

2 Peter Part 4 – Study Notes

Introduction

In 2 Peter chapter 2 Peter bluntly described false teachers who lack authentic faith. They are con people who teach counterfeit truth. They appear to be real but are deceitful. They claim to offer hope and answers but in reality only bring despair. They may use the same words and jargon as Christian believers but they have different meanings. They are themselves enslaved by this deception and seek to deceive others.

In the last chapter Peter warned believers to **beware! Be ready!** He wrote this letter to remind believers of the sound teaching they had had and to strengthen them in the Biblical beliefs they had been taught. In this chapter he exposed those whose teaching have deviated from biblical truths and practices.

2 Peter 2:1-3 *but there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them - bringing swift destruction on themselves.* ² *Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.* ³ *In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.*

The Apostle Paul referred the first ever con artist in 2 Corinthians 11:3 *But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.* Paul identified Satan as the deceiver and then Satan's disciples who are also con artists. 2 Corinthians 11:13-14 *For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ.* ¹⁴ *And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.* Satan deceives others, disguising himself as good, and recruits others in his deception. False teachers can often appear to be doctrinally sound but they deviously twist the truth. Peter warned believers not to be taken in by them.

In the previous chapter Peter had already reminded us that the Word of God is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

It is infallible and inerrant because the Holy Spirit supervised the writing of it through Godly men as they *were carried along by the Holy Spirit.* But there were false prophets who had lived among the godly prophets who offered an alternative message offering cheap imitations of the truth. We too must expect false prophets in our day. Just as God sent true prophets with his Word so Satan will send false prophets with alternative teaching.

Peter showed four characteristics of false teachers: they deceitfully present heresy (2:1a); they openly deny the truth (2:1b); they unashamedly model sensuality (2:2); they selfishly represent greed (2:3).

Firstly they will secretly introduce destructive heresies. Heresy comes from the Greek word *haireisis* which means making a choice. NT writers use the word heresy to refer to the incorrect choices people make outside the boundaries of apostolic teaching. Peter was the first to use the term false Christian teaching. These heretics offer alternatives to the truth. They reject aspects of the truth that seem difficult to accept and offer something more appealing as a choice. Warren Wiersbe said: *the false teachers use our vocabulary but they do not use our dictionary.*

False teachers may use the same words but have a different meaning to the biblical meanings. They use scripture but only in the same way as great poetry that is inspired. God is seen as a higher power because of need to see beyond our self. Jesus is seen a great moral teacher. False teachers redefine terms as they encourage us to question our doctrines. They openly deny and reject the biblical truths. They intentionally set themselves up as true prophets, scripture and the church. They teach the Bible is full of contradictions and errors, there is no eternal, triune God in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit; they deny that Jesus is both fully God and fully man; they reject the virgin birth, Jesus' sinless life, his substitutionary death, his miraculous bodily resurrection and his literal future return, salvation by grace through faith, the eternal life of believers and condemnation of unbelievers.

False teachers have heard the salvation that only comes through Jesus and have rejected it, replacing it with their own message. Peter said that they will face destruction. Judgement will come for them when they don't expect it. **Further study: Matthew 7:13; Philippians 1:28; Hebrews 10:29.**

The inspired Word of God says that Christ's substitutionary death is sufficient to pay for everyone's sin, 1 John 2:1-2 *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father-Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* ² *He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

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But only those who believe in Him receive the benefit of salvation, John 3:16-18 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* ¹⁷ *For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.* ¹⁸ *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

These false teachers have never really been saved. As John said in 1 John 2:19 *they went out from us, but they were not of us.*

2 Peter 2:2 *Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute* False teachers unashamedly model blatant immorality. They go past the stage of concealing their sin and being ashamed of it. In order to live like this freely they redefine the standard of righteousness. Doctrines that say **do what you want** are much more appealing than biblical teaching that says **thou shalt not**. Living under grace to them is redefined as the freedom to do what they want, with whom they want, where they want; living with no restraints. Some times these false teachers claim to be Christians and in doing so they bring reproach to the Name of Jesus. Their deviant behaviour gets associated with Christianity.

2 Peter 2:3 *In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.* The word *exploit* means to traffic or to trade. Most false teachers are motivated by greed for money. They falsely teach people for money. **False** comes from the Greek word *plastos*, where we get our word **plastic**. They replaced the truth with cheap imitations.

Alarm bells should ring when we hear an overwhelming emphasis on money. If we hear that we should sow a financial seed into our ministry and we will get back x (where x=7,8,9,10) fold back from God.

True teachers will teach the whole counsel of God, even the uncomfortable and unpopular things, as well as being good stewards of our finances.

Peter ended these three verses with a reminder of the fate of false teachers. Judgement is coming for them. It may appear that they are getting away with it. It may seem that God is asleep but in his perfect time judgement will come. Christian believers are to be watchful for such false teachers today.

Historical Heresies

Jesus and the apostles predicted the coming of false prophets who would try to deceive Christians.

Simon the Samaritan. Acts 8:9-24 mentions this man having a false faith. History tells us that Simon lived in the time of Claudius Caesar, the emperor preceding Nero. Simon claimed that he was the great god who came down from heaven and his prostitute, Helena, was his first creation. Peter was aware of Simon's false teachings.

Gnostics. This sect began at the end of the first century by followers of Simon the Magician. They taught that Jesus was one of many spirit beings that came from the unknown God to bring salvation by special knowledge, **gnosis**, to the spiritually elite, through enlightenment. They wrote their own Scripture to replace Holy Scripture, or reinterpreted scripture to suit their teaching.