

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

False Teachers Among You

By Joe R. Price

It seems some brethren have an aversion to using the expression “false teacher” and to applying it to those who advance error. They have adopted a very limited use of the expression, telling us it takes more than teaching what is false to actually be a false teacher. They say the false teacher is marked by an evil heart of ignorance and insincerity. For example, “*A false teacher is surely one whose dishonest motives and/or ignorance distinguish him from the sincere brother who has reached an erroneous conclusion*” (Ed Harrell, “*Homer Hailey: False Teacher?*,” *Christianity Magazine*, November, 1988, p. 9).

Our interest here is not prejudicial labeling, but the proper identification of conduct. No doubt, some false teachers have evil motives (2 Pet. 2:3). Regardless of the motivations of the heart, a false teacher does more than merely reach an “erroneous conclusion”; he advances (teaches) his error by instructing others. As a teacher, he comes under the Lord’s “*stricter judgment*” for what he teaches, how he teaches and why he teaches (Gal. 1:6-9; Jas. 3:1; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; 4:1-5).

Thankfully, the apostle Peter did not shrink from identifying false teachers and warning us of them. He strictly warned, “*But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction*” (2 Pet. 2:1). Their words are not the “*way of truth*”, but “*deceptive*”; fabricated, fictitious and false (2 Pet. 2:2-3). They are plastic preachers who trade the truth for a lie for the sake of covetousness, convenience and comfort (2 Pet. 2:3; 2 Tim. 4:3-4). Their destruction is sure (2 Pet. 2:3-11).

Peter’s warning against false teachers in 2 Peter 2 cautions against the error of their teaching as he also exposes the corruption of their character. Wise, obedient faith prompts us to “*test the spirits*” in light of apostolic truth in order to hold fast what is good while abstaining from every form of evil (1 Jn. 4:1-6; 1 Thess. 5:21-22). Consider Peter’s warnings against false teachers and their teaching:

The crucial point is whether or not we are willing to make the applications needed in order to identify and avoid error. Truth will build us up and will expose error when we do the work of first examining what we are taught and then refusing what is false while clinging to what is true (1 Thess. 5:21-22). Otherwise, we jeopardize our souls. So, let us make some practical applications by examining false teachers and their false doctrines.

1. Marriage, divorce and remarriage (MDR). Some will not touch this subject with a 10-foot pole. But, Jesus did, and so must we (Matt. 5:31-32; 19:3-12; Mk. 10:1-12; Lk. 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:10-11; Rom. 7:2). Yet, because more than a few will not, the sin of adultery is minimized and redefined out of existence by false teachers whose error comforts sinners in their sinful remarriages. Some brethren hold and teach that alien sinners are not answerable to the law of Christ on the subject. (Marriage is from the beginning and Christ’s authority applies to the marriages of all men, including the lost, Matt. 19:4-6; Heb. 13:4; Matt. 28:18.) Other brethren teach adulterers may remarry with God’s approval, saying that when one is loosed from the marriage bond, both are loosed. (Jesus said this person “*commits adultery*” in remarriage, as well as the one who marries him or her, Matt. 19:9.) Some brethren teach that the words of Jesus spoke do not apply to people today, effectively removing Matthew-John from the new covenant, including Christ’s personal teaching on divorce and remarriage. (They fail to believe Jesus came “*preaching the gospel of the kingdom*”, and have Him teaching the Law of Moses, Matt. 4:23.) Some brethren teach people should remain in the marriage they are in when they become Christians, regardless of past divorces and remarriages. (These misapply 1 Corinthians 7:20, “*Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called*” by advising those in sinful remarriages to remain together. But, since they are not “*with God*” in that relationship, they cannot remain in it (1 Cor. 7:24).

Repentance demands ending sin, not remaining in it (Acts 26:20; Rev. 9:20-21).

So, ask your elders or your preacher what they teach on MDR and compare it to God's word. Are they false or faithful teachers? It does not take long, in most cases, to determine what is being taught (or not taught) on the subject. We must be willing to *"test the spirits"* or we will suffer the consequences of error's unfettered advancement.

2. Fellowship. Amazingly, many Christians who teach the truth on MDR will have fellowship with those who teach and practice error on the subject. The apostle John emphatically explained the loss of fellowship with God when one goes beyond the doctrine of Christ and when one accepts into fellowship the teacher of error (2 Jn. 9-11). Yet, preachers hold gospel meetings where error is taught and practiced, but the sin is not publicly addressed, exposed and rebuked. Preachers who teach error on MDR are accepted without question, using the rationale that such things are "matters of opinion" and "differences that have always existed". Two cannot walk together unless they agree, yet many think they can disagree on doctrine and still walk together (Amos 3:3). They are walking, but not with God (1 Jn. 1:6-7).

Ask your elders or preacher what they teach and do on the subject of fellowship. Do they agree to disagree with brethren on matters of *"moral and doctrinal import"* like MDR?

Beloved, we must not be deceived by false teachers who fabricate error and fight against the truth and those who uphold it. — *The Spirit's Sword*, July 21, 2013. ■

The Way Paul Preached

By Robert Turner

Soon after Paul had established the cause of Christ in Galatia, Judaising teachers appeared and began their work of destruction. They insisted that Gentiles must be circumcised, must come to Christ via a Jewish route of law; and in their effort to overcome the truth Paul had taught they questioned his apostleship. Paul defended his apostleship to establish the divine source of his message. We here note only the variety and nature of his appeal—the way Paul preached.

There is absolutely no toleration of *"another gospel,"* even if an angel should preach it (Gal. 1:8-9). Nor would its principles be compromised, even by another apostle (Gal. 2:11-14). But strong, hard reaching and emotional appeals were not incompatible. He compared his early work with them to a woman in birth pains, suffering much to bring them to Christ. Now, *"I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you"* (Gal. 4:19). He reminded them of their appreciation for his early effort, saying, *"If it had been possible ye would have plucked out your eyes, and have given them to me"* (Gal. 4:15). That is a heart wringer!

He could become upset with them: *"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you"* (Gal. 3:1); but it is concern for their spiritual well-being that disturbed him. *"Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years"* (as religious ceremonies); so he says, *"I am afraid of you"* (Gal. 4:11) and *"I stand in doubt of you"* (Gal. 4:20). This was the concern of genuine love.

But for those who brazenly contradicted the principles of the gospel Paul had some strong words. He said they were proselyting for the sake of numbers and their own glory (Gal. 6:12-ff). They *"desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh."* Perhaps his sharpest criticism is the irony of Galatians 5:12, *"I would they were even cut off which trouble you."* They preach a little cutting; I wish they were completely cut off.

Here is love, warning, concern, exasperation, tender appeal, fear and trembling, harshness, prayer, blood and thunder. Here is a genuine soldier of the cross; a man of flesh whose heart's desire was to serve the Christ; an example for us all. — *Collegue Church of Christ Bulletin*, August 6, 2017. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com - Email: lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com - Phone: 209-365-9250