

## False Teachers?

*“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you... And many will follow their destructive ways...They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you... they speak great swelling words of emptiness...”* (2 Peter 2:1-2, 13 &18 excerpts)

Based upon popular trends, political correctness, and the work of some of the nation’s most popular pastors and leaders; one would think there must be an absence of the above mentioned false teachers Peter said would be in the Church today. Every day we hear about getting along with those of opposing faiths. For many this is motivated by desire for political gain, peace, or what I call pseudo love.

In fact, those who identify a false gospel or false teacher are considered divisive and judgmental. Some are told that their work will bring harm to the body of Christ - both locally and abroad. Those sounding an alarm are seen as arrogant and are rejected as being negative. It is clear that this trend to embrace the “politically correct” methodology of the day has and will have a serious effect on the Church.

This “state of the Church” forces me to ask a few simple questions. If Peter said there would be false teachers in the Church, pray tell, where are they today? Who can identify them and warn the others? Why would the word of God tell us false teachers would be present in the Church if we are not called to - much less allowed to - identify them? Why would we need to warn the Church of this anyway? I believe it is time we address these critical questions.

**If Peter said there would be false teachers in the Church, pray tell, where are they today?**

There *are* false teachers in the church today. Paul the Apostle said, *“Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”* (Acts 20:30) His concern about this was not just that this would occur but that the Church would tolerate it. *“For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!”* (2 Corinthians 11:4) The very thing Paul feared has come to pass. Not only do we tolerate *it*, but we ostracize those who won’t. Do we think we are better off than Paul in our so-called unifying toleration? Are we more mature than Jude because we won’t rebuke false teachers and identify false teaching? Are we really called to leave the evils of error alone and allow the Church to be polluted by the lies? I think not.

Some say, “But there are good men and women out there who intend to do good who are being called to task over their teaching.” Well said, however, even Peter himself was called out by Paul when he was in error. *“Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I*

*withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed... when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel...*" (Galatians 2:11–14) Paul's work was not to bring condemnation upon Peter but rather to correct the error of the message he communicated. Paul saw the need to keep the message of the Gospel pure so the recipients of the message would know the truth – the truth that makes men free!

## **If there are false teachers in the Church who should identify them and warn the others?**

In the early Church, we see that it was the elders of the Church who were responsible to give correction and instruction through the word of God. Today we are fortunate to have the Scriptures and to understand the message and meaning of the letters written. We know that, *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."* (2 Timothy 3:16–17)

The elders of the church today are the ones who should provide reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness that men and women of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Every epistle in the New Testament was written to correct error in the Church. Did Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jude, forget that correcting others who were in error was a failure to love the false teachers? Did they feel it was none of their business to bring correction to the false teaching? Do we consider them divisive for confronting error and holding fast to the truth? No! They boldly addressed the error and even at times, named the offenders. Paul told Titus (an elder) the standards by which other elders should be appointed. He said, *"For a bishop must...[hold] fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not... One of them, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.' This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth... and [are] disqualified for every good work."* (Titus 1:7–16 excerpt)

It is the elders in the local church, the local community, and throughout the world who are called to the task of identifying error. However, it is mainly those in the pulpits and publishing houses of our nation's churches who are promoting the error. Most of the best-selling Christian books of our day are loaded with bad doctrine. Any who dare challenge the "popular authors of the day" set themselves up as a target to be accused of disunity and are thus scorned!

## **Why would the word of God tell us false teachers would be present in the Church if we are not called to - much less allowed to - identify them?**

The answer is simple; we *are* called to identify them. Jude wrote, “...*contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*” (Jude 3) Paul told the Romans, “*Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.*” (Romans 16:17) Please note that it was those “*who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.*” However, the ones we avoid today are the very ones who are calling out those who are spreading error.

## **Why would we need to warn the Church about false teachers and false teaching anyway?**

First, every God-called pastor is told, “*take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*” (Acts 20:28) Peter said, “*Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers...*” (1 Peter 5:2a) With the calling of God comes gifting and passion. One of the gifts given every Godly pastor is love for the Church. If we truly love people, we don't want them in error. And why? Error causes harm, and “*love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*” (Romans 13:10)

Secondly, it has been my experience that those who have embraced a false teaching in one form or another have a lack of peace or outright fear in their relationship with God. For example, if a believer is taught that they are sick because they have a lack of faith, they begin to doubt their relationship with God, God's love for them, or strive to work up faith insomuch as to get the "healing" they desire from the Lord. This kind of error can be devastating and painful to a believer. In this case, the onus is on us to teach the true principles of the Bible concerning health and divine healing, teach trust in the Sovereign God, and rest in His divine decision concerning when and where He desires to heal.

The above illustration is only one of many. Some of the false teachings of the day are outright heresy and must be identified. Were it not for those who contended for the faith in days past, where would we be today? In my opinion, we ought to be thanking God for those who have gone ahead of us, and for some who have given their very lives in defense of the truth.

### **The way of peace.**

So, as Peter declared, “*There were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you...*” (2 Peter 2:1-2) And as Paul said, “*Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly...*” (1 Thessalonians 5:14a) We must

by all means "... contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3) However, we must always remember that as servants to the Lord, and to the Body of Christ we are called to, "comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all." (1 Thessalonians 5:14b) And remember, "...a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth." (2 Timothy 2:24-25)

"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted." (Galatians 6:1)

Blessings upon you all,  
Pastor Paul