

Identifying False Teachers

II Peter 2:10b-16

INTRODUCTION:

If you would open your Bibles this morning, we will soon be reading from II Peter Chapter 2 starting in the second half of verse 10.

One of the benefits from expository preaching, which examines scriptures verse by verse, is that it causes one to preach on topics that most likely would otherwise be avoided. Chapter 2 of II Peter is one of those cases.

My first reaction, when I read Chapter 2 was "I don't want to preach about false teachers!" But, the more I studied the passage, the more God spoke to me that this is EXACTLY one of the topics that our churches desperately needs to hear today!

Churches today get so wrapped up in

- keeping everyone unoffended and happy,
- offering entertainment,
- tolerating different beliefs,
- and just wanting everyone to just "get along"

that they have lost sight or pushed aside the very reason they are preaching in the churches in the first place. **That is to teach and preach the ENTIRE, TRUE Word of God and encourage people to practice that teaching in their lives for their salvation!**

Anyone who does not teach the TRUE Word of God is a false teacher and it is something that **cannot be** taken lightly. Their salvation and the salvation of the people who follow their teaching is at stake!

No one wants to go through the motions of Christianity and then find out at judgment that they were not actually saved. That is, no doubt, why the punishment for false teachers is so severe. That is also why we are told to "**Study to show yourselves approved before God**". That is why Peter puts so much emphasis on attaining the "**True knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ**" and to "**Be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you**".

You see, God is not going to accept the excuse that someone led you astray. God's gift of salvation is SO GREAT that YOU MUST realize the importance to study the scriptures for yourself and ensure your own salvation. This should be your priority in life! Don't take God's gift of salvation for granted and think lightly of it!

ILLUSTRATION:

Do you remember the story of Little Red Riding Hood?

She encountered the Big Bad Wolf on her way to her grandmother's house. Instead of avoiding him or fleeing, she naively told him where she was going. The wolf quickly ran ahead and locked grandma up in a cupboard. He then put on her night clothes and waited for Little Red Riding Hood. When Little Red Riding Hood reached the cottage, she entered and went to Grandma's bedside.

"My! What big eyes you have, Grandma!" she said in surprise.

"All the better to see you with, my dear!" replied the wolf.

"My! What a deep voice you have!" Grandma!

"All the better to greet you with!" replied the Wolf.

"My! What big ears you have, Grandma!" said Little Red Riding Hood.

"All the better to hear you with, my dear!" said the wolf.

"What big teeth you have, Grandma!" said Little Red Riding Hood.

"All the better to eat you with!" growled the wolf as he jumped out of bed and began to chase her.

Though this story is a "fairytale" the scriptures remind us that there will be many ravenous wolves among us calling themselves preachers!

Jesus warned of this in His Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 7:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

A crowd was assembled on the hillside as Jesus taught this in His Sermon On The Mount. They were instructed to hear and to heed His warning. That same message is vitally important for us today. It is **SO** important that Peter devotes a whole chapter, 1/3 of his letter, to this subject of **false teachers!**

The purpose of our worship service is to worship and praise God for all that He has done for us. Our salvation is not based upon just coming to church and going through the motions. As Peter is going to point out to us in the scripture this morning, we are living in a world of sin and we **MUST** have a **TRUE** knowledge of Christ. These services are intended not only to teach the Word and praise and worship our God and Savior on Sunday, but encourage us to be faithful throughout the week in prayer, reading and studying God's Word, and living for God. Because as Peter has told us, Satan has placed false prophets and false teachers among us who will try to lead us from the truth.

As we prepare our hearts for the message this morning lets stand as we read from God's Word.

All Stand and Read Scripture

2 Peter 2:10b-16 (NASB)

¹⁰ ...Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, ¹¹ whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord. ¹² But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, ¹³ suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, ¹⁴ having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; ¹⁵ forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; ¹⁶ but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, *for a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.*

As we prepare to look more closely at Peter's passage this morning, let's bow in a word of prayer.

Prayer

Peter warned us in the first verses of Chapter 2 that there will be "false prophets" and "false teachers" among us who will lead many to follow their destructive ways. Then he told us of their impending judgment. Now he is going to describe how to identify these false teachers. I have entitled this message "**Identifying False Teachers**".

BODY:

I. THE REALITY OF FALSE TEACHERS.

2 Peter 2:1a (NASB)

2 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies,...

This verse continues Peter's thoughts from chapter one. In Chapter 1 Peter defended the authenticity of his ministry by his and the apostles eyewitness of Jesus and of the prophecy from the Old Testament that was fulfilled by Christ. He says this affirms that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

2 Peter 1:20-21 (NASB)

*²⁰ But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation, ²¹ for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

The scriptures are where we find truth. There are warnings throughout the Bible not to add to or subtract from the scripture.

In our day there is the belief in "progressive revelation" that originates from outside the Word. False teachers do not want to submit to the original intent of the Word, so they do not seek what Scripture actually means, instead, they conform it to what they want it to mean. They will look to other sources as their authority because they are not under God's authority. This is why Paul admonishes us...

1 Corinthians 4:6b (NASB)

...that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written...

This is so pride will not have an opportunity to operate and puff us up. It is pride that makes one participate in false doctrine which makes him spiritually destructive to himself and others who listen to him.

Proverbs 30:5-6 (NASB)

⁵ Every word of God is tested;
He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.

⁶ Do not add to His words
Or He will prove you, and you will be proved a liar.

God is stating for MAN not to add to his words. Adding does not only mean additional words, but can also mean changing them to mean what they do not. When you add new words as equal to Scripture you are really taking away from Scripture.

The sternest reprimand to altering God's Word is found in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 22:18-19 (NASB)

¹⁸ I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

But there have always been those who distort the truth of God. Moses, Jeremiah, and others in the Old Testament dealt with false prophets. The influence of false teachers is seen throughout the New Testament as well.

Jesus spoke about false prophets.

Matthew 7:16-20 (NASB)

¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes* nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷ So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ So then, you will know them by their fruits.

John spoke against false prophets.

1 John 4:1 (NASB)

⁴ Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Jude spoke about false prophets.

Jude 1:4 (NASB)

⁴ For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

There are countless other scriptures in the Bible that deal with false prophets and teachers. Here Peter says that they were a reality in the past, they were a reality in his day, and will be a reality in the future.

II. AN EXAMPLE OF A FALSE PROPHET.

Peter reminds us of a false prophet in the Old Testament. His name was Balaam. The story is found in the book of Numbers 22-24 and 31.

Balaam was a sorcerer who was summoned by King Balak of the Moabites to curse the Israelites as Moses was leading them toward Canaan. Balak promised to pay Balaam handsomely if he would curse the Hebrews, whom he feared, and bring evil upon them.

In the night God came to Balaam, telling him not to curse the Israelites. Balaam sent the king's messengers away. He did, however, go with a second set of Balak's messengers after being warned by God.

On the way, Balaam's donkey saw an angel of God standing in their path, holding a sword. The donkey turned away from him and received a beating from Balaam. The donkey saw the angel a second time and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall. Again he beat the donkey. The third time the donkey saw the angel, she lay down under Balaam, who, again, beat her severely with his staff.

At that, the Lord opened the donkey's mouth and it said to Balaam, **“What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?”** (Numbers 22:28, NASB)

After Balaam argued with the beast, the Lord opened the sorcerer's eyes so he too could see the angel. The angel scolded Balaam and ordered him to go to Balak but to speak only what God told him.

The king took Balaam to several mountains, ordering him to curse the Israelites on the plains below, but instead the sorcerer continually repeated God's covenant of blessing on the Hebrew people.

Balaam knew God and carried out his commands, but he was an evil man, driven by money rather than love of God. The angel threatened Balaam because Balaam was obeying God in his actions, but in his heart he was rebelling, thinking only of the bribe.

Later, Balaam advised the Midianites to send Moabite women to seduce the Israelites into idolatry and sexual immorality. God sent a plague that killed 24,000 Israelites who disobeyed God. Just before Moses' death, God commanded the Jews to take vengeance on the Midianites and they killed Balaam with a sword.

The lesson to be learned is found in our scripture this morning.

2 Peter 2:15-16 (NASB)

¹⁵ forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; ¹⁶ but he received a rebuke for his

own transgression, *for a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.*

"The way of Balaam" was the act greedily seeking riches over God. This story was used as a warning against false teachers who would corrupt others into idolatry and immorality because of their greed.

The question that I would like to ask you this morning is...

Are your thoughts consistent with your actions? When you obey God are you doing it grudgingly or out of love for him?

We know that there are false teachers still in the world today because of the things that they teach and do. Some are not as blatant as others. With TV, internet, radio, and social media their influence can be spread faster and farther than ever! So, Peter shows us how to discern a false prophet. Consider:

III. THE ACTIONS OF FALSE TEACHERS.

Remember... Jesus said "you shall know them by their fruits". This means that we can tell the difference between a true and false teacher of the Word. The authentic teacher of the Word is called by God. His message comes directly from God's Word. This is not the case for these "false prophets". When you examine a man's actions you can tell what his motivation is. Let's briefly look at the actions of false teachers.

1. Verse 1 tells us that they teach false doctrine and deny the truth of Christ.
2. Verses 10 and 14 teach that their lives are filled with immorality. Though they stand and speak in the name of Jesus. Their lives are filled with wickedness and sin. They say one thing and do another. They often use their position to carry out their immoral sexual desires.
3. Verse 10 also shows us that they despise authority. Not only do they despise the authority of the civil government, but they obviously also deny scriptural authority and the Lordship of Jesus Christ. These people are **out for themselves** and reject any sort of authority or accountability.
4. Verse 10 also says that due to their immorality and rejection of authority it becomes clear that they are arrogant, prideful, and rebellious. Peter says that false teachers are "daring and self-willed". This is defined as "failing to observe the limits of what is permitted or appropriate." **This is a "my way or the highway mindset"**. This is the individual that says "I am right, you are wrong and how dare you call me out!
5. Verse 14 also reveals that they prey on the weak. Just like the wolf in the Red Riding Hood story. False teachers lure unstable people into sin.
6. Verse 14 also reveals that they are greedy and selfish. Just like the story of Balaam. Peter states that these "wolves" are well trained in their greed. This is the motivation for what they do! **THEY ARE ALL ABOUT THEMSELVES!** They are evil, corrupt, and false! They have a tremendous impact on society.

CONCLUSION:

We live in a world full of violence and sexual immorality. These things have become the 'norm' with violence and sexual immorality being turned into ENTERTAINMENT!! The world is now ENTERTAINED by the very things that God DESTROYED the world for in Noah's day and destroyed the people from Sodom and Gomorra for in Lot's day!

Everywhere we turn we are told that there is no God, that we evolved from monkeys, that the universe was created by accident by one big bang, that there are no consequences for immorality, and that there is no heaven or hell.

It is on the TV's, on the internet, at the movies, in advertising, in the schools, in the political arena, and even in today's self proclaiming denominations.

Today, we find the majority of people in the world choosing the 'broad way' that leads to destruction, because the way to eternal life is too narrow for them. They say that you don't need to keep God's commandments. They say that we can worship God any way we like. They say that it is ok to like the things of this world. They say that we need to include people from different faiths. They say that any type of sexual conduct is ok and God accepts them as they are. They say many things that are clearly contrary to the Word of God. Why? Because they walk after the flesh rather than the Spirit.

I would like to leave you with an excerpt from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. You can almost HEAR Jesus speaking...

Matthew 7:13-23 (NASB)

¹³ "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴ For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

¹⁵ "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷ So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ So then, you will know them by their fruits.

²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. ²² Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

He is Lord!