

## EXPOSITION OF II PETER

### Message #7

### II Peter 2:1-3

One reason for the rise in medical costs is medical malpractice lawsuits. Premiums are rising because people are suing. I have always appreciated my doctors. I have always thought my doctors were calling it straight for me and doing their best to help me get better. I have no gripes. What they have prescribed for me has worked. I don't owe them a lawsuit; I owe them my thanks.

What amazes me is that some of the same people who sue a medical doctor because they think he has done something wrong to them physically, will gladly give their money to and support a religious teacher who is falsely leading them astray eternally. There is a spiritual malpractice that is taking place every week in that people are going to churches and are not being taught truth. But frankly, it is the false teachers who need to be put out of business. This is where eternal malpractice is taking place.

We are living in a world of deadly and damning religion which leads people away from the Word of God and will lead them right into hell. Heading up this departure from the Word of God are fraudulent religious leaders who do not know Jesus Christ or the truth of God's Word. They have no morals or scruples. They are not serious about really studying God's Word and they are driven by at least six evil motivations, each of which begins with a letter "L":

- 1) False religious leaders are characterized by laziness. Studying God's Word and feeding a flock God's truth week after week is hard work and many religious leaders are too lazy to do it and they don't do it.
- 2) False religious leaders are characterized by lusts. Many of these religious frauds are caught up in some lustful addiction. Behind the scenes of their religious appearance is a filthy, lustful lifestyle. They parade themselves as being "men of the cloth," but they are really dirty, depraved men of the closet.
- 3) False religious leaders are characterized by lording. Many of these religious frauds love the power and love to lord their power over people. They are egomaniacs who crave power.
- 4) False religious leaders are characterized by limelight. Many of these religious frauds love the limelight of standing up before people so they can seem important. Their goal is not to communicate God's Word; it is to be up in front so others can look at them.
- 5) False religious leaders are characterized by their longing. They are not content with what God has given them; they long for more and more and they want bigger and better.
- 6) False religious leaders are characterized by their looting. They are greedy and they will do whatever it takes to get more and more.

All around you and I can see religious leaders who truly fit this description. But this is not new to what we see; Peter saw it back in the first century when he wrote II Peter. There were false teachers in O.T. times, there were false teachers in N.T. times, and there are false teachers in our time.

What Peter writes here is as relevant to us as the day he wrote it:

**BELIEVERS WHO DESIRE TO HAVE AN ABUNDANT ENTRANCE INTO HEAVEN NEED TO STAY FOCUSED ON THE WORD OF GOD AND APOSTOLIC INSTRUCTION AND NEVER SUPPORT OR FOLLOW FALSE TEACHERS.**

Notice how **verse 1** begins. “But” (δε) is sharp contrast to the true men of God teaching the inspired Word of God. There are a group of religious frauds that God’s people need to avoid. As we grammatically analyze the first three verses, there are five false teaching realities that Peter reveals:

**FALSE TEACHING REALITY #1** – False teachers shall arise among God’s people. **2:1a**

I get the biggest kick out of all of these religious leaders who falsely predict the day Christ will return or the day they think the world will end. The day comes and goes and they are proved to be a bunch of liars. Anyone who surfaces today and says he is a prophet is a liar.

Now there is no question that when Peter writes this verse, he seems to understand that the day of the prophet is gone. Peter is writing this final letter around A.D. 66, and as near as we may determine, the revelatory gifts were pretty much gone by A.D. 60. The gift of prophecy was gone; so what Peter is saying here is, just as there was at one time a bunch of false prophets, so now in the Church Age there will arise a bunch of false teachers. **Our big concern is not false prophets, it is false teachers.**

I want us to notice carefully that Peter uses a “future tense” verb, “there will be false teachers.” Peter knows that the last days of the Church will feature a big rise in religious leaders and teachers who do not know the truth and do not teach the truth (i.e. II Peter 3:3).

I find it interesting that verbs “arose” and “will be” are middle voice verbs. **What this means is that the false prophets and the false teachers end up in religious leadership in and of themselves. They are not in ministry because God called them into the ministry; they are in ministry because they called themselves into the ministry.**

They go after God’s people. The preposition “among” (εν) means these false or pseudo religious leaders try to locate themselves within God’s people. They go to work on trying to infiltrate the real people of God in order to pull them into their false doctrine and lifestyle.

John Calvin said we need to know that “the Church shall never be free from this intestine evil.” This is why it is so critical that we carefully study the Scriptures and doctrines of the faith, because this will enable us to spot these false teachers and stay stable in our faith.

I am totally convinced that most people in ministry have called themselves into it. I am also convinced that most people in ministry do not really care if you carefully understand God’s Word ever.

**FALSE TEACHING REALITY #2** – False teachers shall teach destructive heresy. **2:1b**

Now there are two ways a false teacher can corrupt people: 1) By his corrupt doctrine; 2) By his corrupt behavior. The emphasis here in this verse is on his doctrine. **A false teacher does not teach true doctrine; he teaches “destructive heresy.”**

Now the Greek word used translated “secretly introduce” is one that means to smuggle in something in a non-open way or secret way. This word was used for spies who would slip in secretly (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 344). These religious frauds slip in and start smuggling in their heresies. They are not out in the open about it. They do not hand out full expositions of Biblical texts. As Peter Davids said they sneak in their “foreign teaching” (*II Peter*, p. 219).

The word “heresy” (αἵρεσις) is a Greek word that refers to having and teaching an opinion that is not true to God’s Word in order to capture people (*Ibid.*, p. 13). Heretics are a group of people who form some sect or party based upon their false principles and opinions. The Apostle Peter is clear to point out that their false teaching is “destructive” (απωλεία), which means it will lead people to eternal hell (*Ibid.*, pp. 56-57).

The specific kind of false heresy they begin to introduce has to do with tampering with the salvation work of Jesus Christ. It is interesting that Jude said in the very same context as Peter they “deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jude 4). These false religious teachers deny the Person and work of Jesus Christ. They deny the need for the reliance upon the pure grace of God and the need for the redemptive work of the Lord in purchasing them from sin. They promote a works system of doctrine that can lead people to swift destruction. They promote a licentious libertine philosophy that says God loves us all just the way we are.

Contextually they also deny the need for developing a godly life after salvation. As we shall see, they promote a lustful and licentious existence. One writer said these false teachers suggest “if it feels good do it.” The heresies that they introduce have a very subversive effect in that they can lead people into the way of damnation.

Think about it; most churches today that promote the acceptability of the vilest kinds of sins such as homosexuality and women ministers do so because they are in a church that at one time was supported by people who loved the Lord and the Scriptures. Someone slipped into it and started attacking truth and twisting truth. Someone slipped into the midst and started propagating destructive heresy and it ended up destroying the church.

When Mr. Miles was in Grand Rapids, he saw a church go from being very fundamental to becoming one of the most liberal churches in the country by way of two ministers. The good solid man left and others crept in and destroyed the church with vain philosophies and deranged doctrines.

Now we see from this verse that the text says that Christ died to purchase even “them” from their sins. The death of Jesus Christ was sufficient to satisfy all the demands of God to even save false teachers from their sins. The problem is false teachers will not turn to Jesus Christ and the Word.

**FALSE TEACHING REALITY #3** – False teachers will influence many people. **2:2a**

False religious teachers are popular with the masses of people. Do not be deceived; these false teachers will influence large numbers of people. Many as opposed to few will follow their doctrine and lifestyle. It amazes me how these phonies are able to fleece people and get their money. They don't just do this to a handful; they influence many.

If you don't believe this point, all you have to do is look at the mega structures and elaborate buildings of the headquarters of false religion. Take a drive through Salt Lake City and see the massive Mormon Temple that sits in the heart of the city. Look at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and see the demonic Dome of the Rock Muslim shrine. Drive down into New York City and take a look at a Jehovah's Witness headquarters worth millions. Go to Tennessee and see the beautiful campus of the Seventh-Day Adventist cult that mingles law into grace. Don't kid yourself; false teachers influence millions of people and take from them millions of dollars.

I just read a fascinating article entitled "The Crystal Cathedral Megachurch Goes Bankrupt". The Crystal Cathedral was the first real megachurch started by Robert Schuller. It has had a financial meltdown and due to reckless spending is 43 million dollars in debt. Robert Schuller was the man who started preaching an heretical "self-esteem" gospel. He said "to be born again means that we must be changed from a negative to a positive self-image - from inferiority to self-esteem, from fear to love." He then told people that God wanted them to prosper materially and of course part of the process was to give him their money. He promised prosperity, wealth, and positive happiness, and thousands of people were influenced by his false message. Now he is claiming that the bad economy is the reason for the people's trouble and his trouble. One logical question to ask here is since thousands of people gave him their money, why aren't they prospering and why isn't he prospering? The answer is, his message is false and so is he. He has influenced millions of people with his heresy. This is exactly what Peter predicted.

Notice the text says "many will follow their sensuality." This Greek word (ασελγαις) refers to a lifestyle that promotes sexual licentiousness and debauchery. False teachers have "scandalous conduct." False teachers are morally corrupt. They do not have the power of the Holy Spirit dominating their lives; they are dominated by immoral, godless things.

**FALSE TEACHING REALITY #4** – False teachers will blaspheme the way of truth. **2:2b**

The word "blaspheme" (βλασφημεω) is one that means to speak lightly, impiously, profanely of the truth of God (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 82). These guys are not interested in God's truth or God's doctrine. In fact they will say things that are not even true, that are slanderous.

These false teachers do not only blaspheme in their lifestyle, they blaspheme the truth of God. What this means is that these teachers will oppose careful understanding of God's Word and God's doctrines. They invent their clever myths and stories that lead people away from the truth. They are deceitful liars.

## **FALSE TEACHING REALITY #5 – False teachers will exploit God’s people. 2:3**

These false teachers exploit God’s people by false words. It is interesting that the adjective “false” (πλαστοις) which sits before the noun “words” is the word from which we get our English word plastic. The word actually refers to words that are fabricated, formed, and molded (*Ibid.*, p. 363). These are men who will mold themselves to conform to a group of people in order to get their money.

What these false teachers do is they form together or mold together fabricated religious plastic words that will appeal to a group of people in order to exploit God’s people. That word “exploit” (εμπορευομαι) is one that means they want to make a gain from you. In other words, their business is to invent false things to get your money (*Ibid.*, p. 149).

As we said, Peter keeps stressing the need in this Epistle to “grow in knowledge” of God’s Word because this is the great protection against these plastic preachers. The inspired Scriptures enable us to see through their lies. God’s people need to check every religious teacher and ask “is he carefully teaching us the Word of God?” J. Vernon McGee used to say, “One of the marks of a false teacher is that he is a promoter. He is not interested in giving you the Word of God; he is not attempting to help you. He is attempting to get something from you, to make merchandise of you” (*II Peter*, Vol. 5, p. 733).

Now Peter says to God’s people, I want you to know that God will track these false ministers down and He will take care of them. Carefully notice that three times in three verses Peter says these apostate religious leaders will burn in hell. They will face “swift destruction” (**verse 1**), they will face “judgment” (**verse 3**), and “destruction” (**verse 3**).

As Peter was nearing his own death, he was confident that he was going to be with the Lord, but he was also confident that false teachers would burn in hell.

It is serious business to be a religious leader. Every religious leader had better be pointing people to Jesus Christ and to the pure ways of the Word of God, because there are serious eternal judgmental consequences for those who don’t.

### **PARTING THOUGHTS:**

- 1) Only faith in Jesus Christ will save you from your sins.
- 2) God expects you to be on the lookout for religious teachers who are not really feeding you God’s Word.
- 3) The more you grow in knowledge of God’s Word, the more equipped you are to spot what is truth and what is false.