



False Teachers

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. Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; 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. (2Peter 2:1-3)

True knowledge of spiritual things comes from God. In our text, Peter says: “*there will also be false teachers among you.*” This seems strange language to the majority of people, as the majority think that all religious differences are just a matter of opinion. No one should be called a false teacher at all. Peter says such will be, and that they will be effective in their teaching. Furthermore, they are dangerous. If they are that dangerous and that successful, thinking people ought to want to learn as much as possible about the words from God (2Peter 3:1-2).

How can one tell whether or not a teacher is a false teacher? Be aware of the fact that you cannot tell a false teacher by the identifying marks which are so commonly used. One cannot tell a false teacher from a true one by his pious attitude or his pleasing looks (Matthew 7:15). One cannot tell a false teacher from a true one by his ability to draw the crowds with persuasive and pleasing arguments (Acts 20:28-30; Colossians 2:4; Acts 8:10). One cannot tell whether a teacher is a false teacher by his claims (Acts 8:9). One cannot tell whether a teacher is a false teacher by his success (Acts 8:11). One cannot tell whether or not a teacher is a false teacher by his flattering words (Romans 16:18). These are the things which most people use to decide whether one is true or false. While these things may very well be the marks of a false teacher, not every one of them will fall into these categories.

You can tell a false teacher by how he handles the scriptures. If he distorts them, he is false (2Peter 3:16; Galatians 1:7). One can tell that a teacher is a false teacher if he teaches part of the truth and implies that is sufficient (Revelation 22:19). One can further tell that a teacher is a false teacher if he adds anything to the Bible (Revelation 22:18). Martin Luther’s treatment of Romans 3:28 in adding “alone” illustrates this. You can tell a teacher is a false teacher if he preaches something which is not taught in the Bible (1Peter 4:11; 1Corinthians 4:6; 2John 9). Especially prevalent are those false teachers who teach opinions that an audience wants to hear, even though foreign to Scripture (2Timothy 4:3).

The false teacher is dangerous. This is true even though he may please the crowds, may be pious, may have good words and fair speeches, and may enjoy great success. The false teacher is dangerous because he deceives men (Matthew 24:4,11). The false teacher is dangerous because he leads men astray (Matthew 15:14). The false teacher is dangerous because he turns men from the truth, the right way (2Peter 2:2; Titus 1:14). The false teacher is dangerous because he makes Christians to be worse than they were to begin with (2Peter 2:20-22).

The false teacher has nothing to offer of value. He brings destruction. He makes merchandise of people. He brings a reward, but it is the reward of unrighteousness. The false teacher stains and blemishes (**2Peter 2:13**). The false teacher brings promises but does not deliver (**2Peter 2:17**).

What does God think of the false teacher? This is illustrated by Peter. God would not tolerate the angels which sinned (**2Peter 2:4**). God would not tolerate the old world (**2Peter 3:5**). God would not tolerate Sodom and Gomorrah (**2Peter 2:7**). Peter tells us, in view of this, that God especially will not tolerate false teachers (**2Peter 2:10-11**).

What causes men and women to be false teachers? Sometimes this is caused by ignorance. They simply do not know any better (**Acts 18:24-26**). Sometimes this is caused by blind allegiance to tradition (**Matthew 15:3-9**). Sometimes this is caused by the selfishness of the teacher (**2Peter 2:2-3**). Sometimes this is caused by self-will (**2Peter 2:10**). Sometimes this is caused by a desire to be popular (**Galatians 6:12-13**).

What should be the Christian's attitude toward the false teacher? Every teacher is to be tried (**1John 4:1**). If the teacher is found to be in error, teach him if you can (**Acts 18:24-26**). If he is not teachable, he must be withstood (**Titus 1:9-14**). The false teacher must be rejected (**2John 9-11**). Don't do anything to aid him in his false teaching.

It takes the truth to make us free from sin (**John 8:32**). There is no place for the false teacher and his message. He will put us in bondage and keep us there if we follow him.