

False Teachers Described, Part 1

II Peter 2:10-12

In II Peter chapter 2 we have been studying false teachers. In verses 1-3 we are warned that there will be false teachers. They are briefly described and the judgment of God is pronounced upon them.

In verses 4-9 we are given several examples of God's judgment. These examples assure us that God is a faithful Judge. Truth will prevail, and false teachers cannot escape the judgment of God.

Starting now in verse 10 and going through the end of the chapter false teachers are further described and shown to be the worthy recipients of the special judgment God has reserved for them.

We are going to carefully look through these first three verses and see what is revealed here about false teachers. As we study these verses, we should keep three things in mind. First, the false teachers described in this passage are a real threat. This isn't a warning given to us in vain. God didn't inspire Peter to cry, "Wolf!" for no reason. False teachers are just as numerous and just as dangerous today, as they have ever been.

Second, these verses teach us about false teachers, so that we might be prepared to confront, resist, and triumph over them. It does us no good to gain

enough discernment from the Bible to recognize false teachers, if we never resist them and their false teachings.

Finally, as we study these verses about false teachers we should carefully examine ourselves. Are any of the sinful actions or attitudes described in these verses found in you? If so, they must be rooted out. If the Holy Spirit convicts you of any of these sins it must be dealt with, or you open yourself up to the same judgment as these false teachers.

From this passage God wants to warn us about false teachers and prepare us to confront this danger.

I. False teachers walk “after the flesh.” (v. 10)

Verse 10 begins, “But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness.” To walk after the flesh is to be led, not by a sound mind, but by the natural desires of the human body. There is nothing admirable about pursuing the lusts of the flesh, no matter what sort of pleasing language you couch that sentiment in. This is a philosophy that is very popular in the world, and is all-too-often found within the walls of church buildings.

“Follow your heart.”

“Do what feels right.”

“God wants you to do what makes you happy.”

These are all expressions of the same basic idea: “Walk after the flesh.”

In contrast, the Christian is called to a life of holiness. I Peter 1:15 says, “But as he [Jesus] which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.” We are to submit in reverential obedience to the revelation God has given. We are to elevate God’s revelation above what we feel, above the lusts of our flesh.

To do so requires a sound mind. Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 1:7, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” That word which is translated “sound mind” carries the idea of a disciplined mind, of self-control. Our lives are not to be subject to every fleeting lust of the flesh, but we are to be grounded, settled, and disciplined in following the revelation God has given to us. False teachers walk after the flesh, while true believers walk after the Spirit (Romans 8:1).

False teachers walk after the flesh in the “lust of uncleanness.” This word translated as “uncleanness,” is only used this one time in the Bible. It is a very interesting word. The root word means “moral defilement” and is fair common in the New Testament. But the word, as it is constructed in this verse, doesn’t refer to moral defilement, but rather the act of defiling. The process of making something unclean.¹

¹ *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*

False teachers lust after uncleanness. They desire to bring about this process of moral defilement. They are not satisfied with their own sin, but they seek to draw others into their moral corruption as well.

Sin loves company. This passage should serve as a warning for us. Beware that you are not tempted and drawn into sin by those who are involved in sin and who lust after uncleanness.

This can happen through people we consider to be our friends, the people we associate with. We need to carefully consider how the people around us influence us. Do they help us grow closer to God or move away from Him?

This can happen through the media we consume: Movies, TV Shows, Music, Books, Social Media, and on and on we could go. We cannot deny that the media we consume affects the way we think and draws us one way or the other. We must be careful with the media we consume.

This can even happen in the church. The church is a body where we should be safe from this sort of corrupting influence, but the whole point of this passage is a warning that there are false teachers among the people of God. We must be on guard.

Beware also that you don't give place to sin in your own life and become this corrupting influence yourself.

False teachers walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness. Verse 10 goes on to say that false teachers despise government.

II. False teachers “despise government.” (v. 10)

The word that is translated here as “government” has the idea of lordship. False teachers resist God-ordained authority. This could be the authority structure God has ordained in the family. There are many, many false teachers who speak against the clear biblical teaching that the husband is the God-ordained head of the house. Whether he is good or bad. Whether he is gifted as a leader or not. Whether he wants this position of authority or would rather someone else take that spot. None of that matters. God has given him that position of authority. God will hold the man accountable for what he has done in that position. Woe unto those who would despise this authority God has ordained.

False teachers attack the authority parents have over their children. Again, this is a God-ordained position of authority. God gave the children to the parents. God will hold parents accountable for how they exercised this authority. Beware of anyone who teaches against the clear Biblical instruction on parental authority.

False teachers may attack the God-ordained authority of the government. To be clear, there are times when it is right and necessary for Christians to disobey the government when the government gives commands are contrary to the clear commands of God. But as we saw when we studied I Peter 2, the default position

of the Christian should be submission to God-ordained authority. Even civil authority. Even civil authority that we don't like.

I Peter 2:13-17 says, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king."

If you ever question whether or not it is God who gives authority to those who rule over men, I would encourage you to read the first 6 chapters of the book of Daniel. Over and over and over again in those chapters it is made clear that the Sovereign God gives authority to the rulers of men to accomplish His perfect will. Here is just one example taken from Daniel 4:25, "The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."

We are not to look to the government for salvation, either temporal or eternal. Nor are we to look upon the government as an enemy. God has ordained this authority. We are under this authority. Woe unto those who rebel against the authority God has ordained.

This is not a simple issue. For a long time it hasn't been a major issue, especially for us in America. But we live in a time where it is becoming more and

more complex. We must be careful that we handle it biblically and avoid false teaching.

False teachers attack the authority structure in the church. God has ordained the church. God has given the church a leadership structure. If you are a part of a local church body, you are under the spiritual authority of that church. Woe unto those who teach against the God-ordained authority structure in the church.

Ultimately, false teachers attack the authority, the Lordship, of Jesus Christ. This is the foundational error of false teachers. All other rebellion against God-ordained authority flows out of a refusal to submit to Jesus Christ as God. This echoes what is written in verse 1 of this chapter: false teachers deny “the Lord that bought them.”

John Gill commented on this verse: “They will not have [Christ] to reign over them, and therefore reject his laws, and submit not to his ordinances . . . denying his omniscience and his providence, giving out that he neither sees, observes, and takes notice of what is done in the world; nor does he himself do either good or evil, or concern himself about what is done by men.”

Never underestimate the importance of a Biblical understanding of work, ministry, and authority of Jesus Christ. If you are wrong about Christology, the doctrine of Christ. If you deny His authority. If you deny his Lordship. You have set yourself on a wrong trajectory, and you have aligned yourself, not with the Bible, not with God, but with false teachers.

False teachers despise government. Continuing on in verse 10 we are told that false teachers are presumptuous and self-willed.

III. False teachers are “presumptuous” and “self-willed.” (v. 10)

“Presumptuous” is another unique word. This is the only time it is used in the New Testament. It communicates that someone is “shameless and irreverent.”²

To be “self-willed” is to be self-pleasing, dominated by self-interest. The only other time this word is used in the Bible is in Titus 1:7a, “For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled.” It is the opposite to the Greek word that means “patient” or “gentle.” It is used to describe someone who so greatly overvalues any determination he has arrived at that he will not be removed from it.³

This description of false teachers brings to mind Proverbs 29:1, “He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” This attitude can creep up on any of us. We must be careful to guard our hearts from this sort of blind arrogance and pride. We can become so convinced that we are right, that we adopt the same attitudes found in false teachers.

² *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*

³ “ , 342

There is truth. Truth can be known. Truth has been revealed to us. We have the written Word of God. We have the Holy Spirit, living within us to teach and to guide.

In this church and in other churches throughout history we have tried to express the truth we know systematically in carefully worded doctrinal statements. Doctrinal statements are good. I think they are very important and helpful. I have been very blessed and encouraged by our on-going study through *The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*.

But we cannot guard ourselves against false teaching by adopting the same attitudes that are found in false teachers. An attitude of self-will cannot be blessed by God, even if it claims an otherwise excellent doctrinal position. I Peter 5:5b says, “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”

If we adopt the attitude of blind arrogance and pride that is found in false teachers, we are opening ourselves up to all the same errors. It doesn't matter how wonderful and thorough a doctrinal statement is; pride, arrogance, presumption, and self-will will corrupt it every single time.

As Christians we are called to have an attitude of humility. We are to humbly submit to the authority of the Word of God. There may be times when we must be bold in proclaiming the truth and resisting false teaching. But we must never take up the presumptuous and selfwilled attitude that is found in false teachers.

False teachers are presumptuous and self-willed. The end of verse 10 down through verse 12 tells us that false teachers are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

IV. False teachers are not afraid to “speak evil of dignities.” (v. 10-13a)

False teachers are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. This word that is translated as “afraid” is a very strong word. It means to tremble with fear. It is used only three other times in the Bible, and every time it is used to describe the fear experienced by men and women when confronted with the deity of Jesus Christ. One example of this is when Saul was struck down by God on the road to Damascus. He trembled in fear before Jesus Christ, his Lord.

It is good and appropriate for us to have a reverential fear of God-ordained authority. We should be afraid to speak evil of dignities. We should be terrified. This sort of reverence doesn't exist in false teachers. They mistake pride for courage and ignorance for deep knowledge and thus are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

This word, “dignities,” is a general term that can refer to anyone, whether angel or man, who has been given authority by God.⁴ It relates to what we saw earlier in this verse, that false teachers “despise government.” They despise

⁴ *Believer's Bible Commentary*, p. 2997.

authority. Whether that authority is in the spiritual realm, in the family, in society, in the church, or even the Lordship of Jesus Christ Himself.

Verse 11 goes on to show that the audacity of false teachers is unparalleled in the angelic realm. It's an interesting comparison, but let's consider what is taught here. Angels are greater in power and might. The angels in service to God are vastly superior to us by every natural or moral measure. Angels are superior to us in strength. Angels are superior to us in understanding. Angels are superior to us in natural holiness. We are by nature sinful. The angels who did not join Satan in his rebellion still have the holiness with which they were created.

Verse 11 goes on and says angels bring not "railing accusation against them before the Lord." Who is this verse referring to? Who do the angels refrain from bringing railing accusation against? This could be a reference to other angels under their authority. This could be a reference to the fallen angels. This could be a reference to civil authority figures or false teachers or just sinful mankind in general.

The point here is that angels don't bring railing accusation of others before God. The word translated here as "railing" is the word we get "blasphemy" from in English. Angels don't pass blasphemous judgment upon others.

On one hand this seems obvious. Angels are without sin. Of course angels do not bring blasphemous accusations of others before God.

But consider this in light of what was said earlier in this verse. Angels are superior to us in power and might. They certainly seem like they have a position where it would be appropriate for them to rail on inferior beings who sin against God. But they don't.

Why?

The angels understand their position. The angels know that it is not their place to pass judgment on others. Judgment belongs to God and God alone. Can angels bring the sin of lesser creatures before God? I believe they can. But even the most exalted of the angels would never be so proud or arrogant as to assume the role of God and pass judgment upon even the most vile of sinners.

This isn't conjecture. The Bible doesn't tell us a lot about angels, but it does make this very clear. Consider Jude verse 9: "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." The archangel Michael, one of the most exalted angelic beings, would not bring a railing accusation against Satan himself, but deferred Satan's judgment to God. This is incredible revelation: the mighty and powerful angels who stand before the throne of God do not presume upon judgment, but show tremendous moderation and restraint and leave judgment where it belongs: in the hands of God.

This is set in contrast to false teachers who "speak evil of dignities." False teachers have no restraint. False teachers plunge forward, blasting dignities, with

no understanding of their own pathetic nature and their position before God. They are fearless, not out of courage, but out of profound ignorance.

The attitude of the angels is an example for all of us. This is how we are to respond to sin. Not with railing accusation, but with deference to the judgment of God. Matthew Henry's Commentary says, "Let us, who pray that God's *will may be done on earth as it is in heaven*, imitate the angels in this particular; if we complain of wicked men, let it be to God, and that not with rage and reviling, but with compassion and composedness of mind, that may evidence that we belong to him who is meek and merciful."

This comparison continues on in verse 12: "But these, [speaking again of false teachers] as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed." Again, angels are greater in power and might, but false teachers are natural brute beasts. Brute beasts are not rational creatures, they driven by their instincts.

So false teachers are irrational. They follow the lusts of the flesh. Whatever is pleasing and agreeable to the flesh they accept as approved and esteemed. They do not avail themselves of their God-given ability to reason. Like wild animals, they are fit for destruction. A destruction that they bring upon themselves. They do not live for their created purpose: To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

False teachers are profoundly ignorant. Verse 12 goes on to say that they "speak evil of the things that they understand not." We have already seen that false teachers are presumptuous and self-willed, arrogant and irrational. Combine this

with ignorance, and you have a recipe for disaster. This applies to every possible avenue of application as we consider that false teachers “speak evil of dignities.”

First consider the ignorance of false teachers as related to angels. False teachers are ignorant of the nature, office, and dignity of the angels. This has led to major heretical teaching throughout church history. Some false teachers ascribe far too much to the angels. Some have gone so far as to attribute the creation of the world to angels. Many have called for the worship of angels, as if they were somehow divine and worthy of worship. Others have done a disservice to the angelic realm by making little of the power of angels and demons and ignoring the spiritual nature of the conflict we are engaged in as Christians.

Next, consider the ignorance of false teachers as related to the family. False teachers are ignorant of the importance of the family structure God has established. This leads to an abundance of false teaching about what is and what is not permissible in the family. Our culture is suffering from the breakdown of the family unit: fatherless homes, no clear authority structure, children that want to act like adults and adults that want to act like children. And tragically, you are just as likely to find this disfunction within the walls of church buildings as you are out there, in the world. False teachers have infiltrated the church, and with their profound ignorance they have brought terrible destruction.

Next, consider the ignorance of false teachers as related to civil authority. False teachers do not understand the nature and purpose of civil government. And

before you have any mean-spirited thoughts consider that this is true on both sides of the political spectrum here in America. There is a lot of Biblical ignorance and false teaching among people who call themselves Christians on both the left and the right. False teachers will speak evil of governmental authority, when instead they ought to: pray, be thankful for them, and live peaceable and quiet lives under them.

This isn't always popular. This isn't always easy. But this is God's instruction to us from the Bible: Pray for them, be thankful for them, and as much as is possible live peaceable and quiet lives under them.

What about the ignorance of false teachers as related to the authority of the church? The ignorance of false teachers has deeply corrupted people's understand about what the church really is and why the authority structure within the church is important. False teachers will deny the usefulness of preaching for the conversion of sinners and edification of the saints. False teachers will make worship about us and how we feel, instead about God and what He wants from us. False teachers deny the importance of the assembly of the saints. If you were not concerned about false teaching on church before 2020, as we look back over this year we can certainly see how deep and pervasive the corruption has been.

Finally, and truly at the foundation of their error: consider the ignorance of false teachers as related to the authority of the Scriptures. False teachers do not understand or care about the authority of Scripture. False teachers do not truly

know and understand the Bible, but manipulate it and twist it, not realizing that they twist it to their own destruction. Carnal men do not understand spiritual things and therefore blaspheme, revile, and reproach these same spiritual things they claim to cherish and teach.

Verse 12 ends by saying that false teachers “shall utterly perish in their own corruption.” As the hammer that pounds on the anvil doesn’t harm the anvil, but gradually destroys itself; so false teachers pound away to their own destruction. They are servants to the corruption of the flesh. They don’t just love sin, they love the process of defilement. They lust after uncleanness.

The destruction that they bring will ultimately end in their own destruction. False teachers have set themselves upon this course. They will meet their inglorious end, just like the brute beasts that they have made themselves like by rejecting the revelation of God. As false teachers “speak evil of dignities,” they hasten their own destruction.

Spiritual life begins with the gospel. Every human is dead in sin. We are under the judgment of God. There are no good works we can do to save ourselves. We have sinned against the Holy, Creator God and the penalty for sin is eternal death.

But God, who is rich in mercy and love (Ephesians 2:4), has made a way to forgive us of our sins. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to be born as a man.

Jesus came and He did what you and I can't do. He lived a perfect and holy life that was pleasing to God. And then He willingly went to the cross and died there. He laid down His life for the sins of His people.

The gospel teaches that there is nothing good in us that we can offer to God, but there is good in Jesus Christ. And the righteousness of Jesus Christ is given to all those who put their faith in Him. Repent of your sins, call upon the name of Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. By the grace of God, this is the beginning of spiritual life.

But this is not the end of spiritual life. Once you are in Christ, there are still battles to fight. Christians are engaged in spiritual warfare. There are many enemies that we must guard against and be prepared to resist. Among those enemies are false teachers. We cannot afford to neglect what the Bible teaches on this subject.

We have been warned.

The Word of God gives us the resources we need to resist false teachers.

We must heed the word of God, lest we fall to this enemy of our faith.