

## 2 Peter 2:1-3

# Spiritual Sabotage

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In 2 Peter 2, Peter goes to great lengths to warn believers about the danger of spiritual sabotage at the hands of false teachers. If we are not on our guard, we can unwittingly be influenced by heretical teachings that will hinder our growth and bring spiritual harm. We must arm ourselves with the truth and vigilantly guard against false doctrine and those who spread it.

### I. The \_\_\_\_\_ of False Prophets (2 Peter 2:1a)

- Just as surely as there were “holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,” there were also false prophets who spread \_\_\_\_\_ and deceit. (2 Peter 2:15-16; Numbers 31:16)
- Just as there were false prophets in the Old Testament, there will be false teachers in the \_\_\_\_\_ era too. (Matthew 7:15-20)
- We have to critique every teaching to see if it lines up with \_\_\_\_\_, or else we are in danger of being carried away with false doctrine.

### II. The \_\_\_\_\_ of False Prophets (2 Peter 2:1b-3a)

- False prophets are master deceivers and experts at spiritual \_\_\_\_\_. (Jude 1:4)
- False prophets teach doctrines that undermine the truth of the gospel. They mix lies in with the truth so that the result is a \_\_\_\_\_ gospel than the true gospel. (Galatians 1:6-9)
- Heresy causes \_\_\_\_\_, and in the body of Christ, nothing is more harmful than a divisive spirit. (Mark 3:25; Ephesians 4:3; Titus 3:10-11)
- False prophets are often \_\_\_\_\_ at what they do. They convince many people to follow them and their warped teaching. (1 Timothy 6:3-5)
- False prophets give the world reason to \_\_\_\_\_ God, the gospel and God’s people. (1 Peter 2:19-20)
- False prophets are \_\_\_\_\_, and like all good con artists their end goal is to benefit themselves at the expense of others. (Colossians 3:5; 2:8)

### III. The \_\_\_\_\_ of False Prophets (2 Peter 2:3b)

- False prophets will not always enjoy their ill-gotten gain. God promises that they will be punished \_\_\_\_\_ and painfully. (Psalms 73:3-8, 16-19)
- Do not doubt that God can and will \_\_\_\_\_ those who lie and deceive and lead people astray. (Jude 1:14-15)

## Conclusion

We must always beware of false prophets. Their \_\_\_\_\_ will not only hinder us from growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, it will rob us of the joy and satisfaction that comes from believing and following the truth. Do not fall victim to spiritual sabotage.

## 2 Peter 2:1-3

### Spiritual Sabotage

We are in a spiritual war. Satan and his army are bent on causing destruction and chaos in an effort to prevent the lost from being saved and the saved from growing in sanctification. Just like in physical war, one of the tactics that Satan loves to use is sabotage. He deploys secret agents who pose as allies but who are in reality enemies of the gospel. By means of deceit and manipulation the corrupt the truth, spread lies, and bring reproach on the name of Christ. The ensuing confusion turns people away from receiving the gospel and discourages Christians from growing in grace.

Peter was a veteran of the spiritual war who had faced off against false prophets many times. He saw the betrayal of Judas Iscariot, he argued against the elders and priests, and he had dealt with the Judaizers in the church. He knew that there have always been and there always be false prophets, agents of Satan who corrupt and deceive.

In 2 Peter 2, Peter goes to great lengths to warn believers about the danger of spiritual sabotage at the hands of false teachers. If we are not on our guard, we can unwittingly be influenced by heretical teachings that will hinder our growth and bring spiritual harm. We must arm ourselves with the truth and vigilantly guard against false doctrine and those who spread it.

#### I. The Presence of False Prophets

*2 Peter 2:1a But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you...*

At the end of chapter one, Peter declared that the scriptures were a “more sure word of prophecy.” But just as surely as there were “holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,” there were also false prophets who spread lies and deceit. Elijah confronted false prophets on Mount Carmel. The prophet Micaiah was challenged by the false prophet Zedekiah. There were false prophets who opposed Jeremiah, even convincing the king to lock him up on charges of domestic terrorism and treason. But one of the most famous examples of a false prophet in the Old Testament is Balaam, who Peter specifically mentions later in this chapter.

*2 Peter 2:15-16 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; [16] But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet.*

The story of Balaam as a false prophet is interesting, because he never actually cursed the Israelites like Balak the king of Moab wanted him to. Instead, he taught Balak how to get the Israelites to bring God's curse upon themselves by sinning. (Numbers 31:16)

Just as there were false prophets in the Old Testament, there will be false teachers in the New Testament era too. The New Testament is filled with warnings to be on the lookout for them, including warnings from Jesus.

*Matthew 7:15-20 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. [16] Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? [17] Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. [18] A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. [19] Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. [20] Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

We cannot afford to be naive. We have to realize that there are many so-called bible teachers and preachers who are actually false teachers. We have to critique every teaching to see if it lines up with scripture, or else we are in danger of being carried away with false doctrine.

## II. The Ploy of False Prophets

*2 Peter 2:1b-3a ...who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. [2] And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. [3] And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you:*

How do false prophets succeed in leading so many people astray? False prophets do not announce themselves as such. They come in secretly. They sneak in undercover. They are master deceivers and experts at spiritual camouflage. That's why Jesus warned to be on the lookout for the wolves in sheep's clothing. They dress themselves up as sheep, literally and figuratively. They know how to put on a convincing performance. Christians are often unaware of their presence.

*Jude 1:4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

What they bring to the believers are teachings that Peter calls "damnable heresies." Their doctrine is false. It is full of lies and deception. While they might be wrong about a lot of things, the most dangerous of their heresies involve their teachings about Jesus and the gospel. They "deny the Lord that bought them." It may be hard to detect at first because they do not usually tell blatant lies like, "Jesus cannot save you." They are more subtle than that, and instead they teach doctrines that undermine the truth of the gospel. They mix lies in with the truth so that the result is a different gospel than the true gospel. Jude says that they turn the "grace of our God into lasciviousness, denying the only Lord God." Any teaching that leads people to use grace as an excuse to sin is a distortion of the gospel and those who spread such teachings are under God's condemnation.

*Galatians 1:6-9 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: [7] Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. [8] But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. [9] As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*

Peter calls their teachings "heresies." A heresy is a wrong teaching around which people gather as a religious sect. Behind this is the concept of division. Heresy causes division, and in the body of Christ, nothing is more harmful than a divisive spirit. Jesus said, "If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand." (Mark 3:25) That is why we are to endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:3) Dealing properly with heresy is so important that it rises to the level of church discipline.

*Titus 3:10-11 A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; [11] Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.*

Sadly, many churches and Christians are passive when it comes to dealing with heresies and so "many shall follow their pernicious ways." False prophets are often successful at what they do. They convince many people to follow them and their warped teaching, and they point to the number of people following them as an indicator that they must be right and you should follow them to. It is just another form of the age old "everyone else is doing it" excuse. But just because something works in the sense that it accomplishes its goal, that does not mean that it is right.

*1 Timothy 6:3-5 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; [4] He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, [5] Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.*

The result of their false teachings is twofold. First, because of their teaching, “way of truth shall be evil spoken of.” They give the world reason to despise God, the gospel and God’s people. The world is going to speak against the truth. We cannot help that. But we can do is make sure that we do not given them any good reason to do so.

*1 Peter 2:19-20 For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. [20] For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.*

The second result of their false teaching is the defrauding of the believers. False prophets are con artists, and like all good con artists their end goal is to benefit themselves at the expense of others. They are covetous, which is a form of idol worship. (Colossians 3:5) They are driven by a desire for material gain and worldly fame. False prophets rob God’s people for their own gain. This is true in the material sense as they often solicit donations from people under false pretenses. “Give your seed gift to this ministry and God will give you back ten times more!” It is also true in the spiritual sense. They take away the daily joy and fulfillment that the gospel brings to the believer. When we believe lies instead of the truth, we are confused and frustrated. We are hindered in our spiritual growth, and as Peter said in the first chapter, we will be “barren” and “unfruitful” and can even get to the point that we forget that we have been “purged from our old sins.” We must not let the false prophets make merchandise of us.

*Colossians 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

### III. The Punishment of False Prophets

*2 Peter 2:3b ...whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.*

False prophets will not always enjoy their ill-gotten gain. God promises that they will be punished swiftly and painfully. We struggle sometimes because at any given moment it may seem like those who are believing and spreading heresy are enjoying their best life now. We can even begin to doubt whether what we have believed is actually the truth. That is the dangerous deception of false doctrine. It appeals to our sinful tendency to be impatient and to trust what we perceive instead of what God has said. We must remind ourselves frequently of the truth, and the truth is that the false prophets will receive their just punishment in the end, while those who believe the truth of the gospel will receive their reward.

*Psalms 73:3-8 For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. [4] For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. [5] They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. [6] Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. [7] Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. [8] They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily.*

*Psalms 73:16-19 When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; [17] Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. [18] Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. [19] How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.*

Much of the rest of chapter two deals with the punishment of the wicked and the reward of the righteous. Do not doubt that God can and will judge those who lie and deceive and lead people astray.

*Jude 1:14-15 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, [15] To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.*

### **Conclusion**

Of all the acts of sabotage in history, Peter had a front row seat to the most diabolical and infamous of them all. Among the twelve men closest to Jesus was one man who was a double agent. He was so good at blending in that he had everyone except Jesus completely fooled. He bided his time for years, reaping the benefits of ill-gotten gain as he helped himself to the corporate account of Jesus and the disciples. Then, in a final act of greed, he agreed to turn Jesus over to the authorities in exchange for thirty pieces of silver, the cost of a slave. He led the soldiers to Jesus, and betrayed Jesus with a deceitful kiss, making the name Judas Iscariot synonymous with “traitor” for the rest of time.

We must always beware of false prophets. Their influence will not only hinder us from growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, it will rob us of the joy and satisfaction that comes from believing and following the truth. Do not fall victim to spiritual sabotage.