

Alignment – Ordering Your Life With God
The Truth About False Teachers
2 Peter 2:1-3a; 13b-16

Introduction: False teachers claim to be followers of Jesus who are teaching His Gospel, when in fact, they are neither. That alone makes you wonder why we would even need to discuss false teachers. If they are not teaching his Gospel, then why worry about them? Everybody will know it, right? Wrong!

The “successful” false teachers who preyed on the first-century church are no different than the ones who have appeared throughout every generation of the Christian church. They are highly skilled communicators who make what they teach sound like it must be true, all while possessing highly attractive personalities and leadership abilities that motivate people to trust and passionately follow them. However, let me clarify that just because a person is a great communicator, has an attractional personality, and is a highly skilled leader, in no way means he is a false teacher. But, throughout the centuries of the church, successful false teachers have almost always possessed these traits, or they likely wouldn’t have been successful. The same skills that God can use to turn heads and hearts toward the truth can also be used by Satan to turn heads and hearts toward sin, and therein lies the critical distinction.

Faithful teachers of the Gospel are driven by a holy passion to persuade people to trust and follow Jesus for God’s glory and the benefit of those following Jesus. Faithful teachers of the Gospel are not trying to get people to follow them, but like Siri on the Maps App on my iPhone, she tells me how to get home and even goes with me to get there, but she isn’t home, she isn’t the point or the focus, but a shepherd to lead me to my destination. However, with false teachers, everything is the opposite, and as such, ultimately, for them, the Gospel isn’t a message to bring God’s life to people but a tool for them to satisfy their own desires for glory and pleasure. For false teachers, the Gospel isn’t the truth that aligns us with God, but rather the opportunity to align God with us and, as you will see in a second, others with them!

Therefore, as Peter nears the end of his life and calling to shepherd Christ’s flock, he clearly feels an increasing sense of urgency to equip the church for the reality of what’s coming. False teachers will come from every direction, just as Jesus promised. They will be wolves in sheep’s clothing looking to devour the body of Christ, and in fact, some were already being devoured. Therefore, it is an incredibly important and serious subject matter that Peter is addressing, and it is just as relevant today as it ever was. Some might argue that it is even more relevant given the efficiency and appeal the internet brings to communication.

In 2 Peter chapter 2, there are three clear parts to Peter’s exposition on False Teachers, but to better ensure that we understand them and apply them correctly, we will only look at one part per week. In addition, in verse three, as Peter gets into the first part of his exposition on False Teachers, he actually makes a classic preacher move and chases a really important rabbit, then later in verse 13b, he returns to the thought he put on pause halfway through verse 3. Therefore, today, we are going to look at 2:1-3a and 2:13b-16, then next

week, we will look at 2:3b-13a, and finally, on week three, we will finish chapter two in 2:17-22.

So, let's begin by reading the first part of Peter's exposition on False Teachers in chapter two of his second epistle. Then, we will drill down into it to ensure we understand and apply it correctly.

1 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. ... They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. 14 They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! 15 Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, 16 but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. (2:1-3a, 13b-16)

Proposition: 2 Peter 2:1-3 and 13b-16 teach us four truths about false teachers.

The first truth about false teachers is that ...

(1) False teachers rise up from within the church while denying the Lord of the Church. (2:1)

- A. In ancient times, if you lived in a city, you knew you needed to build a wall and put people on the wall to watch for signs on the horizon that an invading force was coming. That's the approach you would likely think Peter would have as he writes about false teachers; however, it turns out to be the exact opposite. The threat of false teachers from outside the city certainly exists, but they are much more likely to come up from within the city! Peter writes,
- B. **1 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.**
- C. First of all, notice the sentence begins with the word "But," meaning it is pivoting from the previous thought. The first chapter of 2 Peter ended with an apologetic defense of the Gospel Peter was preaching, something he first defended with his own experience that specifically included the event known as "The Transfiguration" (Matthew 17:1-13, Mark 9:2-13) and then defended with an even "more sure" apologetic that what he was preaching matched what the Old Testament prophets said the Gospel would be. Peter wrote,

- D. 19 And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, 20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:19-21)**
- E.** He now changes his use of the example of the Old Testament authors of Scripture as an apologetic defense of the Gospel he's preaching to point out the fact that not every prophet in the life of Israel was bringing forth words of God brought by the Holy Spirit; some were bringing forth words from sin and Satan! Among the Hebrew people were fellow Hebrews who served as prophets of God; that is, they declared the Words of God (prophesied) to the people. However, some Hebrew people claimed to declare the words of God when, in fact, they were not the words of God at all, and thus they are called FALSE prophets; that is, they declared words they FALSELY claimed to be from God. The Hebrew people would have been highly skeptical of any Gentile who asserted they were bringing Words from God, and therefore, they were highly unlikely to entertain the words of such a person. However, when it was somebody claiming to proclaim the Words of God who was a fellow descendent of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and who seemed fully committed to the traditions and customs of the Hebrew people, it was much easier to find themselves entertaining the things being falsely accredited to God that were in fact not! The people who rose up from within the city of the faith were the true existential threat because they could **"secretly bring in destructive heresies,"** all while passing themselves off as those walking with Christ.
- F.** The Greek word translated here as **"heresies"** comes from a word that, in its most basic form, **"signifies to take something for one's self, to choose, or to prefer."**¹ It's Biblical usage means to cling to something (a belief or an action) that is fundamentally of one's self and not of Christ.
- G.** The Greek word translated as **"destructive"** **"refers to the loss of all that makes existence worthwhile,"** in other words, these teachers of heresies teach things that directly contradict what makes Christianity itself worth believing, including the most fundamental of all the doctrines of the Gospel—the deity of Christ!
- H.** Now, some of you might be thinking, who in the world would listen to the teaching of a person claiming to be a Christian who denies the deity of Christ?

¹ Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). [*Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude*](#) (Vol. 16, pp. 281–282). Baker Book House.

- I. Rudolf Bultmann was born in 1884 and died in 1976. He is a true celebrity among liberal theologians. While claiming to be a “Christian,” he continued to teach his heretical interpretation of the Bible that argued against the miracles of Jesus and, most importantly, against the eternal existence of Christ and thus against the deity of Christ, the linchpin of the entire Christian Faith. Seminaries all over the world sold his books to their students, and many even required them to be studied, all under the cloak that he claimed to be a “Christian” author and scholar.
- J. It can be easily argued that no one in modern history has caused more people to turn away from the Gospel of Jesus Christ than Rudolf Bultmann, and the vast majority of those have likely never even heard the mention of his name! And, just as Peter articulates in verse one, there are seminaries and denominations all over the world that no longer serve any useful purpose in the cause of Christ because they have adopted Bultmann’s heresies as their own, and, as such, have joined him as those who have faith in a “christ” of their own making. They deny the Master who paid the price to free them from the curse of sin, and as a result, they exist as Christological zombies—walking dead following a false gospel. They have no worth or value in the cause of Christ, only the cause of sinful man and sinful man’s master—Satan.
- K. Despite the fact that these people arise from among us and claim to be followers of Christ with us, they are not. They are waterless springs; dogs who prove themselves as dogs by justifying their return to that which they were saved from. We will go into this more in two weeks when we look at the third part of Peter’s teaching on False teachers in 2nd Peter chapter two.
- L. But for now, you need to know that if we reject the actual Jesus of the Bible, the GodMan, as our master, then by default we are accepting Sin and Satan as our master. There are only two choices: an “a” and a “b”; there is no option “c”! As such, the second truth about false teachers should be no surprise.

The second truth about false teachers is that ...

(2) False teachers lead people to justify sexual immorality and, as such, slander Jesus! (2:2)

- A. Good News Magazine recently documented an unfortunately glaring example of this blasphemy in one of the world’s most prominent “Christian” denominations that appears to have intentionally and systematically oppressed the black vote within its denomination.

B. “Currently, Africa contains more United Methodist members than the U.S. However, on paper, African delegates account for only 34 percent of General Conference delegates, while the U.S. has 56 percent. With the

further reductions imposed by disenfranchisement, Africans will probably have only 26 percent of GC delegates.”²

- C. The article was primarily written to document the noticeable absence of Africans at the United Methodist Global Conference recently held in Charlotte, NC. Apparently, a sizable number of African delegates received the information from the denomination required to get a visa to attend the conference too late, and some never received it. Furthermore, the denomination even refused to acknowledge some alternate delegates the African conferences tried to send to vote in their place. The article noted,

D. “Disenfranchisement extended to the replacement of elected delegates by unelected ones. In at least one annual conference, two duly elected delegates who had received letters of invitation had those letters revoked without explanation.”³

- E. Why did this happen? How and why would a denomination that proclaims to be a leader of racial equality around the world do something as blatantly racist as this? Well, the United Methodist Church, which over the last few generations has massively accelerated its walk into the teachings of Bultmann, has likewise been attempting to change the official doctrines of the denomination to represent the liberal secularist views of sex and sexuality instead of the Bible’s. However, the African delegates refused to compromise the clear teachings of Jesus on the subject, and as such, the Global Conference could never officially change the church’s dogma. So, it appears that what the false teachers within the United Methodist Church did was intentionally disenfranchise a group of historically disenfranchised voters, all while claiming to be one of the world’s leaders in racial reconciliation!

- F. But, as shocking as this might be to those who cling to the Bible as the Word of God, it’s entirely predictable. 2,000 years ago, Peter wrote this,

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

- H. K.S. Wuest notes, “**the way of truth,**” “**is more accurately, “the road of the truth.” The word “way” is to be understood here as a path or road, the road down which a person travels.**”⁴

² <https://goodnewsmag.org/africans-disenfranchised-at-general-conference/>

³ <https://goodnewsmag.org/africans-disenfranchised-at-general-conference/>

⁴ Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Vol. 12, p. 48). Eerdmans.

- I. The Way, the Truth, and the Life are all the person of Jesus (John 14:6). Therefore, when we submit to a god other than Jesus (the god of our sexual desires, financial desires, desires for power, etc.) all while claiming to be following Jesus, then we publicly redefine Jesus as the sinful desires we are serving—which is by definition the most immoral thing we could ever do! We are slandering the person of Christ by identifying him with an idol.
- J. The United Methodist Church disenfranchised and oppressed the black vote so that nobody could stand in the way of permitting people to fully bow down to and submit to the god of sex while claiming to follow Jesus! They literally justified blatant racism in order to align the denomination with idolatry. However, 2,000 years ago, Peter said this was a fundamental result and even intention of false teachers!
- K. When false teachers twist the doctrines of the Bible to lessen in any way the deity of Christ, they open the door for something or somebody else to take its place, and it turns out, at the end of the day, that's one of the main reasons they do it. They lessen the deity of Christ so they can justify treating someone or something else with the submission and allegiance owed to Him. In this case, Peter says it's their sexual desires, but it's not their only sinful, idolatrous desire.

The third truth about false teachers is that ...

(3) False teachers are driven by greed. (2:3a)

- A. 3 And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. (2:3a)
- B. As you will see later, the context of their greed is undoubtedly money. However, the word for greed doesn't necessarily refer to money; instead, it can refer to power or anything else that we so long to acquire more of, that it becomes an idol in our lives. When we suffer from greed, we do so because we have left our allegiance to Christ and surrendered it to acquiring something our lives testify is more important to us than having Christ!
- C. In addition, because our god becomes whatever we are trying to acquire, the ethics of obtaining it are submitted not to Christ but to the outcome of acquiring it. That is, there is no consideration of how we acquire it, but only that we acquire it. As such, greed of any kind almost always leads to justifying exploitation.
- D. Now, in the generic general sense of the word, exploitation is not a bad thing. For instance, in business, if your competitor makes a bunch of bad decisions and has to close down, you would naturally want to exploit that opportunity and try to gain their customers before they go somewhere else. That's not a negative thing at all; that's innovative business that benefits you, your employees, and your customers who need that product or service. But what Peter is talking

about here is clearly the negative sense of the word. Peter is saying these false teachers exploit people with their teaching in order to enrich themselves. They could care less about the devastation their teaching is bringing to the lives of those who follow them, the spiritual deadness and fruitlessness they create in their disciples, because what they want is more money, power, and freedom to submit to their own desires, no matter what those desires are.

The fourth truth about false teachers is that ...

(4) They feel entitled to sin. (2:13b-16)

- A. To be entitled to something means you feel you are JUSTLY owed it even if you didn't earn it or don't deserve it. As we read Peter's description of these false teachers, it becomes very clear that they truly feel entitled to sin! Let's go through 2:13b-16 and watch how this sense of entitlement leaps off the page.
- B. "They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime."
1. K.S. Wuest noted, "These count it a pleasure to live a luxurious life in the day time, which means that they do not work for a living but live off of the money they get from those whom they lead astray into false doctrine. They live luxuriously at a time when men are supposed to be sober and at their daily occupations. See Acts 2:15 and I Thessalonians 5:7."⁵
 2. Kistemaker & Hendriksen add, "Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight." The object of this sentence is not to imply that carousing at night is acceptable. Sin is usually committed under cover of darkness (refer to John 3:19); for instance, Paul writes, "Those who get drunk, get drunk at night" (1 Thess. 5:7; also compare Rom. 12:11-13). But these people scorn all norms of behavior and carouse even during the day. Apparently the heretics have no desire to be gainfully employed, are idle during the day, and spend their time in drunken revelry (see Isa. 5:11)."⁶
 3. The point is that if you live your life this way, it's because you feel entitled to do it! These teachers thought it was their right to party all day while the people who financially supported them worked to facilitate it! It clearly demonstrates their arrogant, sinful hearts, but amazingly, the people who facilitate it think it's justified!

⁵ Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Vol. 12, pp. 55-56). Eerdmans.

⁶ Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953-2001). *Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude* (Vol. 16, p. 301). Baker Book House.

4. Peter then adds insult to their injury when he writes,

C. “They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you.”

1. They live like they are genuinely interested in your well-being and that they see themselves as one with you, but the fact of the matter is, they don't!
2. Peter says these false teachers are actually “blots,” that is, “stains” on the body of Christ. They are “blemishes,” the very thing women cover up with make-up, and that photographers and cinematographers clean up in their editing.
3. The reason is that when they spend time feasting and celebrating with the church, they are not doing it as those who want to be one with the body of Christ but rather as those who see themselves as entitled to the money of those they are dining with; they see themselves as entitled to the allegiance of those they feast with, and as such, they exploit the trust built by the social interaction of table fellowship to facilitate their deception.
4. But it's not just the money they see themselves as entitled to. Peter then adds,

D. 14 They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. (14a)

1. Again, it's helpful to note what Kistemaker and Hendriksen wrote on this, **“In the eyes of these men, a woman is not a person but a tool designed to fulfill their sexual craving.”**⁷
2. They not only feel entitled to the hard-earned money of those in the church but their spouses as well, so much so that they are constantly looking for a woman, regardless of their marital status, to fulfill their own sexual desires. These false teachers are so allegiant to their sexual desires that they have become addicts. Their eyes are “full” of adultery and “insatiable” for sinning, meaning the craving is constant because it is never satisfied. They no longer see a woman as a person to be respected and honored but rather as an opportunity for sex. They are incapable of truly loving a woman because they are only interested in being sexually pleased by a woman.
3. Peter then tosses something in the mix that we will return to in just a second. He writes,

E. They entice unsteady souls. (14b)

⁷ Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). [*Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude*](#) (Vol. 16, p. 302). Baker Book House.

1. Ironically, as they justify their sense of entitlement and look to exploit people to serve their desires, Peter tells us that they are typically successful at targeting “unsteady souls.”
2. Keep that in the back of your mind because we will return to it in just a minute. Peter then continues the description of their entitlement to sin,

F. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! (14c)

1. They have lived with and acted on this sense of entitlement for so long that Peter uses an athletic term of discipline to describe their hearts. They are literally “trained in” it! They are experts at it because they have devoted themselves to its continual practice! They have intentionally made a life of acting on their entitlement to sin and thus “practicing it” to perfect it!
2. Therefore, when Peter calls them “accursed children,” he is echoing what Paul had previously written to the church in Galatia,
3. **“I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who [practice] such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Galatians 5:21b)**
4. Finally, Peter writes,

G. 15 Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, 16 but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. (15-16)

1. There is a bit of sarcasm in bringing up Balaam because Peter gets to say that the highly intelligent and talented prophet was less obedient to the Lord than a dumb donkey! Balaam was still justifying something that even a dumb donkey knew he shouldn't do!
2. I don't have time to tell you the entire story, but you can read it for yourself in Numbers 22 through 25. The long and short of it is the King of Moab recruited the Prophet Balaam to place a curse on the people of God, a curse Balaam knew not to make and was told by God not to make. However, when he was on the way to meet with the King of Moab, God knew Balaam's heart and that Balaam had every intention of taking the King's money and pronouncing a curse on the Israelites, so God sent an Angel that stopped Balaam's donkey dead in his tracks and eventually verbally confronted Balaam for beating him to move forward.
3. However, even though Balaam refused to outright curse Israel, the Bible tells us he eventually justified telling Balak how to tempt the Israelites into

bringing a curse on themselves. Balaam told Balak to get the Moabite women to get the men of Israel to violate the Covenant God made with them by tempting them to eat meat sacrificed to idols and commit acts of sexual immorality with them to worship Baal (Revelation 2:14). It worked until Moses finally figured out what was going on and brought swift justice to the men who had betrayed God and Israel (Numbers 25).

4. The point being, like the False Teachers, Balaam knew what he was doing was wrong, but he did it anyway because of a love of money, a love that, despite receiving God's Word on so many occasions, he still felt entitled to have. If you feel entitled to something there is no regard to any ethics or even direct word from God that stands in your way of having it. You will even twist the obvious things that oppose what you feel entitled to, to justify having it! Likewise, Peter says the New Testament error of false teachers that rise up from within the church know they are twisting up the Word of God to justify their sin, but they are so entitled to sin that they don't care!

Challenge: How susceptible are you to being misled by false teachers? "They entice unsteady souls." (2 Peter 2:14b)

Three ways we end up "unsteady souls":

The first way we can end up an unsteady soul is,

- (1) If we are not anchored to the hope of Christ, we will drift away from life in Him.**

Note: 19 We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 6:19-20)

The second way we can end up an unsteady soul is,

- (2) If we are not being led by the Holy Spirit, we will follow the path of sin.**

- A. To those led by religion and its traditions, even ones labeled "Christian," Paul writes,
- B. **16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. (Galatians 5:16-17)**
- C. **23 These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. (Colossians 2:23)**

The third way we can end up an unsteady soul is if,

(3) If we are not staying properly aligned with Christ as Lord, our desires will be our god.

Note: 19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. (Philippians 3:19)