

Beware of Spiritual Terrorists (2 Peter 2:1-3) (April 19, 2020)

- Peter has a great shepherd's heart as he desires to protect the Lord's sheep from being cruelly deceived and decimated by spiritual terrorists.
 - He will candidly unmask their nature, tactics and brutal influence from 2:1-3:7.
 - Pastor John MacArthur writes this in his study notes on 2 Peter 2:1: "*The greatest sin of Christ-rejectors and the most damning work of Satan is misrepresentation of the truth and its consequent deception. Nothing is more wicked than for someone to claim to speak for God to the salvation of souls when in reality, he speaks for Satan to the damnation of souls.*"
 - Warning may be hard and unwanted, but it is one of the most loving things we can do to spare people from being seriously hurt, especially when it deals with misrepresenting God's saving truth.

- Peter warns us about **four destructive realities** of spiritual terrorists
 1. **False teachers are spiritual counterfeits** (2:1: "*false prophets...false teachers*")
 - Peter uses two words for "*false*" (v. 3: "*false*" is the word for plastic or something that is fabricated, made up; v. 1: "*false*" is the word for pseudo or a lie)
 - Remember, the greatest **threat** to the church is deception (2 Cor. 11:1-4, 12-15) and the greatest **tool** of Satan (the deceiver) is false religion (Rev. 12:9; 13:11-14), so the greatest need of the church is **discernment**, so Paul calls the church "*to keep an eye on*" the false teachers and leaders (Rom. 16:17) and "*examine everything carefully*" (1 Thess. 5:21)
 - In the **Old Testament** with "*false prophets*" God had some strong words (Jer. 5:30-31; 14:14; 23:16; Ezek. 13:2; 22:28; Deut. 13:1-5; 18:21-22)
 - In the **New Testament**, every writer sounds a warning about deception because knowing, believing and living the truth is so essential. Here is how God describes them: "*false teachers, prophets, apostles*"; "*liars*" (1 Jn. 2:22; 1 Tim.

4:2); “*enemies of the cross of Christ*” (Ph. 3:18); “*evil workers, dogs*” (Ph. 3:2); “*ravenous wolves*” Mt. 7:15); “*savage wolves*” (A. 20:29); “*unreasoning animals*” (2 Pt. 2:12; Jude 1:10); “*deceitful workers*” (2 C. 11:13); “*men of depraved mind*” (1 T. 6:5; 2 T. 3:8); “*imposters...evil men*” (2 T. 3:13); “*rebellious men, empty talkers, deceivers*” (Titus 1:10, 2 Jn. 1:7); “*stains, blemishes*” (2 Pt. 2:13); “*accursed children*” (2 Pt. 3:14); “*unprincipled men*” (2 Pt 3:17); “*springs without water, mists driven by a storm*” (2 Pt. 3:17); “*hidden reefs, clouds without water, autumn trees without fruit, wild waves of the sea, wandering stars*” (Jd 1:12-13); “*deceitful spirits*” (1 Tim. 4:1); “*grumblers*” (Jude 1:16); “*mockers*” (Jude 1:18); “*antichrists*” (1 Jn. 2:18, 22); “*another Jesus*” (2 C. 11:4)

- Stay alert as these deceivers will be “*among you*” (v. 1) as Paul also noted in Acts 20:29-30.
2. **False teachers are spiritually contaminated** (2:1: “*secretly introduce destructive heresies*; v. 2: “*will follow their sensuality...the way of truth will be maligned*”; v. 3: “*they will exploit you with false words*”)
- Their **communication** is contaminated (“*secretly introduce...*”). Secretly means to bring in from the outside and this is exactly what deceivers do as they add and mix their own inventions to God’s Word (e.g., self love, God wants you prosperous—healthy and wealthy, etc.)
 - Their **content** is contaminated (“*heresies*”): God calls this the “doctrine of demons” (1 Tim. 4:1). The word “heresies” came to mean something that was factious or divided, so Peter makes sure we know their teaching is “*destructive*” (mainly misrepresenting the “*Master who bought them*” in word, motive and deed)
 - Their **character** is contaminated (v. 2: “*many will follow their sensuality...*v. 3: “*in their greed they will exploit you*”). They cater to the flesh and that which makes us feel good, but they are driven by the lusts of the flesh (Rom.16:18; 2 Pt 2:10-11, 14-15, 18; Col. 2:18-23; Jude 4, 8, 12, 16, 18-19)
3. **False teachers are spiritually contagious** (2:2: “*many*”)

- This word “*many*” is scary as to its magnitude and influence.
 - Jesus predicted this very thing (Matt 24:4-5) and we see this unfold dramatically in the end times with the Antichrist and False Prophet’s influence (Rev. 13:8, 14)
 - What makes these spiritual terrorist so contagious and influential? Satan (Jn. 8:44; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Cor. 11:12-14) who energizes their deceptive messages and methods (2 Cor. 2:11) and preys on the “*unsuspecting*” (Rom. 16:18) who want “*their ears tickled*” so they “*accumulate teachers in accordance with their own desires and turn away from the truth and will turn aside to myths*” (2 Tim. 4:3-4)
4. **False teachers are spiritually condemned** (2:1: “*bringing swift destruction upon themselves*”; v. 3: “*their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep*”)
- Peter uses the word “*destruction*” 5 of the 18 times it appears in the New Testament (v. 1, 3; 3:6-7, 17)
 - The word “*destruction*” doesn’t mean annihilation or ceasing to exist, but for the eternal loss of fellowship with God (1 Cor. 8:11; 2 Cor. 4:3)
 - Peter mentions three descriptive realities of this destruction
 - It’s a **coming** destruction (v. 1): The word “*swift*” points to the fact that it is imminent as it can happen anytime and when it does it will be quick
 - It’s **consistent** destruction (v. 3): “*from long ago*” points back to the Old Testament when God declared judgment on false teachers that continues to his day...it’s “*not idle*”
 - It’s a **certain** destruction (v. 3): “*their destruction is not asleep*” vividly pictures destruction personified as an executioner, always ready to administer God’s sentence on those who teach and follow false doctrine.