

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The Conduct of False Teachers 2 Peter 2:1-3

If you turn with me to **2 Peter 2:1-3** we will be looking at this together. I will be reading from the New American Standard Bible and you can follow along in yours. **"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. (2) And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; (3) 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."**

So, as we look at the topic of false teachers and how they conduct themselves, I am reminded of a time recently that I was on an airplane and I happened to be sitting next to a fellow from the Netherlands. I'm always interested in people from other countries and learning about their country, so I asked him questions and I discovered some things about the Netherlands that he was concerned about and the country was concerned about. And that is immigration.

There are many people moving to Europe from other parts such as the Middle East, particularly, and certain Muslim Nations, so much so that some people now project that they will be the majority religion and people group in Europe within a few decades. Partially it's because of the population birthrate. The Dutch are not populating themselves very quickly. In fact, they as a people group are on the path towards dying out. They are not even replenishing themselves to keep themselves stable. I don't know what part abortion has to play in this, I suspect it is a substantial part, but the country is so concerned about this phenomenon that some people are leaving the country because it is not the Netherlands they used to know.

Others have made policy in the country to offset this immigration. Now in the Netherlands, if you are from certain countries that have moved there, the country will pay you to leave. They will pay your airfare, they will ship your belongings for you, and they will even, in the current conversion rate, pay you about three thousand dollars per person to leave. Trying to restore their culture, Rotterdam, the second largest city in the nation is now 50% Muslim.

Now, I don't think that any one group of people has any right to any plot of land in Europe. This is just kind of how it goes, but others think they deserve to be there and are working to keep it that way. It reminds me of this passage here. If you reflect back in the years, many, many years ago, when the prophet Mohammad came about and he started the false religion of Islam, they, a few years later within a century of his death, took up arms and attacked. They attacked North Africa, they overtook Spain and they were on the verge of conquering France when they were finally defeated.

What's happened today is rather than attacking from the outside, Muslims have just moved there and are now going to overwhelm Europe from the inside. Whether that is good or bad is for someone else to discuss, but I think it is parallel to what happens with false prophets and false teachers. **"But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you."**

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Remember they arose among the people they came up from within, not from an attack from the outside. I don't think as we try to defend the church that we are so needing to be concerned about people who are attacking door to door or apart from us, but really the biggest challenge is people that are among us and particularly in Christianity in the United States where some have been readily accepted to dwell among us as false teachers.

How do you know if someone is a false teacher or a false prophet? First, let's give you some information what the Scripture teaches about false prophets. How do we know if you are a false prophet? There's a test. One test is do you teach according to God's Word? **Isaiah 8:19-20** says this, **"And when they say to you, 'Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter,' should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? (20) To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn."**

One test is are they speaking according to the Word of God. This is why there is such a contrast between the end of chapter one and the beginning of chapter two. The end of chapter one speaks of the sure prophetic word that it is not given by acts of human will, the interpretations of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. In contrast to God speaking, there are other people who are proclaiming to speak from God but they are not. They are false prophets, false teachers. We must teach in accordance with God's Word.

Another one, if you recall the Sermon on the Mount in **Matthew 7:15-20**, Jesus said this about false prophets. **"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. (16) You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? (17) Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. (18) A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. (19) Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (20) So then, you will know them by their fruits."** If they are not living righteously, that is a test to know if they are false prophets.

Here is what **Deuteronomy** says about false prophets. **Deuteronomy 18:20**, **"But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die."** So, we can know people are false prophets by their false prophecies and if you notice they don't get a lot of chances, do they? They only get one chance and the penalty in the nation of Israel, according to the law, was to be put to death. So, it gives you an idea that this is a big deal, isn't it?

Now in the church age we don't go around putting people who are false teachers to death. That's not our instruction. But we should take it just as seriously. Here's another one. Do they have miraculous signs of confirmation? **Hebrews 2:3-4** speaks of those who are sent by God for the church and it says this, **"How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, (4) God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will."**

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These miraculous events were undeniable, and in that they confirm that God was indeed speaking His revelation through His people. The alleged miraculous events that people are proclaiming today pale in comparison. **2 Corinthians 12:12** references the same thing.

And here is the last test that I think may be the easiest to apply. Are they 2,000 years old? If they are not 2,000 years old I basically write them off as being a true prophet of God and the reason is because the Scripture indicates that teachers have replaced the prophets. In fact, **2 Peter 2:1** shows us that false teachers have replaced false prophets. False prophets had arose among the people, that's Israel, as that word is used, just as also there will be false teachers among you. Now we have the challenge of false teachers and it is a challenge.

Now there are many passages that give evidence that the prophets came for a time. In fact, you see this in the Old Testament. There were times in the nation of Israel where there were prophets, and there were times where prophecies ebbed and there wasn't. And there were others that came on the nation as prophets and then it ebbed. In fact, from **Malachi** to **Matthew** there are no prophets in that 400-year gap. So, it's no surprise to us to have another gap in a period of time during the church age where the prophecy of God has been given to us and incorporated for us in the Old and New Testament and we now have it complete.

Other references that give evidence of this is **Ephesians 2:20** the church has been founded on the prophets and apostles. The church has been founded. The apostles have passed and the prophets have passed and the church founding is complete and now the church is being build upon that foundation. **Jude 3** speaks of the encouragement to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered for all. That phrase once delivered for all shows us that the faith, the content of the faith, that we believe in has been solidified and completed.

Revelation 22:18, the last chapter in the Bible, one of the last verses in the Bible says this, "**I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book.**" It's a big deal to add to what God says. **1 Corinthians 13:8-13** also shows this but that is a little more technical so I'm not going to spend time to go into that passage today.

If we look at history, that's also confirmed to us. The early church saw prophets and apostles founding it and then shortly after the next century there were people that proclaimed to be prophets and the church saw them for what they were, false prophets and denounced them and separated from false prophets. And ever since then, until this recent time, the church was not looking for prophets not receiving prophets and a very few smattering of people who came in history who proclaimed to be prophets were so delusional that no one took them seriously. They did not have any footing in the church.

Now in recent times it seems like the church has been much more open to this, unfortunately, and we have suffered accordingly. Some people say they are prophets. They don't mean prophets in the sense of the New Testament and Old Testament of proclaiming a revelation of God. They just might reference that as being someone who speaks the Scripture boldly. I just think they are using the wrong word. That's teaching.

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But there are others who claim to be prophets and claim they are speaking prophecies of God. I think they are not. So, if you want a litmus test, are they 2,000 years old? That's mine.

False prophets were bringing swift destruction upon themselves and so with false teachers. They were also bringing destructive heresies to the people. And how they brought distraction to the people is through secrecy. False teachers will arise among us and will secretly introduce destructive heresies. This word "secrecy" is used for smuggling. False teachers don't come about by a label that says I'm a false teacher. They don't let you know. They do it secretly, they infiltrate. That's why Jesus said in **Matthew 7:15**, "**Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.**" These people are seductive and they are coming. You notice it's not whether they come, it's they will come. So, we should be prepared and we should know what God says in order that we may not be led astray. I hope it's not happening shortly and I hope that we can withstand and Valley Bible Church in 100 years from now will be able to be as protected against false teachers, but I don't know.

I do know one thing; they're coming. They are coming secretly and they are coming with solicitation of their ideas, their philosophy, trying to infiltrate and change the thinking of God's people to follow them. They are not passive they are active and they are busy in the church of America. And their motive essentially is self-will. The word "heresies," which means "separate" "faction," is rooted in a word that means self-will. Someone who is self-willed, selfish, divides the church and divides the church based on false teaching. And that's their manner, their doctrine. They teach falsely. And we will look at the doctrine in a minute. It says here, "**even denying the Master who bought them.**" This is what they deny. Their doctrine denies the person of Christ. They deny the Master who bought them, Master or Lord.

Now certainly, if someone comes here and says I'm denying Jesus Christ, are we going to say maybe you are a fine teacher? I don't think so. I think we are rather protected against that and **1 John 4** says that if someone denies Jesus coming in the flesh, he is a false prophet, false teacher. But it's more challenging than that really. Let me show you the passage right after the warning about false prophets coming upon us as ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing. **Matthew 7:21-23**, "**Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. (22) Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' (23) And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'**"

There are people that actually will say Jesus is the Lord, Jesus is the Messiah, but they are not coming from God. So, just because someone gives lip service, it is not enough to have confidence that they are truly believers or that they are not trying to lead people astray. It's not so much what they say, it's what they do, "**depart from me you who practice lawlessness.**" They deny the person of Christ, the Master who bought them, the Lord. They may call Him Lord, but in essence they have denied His Lordship, His rule over their lives. People that deny the Lordship of Christ are corrupting the church. They also deny the work of Christ. **Galatians 1:8**, even if an angel from heaven comes and proclaims a different gospel, that's anathema and we should deny that.

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People that say the message of God is to just make people happier, healthier, enjoy life more, reform from certain bad habits. All of this stuff truly, though passively perhaps, denies the true work of Christ, the gospel of bringing redemption for the sins of mankind. The reason Jesus came was not just to give some nice teaching that will help us, but to redeem us from sin. And if sin isn't important, then the message of salvation isn't important; but sin is a very important subject and Jesus came to die for the sake of the sin of man so that we can have forgiveness. If we are not proclaiming this, Jesus said this in **Matthew 12:30. "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters."** If you are not actively furthering the work of God you are scattering. He who is not with Jesus is against Him. We cannot deny the person or the work of Christ.

Now I will grant you that everyone in some fashion teaches something that is not true. That doesn't make them a false teacher. It's kind of this way. Are you a big T or a big F? If you are a big F that means you have not actively with your teaching promoted the Lordship of Christ, His rule, that He has called us to deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow. If you are a big T you have not proclaimed the message of the gospel of salvation from sin in the death of Jesus Christ for the sins of mankind. That's the distinction. Now hopefully true teachers will not have a lot of f's among the big T's. We don't want to teach things that are wrong. But those are little f's not the big F.

There's another part of this I wanted to give some attention to and this is in **verse 1 of 2 Peter 2** about limited atonement. **"Even denying the master who bought them."** Note here it's the master who bought them. The Master, Jesus Christ, has redeemed or bought even the false teachers. This verse then teaches unlimited atonement. Obviously not every one is going to heaven. The Scripture teaches that some people, including the false teachers, are destined for destruction. But even those people the master Himself bought.

This is called unlimited atonement. In other words, Jesus died for the sins of mankind, all mankind, everyone. Here are some verses that support that: **1 John 2:2, 1 Timothy 2:6, Hebrews 2:9.** Those passages along with this passage show us that Jesus died for the sins of all. It's then the responsibility of those whom He has bought to receive Him and if they are going to reject Him, which they willing do, the false teachers, it is their destruction they are bringing upon themselves.

This verse then teaches unlimited atonement as opposed to limited atonement. Limited atonement is a theology that teaches Jesus only died for those who are elect or the saved. He effectually only died for those but His blood, His death, covered the sins potentially of all mankind. That's a theological point in the midst of this. Those of you who are not into theological points can rejoin us at this point. The false teachers are bringing swift destruction among themselves. The swift destruction is sudden.

It doesn't mean it's happening in a quick time frame. It means that when it's happening, it's happening swiftly and suddenly. They are going along teaching and at one point the Lord will bring judgment, and when He does it will happen suddenly. We can take heart that this situation that presently exists, where false teachers have taken root in the church in America and people have given them a hearing, will not last forever and the destruction is coming suddenly and they are bringing it upon themselves.

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This destruction is self-induced. They are making the willful choice to teach as they are and the Lord will repay accordingly.

The next thing that will evidence false teaching is their disciple making. They are creating followers. Notice that **verse 2** says many will follow their sensuality. They are popular and they gain a following. Do you ever sometimes wonder why false teachers are so popular? I think it is essentially because they are telling people what people want to hear, and if you tell people what they want to hear, people might like that and you can become very popular. It is tempting for even true Christians who are trying to teach God's Word to fall into this trying to be popular.

I'm not making any statement about whether this person is a true teacher or a false teacher, only that he says some things I don't believe. I was watching the Larry King show recently. I don't watch the Larry King show very often but when he has a religious person on it sometimes draws my attention, and he had a fellow named Joel Osteen who is the pastor of the largest church in America. They had a conversation and if you have watched enough of these conversations that Larry King has had with religious figures he kind of likes a certain line of questioning and he engages in it here. He asks what if you are Jewish or Muslim and you don't accept Christ at all? Joel Osteen says you know I'm very careful about saying who would or wouldn't go to heaven. I don't know. Larry King asks if you believe you have to believe in Christ then they are wrong aren't they? Osteen says well I don't know if I believe they are wrong. I believe here is what the Bible teaches and that from the Christian faith this is what I believe, but I think that only God will judge a person's heart. I spent a lot of time in India with my father. I don't know all about their religion but I know they love God, and I don't know. I've seen their sincerity, so I don't know. I know for me, and what the Bible teaches. I want to have a relationship with Jesus.

Now fortunately this church that he pastors has enough biblically aware people in it that this created quite an uproar in his church, and so he was then moved to apologize for his comments here. Now I want to give people a break and I don't know what I would say on the Larry King show but I do know that there's a temptation in the Christian movement of trying to gain more and more people in their churches. And there is a great temptation to tell people, including Larry King, what they want to hear, and we have to guard against that because in that we may deny the Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came to die for the sins of man and that is the message that can not be shied away from. We cannot judge the success of a ministry by its popularity. I don't know how many people will follow false teachers but it doesn't matter. It doesn't make their teaching correct just because they are extremely popular. They are popular, but they are also perverted, and many will follow their sensuality.

Luke 6:40 says a pupil will not be greater than his teacher but when he is fully trained he will be like his teacher and we can judge the failure of a ministry by its people. What are the followers like? Are the followers self-willed? Are the followers living for themselves? Are the followers looking to just tell people what they want to hear? Or are they looking to tell people what the Scriptures teach us. If we just tell people what they want to hear, they will never be instructed by what God says, because what God says is not exactly what people want to hear. As the Proverb puts it, there is a way that seems right to a man but its way ends in death. Also in **verse 2** we see their disrepute. Because of them the way of the truth will be maligned. People that are teaching wrongly and living badly are bringing disrepute upon the Lord and this is a significant thing.

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Romans 2:24 says the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. God's reputation is effected by people that connect themselves with Him. Those who identify themselves with the Lord Jesus Christ are responsible for how the world speaks of God because of their lives. God takes this so seriously that in **Ezekiel 36** He said this. This is a very pivotal passage. It shows the new covenant in **Ezekiel 36** that God will bring forgiveness to man, give us a new heart but before He teaches about that in **Ezekiel 36:22-23**, the Lord says this about why He is bringing salvation to mankind. **"Therefore, say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God, 'It is not for your sake, O house of Israel that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,' declares the Lord God, 'when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.'"** People who connect themselves to Jesus Christ have a responsibility to live well and to not defile the name of the Lord among the world and there are verses that teach that.

Then there are their desires. **2 Peter 2:3**, **"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."** They have a desire and that's to exploit people. Now the word "exploit" simply means carry out business. Now how people are conducting business in the church could be exploited and here is how it becomes exploitation. It becomes exploitation when it uses misrepresentation, when they exploit with false words. When people look to get people into church without truly representing Jesus for who He really is, the Lord Jesus Christ who came to die for their sins, if it's come join us, have a happy life, feel better about yourself, this kind of becomes a bait and switch. We get them in for one thing, but really Jesus is teaching something far more than that.

Our ministry cannot be manipulative, it can't be about greed and desiring to build up our selves or our church or our pockets. It has to be about God and His grace for the lives of mankind, not service for our selves but service of others. Their end is this, damnation. Their judgment is from long ago, not idle and their destruction is not asleep. The destruction is coming. It is planned and it is promised. It will happen. God planned it from long ago and He will come and fix it and we can count on that. **Ezekiel 13:3** says this about the false prophets. **"Thus says the Lord God, 'Woe to the foolish prophets who are following their own spirit and have seen nothing.'** And likewise whoa to the teachers who are not representing God's Word but representing their own ideas. Their destruction is coming. False teaching is a big deal.

Let's close in a word of prayer. Lord Jesus, we thank You for giving us Your revelation to mankind and we pray, Lord, that You would be helping us to appreciate that revelation more clearly and more firmly so that we can be protected both individually and as a church against those who want to secretly introduce destructive heresies. We ask for Your grace to accomplish this. In Jesus' name, Amen.