

## ***“False Teachers Predicted”***

### **Holiness**

Dr. Bruce Bickel

2 Peter 2:1-3

February 5, 2016

**Bruce:** Turn in your Bibles, please, to 2 Peter chapter 2, which will be our passage today.

Let’s pray. Gracious and merciful heavenly Father, it is with a great sense of awe and anticipation that we come to sit at Your feet. Father, there is much going on in our lives that we don’t know how to manage ourselves apart from Your grace. So Father, would You give us the grace to be sufficient for each of our needs, whatever those may be? And may You do that so that You will manage Yourself through our lives, and we will manage ourselves through Your grace that will call attention to Your majesty, Your glory and Your magnificent sovereignty, as well as Your hope and Your love. And may it be so for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Bruce:** Let’s turn to 2 Peter chapter 2, looking at the first three verses, reading again from the English Standard Version of the Bible.

*“Now false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who brought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.”* This is the word of the Lord.

**Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Bruce:** Amen and Amen. Several years ago an American philosopher made this statement that you’ve heard. “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Now while that is true, and the philosopher meant that the actions of nations is what he had in mind, there is no better illustration of that when you take and read your Bible and look at it historically. When you read the Scriptures as a book of history, which it is—it is His story—but looking at the Scripture historically, you’ll see the validity of that truth, because all one has to do is to look at the sin and disobedience of the nation of Israel and we’ll see that this statement is very true.

But I also believe that there is a corollary to that statement and I would say it this way. We do not learn from our mistakes and we do repeat them. Now this is why the bible so often warns us about being aware—such things as “take heed,” “be careful,” “Be watchful.” The admonitions are ones of warning. And all of chapter 2 from the book of 2 Peter is a book of warning about false teachers.

Now it’s interesting. Last week Peter taught us about the great confidence he had in his Christian life. And it was because of the revelation and the inspiration and the illumination of God the Holy Spirit putting together the Bible writers and what they wrote and what they taught. So coming right off of the fact that he’s talking about the infallibility of Scripture, that God has given us a revelation, that He inspired the biblical writers to use their personalities, their own nuances, their own vernacular, to create the exact words that God wanted them to have, and so it would be infallible.

## ***“False Teachers Predicted”***

Now after that, Peter begins to warn us of something. I really appreciate the logic of Scripture, because right after telling us about his great confidence in the revelation of Scripture, his great confidence in the inspiration of Scripture, and his great confidence in the illumination of Scripture, he now goes to say, :”Be careful because there are going to be those who are going to distort that truth, and they are known as false teachers.” And He goes back and teaches us a history lesson from the nation of Israel. And that’s what we want to see today.

In this passage, Peter joins us with history. And this is what he is going to say. *“Historically, just as there were false prophets in the nation of Israel, so there will be false teachers in the church. The comparison is to the false prophets of the Old and the false teachers of the New, because Peter was dealing with the issue of the false teachers which had infiltrated the church. And he is using a history lesson to teach us this wonderful truth, that when you go back and understand the false teachers of Israel, the false prophets, you’ll see that they are very similar to the false teachers of today. And as we look at our culture today, we’ll see those same characteristics which are evident today in the false teachers in our church life.*

So what I want us to do first of all is to take a look at what Peter teaches us about the false prophets of the past. And the reason that it’s important for us to take heed of this, men, is because we live in the days where the Christian faith is being widely questioned, where you have all kinds of new and speculative theologies thrown into the mix, and where there is wide dissemination of Biblical untruth unmasked by Biblical truth. We have to be very careful of that. Actually, what was a warning has now become big business. Christianity is now big business. And so we need to hear what Peter is going to teach us as a warning, because Peter is saying this. Just as there were false prophets in Israel, there will be false teachers in the church. He has been speaking of the true prophets of old, in the Old Testament.

Let me give you some warnings. Look at some verses. Would somebody read Jeremiah 5:31? Turn to the book of Jeremiah. You’ll see some of the warnings about the false prophets. And so we’re playing off of Peter’s history lesson which is a warning about false teachers. Would somebody read Jeremiah 5:31? Also, would somebody read Jeremiah 14:14, and then Jeremiah 23:32. Would somebody read those? First of all, Jeremiah 5:31.

**Participant:** Jeremiah 5:31. *“The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction. My people love to have it so, but what will you do when the end comes?”*

**Bruce:** Now listen to that verse. Take that verse historically and say that this is what happened among the false prophets of the nation of Israel and translate that into our culture today. Do you hear the same things? Let’s take the next verse, which would be 14:14 of Jeremiah.

**Participant:** *“The LORD said to me, ‘The prophets are prophesying lies in My name. I did not send them, nor did I command them, or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision with divination and the deceit of their own lies.’”*

**Bruce:** Jeremiah 14:14. How about one more? Jeremiah 23, verses 30-32k, please?

**Participant:** *“Behold, I am against the prophets declares the LORD, and steal My words from one another. Behold, I am against the prophets,’ declares the LORD, ‘who use their tongues,’ declares the LORD. ‘Behold, I am against those who prophesy lying dreams,’ declares the LORD, ‘and who tell them and lead My people astray by their lies and their recklessness,*

## ***“False Teachers Predicted”***

*when I did not send them or charge them. So they are not prosperous. For they do not profit this people at all,’ declares the LORD.”*

Now those are just some verses to help us understand that there were prophetic utterances warning people about these false prophets. And what Peter is doing for us today is that he is saying, “Look! Go back and look at your history.” Look at the sin and disobedience of the nation of Israel and how they were led astray by these false prophets. And the warning for us in the New Testament church in the New Covenant is this. Just as there were Old Testament false prophets, there will be New Testament false teachers.

Here are a couple of verses. Would somebody look up Matthew 24, verses 4-5? We have the same warning of false prophets in the current age. Matthew 24:4-5 and verse 11.

**Participant:** *“Jesus answered, ‘Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.’” “And many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.”*

**Bruce:** And that is exactly the same warning in our current age. This was the warning for the Biblical church in Peter’s age and what was going on culturally, and it’s the same warning we have in our culture. How about Acts chapter 20, verses 29 and 30?

**Participant:** *“I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock, and from among your own selves will arise men seeking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them.”*

**Bruce:** I just gave you some verses, men, to help you to understand the history lesson of the Old Testament. And we need to take the warning of the Old Testament into the New Testament at times, because just as there were false prophets, there will be false teachers. And all of chapter 2 in the book of 2 Peter is a warning against these false teachers. Now it follows logically that because he had just taught us about the infallibility of the word of God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, now he says, “Be careful, because these people are going to abuse it.” And so we need to learn from our lesson of Peter’s warning us because these false teachers will take the church away from the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man. And they will give them what they want to hear.

It’s a warning that’s designed to make you aware of something, of some impending danger, so you can take appropriate action to avoid a calamity. That’s why there’s a warning.

It’s just like this. When you’re flying an aircraft, you have a fire warning light. When your fire warning light goes on, you know you’re going to blow up. There’s a warning. It’s a fire warning light. If something happens, you know you have a procedure to go through to disengage that so it’s over. But you’ve got to realize that sometimes there’s a fire warning light. And you have to take appropriate action to avoid a calamity. That’s what Peter is saying to us in this particular chapter. He’s saying that there’s a fire warning light in the church today. And you’ve got to take appropriate action to avoid it, or you will engage in calamity that you cannot manage.

So let’s take a look at some of these things. I want us to understand as we look at chapter 2. We can divide this chapter outline, and there is a threefold approach to this. First of all, *false teachers are predicted. False teachers are judged. And then false teachers are described.* False teachers are predicted, judged and described.

## ***“False Teachers Predicted”***

Today we want to take a look specifically at these false teachers predicted. And that would be their *character* in verse 1, their *successes* in verses 2 and 3, and their *doom* in verse 3. That’s what we’ll look at today in this study of the warning against these false teachers.

First of all, since Peter is taking us on a history lesson, let me give you some illustration of the characteristics of the Old Testament prophets because I want you to understand this first of all. Peter is saying that if you go back and understand the characteristics of the Old Testament prophets, you’re going to see the same characteristics in the New Testament false teachers. So we need to go back and look historically at the characteristics of the Old Testament prophets.

Let me give you some insight into this. First of all, these false prophets were more interested in gaining popularity than in telling the truth. Their policy was to tell people what they wanted to hear. The false prophets said, “*Peace, peace, where there is no peace.*” Jeremiah 6:14. They saw visions of peace when the Lord God was saying that there was no peace at all. Ezekiel 13:16. This was a direct contrast from what God was saying.

In the days of Jehoshaphat Zedekiah the false prophet dawned his horns of iron and said that Israel had pushed the Syrians out of the way, as he pushed with his horns. Micaiah the true prophet foretold disaster if Jehoshaphat went to war. And of course they believed Zedekiah who was popular, and afterwards they were destroyed.

We need to understand this. They were more interested in gaining popularity than in telling the truth.

Secondly, this. False prophets were interested in personal gain. “*The priests teach for hire and the prophets divine for money.*” Micah chapter 3 verse 11. We could see these exploiters of the Christian work in the early church.

There is a book called the *Didache*, which is a teaching of the twelve disciples. It’s a wonderful book. It was used as what might be called the first service order book. Now here is some of the teaching of the first service order book, known as the *Didache*.

Now here is some of the teaching from the first service order book, known as the *Didache*. “It is laid down that a prophet who asks for money, who asks for a table to be spread in front of him, is a false prophet.”

Now this is the warning in the Old Testament times. If somebody said that he asked for money, or asked for a table to be spread out in front of him, that he was a false prophet. They were known as “traffickers in Jesus.” “Traffickers in Christ” is what they were referred to.

“The false prophet is a covetous creature who regards men as dupes to be exploited for his own values, his own means.”

Now all I’m trying to help you to understand, guys, is to take a look at the Old Testament prophets. Do you see any similarities to what we have going on in our culture today? Tragically, we do.

How about a third characteristic of the Old Testament prophet? The false prophets were dissolute in their own personal lives. In other words, their morality was dissolute. Isaiah writes this. “*The priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink. They are swallowed up in wine.*” Isaiah chapter 28 verse 7. Jeremiah says this. “*I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem a horrible thing. They commit adultery and walk in lies. They strengthen also the hands of evildoers. They cause people to err by their lies and by the likeness of their doctrine.*” Jeremiah chapter 23.

## ***“False Teachers Predicted”***

These false prophets personal lives were a disaster. And yet they were followed because people listened to what they told them because they told them what they wanted to hear.

A fourth characteristic of the Old Testament prophet was this. The false prophet was above all men who led other men further away from God rather than closer to God. They drove other men away from God rather than closer to God, under the guise of teaching them how to follow God. Notice Deuteronomy chapter 13. *“Let us go after other gods.”* Deuteronomy 13:1-5.

Now these are the characteristics of the false prophets in the ancient days of the church in the nation of Israel. And they were the characteristics of false teachers who were troubling the people in Jesus’ time and in Peter’s time. And to this day these same characteristics exist.

So let’s now compare that which we have just learned about the Old Testament prophets and compare that with the New Testament language, and see the great similarities. So we now go to 2 Peter chapter 2, verses 1-3. Let’s take a look at the characteristics of the false teachers of our current age.

First of all, we need to understand that they are referred to as *teachers*. The Old Testament prophet was a minister of rebuke to Israel because of their sin and their pointing away from Christ and away from God and the way of righteousness. The New Testament teacher is a ministry of preaching the gospel to the unsaved and the exposition of the Word to the saints. So either way, we refer to them as Old Testament prophets and now we refer to them as New Testament teachers. The point that I’m trying to make is that the prophet was the word in the Old Testament, but the teacher is the word in the New Testament. They were the ones who supposedly handled the word of God.

Secondly, they are *traitors*. They secretly introduce heresies. The word *introduce* means to come alongside. They came alongside. That is, they were false teachers, teaching much that is true, but would cleverly include false teaching with it. In other words, they would make it look so good that some of it was good, but it wasn’t enough to do any good in a person’s life. And so it’s disguised. They are essentially traitors. They are disguising everything to look so good.

Now there is a very popular preacher in our culture today whose name I will not mention because he has not given me permission to do that. I haven’t talked to him personally, so I can’t divulge his name. But you might understand when I give you the illustration. What I’m trying to say, men, is that I’ve not talked to him personally, so I should not go around bad-mouthing him or gossiping about him.

But he was in town some months ago in Pittsburgh, I think about a year ago. Fifteen thousand people came to the Consul Center. And one of my staff asked me if she should go to hear him.

And I said, “Well, I can’t tell you what to do. But I’ll tell you this. If you decide to go, come back and tell me how many times he mentions the name Jesus Christ. Just come back and tell me how many times. Listen for that.”

And she went and came back. There were fifteen thousand people, and he never mentioned the name of Jesus Christ. Things were disguised to look very, very good. But he talked about faith, talked about God, talked about love—all those things that are very attractive. But nowhere in the message did he ever communicate anything about the sinfulness of man, the holiness of God, the Person and work of Christ, or repentance and faith. It was a message that was very

## ***“False Teachers Predicted”***

attractive to people. But it was disguised because it was misleading the people and leading them away from God rather than closer to God.

So we need to realize that sometimes these men are just really traitors. They secretly introduce and bring things along that are very attractive, but may not be the whole truth.

That’s why we must be warned because they are hard to detect, because so much of it really sounds so good. But it really can be very, very destructive.

Thirdly, I would offer for your consideration this comparison between the Old Testament prophet and the New Testament false teacher. Not only are they teachers. Not only are they traitors. But I would also say that they are *destroyers*. They bring in destructive heresies. They bring about the loss of everything that makes human life worthwhile. They lead people away from Christ, but they think they are leading people to Christ.

Now let me give you an understanding of the word *heresy*, some history on that word. The word *heresy* means “to choose.” It means a line of belief or action which a person has chosen for himself. It’s an action and a belief system that you choose for yourself.

Prior to the arrival of Christ, the word *heresy* was a very honorable word, because it just meant that you had a system of belief and you were attracted to it. And so before Christ there was no definite description of righteousness in one’s demonstrated life. There was no God-given truth about the Person and work of Christ. And men could possibly choose from a number of different possible alternatives. And so here was a heresy. You would just choose this particular alternative and you would believe it, and that was okay.

When Christ came, that all changed. Truth was defined by the Person and work of Christ. And people had to accept or reject the Person and work of Christ. No longer was it a question of choosing a particular line of belief that appealed to you, but it was an acceptance or a rejection of the Person and work of Christ. That’s when the word *heresy* changed.

So a heretic is a person who believes what he wishes instead of accepting the truth of God. That’s why I say that they are destroyers, because they bring about false teachers and heresies. Just give the people the option to choose whatever they want to believe.

Then I would also say this. They are *deniers*. They are deniers of the Person and work of Christ. They have an inadequate view of the Person and work of Christ and the relationship to sin. They distort the doctrine of Christ and His work. And those are some of the issues where we can compare the Old Testament prophet with the New Testament false teacher.

But these men were troubling Peter in his day and age and they were doing something very similar. They were saying that they loved and served Christ. At the same time, the things that they preached and taught did not validate that they were living for Christ. Unfortunately, that’s what we see in our culture today.

So I think there are three questions we can ask. All I’m trying to do, men, is to give you a little history lesson to help you to understand the difference between the Old Testament prophet and the New Testament false teacher. There is really no difference. There are different words, different phrases, different understandings. But there is essentially no difference. The Old Testament prophet and the New Testament teacher are basically the same in their characteristics.

So here are a couple questions that we just might need to ask ourselves. What is behind these false teachers? I would offer 1 Timothy 4:1 for your consideration—seducing spirits. Would

## ***“False Teachers Predicted”***

somebody read that? The reason that I’m having you open your Bibles is so you’ll know where these passages are. Would somebody read 1 Timothy 4:1?

**Participant:** *“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.”*

**Bruce:** Okay, demonism is its source. Demonism is the source of these false teachers in the church today. How about reading Revelation 16 verse 13? You see a satanic trinity. A satanic trinity is involved.

**Participant:** *“Then I saw three impure spirits that looked like frogs. They came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.”*

**Bruce:** And notice what they were planning to do. They were planning to prevent Jesus from conquering sin. And see, the source of all this is demonism. I’m not saying that person is satanic. I’m saying that person is influenced by demonism. This is the spirit that is influencing his teaching. Satan works overtime to teach false doctrine about the Person and work of Christ.

That’s why one of the first questions somebody may ask you just may be a smoke screen. Sometimes you’ll hear people say, “What about this? What about that?” Or sometimes you may hear somebody say, “Well, that’s not fair.” God’s electing grace is not fair. That’s just a smoke screen. Really, the question you need to ask is, “What have you done with the Person and the work of Christ?” That’s the bottom line. The bottom line is this. Who do you believe that Jesus is? What have you done with the Person and the work of Christ? You cut to the quick and they probably won’t even want to have a conversation with you, or if the Holy Spirit is going to penetrate the heart and he’ll talk with you.

But that’s the real issue. And that’s what demonism is trying to do. The demons try to divert them away from the Person and work of Christ. And so the battleground is this. Who do you believe that Jesus is? Is He the God of Biblical revelation, or the Jesus of human imagination?

The second question I would offer for our consideration would be this. How can you recognize these false teachers? How can you recognize them? Would you turn with me to 1 John chapter 4? In verses 1-6, I think we see three indicators of how we can recognize a false prophet.

*“Beloved, do not believe every spirit. But test the spirits to see whether they are from God. For many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming, and now is in the world already. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world. Therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us. Whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”*

I think the three key insights for us to understand are what John is writing to help us to understand false teachers. First of all, this. What do they say about the Incarnation? Notice, the word is *confess* versus the word *profess*. The word *confess* means to agree with what somebody else has already said. The word *profess* means just to make a statement. They *profess* the divine Lord, but they are denying the Incarnation because they don’t confess it. Do you understand the

## ***“False Teachers Predicted”***

difference? To profess means to make a statement. I’m just making a statement. To confess means that I’m agreeing with what somebody else has already said.

Notice 1 John 4 verse 2. *“By this you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus has come in the flesh is from God.”*

They might make the statement that Jesus is a nice prophetic teacher. But do they confess the fact that He is God? Do they agree with what somebody else has already said? That Somebody else is God and what He has said in the Scripture. They profess certain things, but they may not confess them. Do you see the difference? So first of all, it has to do with the Incarnation.

Secondly, do they possess the divine life? That would be regeneration—verse 4. Have they been regenerated? Do they possess the divine life?

And thirdly, do they confess the divine law, revelation? Those are verses 5 and 6. The three things that we can look at to help us to understand false teachers is to understand their view of the Incarnation, their view of regeneration, and their view of revelation. Those are the three things that John says. Find out what the teachers believe and you’ll know whether or not they confess Christ or profess Christ. 1 John 1:9 says, *“If we confess our sins.”* That means that I’m agreeing with what somebody else has already said about my sins. I’m not making a statement about my sin. I’m confessing it. When I confess my sins, *“God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness.”* There is a difference between making a profession of faith and making a confession of faith.

Years ago, when I was with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, everybody would always get excited when somebody would score a touchdown. He would do a genuflect or something like that, or he would pray if he was Christians. Why is that? Well, he did something after the touchdown. He had just indicated his faith in Christ.

Well, that may be. That could be. But we ran these summer conferences where we had many of these professional athletes come and give their testimonies. And somebody would say to me, “Is he a Christian?” And sometimes the best I could say was this. “Well, he professes Christ, but I don’t know if he confesses Christ.” There is a difference between a profession and a confession. Do you understand the difference?

Profession means to make a statement. Jesus is a good teacher. That’s a profession. Confession is this. I agree with what the Scripture says about the Person and work of Christ—that He is God, that He died for my sins, that He was buried and resurrected now to eternal life. Do I really confess what the Scriptures have already said about the Person and work of Christ? There is a difference between their profession and their confession. That passage in 1 John is very critical for us to understand.

The third question I would say that we need to consider, men, is this. Why does God permit false teachers in the church? Now I can’t put myself in the place of God, but I’m going to try to give you some Scriptural insight that might help us answer that question.

First of all, would somebody read 1 Corinthians 11:19?

**Participant:** *“There must be factions among you in order for those who are genuine among you to be recognized.”*

**Bruce:** In other words, it is through the trial of our faith. Those who act worthy of God’s approval must be evident. In other words, it’s going to reveal the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the tares, the true from the untrue, the true believers from the false believers, because



## ***“False Teachers Predicted”***

we have those in the midst of the church. And so part of the reason I would say is 1 Corinthians 11:9—the testing of our faith. It’s a trial to make sure that the true believers come to the surface. The cream comes to the top, you might say. And so it’s to test our faith. Those who are really followers of Christ become more evident when there are false teachers in our midst.

Also, I think it is so that the true pastors may become more effective. Look at 2 Timothy 2:15. I think a second reason is this—that true pastors may become more effective in their ministry to the flock. Would somebody read 2 Timothy 2:15, please?

**Participant:** *“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, who correctly handles the word of truth.”*

**Bruce:** *“Correctly handles the word of truth.”* Sometimes heresies make the godly sharper in their defense of the Biblical revelation. If you and I understand what this heresy is, that gives us insight into how we can defend that when we need to, confronting them with truth. So sometimes we need to understand that in the midst of these false teachers, it’s going to help us to clarify how we can defend the Biblical revelation. That’s why I think that pastors need to understand how they can handle the word of truth correctly.

I think that there is one other reason I will offer for your consideration, and that is this. Would somebody read Romans 1:21? It’s because we’re ungrateful. I just don’t think that we take our gratitude seriously enough, that God has given us divine revelation that’s infallibly written for us to read and discover who He is because He has chosen to disclose Himself and reveal Himself to us. We think that God owes us something. We think that we can make a difference.

**Participant:** *“For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God, nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.”*

**Bruce:** Notice what happens right before their thoughts became darkened, what did they not do?

**Participant:** They did not give thanks.

**Bruce:** They did not give thanks. You see, I think that one of the reasons we have heresies in the church is because we are not grateful. We think that God owes us something. We think that we can make a difference when really we need to be so grateful that God has given us this disclosed revelation of Himself in the Scripture that we can study.

I think that one of the things that causes us not to defend our faith the way we ought to is because we’re just ungrateful. We don’t give enough thanks for who God is and for what He has done in our lives.

Next, let’s take a look at their successes. Why is it that they are successful? We’ve tried to examine some things—why they exist in the church. We’ve seen that it’s for our personal edification and the trial of our faith. It’s to help pastors become more skilled in handling the word of God. It helps us become more grateful.

In verses 2 and 3, we can look at their successes. Why is it that these false teachers are successful? It’s because many people follow them. To persuade them to an end of a line of thought is what they try to do. First, people listen to the false teachers, and then they begin to live like the false teachers. The emphasis here is not following the heresy, but the shameful conduct of the false teachers, beginning to implement and practice what they teach.

## ***“False Teachers Predicted”***

The word *way* is a very interesting word in this passage. It means a behavior or manner of life. True faith is spoken against by the world because of the conduct brought on by false teachers.

How many times have you heard somebody bash Christianity because of what some false teacher has done or hasn't done? There are examples all over the place. And so people begin to live out in practice the things that these false teachers teach. And then it brings disparagement upon the Person and work of Christ.

And what are the reasons for their success? Well, again, I think that 1 John 4, verses 5-6 will tell us. It's the number of responsive people. They must be successful. If no one responded, they would quit. That's the difference. If nobody responded, a true teacher would continue to what?

**Participant:** To teach.

**Bruce:** Continue to teach the Scripture, because the issue is never what is the response of the audience. It is this. Is truth proclaimed? That's the difference. If we'd quit following them, they would quit. A true teacher is going to continue regardless of the response of the audience.

**Participant:** Bruce?

**Bruce:** Yes, please?

**Participant:** You know, the thing that I've found, too, is that a strong personality who might be a good Biblical teacher can do the same thing, as opposed to the average personality. He may not be as dynamic in the pulpit, but he teaches the truth. He may not draw a crowd, so to speak.

**Bruce:** That's true. We have to be careful about following a personality or following a message. We've got to be very, very careful of that. That's a good point, Sig. Be careful not to follow a personality. But we need to follow a message.

1 John 4:5 tells us this—that the world loves the message that originates from the world. How about somebody reading John chapter 8 verse 47? *“Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”*

Why is it that some people don't listen to the Scripture?

**Participant:** They are not of God.

**Bruce:** They're not of God. That's just a fact. They're not God's children. Therefore they don't want to hear God's message. That's just the reality. And that's why we have to be so cautious of the teachers that we follow.

So why are they successful? Because people follow them. They would quit if people didn't follow them. And I think that another reason is this. It's the honor and respect given them, the honor and respect that we give false teachers unknowingly.

The gentleman I'm referring to who I would suggest is a false teacher was given an advance for a new book he was going to write. The advance was \$15 million before he even wrote the book. The advance was \$15 million. He hasn't even written the book yet. So the honor and respect we give them is the reason that continues to motivate them to continue their heresies.

**Participant:** Bruce?

**Bruce:** Yes, please?

## ***“False Teachers Predicted”***

**Participant:** And yet, with that same false teacher, I’ve had people who love him, and I challenge his teaching. And they say, “But I’ve grown so much closer to God. I never used to go to church until I followed this man’s teaching. I’ve never read the Bible.”

**Bruce:** Ted, I’ve heard a lot of the same thing. All I can say to that—and I’m not the answer person---but all I can say to that, I would think, is this. God can use any amount of truth that is needed in some message to call out His elect. Now that’s the best answer I can give. He’ll use any amount of truth that is needed for that individual person because He knows that person and we don’t. He’ll use any amount of truth that is proclaimed. And these false teachers do proclaim some truth. Sometimes you shouldn’t throw out the baby with the bath water. But I think that God will use any amount of truth that is needed to draw that person who is one of the elect to come to saving faith. That’s very, very predominant. You’ve got to be careful with that. Yes, please?

**Participant:** I just want to say this in really general terms.

**Bruce:** Please.

**Participant:** But it seems like why do so many well-meaning church leaders buy into these heretics, and they seek to apply it. And I know they are well-meaning people. There is a love for the Lord there. Why can’t they discern? What’s happening here?

**Bruce:** Does anybody want to take a shot at that? (*Laughter.*) I need to think about an answer. Yes, Ted?

**Ted:** I’ve just been thinking about this whole kind of thing as we’re talking. And I’ve been reading Luther recently, and especially *The Bondage of the Will*, which I consider his finest work.

**Bruce:** Yes.

**Ted:** Maybe the finest work that ever came out of the Reformation outside of *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* by John Calvin. But that was an environment of vigorous debate. And I think a lot of our church leaders have not been involved in vigorous debate or argument between each other about the validity of doctrines. So they hear it. They go to their seminaries. They’re raised in that church. They go to a seminary that reinforces that. And nobody ever challenged them. But I’m looking at Luther. And my gosh! This healthy—what I think is this very helpful and positive debate with Erasmus over the question of free will—he was forced to defend it point for point. Our pastors don’t do that today. They simply don’t do it. They simply get a message and they run with it. And they’re not challenged.

“How can you say there is free will?”

“Well, of course there is.”

“I mean, on what basis do you say that? Does Scripture show that to be true?” I’m sorry—

**Bruce:** No. That’s a great answer, Ted. I appreciate that. Biblical counseling occurs in the pulpit, not behind closed doors. But first it ought to start in the pulpit. In doing the right thing, as Ted said, we take on those issues and we debate them from the pulpit. We teach them from the pulpit. We teach it.

But I think another reason why some of the leaders go that way, my friends, is because they’re not qualified to be leaders. Why are they leaders? Why is that person a leader in the church? It’s because he or she is the CEO of some company. We think that if they’re successful in the world, they’ll be successful in church.

## ***“False Teachers Predicted”***

If you really look at the examination of a qualified Biblical church leader, there are very, very specific things. And the number one responsibility of any church leader is to labor in the Word and doctrine. Now do they do that? No. They sit around and talk about the color of exit signs. They don't talk about Word and doctrine. That's exactly what Ted is saying.

I think part of the reason is because we don't have the right leaders in the right spots. We don't have the right qualified person in the right spot at the right time. And therefore they are going to be swayed by the world because they're not qualified to be there Biblically. And yet we put them in that position culturally because we think that if they have been successful in the world, they'll be successful in the church. That's just one of my observations. I would offer that for your consideration. Yes, please, Mike?

**Mike:** 1 Timothy 4:3. *“For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers who say what their itching ears want to hear.”*

**Bruce:** Yep.

**Mike:** *“They will turn their ears away from the truth, and turn aside to myths.”*

**Bruce:** Amen. Let me give you a warning for us. Not that we have all the right answers. I'm not suggesting that. But for those of us who teach, we need to be very, very careful. I think the way that a New Testament teacher can lead the flock astray is in three ways. A pastor or a New

Testament teacher can lead the flock away in three different ways.

First of all, by *flattery*, telling you what you want to hear. We tell them what they want to hear. That's flattery.

Secondly, *heresy*—letting you choose what you want to believe, rather than painting you the picture of truth in Christ and what you should believe. That's what Ted was suggesting. Letting people choose what they want to believe. “So you just go ahead and believe in free will. That's okay. Go ahead, do that. It's your choice. You can do that. I can't tell you what to do.”

Rather, we need to take it on and say, “Look! Let's examine that issue because we're letting them go along with something they choose rather than telling the truth in Christ.” That is not easy to do. But it's something that we must do.

So I think that for New Testament teachers and preachers we need to be careful of our flattery, letting people believe what they want to believe. And thirdly, there is *silence*. I think the third way that we mislead the people in the flock as New Testament teachers or preachers is *silence*. The watchman who does not ring the alarm at the approach of danger betrays the city to the enemy.

Well men, there are many voices to be heard today, many new solutions that are clamoring to become the panacea for all of your ills. Let me close with this observation about the motives of a false teacher. In their greed, the desire to possess what a man has no right to possess, they desire to take the place of Christ. That's their desire, to take the place of Christ. They have no right to possess that. Yet in their greed, they try to take over the place of Christ and His truth. The false teachers of our own age are guilty of nothing less than usurping the place and the position of Jesus Christ in our lives. And men, we just have to be careful.

Peter says, “Be aware. Be watchful. Be concerned.” And let us, when we need to, ring the alarm bell if there is a heresy that is designed to take the place of the Person and the work of

### ***“False Teachers Predicted”***

Christ. Men, we just need to be cautious. Any questions? Do you see the contrast between the Old Testament prophet and the New Testament teacher? These are things that we just need to be cautious of.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank You that not only do you tell us the truth, but You warn us of the untruth. And may we be discerning. May we always go back to the divine revelation of Your word to confirm what is true and what is false. Bind the evil one from our minds. Do not let him infiltrate our churches with false teaching. And Father, may we first of all examine our own lives and think. Have I taught something that is designed to usurp the Person and work of Jesus Christ? If so, Father, we repent of that as an evil, and a sin that we confess for Jesus' sake. Purify us, Father, in our words, our doctrine and our lifestyle. And may it be so for Jesus' sake. And all the Brave Men said, "Amen."