

Teacher's Vet

2 Peter 2:1-3 March 1, 2026

Never underestimate the impact of a teacher. Most of us can think back to a teacher who not only made a subject come alive, but awakened wonder in us and a desire to truly grow in our learning. Along the way, whether they said it or not, it was clear that they actually cared about us.

Even *more* vivid is our memory of the bad teachers. The discouragement we felt walking into the classroom. This teacher stopped caring long. Rather than strengthen our understanding, they undermined it. Their influence didn't foster any wonder in your mind, only weariness.

But worst of all is a bad teacher that you don't *know* is a bad teacher. They can do a lot of damage. My first year at my *Christian* college, every student had to take this class called *Jesus In The Christian Community*. On the first day of that class, the professor stood at the front with a smile on her face and proceeded to explain that much of what we had been told about Jesus, the Bible, and Christianity was *not*, in fact, true. That the Scriptures were *not* infallible. That there was truth to be gleaned in *other* religious systems as well. I knew it was going to be a *long* semester.

I watched friends join the Bible department at this school. While there *were* some faithful, orthodox teachers, the dominant philosophy among the theology staff was the same as that JCC teacher.

I look back now more than 20 years later and I can think of quite a few former friends who received theology degrees, Bible degrees, specialist training in Hebrew and Greek, yet many now openly deny Christ. Among those my age, that seems to be the rule, rather than the exception. That was the product of the Bible department. What a difference teaching can make.

That's the main point of our text today. Really, it's the main point of Peter's message in this letter: Watch out for those teachers whose ideas lead to spiritual and eternal ruin. Of course, it's not all doom and gloom. Peter began by encouraging us that we have all we need for a vibrant spiritual life, for Godliness, for days full of hope and confidence as we trust in the Lord and wait on Him.

But now in chapter 2, he moves into the main body of his message, which is to warn us of the danger of false teachers, help us know how to identify them, and how to not be knocked off balance by the misdirections they smuggle into the Church.

2 Peter 2:1 - ¹There were indeed false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, and will bring swift destruction on themselves.

Peter packs *so much* into every sentence! This one verse alone touches on a wide variety of Biblical connections, prophecy, doctrines, philosophy, and practical insight.

His main point is that false teaching always has been and always will be an issue for the people of God. Some problems in life are ever-present. For example, 95-100% of adults carry the roseola virus in their body.¹ We're up against spiritual viruses as well. Things like pride and doubt and fear. False teaching will always be a spiritual contagion seeking to afflict believers. Don't let that knowledge discourage you. Instead, this knowledge helps us fortify ourselves so we can develop spiritual antibodies and immunity. That's why Peter is warning us.

Now, in this letter, Peter speaks both empirically and prophetically. There *were* false teachers doing their thing right then *and* they will be more in the future. In fact, Peter uses the word "will" 6 times in these 3 verses. There *will* be false teachers, they *will* bring in their heresies, many *will* follow them, and it *will* bring defamation on the name of Jesus.

It was a problem in the Old Testament, it was a problem in the first century, it is still an issue today. But before we look closer at these teachers and their teachings, some good news: No matter *what* era a believer finds themselves in, they *can* stay rooted in the truth. They can be part of what the Bible calls the "remnant." The remnant are those who hold to their faith in God, no matter the pressure from the culture, no matter how influential the false teachers are - no matter what.

There were times in the Old Testament when the false prophets absolutely dominated the airwaves. But there were always those who kept walking with God. In 1 Kings 18, there was a man named Obadiah. His job was to manage the palace for the wicked King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. But Obadiah greatly feared the Lord. He was like a 9th century B.C. Oscar Schindler. He saved and protected 100 *true* prophets of the Lord. He was not polluted by the lies that dominated his nation.

In the time of Jeremiah, an era dominated by idolatry and false prophecy, we see the Rechabites - this faithful family who would not compromise their beliefs or behavior. There's a whole chapter of Jeremiah dedicated to them.² They stayed true when all their neighbors followed a lie.

You and I *can* stand strong in truth. We *can* share in the Divine nature and escape the corruption in the world. To do so, we have watch out for the lies that undermine God's Word and His directives.

Peter says these teachers are going to bring in *destructive* heresies. That almost never takes the form of someone walking in and saying, "You should abandon Christianity," or, "Let's perform human sacrifice to Baal." It's always more subtle than that. In fact, the term Peter uses for "bring[ing] in" can mean to *smuggle*,³ or to bring them in alongside the orthodox doctrines of the Church.⁴

Doctrine, by the way, simply means instruction or precepts. Teachings about the truth.

¹ <https://www.infectioncontroltoday.com/view/new-insights-human-herpesvirus-6>

² Jeremiah 35

³ Edwin Blum *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 12: Hebrews Through Revelation*

⁴ John Walvoord and Roy Zuck *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*

Peter is describing a person or group gaining influence in the Church who present *new* understanding, a *new* school of thought. It masquerades as true Christianity, but is actually putting you on a different path altogether.

One way to identify this kind of teacher is if they are sectarian. They create a faction and always trying to add numbers.⁵ Always working to *exclude* others and siphon people off to their group.

But the *main* way to verify a teaching is to see how it treats Jesus Christ. In this case, they “deny the Master Who bought them.” At the time, this was happening in two ways. The false teachers denied that Christ was going to return *and* they were denying His moral imperatives - the way Christ commanded us to live. It was a new way of living. A redefinition of truth, morality, and spirituality.

If a teacher has a wrong Christology, *everything* else is going to be off-base. So, for example, when someone says that Jesus’ was limited by His first century culture, or that Jesus’ commands on how to live life are now outdated, or if they say that Jesus’ teachings and His word are not enough, but that we need *other* ‘truths’ added in, they’re denying the Master.

Before moving on, take a moment to notice how Peter said that Christ *bought* these false teachers through His death on the cross. This indicates that Christ’s atonement was *not* limited, but that Christ’s atoning work was for every human to ever exist. These false teachers were *not* born again, though they claimed to follow the Lord, yet His blood *was* shed for them all the same.

But let’s get back into the danger of their teaching. And, let me be clear: We’re not talking about differences of opinion on non-essential areas of Bible doctrine. This isn’t about various preferences in style of worship or modes of baptism or church government. This is about teachings and teachers that actually lead people off the path of truth, off the path of righteousness, onto *another* path, typically of selfishness, license, and man-centered theology, one *outside* faith in Christ.

That path, Peter explains, is destructive for lives now and for eternities in the future. In the here and now, these false teachings lead to lives that are corrupted, exploited, and ruined. A spiritual life which is the equivalent of a dog eating its own vomit.

But these teachings also lead to *eternal* destruction. Jesus Christ is *the way, the truth, the life*. And when a person goes *another* way, no matter how good it looks or sounds, the end is destruction.

One source notes, “Bringing swift destruction on themselves is not a simple extinction of existence...but an everlasting state of torment and death”⁶ ‘Swift’ here makes reference to what we call the doctrine of imminence⁷ - that Christ can return at any moment with deliverance for His people *and* judgement for His enemies. Peter’s warning is serious - it’s life and death.

⁵ Richard Bauckham *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 50: Jude, 2 Peter*

⁶ Gerhard Kittel *Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament*

⁷ See Bauckham, Douglas Moo *The NIV Application Commentary: 2 Peter, Jude*

2 Peter 2:2 - ² Many will follow their depraved ways, and the way of truth will be maligned because of them.

The sad news is that false teachers are often *very* effective. Which means we can't just look at the size of a church or a ministry or a teacher's influence to verify their message.

Large numbers do not necessarily equal spirituality. Jeremiah had very few followers. Now, there *are* times when God does a great work of revival and great masses of people fill faithful churches. But just because a podcaster says they're a Christian and has a million subscribers does not mean their message is the truth. You have to evaluate the teaching. Where do their directions lead?

But here's the *good* news: God has given you a mind. If you're a Christian, He's given you His Holy Spirit to be your Teacher - to help you understand the truth.⁸ God has promised to not withhold wisdom from you if ask for it. So, no matter *who* is trying to teach you, no matter how impressive or influential they seem to be, do what the Bereans did. They heard this guy Paul teach a message about God, then they took what he said and examined the Scriptures to see if it was true. Acts 17 says they did so *daily*.⁹ It wasn't that they had *closed* minds, they had *critical* minds. Not just drinking the draught because they were impressed by the person offering it.

You and I are called to be wise, to be discerning, to be careful about which well we drink from, spiritually speaking. False teachers present themselves as expert navigators, but their directions don't lead to abundant life. Their path is a crooked path of depravity and spiritual disease.

Often the form these heresies take is in personal license - you can indulge however you want, you can live how you want. There's frequently an embrace of all sorts of sexuality outside the commands of Scripture. A lack of moral restraint.¹⁰ And as people walk this road while *claiming* to be Christians, it causes the unbelieving world outside the Church to say, "Those 'Christians' are a bunch of hypocrites!" It brings shame on the name of Jesus. The truth is maligned.

When professing Christians disobey Christ, when we sin before a watching world, it contributes to a blaspheming world digging themselves further into their unbelief. Now *you* are not responsible for someone else's choices, but *you* influence them. And God takes that *really* seriously.

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus says those who put an obstacle in the faith of others have done a terrible thing. It would be better to have a millstone put on your neck and be thrown into the sea!

2 Peter 2:3 - ³ They will exploit you in their greed with made-up stories. Their condemnation, pronounced long ago, is not idle, and their destruction does not sleep.

⁸ John 14:26

⁹ Acts 17:11

¹⁰ Gene Green *Jude & 2 Peter*

They offer “freedom,” they offer “pleasure,” they offer “enlightenment,” but all you really get from them is entrapment, exploitation, corruption, and blindness.

Now notice what Peter says: “They will exploit *YOU*.” This isn’t just a theory in a lab. This is a real danger out there. He doesn’t say this to make us *afraid*, but to make us *aware*. So we can be firm in the truth. Remember what he said in chapter 1: He’s reminding us of things we already know so that we will be *established* in the truth. Because God *wants* life for you. He wants strength for you. He wants to protect you from exploitation. To save you from being spiritually robbed.

In many cases, these false teachers was *literally* taking resources from people. In that time, as well as ours, false teachers often charged fees and begged money from their listeners.¹¹ And Peter says here that the false teachers were trying to make *merchandise* out of Christians.¹²

Beware commercialized religion. Now listen, our church is supported through donations. We don’t bring in tax revenue. We don’t make profit from selling products or services. The things we do sell, we sell at a loss. Giving financially to God’s work is part of the Christian life. We are so thankful for those of you who have and do give to our local church family here.

But that’s not what Peter is talking about. He’s talking about money grubbing and greed. He’s talking about things like the Texas megachurch pastor who offers life-coaching classes for \$84,000 a year. Only millionaires are allowed to apply. That’s *real*, by the way. He also offers marriage counseling for \$36,000 a year.¹³ He’s talking about leaders who fleece their flocks every week so they can buy a jet. He’s talking about those who hide the Gospel behind a paywall.

We try hard to not pressure people to give because so many churches *have* been influenced by worldly methods of fund raising. And it’s not right to constantly shake God’s people down for money. That constant pressure for giving is part of the false teacher playbook. That doesn’t mean every church that puts up a thermometer is part of the false teacher group, but it’s a methodology that should make us pause and evaluate carefully.

Now, Peter says, “Listen, these guys are just making up stories.” Interestingly, *that’s* what they accused Peter and the other apostles of doing. It was just projection and misdirection. Meanwhile, as we saw last time, Peter and the apostles had a message that was in line with Scripture, that was humble and loving, one that was submitted to and in line with the teachings of Jesus Christ.

So, now that we know these false teachers are out there, what do we do about it? It’s interesting - by the end of the letter, Peter doesn’t tell us to stone them or shout them down. Actually, all he tells us to do is escape them. Get away from them. Be on guard. Don’t be led away. Don’t be afraid but be aware and be advancing in the truth, in grace, in the strength given to you by God as you follow Him.

¹¹ Craig Keener *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament (Second Edition)*

¹² D. Edmond Hiebert *Second Peter And Jude*

¹³ <https://protestia.com/2025/11/06/megachurch-pastor-charges-36000-year-for-marriage-counseling-retreats/>