

Title: Terrorists in the Church: Description, Danger & Doom of False Teachers (Part3)

Passage: 2 Peter 2:2-3

Theme: The deadly danger of false teachers in the church

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{{Read Passage}}

Good 2b back in 2 Pet & I'm anx. to move forw in this chapt.

As we've noted, this ent. chapt. is devoted to a singu issue: false teaching. We live in a time when being "particular" isn't very popular. There's much confus. about truth & woe be t/man who would pretend to have it.

I have to confess: I feel for those o/s of t/CH who are bombarded w/so many conflicting messages as to what is really and finally true when it comes to Xnty.

Walk in t/shoes of a skeptic for a moment . . . What do you think, as a skeptic, when you think of Xnty? W/i t/parameters of today's Amer. culture?

Your mind might be drawn to high liturgy, such as that found in RCism or E.O. In that sense, being a "Xn" is about being "religious" – perhaps even mystical.

You might think of hard-core fundamentalists who always seem angry & are oh so ready to condemn others to hell.

Your mind may also be drawn to the many scandals within Xendom. Sex scandals that continue to rock t/RCC as well as those assoc. w/mega CH Pentecostal ministries.

Then we can throw in t/various cults out there, some of which are very well known. Their adherents go door to door and ride bicycles as they testify to their own truth claims.

You can imagine how t/avg. person out there feels. It seems like everyone has an angle, everyone says that they have t/truth.

Since you don't have a theological/historical framework by which you can filter through it all, you are likely to adopt an apathetic attitude.

It's not just t/skeptic.

There are those who are religious who have a very post-modern attitude about truth. Post-modernism has taught us to deal in generalities, not specifics.

Even our religious culture screams tolerance.

Who are you to say that my own private worship of God is wrong?

Who are you to say that I'm not right with God

– even worse - that I'm going to hell!?

I feel that pinch when I try to reach out to my RC relatives.

They're not judging me; they don't have any doubts that I'm a Xn serving JC on my way to heaven. They don't even think I'll have to go to purgatory!

That I would be so intolerant to deny them what they believe to be true of me!

Even professed Evangelicals are wimpy when it comes to truth.

We get asked about hell in a public forum & we squirm & try to explain it away. As if t/truth was supposed to be redefined by us.

Listen, we defend truth; we don't redefine it.

So we come to this chapter mindful of t/fact that it is as relevant as it ever was, and is as unpopular – even w/i t/CH as it ever was.

2 Thess. 2:10 equates salvation with t/love of t/truth. Do you love truth?

There is a caveat here. I've known doctrinaire believers who claimed to love truth & yet exuded so little love for X or other believers.

Almost as if a love for truth becomes an end unto itself.

I understand that temptation. I fear I have been that way at times t/o my Xn life. It's easy to be all about doctrine while demonstrating so little devotion. To get your theological stinger out of joint whenever anything is said or sung that might raise a theological eyebrow.

I'm all for loving t/truth when t/foundation for that love is a passionate devotion for Christ. Love for God will fuel our love for God's truth & will at t/same time strip away t/pride that is in our hearts that motivates us to defend our little turf of theological pavement.

As we move thru this passage I pray you will keep all of this in mind.

I. The Commencement of False Teachers (1-3)

II. The Condemnation of False Teachers (4-10a)

III. The Character of False Teachers (10b-22).

I. The Commencement of False Teachers (1-3)

7 sub-points under this major heading.

When it comes to false teachers in t/CH we need to be ==>

Aware / Alert / Separate / Patient / Diligent / Grieved / Discerning.

When we left off last time we noted in verse 1 that we must ==>

A. Be Aware: False teachers in the church parallel the false prophets of Israel (1a)

From t/perspective of Peter's 1st c. audience (and ours) false teachers, those who pervert t/voice of God, are nothing new.

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as also there will be false teachers among you

1. You can't miss t/flow of Peter's thought from chapter 1 here

Peter is arguing against those who had a low view of OT prophesy; denied apostolic authority; and rejected t/idea of a future judgement. They were greedy // sensual // gave license to sin.

May have been an early form of Gnosticism.

Many of t/ECFs ID'd them as The Nicolaitans of Rev. 2.

Nicolaitans are considered a sub-set of early Gnosticism.

We don't know for sure that's who they were. But there are striking similarities. We do know that they were apostates. BTIM - they came from w/i t/CH, they had once ID'ed w/true Xns, and had even "known the way of righteousness" as Peter says in v. 21.

Just as false prophets arose from w/i Israel; these false teachers arose from w/i t/CH. (cf. Acts 20:30).

Be Aware

B. Be Alert: False teachers in the church operate covertly (1b)

Note that they ==>

. . . secretly introduce destructive heresies . . .

1. Verb παρεισάγω = to bring in secretly (only here in NT)

It's to bring something in that doesn't belong there.

A related word is used in Gal. 2:4 where Paul speaks of ==>

. . . . false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty . . . in order to bring us into bondage.

The parallel passage in Jude's epistle ==> **For certain persons have crept in unnoticed . . .** (v. 4)

2. That's why we said that false teachers fall into 2 basic categories:

Those who are within t/CH and those who are outside of it.

FT o/s of t/CH are represented by various other religions; might be New-Agers; Muslims; Hindus; Buddhists; Spiritualists; even those in Pseudo-Xn cults.

They're dangerous in their own right, but they are easy to ID.

What's more sinister are false teachers from within. They are Trojan Horses who make their way into t/CH. These are men who preach from Evang. pulpits. They teach in Evang. schools. They take up leadership in Evang. CHs.

B. Be Alert: False teachers in the church operate covertly (1b)

Stealth bombers; Fly under the radar.

But what they promote as truth claims are really ==>

... destructive heresies ...

Destructive because they twist and pervert t/truth of t/Gospel. We're not talking about minor differences of opinion on secondary or tertiary doctrines.

We're talking about destructive heresies. They destroy . . . souls.

These are men who turn t/doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone into something else. They introduce works; they mock grace; they deny eternal punishment

Ultimately they deny God in his very person and work.

C. Be Separate: False teachers in the church deny God (1c)

... even denying the Master who bought them ...

1. Peter uses the word ΔΕΣΠΟΤΗΣ (despot)

a. ΔΕΣΠΟΤΗΣ is a word that implies ownership

Used of a legal authority. Used, for example, of a master's authority over his slaves.

b. Here it seems to be related to creation

It's used in contexts that emphasize God's role as Creator and Ruler of the world (Acts 4:24; Rev. 6:10).

In saying that they denied t/Master who bought them, Peter could be referring to either t/Father or t/Son.

2. In phrasing this as he does Peter continues to draw upon his parallel to OT Israel (particularly to Deuteronomy 32)

God purchased Israel as a nation even though He didn't purchase all of them for salvation.

In a similar fashion, God purchased creationally everyone who identifies w/the visible CH, even though He didn't purchase all of them to be part of the universal CH.

Not all Israel is Israel. Not all the church is the church. Only those who are justified by faith are true sons of Abraham, the believer (Gal. 3).

a. God is the Master / Despot / Creational Sovereign

Just like t/false prophets of OT Israel, these false teachers denied t/very One who owned them.

Dr. Robert Reymond ==>

Instead of portraying Christ in his role as Savior, Peter, referring to Christ in his role as their Sovereign Creator, states that these false teachers were denying that Christ was their Creator and Sovereign who owned them. [Robert Reymond, Systematic Theology, 700-01]

C. Be Separate: False teachers in the church deny God (1c)

That doesn't mean that they don't profess to believe in Him. They may even profess to believe in JC. But they either deny God's nature (i.e. Trinity) or they pervert t/Gospel.

We have to be separate from them. We can't fellowship with heretics.

2 Cor. 6 - context is different but t/principle applies.

14 . . . what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?16 Or what

agreement has the temple of God with idols? 17 “Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,” . . .

John likely had similar people in mind when he penned his 2d letter
2 John 9–11 9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting;

You don't want to be caught dancing with a guy who has a live hand grenade in his pocket. When it goes off, and it will, you will be on t/receiving end of t/destruction that's his.

. . . .bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

4th point ==>

D. Be Patient: False teachers in the church are being judged (1d)

There will always be a tendency to become impatient // weary or frustrated in t/battle against error.

1. God's judgement on those who misrepresent him will be sure

In fact, it's happening already. Word "bringing" is a present ptcp. Present tense indicating that it's in process.

Be patient. God's name will one day be honored t/o t/entire creation.

This statement by Peter bookends what he has to say in v. 3 which we will get to in a moment.

We have to get to v. 2 first.

Not only do we need to be Aware // Alert / Separate // Patient.

E. Be Diligent: False teachers in the church will have a following (2a)

We have to be diligent in our pursuit of truth even as we are diligent in our pursuit of Christ. To pursue Christ is to pursue Truth. As I said before we can't lay down // rest easy.

E. Be Diligent: False teachers in the church will have a following (2a)

And many will follow their sensuality . . .

1. Never have false teachers lacked either a hearing or a following

I'm always struck by the hordes of people who will follow lies.

John Calvin figured that only 10% of those who professed X in his day were really regenerate ==>

. . . hardly one in ten of those who have once made a profession of Christ, retains the purity of faith to the end. Almost all turn aside into corruptions, and being deluded by the teachers of licentiousness, they become profane.

So he adds ==>

Lest this should make our faith to falter, Peter comes to our help, and in due time foretells that this very thing would be, that is, that false teachers would draw many to perdition. [Calvin, 2 Peter]

2. Note what is says here

. . . many will follow their SENSUALITY . . .

IOW - there's a sensualness about them. A lewdness.

There is something about certain brands of false doctrine that attracts sexual perversion. Doctrinal perversion and sensuality so often go hand in hand. From pedophile priests to word of faith heretics who are known for their love of money & sexual perversion.

a. Wikipedia list of 33 evangelists involved in various scandals

Most of them from t/past 10 years // involved in some sort of financial or sex scandal, many of them homosexual in nature.

Seems that so often doctrinal perversion and sexual perversion are kissing cousins (pardon t/metaphor).

While those o/s t/CH really aren't able to discern t/doctrinal corruption of these perverts, they certainly are aware of their deviant lifestyles and blatant hypocrisy.

As a result, God's Precious Name is Dishonored & Real Christianity suffers guilt by association.

Sixth point ==>

F. Be Grieved: False teachers in the church dishonor Christ (2b)

. . . and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed;

1. Isn't that the truth!

The world observes those whose lives dishonor X & as a result God's honor gets thrown under t/bus!

2. God's honor is to be our finest preoccupation

If that's true we will be grieved when his name is dishonored & t/way of truth is ridiculed.

a. Psalms are filled with anxious pleadings that God receive the honor due Him

In Psalm 74 the Psalmist describes the majesty of God in His works of Providence ==>

12 Yet God is my king from of old, Who works deeds of deliverance in the midst of the earth. 13 You divided the sea by Your strength; You broke the heads of the sea monsters in the waters. 14 You crushed the heads of Leviathan; You gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness. 15 You broke open springs and torrents; You dried up ever-flowing streams. 16 Yours is the day, Yours also is the night; You have prepared the light and the sun. 17 You have established all the boundaries of the earth; You have made summer and winter.

Then ==>

18 Remember this, O LORD, that the enemy has reviled, And a foolish people has spurned Your name.

His desire ==>

21b Let the afflicted and needy praise Your name. 22 Arise, O God, and plead Your own cause; Remember how the foolish man reproaches You all day long.

Oh that we would be grieved when God is dishonored!

It's not about us =>

Psalm 115:1 Not to us, O LORD, not to us, But to Your name give glory Because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth.

We ought to have t/attitude of Spurgeon who said ==>

"To be laughed at is not great hardship to me. I can delight in scoffs and jeers. Caricatures, lampoons, and slanders are my glory. But that you should turn away from your mercy, this is my sorrow. Spit on me, but, oh, repent! Laugh at me, but, oh, believe in my Master! Make my body as the dirt of the streets, but damn not your own souls!"

3. And even here we have another parallel to OT Israel

NT F.T.ers parallel OT false prophets, broadly defined, in that they both are t/means by which unbelievers ridicule the truth

a. Romans chapter 2

Romans 2:17–24 17 But if you bear the name “Jew,” and rely upon the Law, and boast in God,¹⁸ and know His will, and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law,¹⁹ and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth,

21 you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one should not steal, do you steal?²² You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?²³ You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?

24 For “THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU,” just as it is written.

Same word translated "blasphemed" here is used in 2 Peter 2:2 ("maligned" by the NAS).

True Christianity is blasphemed, reviled, cursed, condemned by outsiders who see professed Christians running to all manner of excesses. "If that is Christianity," they will say, "curse it!" When many follow such excesses, outsiders are unable to distinguish and so blaspheme the whole "way." These false exponents seem true products of the way to them.

[R.C.H. Lenski. The Interpretation of the Epistles of St Peter St. John, and St. Jude (reprint, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966), 307]

I suppose in t/eyes of t/world licentious Xnty gives every bit as much a reason to mock as does legalistic Xnty.

The face of legalistic Xnty is Hate.

The face of licentious Xnty is Hypocrisy.

Neither is real Xnty. Both bring dishonor to X.

The answer to Hate is Love & Grace // Hypocrisy is Truth and Integrity.

How much different would we be in t/eyes of t/world if are lives and churches were marked by grace, love, mercy, truth, integrity.

If we were able to engage our culture intellectually instead of with caustic emotional rhetoric or with worldly compromise.

We live our lives before a watching world. Concern isn't that we be mocked or ridiculed. Concern is that God or the Gospel be ridiculed and misrepresented.

TIT 2:5 {to be} sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored.

TIT 2:8 sound {in} speech which is beyond reproach, in order that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.

1PE 2:12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe {them,} glorify God in the day of visitation.

Brings us to verse 3 and our last subpoint under our first heading "The Commencement of False Teachers" ==>

G. Be Discerning: False teachers in the church are identifiable (3)

They can be IDd by those who know t/truth.

We see here in t/third verse ==>

A. Three basic traits

3 charact. that are true of them. These are further developed in t/rest of t/chapter.

First thing we see is ==>

1. They are greedy (3a)

... and in their greed they will exploit you

a. First mention of "greed"

b. This was always a concern in the early church

Paul had as a mark of his ministry, to give no opportunity for t/label of greed to be applied to him.

Acts 20:33 **We coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes.**

1TH 2:5 **For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed-- God is witness--**

2CO 2:17 **For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.**

Didache 11:12 **But whoever says in the Spirit, "Give me money," or something else like this, you must not listen to him. But if he tells you to give for the sake of others who are in need, let no one judge him.**

c. Remember t/account in Acts 8 – Simon the Magician ?

Right after t/stoning of Stephen & Saul's persecution (chapter 9 = his conversion).

As a result of t/persecution t/church spread beyond Jerusalem into Samaria (Acts 1:8).

Philip goes into Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. He was performing signs, people were healed & delivered from demonic spirits.

Then there was Simon.

13 And even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip; and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.

The apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

That seems odd, how could they come to X and not receive the H.S.?

Unique instance. Certainly not normative (Romans 8:9).

Remember, Jer. and Sam. were rivals (cf. John 4). There lurked t/danger that Samaria would est. a rival CH from that of Jerus.

They need to know that they were under t/authority of t/Jerus. apostles and part of t/same church in Jerusalem.

Peter and John lay hands on these Samaritan believers and they received t/Spirit of God.

Enter Simon once again

18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, 19 saying,

“Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.”

20 But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!21 “You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.

You have to wonder if Peter had Simon in mind when he penned these words so many years later.

In v. 14 he says that they have Hearts trained in greed.

Not only are they greedy, but ==>

2. They are shrewd (opportunistic) (3b)

... they will exploit you ...

ROM 16:18 For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.

Describes false teachers, men like Benny Hinn & Kenneth Copeland, who exploit their followers for financial gain.

I saw a video of Paul Crouch talking about the day he saw gold dust on Benny Hinn's face Sev. years ago one of his so-called "prophetesses" was filmed at a crusade shaking gold and silver particles out of her hair.

All that glitters is not gold (later ID as common craft glitter).

a. Exploit = Word originally meant "to travel on a business trip" –
Then came to mean "to trade in" or "to cheat"

Lenski: "they will trade you in."

Send me your money and you will have your bills paid // you will become rich // job // salvation of a loved one.

4 years ago, in 2007, Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) opened a probe into the finances of six televangelists. The probe investigated reports of lavish lifestyles by televangelists including: fleets of Rolls Royces, mansions, private jets – paid for via donations.

According to USA Today - Grassley's letters went to:

- Kenneth and Gloria Copeland of Kenneth Copeland Ministries of Newark, Texas, a \$20 million organization and prosperity gospel pioneer. Questions were raised about the transfer of church assets to a for-profit company, Security Patrol Inc., a \$1 million loan from Gloria Copeland to the group, and a "personal gift" of more than \$2 million given to Kenneth Copeland to mark the ministry's 40th anniversary.
- Creflo and Taffi Dollar of World Changers Church International and Creflo Dollar Ministries of College Park, Ga. Grassley's letter asks for records on private planes, . . . compensation and donations and "love offerings" to visiting ministers.
- Benny Hinn of World Healing Center Church Inc. and Benny Hinn Ministries of Grapevine, Texas, is asked about use of a private jet, a home in Dana Point, Calif. and "layover trips" while traveling on ministry business.
- Joyce and David Meyer of Joyce Meyer Ministries of Fenton, Mo., who were quizzed about receiving donations of money and jewelry and the handling of cash from overseas crusades. They also were asked

about expenditures at ministry headquarters, including a \$30,000 conference table and a \$23,000 "commode with marble top."

• Randy and Paula White (since divorced) of the multiracial Without Walls International Church and Paula White Ministries of Tampa are asked about home purchases in San Antonio, Texas, Malibu, Calif., and New York, credit card charges for clothing and cosmetic surgery and the reported purchase of a Bentley convertible as a gift for Bishop T.D. Jakes, a prominent Texas preacher and televangelist.

[http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2007-11-07-televangelist-probe_N.htm]

G. Be Discerning: False teachers in the church are identifiable (3)

1. They are greedy (3a)

2. They are shrewd

Lastly ==>

3. They are misleading (3c)

and in their greed they will exploit you with false words;

a. They use false words

False = πλαστός = made up, fabricated. Cf. "plastic." From πλασσω - "to mold" as in clay or wax.

Plastic theology.

b. The picture you get here is one of deception

I am concerned about how easily even Xns can be led astray by t/slick words of those who in reality have no part in the Gospel of JC.

I was talking to someone not long ago about another man who left t/Gospel of grace for Romanism. I was shocked when he said, "Yeah, I'm certain that he loves Jesus and is a real Xn."

I know guy went into it with eyes-wide open, so I replied, "Isn't he promoting RC theology?" Intercession of saints/Mary as co-redemptrix/efficacy of the Mass/justification by grace & works? My friend sort of shrugged his shoulders.

It doesn't matter if someone is sincere // how zealous they are // good they appear to be or how much they seem to love Jesus.

That's hard for us.

I'm sure that there were Judaizers in Paul's day who seemed to love Jesus and were very zealous. Yet Paul said of them (and all who would mix works with grace) that they had fallen from X and t/way of salvation.

Even of his fellow countrymen ==>

2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.

1 BRETHREN, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. [Romans 10]

Romans 9:3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,

Sincerity alone doesn't save anyone.

That's why we have to frame things in such a way that we know not only what people affirm, but what they deny.

You can affirm that you love Jesus // are a Xn // sincerity // believe in salvation by grace.

But do you deny that we are justified, declared righteous solely by God's grace through faith?

To say that it's grace plus works or sacraments is to deny t/Gospel.

I want to at least get through v. 3 this AM (and our 2d main point) ==>
We've seen their commencement and that we are to be Aware / Alert / Separate / Patient / Diligent / Grieved / Discerning.

Next ==>

II. The Condemnation of False Teachers (3b-9)

This point will take us all t/way through v. 9

A. *Their Judgment Declared (3b)*

B. *Their Judgment Described (3b-9)*

A. Their Judgment Declared (3b)

... their judgment from long ago is not idle and their destruction is not asleep.

This statement bookends the end of v. 1 {cite} and introduces us to a large section of chapter 2 that deals with judgement.

1. We know that those of whom Peter writes denied judgement

{3:3-4}

a. This was a distinctive of Epicurean philosophy

Epicureanism had a strong influence t/o the West. Among t/Epicurean distinctives was that a delay in judgement = no judgement.

One ancient statement in that regard comes from a man named Patrocleas who says, "The delay and procrastination of the Deity in punishing the wicked appears to me the most telling argument by far."

[cited in Gene Green, 246]

IOW - People do terrible things and get away with it all the time. Lightening doesn't come down from heaven. In fact, many of them seem to be blessed.

We look at false teachers today who fleece the sheep for millions. They drive around in fancy cars, eat at t/best restaurants, fly in private planes, live in luxurious homes.

b. Where's the judgment?

... their judgment from long ago is not idle and their destruction is not asleep.

Their judgement is from long ago, that is it's in t/Plan of God. Their destruction is not asleep, that is God's not dozing off. He's not forgotten.

Much like dominoes, a string of which ending at their destruction. The first has been "tipped" by God and it's only a matter of time.

c. This may be another allusion to Deut. 32 (cf. v. 1 and 32:6)

DEU 32:35 'Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, In due time their foot will slip; For the day of their calamity is near, And the impending things are hastening upon them.'

So we're brought face to face back to the issue of truth.

R.B.Kuiper, a Dutch theologian who a gen. or 2 ago served as syst. theol. professor at WTS ==>

The Word of God tells us that Christ's church is glorious... [But] today the glory of the church is thickly veiled. It is no exaggeration to assert that in the main it presents a picture of advanced decadence and extreme feebleness... Let it be said emphatically, the church is where the truth is. Sound doctrine always has been, is today, and ever will be the foremost mark of the true church. [Yet in our day] . . . people do not go to church to learn about God from His infallible Word, but to be tranquilized. [R.B. Kuiper]

"Therefore, since you have God's Word, you should take heed to yourselves that you do not have in addition also false teachers. . . . Therefore it concerns everyone's own soul's salvation to know what God's Word is and what false doctrines are." [Martin Luther, 2 Peter, 252-53]