

## **Protection in Identification**

2 Peter 2:1-3

(preached Pine Grove 3/15/20 Sun PM)

### **Introduction**

Take your Bible and turn to 2 Peter with me.

We begin chapter 2 tonight in our study of Peter's second letter to the church where he is attempting to equip the church to deal with false teachers.

I am going to read the first 9 verses of the chapter.

***1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.  
2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; 3 and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.  
4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;  
5 and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a [a]preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 and if He condemned***

*the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter; 7 and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men 8 (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds), 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,*

Let's pray.

In 1978, a small package exploded at Northwestern University in Evanston Illinois.

That package was the first of 16 mail packages that would explode over the next 17 years somewhere in the United States, killing 3 people and injuring many others.

That package was the creation of a man who came to be known as the Unabomber.

He was eventually caught in 1995 by James Fitzgerald, an agent of the FBI.

And how did Fitzgerald catch him?

Was it a fingerprint? DNA? A piece of clothing or material?

No, none of that.

Fitzgerald simply built a profile of the Unabomber.

You see, Fitzgerald was not a scientist.

Fitzgerald was a behaviorist, meaning he looked for clues in the Unabomber's behavior that helped him determine age and gender and culture.

And the single most important clue that Fitzgerald had was document that the Unabomber had written, which he called his manifesto.

That letter, which was sent to the New York Times, allowed Fitzgerald to narrow the search down even more until the Unabomber was arrested in 1996.

And with that arrest, criminal profiling became an important tool in the FBI's arsenal.

Over the next few weeks, Peter is going to give us a profile of the false teacher in 2 Peter 2.

He is going to take inside the mind and heart of someone who is trying to oppose the work of God in the world.

He is going to paint a picture of the people who seek to lead others with them to hell.

And one thing to note about this profile is the eternal nature of it.

Peter was inspired to write this chapter almost 2000 years ago, but guess what?

A leopard can't change his spots and neither can the false teacher.

He is the same regardless of the generation in which he born.

And the way he brings destruction is the same regardless of the century in which he lives.

So let's prepare to see the profile of the false teacher, and this is really the heart of Peter's 2nd letter to the church.

Now remember, Peter is writing this letter at the end of his life.

In fact, we learned in chapter 1 that Peter felt his death was imminent.

It is likely 65-66 AD.

Peter is likely in his late 60s himself if not in his 70s.

He has fought the good fight.

He is finishing the race well.

He has kept the faith.

And note this.

Peter is not sitting around enjoying retirement.

Jesus told Peter that he would die by crucifixion as an old man, but Peter hasn't taken a day off in his life.

He has preached, he has taught, he has evangelized.

He has led the church, planted churches, and encouraged churches.

In fact, even with his death approaching, Peter isn't on the beach or on the porch enjoying a nice cup of tea.

Peter is still on the front lines of the battle.

He hasn't softened up with age.

HE has grown more resolute and determined in his fight and service to the church.

And one thing that is definitely on his heart and mind as he nears the end of his life are men who seek to destroy the church that he loves.

So this letter becomes his last word to the church.

And it simply tells us to be aware of wolves dressed as shepherds.

Now, we are going to tackle this chapter with a simple list of the false teacher's profile that we will pull from the verses of this chapter.

Some will be similar and repetitive, but if you put this list to memory, you will be able to spot the false teacher anywhere in the world at any moment of history.

Let's begin in verse 1 with a couple traits of the false teacher..

## **I. False Teachers Are Similar (1a)**

When I say similar, I don't mean that they are similar to one another, which they are.

I mean that they are similar to true teachers and true believers.

Look at verse 1.

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

The key word there is “among.”

And though we have seen this before, this verse reminds us that false teachers often arise within Christianity.

They don't grow up atheist and arrive at church one day and say, “Ok, I don't believe in God, and now I am going to teach a Sunday School class in order to pull others to my worldview.”

Often times, false teachers grow up in the church.

They grow up among the people of God.

And even if they don't, they get into the church without much notice and fanfare.

They are often the nicest people.

They are often the kindest souls.

They have their Bibles, their smiles, their handshakes and hugs, yet all the while their intentions are evil.

And look, they have been around the people of God ever since the OT.

In fact, when Peter writes that false prophets arose among the people, he is referring to Israel in the OT.

Listen to *Jeremiah 23:30-32*.

***30 Therefore behold, I am against the prophets," declares the Lord, "who steal My words from each other. 31 Behold, I am against the prophets," declares the Lord, "who use their tongues and declare, 'The Lord declares.' 32 Behold, I am against those who have prophesied false dreams," declares the Lord, "and related them and led My people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting; yet I did not send them or command them, nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit," declares the Lord.***

The book of Ezekiel speaks of the false prophets that plagued Israel.

But that had been the case ever since Israel had bene a nation.

The book of Deuteronomy called for the death of false prophets in Israel.

And the Bible even records the deaths of Nadab and Abihu, who were two Jews that offered strange fire to the Lord and were consumed by that fire.

As long as there have been true prophets, there have been false ones who are demonically inspired to lead people away from the true God.

So Peter tells the church to expect these men.

They were in Israel and they will be in the church, and they will operate among the people of God.

You see, Satan is active outside the church.

He has created all sorts of false religions.

He is active in alls sorts of cults and satanic worship, but his greatest damage is done from within the church.

He seeks to create havoc among the people of God.

Case in point is Judas.

Judas was the worst kind of enemy because he operated right beside and among true believers.

He deceived with lies right next to the truth that Christ proclaimed.

And false teachers will do their greatest damage among the people of God.

So our profile of the false teacher begins with their similarity to the true teachers.

This leads to profile characteristic #2.

## **II. False Teachers Are Subtle (1b)**

The second part of verse 1 says that false teachers will “*secretly introduce destructive heresies,*”

The Greek word for secretly introduce literally means to bring in from beside.

In other words, the false teacher will stand beside you with his arm around you while stabbing you in the back.

His false teacher will literally come in the side door.

It usually starts with a false teacher coming alongside you and saying something like, “Hey friend, do you really believe what the Bible says here?”

And here is the deal.

It won’t be that obvious to you.

It won’t seem like anything is off base.

In fact, the false teacher will usually agree with the Bible in most places but there will be something secretive or subtle that they will introduce to others.

Listen to me.

This is what makes the false teacher so hard to deal with.

He or she speaks enough biblical truth to get a pass with most Christians.

In fact, false teachers know the Bible.

They know the verses.

They know the sayings of Jesus.

They know the Christian lingo.

But they eventually sneak in destructive heresies.

Heresies are religious lies that lead to division among the church.

Essentially, heresy is any teaching that stands contrary to what Scripture teaches.

And that is the issue.

False teachers seek to spread teaching that is contrary to the word of God.

And the end result of their teaching is destruction.

In fact, you see the word destruction 3 times in these 3 verses and it always is a reference to spiritual destruction.

False teachers are on the broad road to destruction in an eternal hell, and their goal is get you to talk along with them.

Now it needs to be said before we even get to it that false teachers will never lead true believers to destruction.

Some believers may follow a false teacher for a while.

Some believers may listen to a false teacher for a while.

But ultimately, the true believer will stay on the narrow way because nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

However, there are always unbelievers among the church as well, and many have been led astray by the destructive heresies of false teachers.

So we are to be on our guard to protect ourselves from falling for their false teaching, but more importantly to protect the unsaved from spiritual destruction.

So the false teacher is similar and subtle, but there's more.

End of verse 1..

### **III. False Teachers Are Self-Centered (1c)**

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

As I said before, false teachers appear to be friends of Christ.

They will even speak of Jesus in glowing terms.

They will talk of Jesus' cross.

They will talk of Jesus' death.

They will even talk of Jesus' atonement for their sins.

Right here, Peter tells us that false teachers will say thing like Jesus bought me.

He paid for my sins in his blood.

But also understand that while speak of Jesus dying for them, they will also deny his ownership of them.

Peter says they will deny the Master.

In other words, false teachers reject the Lordship of Christ.

They deny his authority in their life.

It is like the kid who says they love and respect and owe everything to their parents but never obey them.

How can you say you love and respect someone by disobey them?

In the same way, false teachers will say they love Jesus, but their lives will give evidence that they love themselves.

That they lie for themselves.

That they are focused on pleasing themselves.

This is why denying the Lordship of Christ is equivalent to being lost.

You cannot be saved if you cannot submit to the authority of Christ.

***Romans 10:9***

***if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;***

To be saved is to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord and Master, but the false teacher can't do that.

Now understand, the issue here is not what a person says.

It is always what a person does.

The false teacher may say that Jesus bought him with his blood, but if his life denies the Lordship of Christ, whatever he says is nothing but hot air.

False teachers often have a way with words, but when the curtain of their life is pulled back, it is clear that sin has had a way with them.

Look, there is a long line, a sad line of preachers and priests and Christians in general who had a way with words but a mess of a life.

There is along line of people who spoke sweet things about Jesus but denied his Lordship with their life of sin.

This is why we must understand that an element of truth in a teacher's words is not a guarantee that what they say is true.

False teachers say right things but their lives are full of wrong.

A man or woman who won't submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ does not belong to Jesus Christ, no matter how much truth they may speak.

And the proof of that is what Peter ends verse 1 with..

***bringing swift destruction upon themselves.***

Look, there will be plenty of people in hell who spoke truth about the Lord.

The issue is not the lips but the heart.

And a heart that is self centered and self serving and self governing is not a heart that belongs to Christ.

To know Christ in a saving way is to acknowledge that is your Savior and Master.

Anything else is just lip service, and that is certainly the case with the false teacher.

How tragic it is to know the truth but refuse to live the truth.

However, Peter is just getting warmed up profiling the false teacher.

In verse 2, we see the 4th profile trait of the false teacher.

#### **IV. False Teachers Are Successful (2a)**

Note what Peter says at the start of verse 2..

***2 Many will follow their sensuality,***

Before we define sensuality, let's note the fact that many will follow false teachers.

Joel Osteen has a church that average 52,000 people a week.

He has had 7 New York Times best sellers.

He is worth 60 million dollars.

He is called America's pastor and the world's most most known preacher.

Yet Osteen is a false teacher who has denied that Jesus is the only way to heaven on numerous occasions.

Benny Hinn speaks to 10 million people a year in his Holy Spirit Miracle Crusades.

He packs out stadiums.

He even preached to 7.3 million people in India over a 3 day period in 2008.

He has written numerous books, has a TV show, and has a net worth of 40 million dollars.

But Benny Hinn is a false teacher who has offered numerous prophecies that failed, not to mention his unbiblical views of Jesus and man.

Then there is Joyce Meyer, whose TV show appears to 600 markets around the world.

Who has written over 70 books, and preaches to audiences of well over a million each year.

Her net worth is around 10 million dollars, yet she is a false teacher who teaches that Jesus stopped being the Son of Man and actually became sin on the cross.

She also teaches that believers become little gods at salvation and cease from sin.

And these are just the tip of the iceberg in terms of popular false teachers.

Let me simply say that success is deceptive.

Just because someone has a crowd doesn't mean they know Christ.

Just because you see success doesn't mean they teach truth.

Understand that false teachers often gain a following but know that the broad road to destruction is always crowded.

Now the reason they gain a following is found in their 5th trait.

They are sensual...

## **V. False Teachers Are Sensual (2b)**

The Greek word for sensuality would include sexual immorality but it is more the idea of liberty.

False teachers push an agenda of little restraint.

They rarely speak of the need for holiness in our lives.

They prevent Gods' grace into permission to sin.

And look, that appeals to the world.

Listne to 2 Timothy 4..

***3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.***

Look, there is a whole segment of society that want to appear like they are lovers of God but desire to live like the devil.

So what they do is find supposed Christian teachers and preachers who will give them permission to live that way.

How does Osteen and Meyer end up millions of followers and millions of dollars.

Simple.

People pay to have their ear tickled, so that they can have the appearance of religion while living a lifestyle of sin.

And false teachers know this.

So they offer a subtle message of sensuality that says, God is good and forgiving, so just live like your heart desires and you will make it to heaven in the end.

What a tragedy, but what a reality.

In the end, such teaching only confuses the world and twists the truth of Scripture.

But this is the aim of the false teacher.

We need to finish at least 3 verses to me feel like a preacher.

So let's look at profile trait #6 in verse 3..

## **VI. False Teachers Are Swindlers (3)**

The motivation behind all the schemes of the false teacher is his greed.

In the end, the false teacher is a salesman who needs to turn a personal profit, so he exploits the church to do it.

Hate to pick on Judas again, but why did he cozy up to Christ and the disciples?

So that he could get rich.

And false teachers are always motivated by money.

They want to sell you something.

They want your financial support.

They have a need.

But ultimately, their greed will be their doom.

The end of verse 3 says that their destruction and judgment are coming.

God is very much aware of who these false teachers are.

HE is not asleep on the job.

He is patient not willing that any perish but all come to repentance.

But in the end, the false teacher will be judged by the same Scripture that he tries to twist..

And that judgment will be swift and sure.

Next week, we will look more at the judgment of false teachers, but let's end with a couple thoughts on these 3 verses.

## **Conclusion**

### ***#1 - Don't judge a book by its cover.***

Let me say this again for clarity.

False teachers will rarely be identified on the surface of their lives.

You must be around them and listen carefully to them to catch their subtle error.

And likely, you will have to take time to see their lives lived out in front of you to know who they truly are.

Look, spotting an atheist is easy.

Spotting a Muslim is easy.

Identifying a Mormon or a Jehovah Witness is a breeze.

The hard part is spotting the person that looks like a Christian and talks like a Christian but lives like the devil.

So be aware that you may hear truth from a false teacher before you spot the subtle lies of their teaching and lifestyles.

## ***#2 - Judge every teacher by the book.***

Once again the best defense against the false teacher is the truth of Scripture.

Just as you should know the biblical description of your salvation, you also know the biblical description of the false teacher.

And it will extend beyond 2 Peter 2 since the true teacher of God is responsible to be in line with everything from Genesis to Revelation.

Now that doesn't mean that people make mistakes and need to grow.

But it doesn't mean that it is a serious calling to be teacher in the church.

Not only will a teacher face a stricter judgment, he must walk a stricter line that follows the teaching of all of Scripture.

2 Peter is not the only place to measure the false teacher.

He should be measured by every verse of Scripture.

So arm yourself church by knowing what is in the book, so that you can judge every teacher by it.

***#3 - God will throw the book at every false teacher.***

I dont meant to be silly or trivial here because the judgment of God is no laughing matter.

But understand that God's judgment will not be withheld forever against those who twist and distort his word.

He will judge them swiftly and certainly, so find comfort in that.

And also find comfort in the fact that you are safe if He has written your name in His book.

As I said before, no true Christian will leave the narrow way for the broad road, but you certainly want to make sure that you don't take a detour along the way.

So begin to use the false teacher profile of 2 Peter to arm yourself for the false teachers that seek to lead you astray.

Let us pray.