

Protection in Identification, part 4

2 Peter 2:17-22

(preached Pine Grove 6/28/20 Sun PM)

Introduction

On March 30, 2020, Kenneth Copeland stood in the pulpit in his church just north of Dallas and said the following...

“I am standing in the office of the prophet of God and call for a supernatural heat wave to kill the coronavirus in New York City and the rest of the world where it’s needed.”

He then stared into the camera and said “(this virus) hates heat. It hates humidity. It hates water. It just dies. It gets better. The Lord also said to me that it is better if there is no wind at all. Just need heat to keep the deaths down in New York City.”

And then despite what the Lord supposedly told him, Copeland looked into the camera and said “wind, almighty strong south wind, burn this thing in the name of Jesus. Satan bow your knees, fall on your face, COVID 19..I blow the wind of God on you. You are destroyed forever and will never be back.”

Needless to say, COVID has not disappeared and we are going on month 4 of Copeland’s prophecy.

This supposed man of God who supposedly heard from God personally is now 4 months into his lie, and yet very few are calling him a false teacher.

In fact, his ministry is growing as folks stay home and watch a near daily message from him.

He still owns a fleet of Gulfstreams jets, lives in 6.3 million dollar lakeside mansion, owns 1000s of acres of land and has a net worth of 300 million dollars, making him the richest pastor in the world.

And let me remind you that he doesn't have that money unless people are giving it to him.

But this is evidence of the lack of spiritual discernment today.

People don't know a false teacher from a hole in the ground, so they send their money to men and women who say they speak for God and hear him speak to them.

However, these false teachers use that money to satisfy their own desires and lusts.

This is why a man can stand and supposedly speak for God and hear from God about Covid 19 and never have either be true, but still have people send money to him every day.

This is the level of spiritual ignorance in this country and around the world.

And though we may get upset with the false teacher, the bigger issue is with the people supporting the ministry.

Look, Kenneth Copeland may anger us and so may Joel Osteen and Benny Hinn and Creflo Dollar, but none have any influence if the money doesn't come.

However the money flows because the people sending it are ignorant at best and willfully disobedient to Scripture at worst.

You see, God has spoken clearly about men like Copeland and Hinn and women like Joyce Meyer and Paula White.

The Lord has described them perfectly in Scripture, but when Scripture is ignored, false teachers rise.

Well my hope is that none of you will ever be duped by the false teacher.

My prayer is that you will see these men and women for what they are.

And that is simply a wolf in sheep's clothing.

An unbeliever with a believer's vocabulary.

But worse yet, a soul headed for the hottest part of hell while supposedly helping others reach the sweetest parts of heaven.

And to remind you of how dangerous these false teachers are, the Lord inspired the book of Jude and the majority of the 2 Peter to address these agents of Satan.

Let me also note that John speaks of false teachers in his letters.

The same is true for Paul in his letters, and Jesus Himself spoke of the dangers of false teachers numerous times in his messages to the masses.

Listen to Matthew 7:15-23

15 "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will [k]know them by their fruits. [l]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 [m]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 [n]miracles?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’

The implication is that false prophets are not just Christian teachers who go astray.

These people are lost, despite the fact that they claim to prophesy for the Lord.

They are hell bound, despite the fact that they supposedly cast out demons.

They are demonic, despite the fact that they do miracles.

And they do not belong to Christ, despite the fact that they call him Lord.

Pine Grove, listen to me.

I do not enjoy naming false teachers, but it is a necessary exercise for a good shepherd to expose the false shepherds.

It is clearly needed today as false teachers begin to look more and more like true teachers.

And let me assure you, of the few names I mention, there are 100s of others.

In addition, there are still others waiting in the wings for these to pass on so that they can take their spot.

If you are fearful of being led astray, that is a good fear.

But alleviate that fear by growing in your knowledge of the Word of God, which helps us identify these men and women.

Now, it has been a while but we have been busy in the 2nd chapter of 2 Peter getting a detailed description of these impostors.

In fact, we have made a list of 9 traits of the false teachers, and we are going to add 2 more traits tonight in 2 Peter 2:17-22.

For a quick review, let's look at the first 9 we have covered.

We began in the first part of verse 1 of 2 Peter 2 and we noted that false teachers are often **very similar to true teachers.**

Look at verse 1..

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

And the truth to take note of is that false teachers often rise AMONG the people of God.

It is not the unbelieving atheist that poses the greatest threat to Christianity.

It is the unbelieving church member who poses the biggest threat.

So please note that false teachers often look like the church member that they are seeking to led astray.

The second trial of the false teacher is **their subtlety**.

Middle of verse 1..

False teachers ***will secretly introduce destructive heresies..***

Please note that false teachers rarely begin with a boisterous ministry.

There are secretive and subtle in their initial teaching.

They will pull you aside and gain your confidence by showing an interest in you.

But understand that these men and women are not interested in you, but in themselves.

Which is the 3rd characteristic of the false teacher..

False teachers are **self-centered**.

Note the end of verse 1..

False teachers *deny the Master who bought them*.

Peter's point is that false teachers claim that their lives belong to Christ because he supposedly purchased them in his death.

However, they deny his Lordship and authority in how they live.

Ultimately, they are their own authority because their hearts are filled with arrogance and self-centeredness.

Beware of the supposed man or woman of God who has no authority over them.

Lack of authority may be a sign that they lack respect for the authority of Christ.

However, this lack of respect for the authority of Christ will not bother their followers.

The first word of verse 2 gives us false teacher trait #4..

False teachers are successful.

Verse 2..

2 Many will follow their sensuality,

We can stop right there.

False teachers will have **many followers**.

Packed sports arenas and stadiums and television shows will be evidences of the false teacher's popularity.

Many will follow them, but I remind you that Jesus said many will follow the broad road to destruction.

That is no coincidence.

The false teacher is on the broad road and he has many walk that broad road with him.

Popularity of a ministry is not an indicator of how biblical that ministry is.

It could be big and biblical, but often times, more people equals more error.

Just simply be aware of that as you evaluate the churches and ministries of today.

A 5th trait of the false teacher is found in the rest of verse 2.

2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;

False teachers often have a large appetite for pleasure, which is what **sensual** means.

This is why the greatest false teachers of today compete to see who can own the most planes or the most cars or the biggest house.

They are pleasure seekers, and often this takes the form of sexual pleasure.

And sadly, many people are drawn to them because they have a big house, a big plane, a big car, or simply good looks.

A 6th trait of the false teacher is seen in the first half of verse 3..

False teachers are **swindlers..**

3 and in their greed they will exploit you with false words;

There is no question that false teachers have a love of money.

My granddad used to tell me..

“Follow the money and you’ll find the motivation of men.”

And though that isn’t always true, there has always been a strong link between greed and and false teachers.

Then in verses 4-10a, we get a trait of the false teacher, but it more like a warning.

False teachers will be **sentenced**.

I won’t read all those verses but Peter’s point is clear.

False teachers sit under judgment.

They may escape for a while, but they will not escape forever.

Verse 9..

9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from [b]temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,

And then the last time we were together in 2 Peter, we added two more traits to our list...

In the second half of verse 10 to the first part of verse 13, we simply said that false teachers are **stupid**.

What we mean by that is that false teachers are ignorant of truth, especially biblical truth.

So in verses 10-13, Peter speaks of how false teachers revile angelic majesties.

And that is not a reference to holy angels, but to fallen angels.

Just as I quoted Kenneth Copeland earlier, false teachers love to pronounce judgment on the devil and his demons.

The only problem with that is that according to the book of Jude, even the archangel Michael wouldn't pronounce judgment on the devil when he had the opportunity.

Instead, he left that pronouncement of judgment to the Lord.

However, despite such clear teaching in Scripture, false teachers love to revile the devil and his demons.

They love to supposedly tell them what to do.

They drive their followers in a frenzy with a supposed display of their authority over supernatural creations of God.

So be very aware of men and women who seem to enjoy directing the demonic world around.

Be very careful of those who ignore Scripture and try to exercise authority over the unseen world.

Those who are ignorant of Scripture and disobey it certainly should be trusted to it to you.

And the last trait of the false teacher we noted was found in the second half of verse 13 all the way down to verse 16..

False teachers are **sordid**.

Sordid people are those who enjoy immoral activities, and that certainly describes the false teacher.

Look at the second half of verse 13..

*They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime.
They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their
[f]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;*

False teachers are so arrogant and emboldened by their popularity that they sin in the daytime.

They even sin within the church.

And see everyone as a potential target to satisfy their lusts.

It is mistake to ignore the habits and practices and lifestyles of those who stand and teach the Word.

Show me a false teacher and I will show you someone who is sinning somewhere and often sinning in plain sight even within the church.

That leaves two more traits of the false teacher for use to look at tonight, and it is a good thing because I am about out of words that begin with “S”.

And you will probably be able to tell this as we look at trait #10.

WE will simply call this..

J. False Teachers Are Shady (17-19)

Shady is a word that can mean different things, but it is often applied to folks whose words can't be trusted.

WE often say that used car salesman are shady or contractors are shady.

And that isn't fair to either of those professions because there are honest people in the car and contracting business.

But many who claim to be preachers and teachers sadly are just as shady with their words..

Look at verses 17-19 with me..

17 These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the [g]black darkness has been reserved. 18 For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, 19 promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.

Two keys word in these 3 verses are “entice” and “promise”.

The Greek word for entice is *deleazo*, which comes from a Greek word that means to trap or bait.

False teachers lay bait in front of their audiences in the form of promises and prophecies and predictions.

And they often do it with what Peter calls arrogant words of vanity.

What does this mean?

Well, vanity simply means devoid of content.

Solomon uses the word vanity often in the book of Ecclesiastes to speak of the something that is worthless.

We would say that vanity is nothing more than hot air.

It rises and then it is gone.

Well, false teachers speak words of vanity, and what that means is this.

Their words sound spiritual.

They may even sound scholarly and biblical.

But ultimately, they are of no value.

Have you ever somebody use big words but essentially say nothing with those big words?

That is the false teacher.

Big vocabulary but small value.

You can often detect this is the prayers of false teachers.

Lot of fancy words and speech, but you have no idea what they mean and neither does the false teacher who said them.

But guess what?

Ignorance attracts ignorance.

The false teachers speak meaningless words but people are enticed by them.

They are drawn to them because the words sound spiritual and fancy.

And who is often drawn to these fancy words and speech?

Well, Peter describes them at the end of verse 18..

“those who barely escape from the ones who live in error.”

More often than not, the person on the edges of Christianity is drawn to these teachers.

This would be the person who is coming to church for help.

They aren't saved but they are open to the gospel.

Well, these are the false teacher's prey.

And they hook them and reel them in with fancy words that sound spiritual but are simply enticements used to gain a following.

Let me say this church.

Guard venerable people in the church.

They may not be believers, but they can be victims of false teachers ..

And also let me say this too..

Be aware of people who like to use a lot of fancy, spiritual sounding words.

Look, our spiritual vocabularies need to grow.

WE need to think and speak more biblically.

But if somebody can't explain a fancy sounding word they used, they probably don't need to be using it or they may be using for the wrong reasons.

So false teachers use fancy but empty words to entice others to follow them.

But false teachers also make promises they can't keep.

And their empty promises often revolve around freedom.

They will teach and offer financial freedom to their listeners.

Listen to me and the Lord will pour out riches on you.

They will teach and offer health freedom to their listeners.

Give to me and the Lord will heal you.

They will even offer spiritual freedom to their listeners.

Follow my teaching of Scripture and you can live however you want to live.

This is what draws the crowds in.

People want freedom.

They want security with their health and wealth and happiness, so they listen and give and support these false ministries.

The only issue?

These men and women offering this freedom aren't free themselves.

Some are slaves to money because they have such lavish lifestyles.

Some are victims of poor health themselves.

And all of them live in bondage to the same sin that they are supposedly offering deliverance from.

This is what creates the righteous anger toward these men.

They pray on people who are looking for real biblical answers and they rob people of their last dime with the promise of giving to get more in return.

They are multiple examples of people with no money putting donations to false ministries on credit cards with the promise that God would bless them because they gave to the false teacher.

How tragic and how sad.

But these are the empty words of false teachers.

And therefore Peter says that these men and women are like springs without water and clouds without rain.

Every seen a day in summer where we really need rain and it clouds up but not a single drop falls?

That is the ministry of a false teacher.

Looks like a real preacher and teacher, but never delivers a helpful word or keeps a made promise.

And you can hear Peter's frustration with that at the end of verse 17..

for whom the [g]black darkness has been reserved.

With that, let's look at the final trait of the false teacher in verses 20-22..

Again, my word choice doesn't capture all that is here, but let's simply call this..

K. False Teachers Are Sickening (20-22)

20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. 21 For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. 22 [h]It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A dog returns to its own vomit," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire."

I think you can see the sickening part of these verses...

Clean pigs rolling in the mud are gross, but worse is a dog eating its own vomit.

However, those pictures are what the Lord inspired Peter to record in describing the false teacher.

And why are false teachers so revolting?

Simple, they are close enough to the truth to know better, but they ignore the truth and choose the lie.

Look, if you don't come Christ to Christ, there is a literal and eternal hell to pay.

But there is an even worse judgment for those who knew the truth but rejected it.

The lake of fire is hot but there are hotter parts for false teachers.

In fact, Peter even writes that it better to never know the way of righteousness than to know it and turn away.

We may find that hard to understand but we all practice it ourselves.

For instance, you wouldn't discipline your children as hard for doing something that they didn't know was wrong.

But you would punish them more severe for knowing something is wrong and doing it anyway.

The same applies to the false teacher.

For the man or woman who sits a Bible under them as they spew their false teaching, the eternal lake of fire will be hotter and far worse for them.

Conclusion

Let me end this chapter with a couple thoughts..

#1 - There is no excuse.

It is possible for a believer to be drawn to a false teacher, but there is no excuse for staying with one for an extended period of time.

The Lord has given us detail after detail of the false teacher.

Jude describes them.

John describes them.

Peter describes them.

Jesus describes them.

It is kinda hard to miss the warnings and descriptions of false teachers even if you are just barely reading your Bible.

As I said earlier, the greater tragedy is not the false teacher but the people who ignorantly support them.

#2 - There is no danger.

I will repeat what I have said before because I want to be clear.

Stay in Scripture.

Stay in prayer.

And stay obedient to the Lord.

And you will be safe from the false teachers.

Mature and maturing believers are not going to follow the false teacher.

The Spirit and the Word that the Spirit inspired will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

#3 - There is no better place.

Get busy warning others of these false teachers.

There are people in churches in this area blindly following men and women who teach a false gospel.

This isn't a problem that you just find in California or Florida or New York.

This is a problem right here with your neighbors
and your family.

Be wise.

Be kind.

But be bold enough to take this passage of Scripture
and use it to alert others.

Do not delay those conversations.

It can be a matter of eternal life or death.

Let us pray.