes to spiritual things.

I'm not sure if people go to a church - if they listen closely enough to make sure the preacher - is trustworthy and safe. I'm not sure if they look at the church and what the church believes regarding the Bible, Jesus or the mission of the church itself - or if after a service or an event they simply ask themselves, "*Was I entertained?*" or "*Did I enjoy that?*" If you're a guest here today - if this is your first Sunday with us - welcome! I think it's important that you not only consider if you enjoy the service and the people - but it's incumbent on you to evaluate this church on the basis of: *Do we teach what the Bible teaches and act in ways the Bible directs?*

Why do I say this?

Because in recent decades, many churches have gone away from what the Bible teaches by teaching and acting in ways contrary to the Bible and the teachings of Jesus.

There was a group of people who were taught by the Apostle Paul, and after he taught them, they looked to make sure his teaching was in agreement with the Scriptures.

**Acts 17:11**

"...they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." They fact-checked Paul!

If they checked the Apostle Paul...I think it's important to check anything said from this pulpit...or any other pulpit these days!

The Apostle Peter was near the end of his life when he wrote 2 Peter - and he was very concerned about the false teaching which was already infiltrating many of the churches. He wrote in 2:1-3a:

“But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.

3 And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. *Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.*”

We learn a number of things (4) in this passage about false teachers - the first one is:

### **False teachers reside in the churches** *vs. 1a*

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

The Jews (“among the people”) had many false prophets throughout their history.

#### **Deuteronomy 18:20**

“But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods...”

#### **Jeremiah 6:14**

“They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace.”

#### **Micah 3:11** (Israel's leadership)

Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the LORD

and say, "Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us."

**Isaiah 28:7** (Political & Religious leaders of Israel)

"These also reel with wine and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are swallowed by wine, they stagger with strong drink, they reel in vision, they stumble in giving judgment."

Peter says straight up - "there will be false teachers among you...". He says, *"Don't think this was only something ancient Israel had to deal with - you will deal with this too!"*

Guess when this started to infiltrate the Church?

Guess when false teachers began teaching heresy / false things about God, Jesus, salvation and the Christian life to those in the Church?

In the first year or two.

**Acts 8** and Simon the Sorcerer who wanted to pay money to the Apostles so he could have power.

By the 2<sup>nd</sup> decade of the Church, false teachers were popping up everywhere. If you read the closing verses / chapter of the pastoral epistles, you quite often read of warnings and judgments given concerning those who were spreading falsehood in those local body of believers.

If that was happening in the first 20 years of the Church - when the Apostles were teaching and visiting churches

- how much of a problem do you think this issue is for us 2,000 years later?

I realize in our culture, when you hear someone begin talking about ‘false teachers’ leading people astray - our culture is so tolerant and relativistic, the knee-jerk reaction tends to think of this kind of talk as “*tin-foil hat*” or conspiracy theory stuff.

But the truth and reality is: false teachers are a dangerous threat - and they reside in the church.

**The recipe false teachers follow** *vs. Ib*

As some of you know, I enjoy cooking. Preparing a meal which has some big flavors is fun - a challenge - and satisfying.

Recipes are wonderful guides and instructions which tell you how to cook something. Some recipes are very exact and any *creativity* you add to the recipe will ruin the final product. But other recipes have a great deal of flexibility, and as long as you follow the directions in a general sense, you can add a great deal of personal creativity to the dish and customize it to your taste.

This is how the recipe for false teachers works. There are some major ingredients which seem to always be part of the mix...but there is a variety in what the final product looks like. Peter says:

**(Vs. 1b)** “false teachers among you” “...who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.”

I see 5 ingredients listed here - let's begin with the 2 major ingredients of the false teacher recipe.

First, add a heaping cup of *deceit*.

False teachers never walk in the front door and announce their heretical beliefs. By *heretical* I mean beliefs that contradict what the Bible says. Notice Peter says these are “destructive heresies”. This is not simply a difference of opinion in debatable areas. These are either false views on the foundational beliefs of the faith (Bible is God's inspired Word, deity and works of Jesus, the work of the Holy Spirit, the nature and evil of sin), or they take debatable issues (Romans 14) and raise them to the level of essential truths - foundational beliefs. Either one of these is extremely destructive, but they never lead with these things - they creep in - hoping nobody will notice. They are not honest about their intentions - or their beliefs.

Second, a cup of *denying* the *redemptive* work of Christ.

The Bible is very clear - Jesus has bought us by giving Himself as a sacrifice on the cross. He is our atoning sacrifice.

**Mark 10:45**

“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

**1 Corinthians 6:19b-20**

“You are not your own, **20** for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

Our redemption is a central theme woven throughout the N.T.

Eventually, in some way false teachers will deny the atoning death of Christ. They may teach salvation is attained by a combination of grace and works. Or, they will be so out of balance in their teaching of God’s love and grace they will give license to virtually any sin. But their 2 favorite sins are the third ingredient:

Third, add a dash of sensuality and greed for flavoring. Recipes often require 1 or 2 cups of the main ingredients - but the flavoring is usually measured in tablespoons or teaspoons - or you ‘*season to taste*’. So it is with sensuality and greed. Certainly, these can be overflowing cups - but most often, they are subtler and at least in the beginning, very small amounts indeed.

A little here...a little there.

A pinch here...a pinch there.

But eventually, the flesh takes over and these areas become prominent in the false teacher’s life.

Fourth, they are a *secret* ingredient.

False teachers walk in the door and they blend in - they match up with everyone at first. Then, very slowly and very carefully, they begin to float some trial balloons - and depending on how those trial balloons are received or reacted to, they can gauge how quickly they can openly share their heretical beliefs.

This shouldn't be a surprise to anyone. There are plenty of passages in Scripture which warn of these things.

**2 Corinthians 11:14**

“And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”

**Matthew 7:15**

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”

Don't be fooled - Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44) - he is constantly trying to deceive believers - using false doctrine to attack and weaken the church.

Now to be sure - we're not talking here about people in the church who are trying to understand the truth and don't have a good grasp of Biblical doctrine yet. We're talking about those who are teachers and influencers in the church who know what the Bible says - know what historical Christianity has



believed, and they are secretly teaching their own versions of these things.

Fifth, their recipe is deadly food poisoning.

Ever had food poisoning?

*I have a few times in my life - the most 'memorable' time was in college, I worked as a courier for a law firm in Chicago, and the firm held a seminar in the John Hancock building. I'm not sure if it's still there, but at that time there was a very high-end steakhouse located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor(?), and after the seminar, the owner of the firm took everyone who was working the seminar to lunch at this high-end restaurant.*

*By 3:00 I was in bad shape - lying on the couch in his office - fever spiking, and all the other symptoms of food poisoning coming on strong.*

*Finally, around 1:00 or 2:00, the symptoms stopped.*

What false teachers offer may be easy to swallow and make you feel good at first, but those who pervert the truth of God's Word will face intense judgment from God. Peter says false teaches are: "...bringing upon themselves swift destruction."

Why? Because this is serious business - the most serious business we can engage in. Those who claim to represent Christ and teach from His Word have a

tremendous influence on the eternal destiny and life choices of those they teach.

This is why the Bible says in **James 3:1** “...we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.”

Do not eat what false teachers cook up. It’s not only contrary to the Bible - but it will poison you and bring pain and destruction into your life and rob you of God’s blessings.

### **The results of false teachers** vs. 2

As I mentioned earlier, our culture is so tolerant and relativistic that most people hear this stuff and think, *‘What’s the big deal?’*

One of the problems with our tolerant culture is we have lost the ability to think critically - and we have redefined tolerance to mean something which is actually harmful. Christians should be tolerant of others. In fact, the overwhelming majority of Christians are very tolerant of others - what they believe and how they live their life. We can’t force anyone to agree with us or force them into faith.

Which faith is more tolerant of people’s beliefs:

Christianity or Islam?

But tolerance in many churches has gone too far. Some churches tolerate people in their congregation who believe, say and practice things which are simply untrue

and opposed to the Gospel. Not only do they tolerate these false teachers, they are put into teaching positions - and sometimes even placed into positions of leadership.

In some more extreme cases, they pick and choose which parts of the Bible they want to agree with and dismiss the rest.

Peter tells us the result false teachers will have in a church:

“And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.”

1. Many will follow false teachers

Church popularity does not equal truth.

False teachers attract a large crowd.

**Matthew 24:11**

“And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.”

Why? Because they teach things people like to hear.

Their teaching is easy to swallow. Their teaching appeals to their pride and flesh.

They don't teach about repenting from sin - they don't teach about the sufficiency of Christ or the high moral and ethical calling Jesus gives for believers.

They don't teach of putting others first and the kingdom values of “last will be first” and “least will be the greatest”.

They don't teach of sacrifice and serving those who can't repay your service.

Just because there is a large crowd doesn't mean there is a false teacher standing in front - but most false teachers do attract a large numbers to their message.

2. Sensuality and greed (vs. 3a) will characterize their life.

At some point, false teachers increase their focus on physical and sexual pleasures and their greed begins to be more obvious.

Within marriage, God blesses mutual sensuality between a husband and wife - but the false teacher engages in / encourages sensuality without regard to marriage.

Greed is also a prominent trait in the ministry of false teachers. Their goal is not to protect the sheep, reach the lost with the Gospel or help strengthen the church through the teaching and application of God's Word - their goal is to make money - and they never make enough of it!

3. Christ and His Church will be slandered.

The best examples of this are the public scandals of many so-called pastors and Christian teachers.

Over the years each of these scandals centered around sex and money.

In each of these scandals, the name of Christ and the reputation of His Church was dragged through the mud.

The false teachers of Westboro Baptist also cause severe damage to the reputation of the Church as they spew their hate and racist views and teachings, and the public often groups them - and every other Baptist church into the same pool.

**The reward which motivates false teachers** vs. 3a

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

False teachers exploit others for their own profit.

Their motive is not altruistic - it's selfish.

In the end they care for themselves - they put themselves first.

To do this they use “false words”. The Greek word translated to the English “false” is *plastos*, from which we get our word ‘plastic’.

Plastic materials often look like something they are not. They can look like porcelain, or like granite, wood, grass. Another way we use the word ‘plastic’ is when we refer to someone who lacks any depth of character and is only concerned with appearances - we'll call them ‘plastic’.

The false teachers appear to be something they're not. They reside in churches.

Their first impression is deceitful, and they keep their true nature and beliefs secret / hidden until the right time. They deny the redemptive work of Christ and if you eat what they cook, it will poison you and bring pain and destruction into your life. They will lead you away from God.

Unfortunately, the result is they often have a large following, and they use false words so they can exploit you for their own advantage.

So what do we do about this?

### **Apply it...**

#### Know your Bible

Small groups!!! Get connected with other believers and read, study, talk about the truths and principles found in God's Word. Learn what it says and how it's applied in daily life.

There's no substitute to reading and knowing the Bible!

#### Learn Doctrine / Theology

This is really the same as "know your Bible" - just at a more organized or systematic level.

##### **1 John 4:1**

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world."

Know and learn what the Bible says about itself, about God, about humanity, about sin, about Jesus, about angels and demons, about Satan, about the Church, about salvation. These are all areas of theology - and one of the best ways to spot a false teacher is to have a firm grasp of Biblical doctrine. When you have a firm grasp of the truth and you're very familiar with the truth - false teaching is much easier to identify and counter.

Pray for me - and for other church teachers and leaders.

We covet your prayers. We need your prayers.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

**2 Corinthians 11:28**

“And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.”

Why? One of the primary reasons was for them to remain faithful to the truth! He was worried / anxious about the church wandering or running from the truth.

If you are strong in the truth, you will choose leaders who are strong in the truth - who will in turn make sure I and the other pastors remain strong in the truth.

**2 Timothy 4:2-4**

“...preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,

4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.”

May this never be our story.

I pray we will remain strong in our commitment to God’s inspired, authoritative, inerrant Word which will guide us into true and lasting freedom and joy.

Close in prayer