

2Peter 2:1-3

Destructive Ways, vs. The Way of Truth

The Bible spoke more often to warn about the perils of the coming last days judgment than possibly any other topic in scripture.

So then, why is it that we, who are on the threshold of experiencing this most important, and most prophesied event since the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, are not allowed to speak openly to warn about the perils we see unfolding around us?

In 26 years of serving as a pastor, I have never known a more tabu topic to talk about from the pulpit than to teach what the Bible has to say about the global crisis of deception unfolding all around us.

Why is that? This is obviously a very spiritually charged climate that we are being plunged into.

We are being confronted with a massive deception, and deception can't compete with the truth, just as darkness can't exist where the light is shining.

Therefore, the light of the truth must be censored and silenced in order for this dark deception to succeed.

The Bible has much to say about the days that are coming upon us. Therefore we can expect increased opposition from those who are of the dark.

This letter of Second Peter is written to warn the churches of a coming time when false teachers will greatly increase among the believers.

There have always been false teachers trying to lead Christians astray, ever since the church began.

And there came a season shortly after this letter was written, that the churches were inundated with a large number of false teachers who did a lot of damage to many of these churches.

However, part of the focus of this letter's message is pointing to a day even further in the future, just before the second coming of Jesus Christ (1:16, 19; 2:9; 3:3-5, 10), when there would be an invasion of false teachers flooding the churches with destructive doctrines.

And it is beginning to look like we may be living in the time that Peter was speaking about.

2Peter 2:1, "But there were also false prophets among the people [referring to the people of Israel in the Old Testament], **even as there will be** [future tense] **false teachers among you, who**

will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.”

This is not referring to false religions and cult groups outside the church, this is talking about false teachers who work from inside the church to lead believers astray with false teaching.

There have always been, and there will always be, false teachers who come among the people of God—there is no way of preventing them from coming; it is unavoidable, “there will be false teachers among you...”, but we must not be deceived by them. And we must not embrace them, but resist.

False prophets and false teachers were those who claimed to be speaking the word of God, but they were speaking lies—their message was not from God.

And when the Bible speaks here of ***false teachers***, it is a reference to fake Christians—unsaved people, who are pretending to be teachers of the true gospel, but they have never been born again. They are wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matthew 7:15). (*Gene Green, p. 238*)

A genuine Christian who has some mixed-up ideas, or some false doctrine that they have embraced, is usually not called a false teacher, even though they may have some false teaching.

They will ***secretly bring in*** to the church fellowship heresies, meaning they bring from outside sources, false doctrine, which they teach as truth from God.

They secretly bring these heresies into the church. They do not announce, “This is a totally different teaching that I got from a demon, but I think we should follow it.”

No, they will typically quote a scripture, or part of a scripture, and then they give a distorted explanation of what that scripture means.

They may even say, something like this, “Holy Spirit revealed to me what these words mean, this is what He said ...”

And the meaning sounds plausible, it makes sense, but in reality, it is a deceptive lie from Satan, or from some other demon, and if you checked it out with scripture you would discover that it actually contradicts other verses in the Bible.

Most false teaching actually can be supported by scripture verses that are twisted or taken out of context.

But an accurate teaching will not only be supported by some scripture, there will be no scripture that contradicts it. If you can find a verse that supports a teaching, but there are other verses that disagree with it, then you do not have an accurate teaching.

Some examples of very well-known false teachers who are leading millions of people astray are, Joel Osteen, pastor of Lakewood Church in Texas; Bill Johnson, pastor of Bethel Church in Redding, California; televangelist, Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland, and former pastor, Rob Bell.

But most false teachers never become famous. They may lead a small group Bible study in their local church, but what they teach may be just as damaging as anything the big names are teaching.

Verse one says that these heresies are *destructive*, meaning that if you believe the false teaching to be true, and you follow it, the consequences of embracing that lie will bring much harm to your personal life, or to your family, or they will bring much harm to the life of the church, and to your relationship with God.

Some false teaching strikes at the core of the Christian faith—for example many false teachers, like Rob Bell, undermine the deity of Christ and the gospel of the cross.

But one of the destructive heresies that, in chapter three, Peter says will come in the last days, is not an attack against a core tenet of the gospel for salvation, but it is to deny the relevance or literal accuracy of Bible prophecy concerning the end times judgment and return of Christ.

Because many Christians do not believe Bible prophecy about the last days, many Christians do not recognize the establishment of an anti-christian totalitarian global government taking place before their very eyes, under the guise of getting control of a global pandemic.

And because they do not believe what Bible prophecy says about these events, many Christians are oblivious to the clever lies of the enemy. Therefore they are vulnerable to falling for the deception that this is merely a health crisis.

There are always consequences to following a lie—that false path leads somewhere other than where the truth would have taken you.

False teaching, which are lies, are not a side street that will eventually take you to the same destination as the truth. Lies are not a harmless scenic route or an alternative path that you can safely use to get where you want to go.

The whole purpose of Satan’s lies and heresies is to lead you astray and bring you to a very different destination than where the truth would take you.

Praise the Lord that He is merciful and willing lead us back into the way of truth if we cry out to Him when we have been led astray. (*See Luke 15*)

The last half of verse one says, ***“there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them...”***

The Greek word translated, “Lord”, in this verse, is a word that means the master of slaves, over which he had legal authority and control. (*Gene Green, p. 240*) In the culture of that day, it was common practice for wealthy people to have slaves.

Peter is using the language of a master who has bought slaves from bondage, and has given them freedom. This was a concept that was frequently used in the New Testament as a metaphor to describe Christian salvation.

1Corinthians 6:19-20, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

1Corinthians 7:23, “You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.” But rather we are to use our freedom to honor and glorify the Lord, who bought us with His blood.

These false teachers know that Jesus paid the price for their salvation, they know the gospel, they are in the church, but they have refused to follow Jesus—they deny Him, but continue to serve Satan, their old master.

Not only do they choose to follow Satan’s lies rather than the truth, but they also choose to entice others away from the truth with their false teaching.

Verse one ends saying that the result of their rejection of the Truth, in preference of following the voice of the father of lies, is that they will “***bring on themselves swift destruction.***”

This is a reference to what the Bible describes in ***1Thessalonians 5:2-3***, “For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. ³ For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.”

2Peter 2:2, “And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.”

False teachers hurt those who follow their destructive ways, but because they call themselves Christians, they hurt the reputation of the church in the eyes of the world, and therefore hinder others from coming to Christ.

Verse two prophetically declares that many, meaning many in the church of the last days, will follow the destructive teaching of the false teachers.

There are several verses in the Bible that prophetically warn that many will be led astray from the truth in the last days.

Matthew 7:15, 21-23, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves... ²¹ Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter

the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' [Many false teachers specialize in false signs and wonders—miracles performed by the power of demons, like what happens at Bethel church] ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

The effect of their deceptive lies is that the way of truth is blasphemed.

The Christian faith is described as the way of truth—truth matters to us. In fact, all throughout the Bible, God's word and the Gospel, and the Christian faith are, repeatedly, simply referred to as, "the truth".

John 14:6, *"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"*

John 8:32, *"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

But the truth is not only important in matters of religion, because genuine faith impacts every aspect of our lives. Truth matters in all of life.

Psalms 25:10, *"All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth..."*

Romans 1:18, *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."*

We teach our kids to tell the truth always, not just when talking about spiritual things.

Many parents homeschool their children because truth matters and the public schools teach many lies—such as evolution; marriage alternatives; gender choices; man-caused climate change; we can save the planet; and revised history.

What we put into our hearts and minds matters. **Psalms 51:6** *ESV*, *"Behold, you [God] delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart."*

The Christian faith insists on the truth being spoken and followed in all areas of life, including the courts (with hand on the Bible swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth).

When doing business, God hates dishonest weights and dishonest scales (Proverbs 11:1; 20:23).

In relationships, honesty is vital. Lying and deception will ruin any friendship or marriage.

1John 1:6, *"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth."*

In the wisdom literature of the Bible there is a very strong emphasis on speaking the truth, and walking according to the truth. We are warned not to walk in the way of lies. We are not to trust and follow those who lie.

Proverbs 8:7, “For my mouth will speak truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips.”

Proverbs 23:23, “Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding.”

Proverbs 19:9, “A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who speaks lies shall perish.”

Proverbs 29:12, “If a ruler pays attention to lies, all his servants become wicked.”

Truth matters. What if you are meeting a friend in an unfamiliar city and you ask for directions to a coffee shop where you hope to meet your friend, and you are given false directions—does truth make any difference in finding your friend?

In court, if a judge asks an eye witness, “Did you see this man shoot the victim?” and the witness lies and says, “No, I saw that woman shoot the victim.”

Does truth matter? What if you are that innocent woman who now faces the possibility of jail? What if you are the next victim, because the guilty went free? Does truth affect what you experience in life?

2Peter 2:2 says that the deceitful lies of the false teacher are *destructive ways*.

Deceitful lies of when spoken by politicians, and doctors are also destructive ways, and those who follow in the ways of lying authorities will experience a very different outcome from those who walk in the ways of truth.

Both paths do not lead to the same outcome. So, the choice we make in which voices we are going to follow in life are important, and they must be made with wisdom.

Therefore, if walking in the path of lies is destructive, but walking in the way of truth is freedom from evil, how can Christians not be concerned about the importance of walking in truth and exposing lies when it comes to addressing a global crisis that is affecting the lives of billions of people?

Romans 1:18, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness ... ²⁵ who exchanged the truth of God for the lie ... ^{2:2} But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.

If you don't get off the path but continue to walk down it, the end result of following a lie will be radically different than the end result of following truth. Because Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44), but God is truth and He is the Spirit of truth (John 14:6, 17).

Continuing to walk down Satan's path is going to lead to a very different outcome and experiences than walking down God's path.

2Peter 2:3, "By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words;"

ESV, "And in their greed they will exploit you with false words."

To exploit someone is to use them unfairly for your own advantage.

False teachers are not motivated by love of you, nor by love of God. But they are in it for what they can get out of you.

They either want your money, or they want your talents, or they simply want to increase the number of their followers to make them look and feel important.

Satan and deceptive political leaders are also the same. They seek to exploit you with their lies and deception. They will use you as long as you are useful to them.

But they can never accomplish their selfish purposes by speaking the truth. Because the truth liberates, but they seek to enslave you for their own purposes.

How very different is the gospel. God seeks to set us free from bondage, and free from sin and oppression. How does He set us free? With the truth!

In ***John 8:31-32***, Jesus said, "*If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³² Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*"

The truth matters. Only the way of truth will lead to freedom. Lies and deception will bring you into bondage.

So, it is vital that we discern truth from lies. Follow the way of truth, for it will bring freedom. Avoid the way of deception for it will lead to destruction.

Psalms 86:11, "*Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name.*"

3John 1:3-4, "*For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*"

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