

False Teachers

2 Peter 2:1-2

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. (2 Peter 2:1-2 (ESV))

These first words here in chapter 2 follow on to the words that we have just studied at the end of chapter 1. There, God very simply, but very empathically explained to us how this precious truth of His word came into being. There He said to us through the mouth of Peter that all the words that the writers of scripture brought to them were pure and unsullied truth coming directly from the mouth of God. And there, God assured us that Peter himself had not come to them with “cleverly devised myths”, but with “eye-witness testimony” and with the “tried and proven” prophecies of scripture, words “breathed out” of the mouth of God into the minds of the prophets, who then were “led along by the Holy Spirit to say and to write down only the exact words God had given to them.

May I give us one example from the Book of Jeremiah, and there are many, many more of these examples? In Jeremiah 1, Jeremiah said,

⁹ Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. (Jeremiah 1:9 (ESV))

Can that be any more clear, God saying “behold, I have put my words in your mouth”? And God did this very same thing with all of the writers of these scriptures, “breathing” His words and His meanings into the mouths and hearts and minds of all of the writers of scripture, both of the Old and New Testaments! Yes, for our benefit and better comprehension of His words, He filtered them through the personalities of the writers, showing forth the mindsets and the thoughts of each of the writers. But make no mistake, the words themselves came out onto these pages exactly, exactly, exactly as God gave them.

And folks, I must testify to you that I personally believe this with all my heart, that God has done exactly this in these scriptures, that these words that we read in these pages truly are the very “breath of God”, pure and holy, unchangeable, inerrant and infallible, and with meanings that cannot be misunderstood by us as long as we allow the same Holy Spirit who “breathed” them to also reveal their meaning to our minds. Read about that in I Corinthians 2:10-12!

God is that thorough and that comprehensive in His giving of these truths, leaving nothing within the hands and minds of corruptible men. He breathed out these words into the minds of the writers. The writers wrote them down on these pages exactly as “God breathed” them. And now, as we read them, the Holy Spirit explains their meaning to us. Praise the Lord!

Now, with that as the backdrop, the Apostle Peter is here warning these dear saints, and consequently you and me also, that they and we must always be vigilant and aware that these truths that God intends to stay so pure and holy will be taken up by corrupt and false teachers and will be misused to lead people astray, both those people who do not know the Lord, but especially also those unwary saints who are susceptible to false teachings.

Who are these false prophets and teachers, and where do they come from? And what is their mission? In verse 2, they are described as “sensual” men. In verse 6, their sensuality is likened to that of Sodom and Gomorrah, where vile and perverted sexual sins were rampant, so much so that those sins controlled almost every person who lived in those cities. And those false teachers will also be “greedy” men who seek their own gain at the expense of ignorant people.

Some are here described as being accepted as “prophets”, men who were supposed to be “telling forth” the words of God. But they were false prophets, “pretenders”! They knew the scriptures, and they were even perhaps eloquent in them, able to use and “misuse” God’s truths in such ways that well-intending listeners would be fooled and carried along by their deceptive words and the false doctrines they would preach.

Other are here described as being “false teachers”, well- taught, well-learned in the scriptures, so much so as to be elevated to trusted positions of teaching within their congregations. Some of these “false teachers” may have even grown up among the other saints, making them to be even more accepted and trusted.

Again, how do false prophets and false teacher come into being, and what is their mission? The first part of the answer to that question is that every person is born with a sinful nature within them, one that is easily led into sinful behaviors such as these of being false prophets and false teachers. But also, the evil one, satan, is every and always at the forefront of that kind of evil. From those first moments in the Garden of Eden”, we can see his presence and his evil influence, seeking to corrupt and turn innocent hearts and souls astray and into sin. And this would be no different.

Also, you will recall that as satan tried to tempt Jesus, he used and misused the pure words of scripture. There are no greater “false prophets” than satan and his fellow demons. And their purpose is to seek to “steal, to kill and to destroy” anyone and everyone they can entice into listening to them.

Who are the ones who are most susceptible to their false prophecies and teachings? As we said when we discussed the “cleverly devised myths” in chapter 1, it is often those innocent seekers who are looking for a way for God to be more like they “want Him to be” rather than the way that He really is, as revealed in these scriptures.

You will recall that in our earlier study, we used as an example, those hopeful people, often mothers and fathers, who see their children and other loved ones who are caught up in a constant lifestyle of sin. And in their desperation to find a way for their loved ones to still be able to be saved, they look for a way to change God and to change His Holy law, rather than seeking to bring changes into the souls of their loved ones. And the most currently used “devised myth” that promises to provide that outcome is to accept the false doctrine that “God is a God of love” “only”, and that He will forfeit all the other qualities of His being, especially His holiness and His righteousness, in favor of “love” so that everyone can be saved. And consequently then, those hopeful people fall fully into that false teaching, and their children continue in their sinful lifestyles, and everyone loses, some of them for all eternity.

And unfortunately, more and more churches are daily falling victim to those same false teachings, and those churches are growing in leaps and bounds with people who will not listen to or believe anything else beyond those false teachings. And if truth be known, even you and I might wish for such false teaching to be true, especially as we watch helplessly as our own beloved children and grandchildren immerse themselves in sinful lifestyles and behaviors.

And across our nation today, as the immorality of sin-filled sexual behavior increases, both heterosexual and homosexual, so increases these false teachings. It is now rampant both inside and outside the churches.

Our scripture text again,

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. (2 Peter 2:1-2 (ESV))

Here in the context that Peter was giving to these saints, he was giving specific scripture references, so that those saints then and you and I now could personally “dig” back into the scriptures and see exactly what had taken place, here speaking about the days of Noah and of Sodom and Gomorrah and of Balaam. Why did God want that message to come forth from Peter? It is because God wanted those dear ones then, and also you and me now, to know where to go to find “real truth”. Remember that “false prophets” and “false teachers” are clever. And they are preaching and teaching words that you and I want to hear, words that meet some “need” that we have within our heart. And we really will not want to “dig into these scriptures” to “fact check” their words. As long as we will simply accept their teachings, they have us captured.

In the time that we have left, let’s look at some of the scriptures, beginning with the first of the “false teachings”, this by the “craftiest” of the “false prophets”, satan himself! Turn with me to Genesis 3 and as we study these words, we will be able to see that this very first sin was exactly the same as the sins we encounter today. We want to be able to decide for ourselves what is “right” and what is “wrong”. Because if we are able to do that, then maybe we can magically make all those things our children and our grandchildren are doing wrong be OK. Listen!

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” ² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:1-6 (ESV))

Folks, this is the way false teachers work their beguiling ways within our foolish hearts. In the beginning words of this passage, satan simply poses a question to Eve, and he words it in such a way as to provoke a response that would reveal her real understanding of what God has said, and then also to possibly reveal her attitude towards God’s words. The question from satan,

“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”
(Genesis 3:1)

Eve’s response,

² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” (Genesis 3:2-3)

First of all, it is not written here in Genesis that God spoke these words to Eve, but only to Adam, before Eve was created. Yes, God may have later repeated those words to Eve, but that is not given here. So one assumption might be is that Adam was given the leadership responsibility of passing God’s laws on to his wife and he did not do it correctly.

One part of Eve’s response that has caused me to wonder is that she appears to have added her own emphasis with the words, “neither shall you touch it”. Maybe God said that to her. Maybe Adam said that to her. But that is not given in these scriptures. Therefore, her added words may have revealed what appears to be a slight resentment. And “neither shall we touch it” implies to me that Eve might have wanted to “know good and evil” for herself and felt she was being denied that knowledge.

May I hasten to say here that this thought comes from my own head and not from these scriptures. So please take those words as only suggestions and not “inspired truth”.

But in some way, Eve’s answer quickly prompted satan to move on ahead with his temptation. And it worked, exactly as satan planned. Her response was all that satan needed in order to ply his evil craft and to tempt Eve. Folks, Eve probably did not really know what she wanted. But as we are told in James 1:14-15, sin only needs one single desire to begin within our minds, and left unattended that desire can develop into sin. And so it did!

Notice here also, that the rejection of God and the following of wrong paths is often a family affair. Once one family member falls prey to false teachers, other family members, in this case, Adam, often follow suit.

And notice also that it was satan’s plan all along to get Adam and Eve to deny God as their God and their “choice maker”, and to elevate themselves into that sovereign position of being “like God”. And that is also the context of the warning being given here in our scripture passage today. Listen!

¹ . . . there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them. (2 Peter 2:1 (ESV))

Did you note the clever exchange of words that took place between satan and Eve? Please understand that false teachers are often so much more clever than you and me.

Through the power of satan, they become experts at it. And sadly for them, most of them do not even realize that they are false teachers being misused by satan. They are simply a Sunday School teacher, or preacher, or college professor, or bible study leader with their own opinions about right and wrong. And they are often telling us what we want to hear already, again, a way perhaps that our children can be saved without their having to change their ways.

Folks, you and I must always be careful and on the alert. We must study and know these biblical truths, “exactly” as they are given. It is only then that we will be able to know when we are being led astray by a false teacher.

I must close for today, but the Lord willing, we will pick back up here next week. Listen as we close . . .

¹ . . . 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. ²And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. (2 Peter 2:1-2 (ESV))