


False Teachers Among You

Frank Jamerson, Florida College Lecture 2-9-00

Introduction:

- A. Ten years ago spoke on Pharisaism. In the introduction I said that after understanding their basic error, I decided I was one! When I told one of my sons my subject this year, he said "You can't do like you did on Pharisaism and say I am one." Why not? According to some definitions I have read, all of you think I am a false teacher – and if you don't, you just don't know some things I believe! But by the same judgment with which you judge, we all think you are lse teacher, or we haven't talked with you long enough to brand you yet!
- B. No shortage of material on the subject:
1. Some of our liberal brethren (who are accustomed to pigeon holing people with whom they disagree) have been battling over the same subject.
 - a. In **The Spiritual Sword** I read – One was labeled false because "he would not call names" in his preaching. (He does, but not as the accusers desire!)
"If a sound preacher appears on a lectureship or other program with another preacher who takes some erroneous views, then the sound preacher becomes unsound because he was on the same program!" (Guilt by association.) Some said "The Spiritual Sword was 'on the slide' for even allowing them to write an article."
 - b. The ed. **Carolina Messenger** (July, '99): "Ancient Jews developed 'hedges' around the law. These were rules which were in addition to the regulations God had given, but which were intended to keep people from even going in the direction of violating the law...These 'rules' say when and with whom sound brethren may associate...We recognize the dangers inherent in some situations. But at the same time we must grant that each person has a right to his own judgment as to the places, the events, and with whom he will associate (as long, of course, as he does not surrender the truth).. (David R. Pharr).
Then quoted article by **Guy N. Woods** from the July, '99 issue of **Gospel Advocate**: "The assumption exists that some man or group of men is clothed with the power...to pass judgment officially on whom elderships may, or may not invite...men with whom they disagree on currently burning issues, while happily fellowshiping and supporting those with whom they are in conflict on numerous other issues not presently being agitated..... There is a vast difference in announcing a meeting and in endorsing all that the speakers may believe or say."
 - c. I am not surprised when **institutional brethren**, who have pigeon-holed their brethren for years - do that to one another. But I have never appreciated being labeled "anti everything" just because I am anti some things. (Grover Stevens used to say "we really do have some antis - they are against everything"!)
 - d. When I label someone because of: the Paper for which he writes, or the school

where he teaches; or label the paper or school because of what one person said; or label someone because he is a friend of someone I don't like, that is pigeon-holing. I was accused of fellowshipping false teaching because I spoke at a place on vacation where a false teacher once taught. (Maybe I shouldn't admit it, but I also once taught a Bible class in a Methodist Church, and never imagined that I fellowshipped everything they taught.)

- C. We must remember that 1 Cor. 13:7 says love "believes all things and hopes all things." I understand this to teach that if we have love we put the best construction on what others say and write and hope that they didn't mean it when it appears that they meant something wrong (until we are certain they did).
1. I have to be careful not to act contrary to love, because I can be lost for **false living** as well as **false teaching**.
 2. I have received e-mail messages that **at best** were unkind, **at worst** slanderous. When I reply and hit "send" the message is gone. When I start to delete a message it asks: "**Are You Sure You want to Delete This?**" Maybe computer programs should ask: "**ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO SEND THIS?**"
 3. We can be false teachers by **teaching falsely**, or simply **not teaching** the truth; by **ungodly living** or **not acting with love**.
- D. Will first discuss passages in 2 Peter and Jude about false teachers and their destructive influences, then deal with other teachings that relate to the subject.

Body:

A. Peter's and Jude's approach to false teaching:

1. How many times does the O.T. use the expression - "false prophet"? NONE, but the N.T. says they existed, and that false teachers exist - though the expression is used only once (2 Pet. 2:1).
2. Peter and Jude begin and end their discussion of false teachers by emphasizing God's word as authority. They were teaching and acting contrary to the Truth.
 - a. 2 Pet. 1:20,21 - then warned that those guided by a different spirit would come in - then 3:1,2.
 - b. Jude 3 - then discusses certain men who had crept in and rebukes them - then v. 17.
3. We must teach the truth - to prevent false doctrines from coming in, and we must teach the truth to rebuke those that have entered. (We do not have to teach error to be false. When people hear our preaching and cannot tell the difference between truth and error - we are false.)
4. Although the O.T. never uses the expression "false prophet" it does describe them as those who "prophesied falsely." Jer. 5:30,31: "An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?"

Moses said: "When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him" (Dt. 18:22).

- a. Often false prophets were motivated by greed, popularity, or lasciviousness - but **if the message was not from God**, it was false **regardless of motives**. I know we have different ideas over whether all false teachers are dishonest, etc., but I am going to center my lesson on how we should deal with those we believe to be teaching falsely - **regardless of their attitudes**.
- b. I will not **participate in** the teaching, or practice of anything I believe to be false - regardless of the spirit of the person doing the teaching - or whether I will support him in other teaching and practice or not.

B. **Characteristics of false teachers** (from 2 Pet. and Jude):

(Peter said they will secretly bring in destructive heresies, Jude says they have crept in unnoticed - we must guard against the introduction of error and oppose it when it has crept in.)

1. Their character was despicable:

- a. They reviled authority, were self-willed and presumptuous in speaking evil of dignitaries, were like brute beasts that follow natural instincts (a dog will attack his friend, if he's hurt - he doesn't know the difference between friend and foe), revel (carouse) in the daytime (usually night activity), and have no shame as they walk according to their own lusts, their eyes are full of adultery; they knew the right way - but like Balaam "love the hire of wrongdoing."
- b. Even "while they feast with you" (2 Pet. 2:13), they are "spots in your love feasts" (Jude 12). The only feasts Christians partook - social meals (Acts 2:46) and the Lord's supper (which is not specifically called a feast, but is eating with Christ). **Clinton Hamilton** commented that evidence for some solemn religious meal is weak. "No doubt, under view are common social meals which were used as occasions to beguile brethren into believing that they could become gluttons and winebibbers" (Commentary on 2 Pet. & Jude, p. 164).
- c. Paul clearly condemned congregational social meals, as well as corrupting the Lord's supper (1 Cor. 11).
- d. Whatever love feasts were - false teachers used them to beguile unstable souls. False teachers today twist these passages to seek justification for congregational kitchens and social meals. (Speaker, at Fl. School of Preaching, quoted "tarry one for another" (1 Cor. 11:33) and said "it sounds like Paul encouraged eating together." Next verse - "But if any man is hungry...")

C. **Dealing with such teachers:**

1. Judgment assured through a number of O.T. examples:

- a. The angels who rebelled (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6)
 - b. The ancient world destroyed with a flood (2 Pet. 2:5)
 - c. Sodom and Gomorrah - with fire (2 Pet. 2:6; Jude 7)
 - d. Israelites in the wilderness (Jude 5)
 - e. These show that God "knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment" (2 Pet. 2:9). (He delivered Noah and his family when everyone else was wicked; He delivered Lot, his wife and two daughters, when 10 righteous people could not be found.)
2. Jude - gives three ways of dealing with those who are going, or have gone into apostasy. **"There are some whom you must pity because of their doubts; some you must save by snatching them out of the fire. But there are others for whom your pity must be mixed with caution, hating the very clothes which their deeds have soiled"** (vs. 22,23, Phillips Modern English).
- a. Obviously there is diversity in our treatment of those we believe to be in error - and we may have diversity in judgment as to where a specific person may stand; each must make that judgment for himself.
 - b. Most would treat the false teachers described in Peter and Jude in the third manner - pity, but caution against being defiled by even trying to help them.
3. Brethren are generally agreed (and I believe the Bible plainly teaches) that "if the doctrine taught by the teacher is false, then the person who does the teaching is a false teacher on that particular subject" (J.T. Smith, Gospel Truths, May 1998, p. 5).
- a. Does that mean that he is an immoral reprobate - as described in 2 Peter and Jude?
 - b. If not, how do we distinguish between those teachers and teachers who sincerely respect the apostolic message but have made an interpretation with which we disagree?
 - c. One suggested that we CAPITALIZE False for one and not for the other.
 - d. I do not have all the answers. (One brother said: "Consistency is very difficult to achieve. Most people are stricter in theory than in practice" Bob Waldron, **"Is It Lawful? A Comprehensive Study of Divorce"** p. 436).
 - e. I am not going to "pigeon hole" everyone, but will try to set forth principles that I believe are Biblical and should be applied to any issue that arises; rather than being caught up in whatever is the current issue - and taking positions that are inconsistent when applied to other issues.
4. There are **two extreme positions** that can be Biblically excluded - "unity in diversity," and "one hundred percent agreement on everything in order to do anything together."

D. First False Extreme - Unity in Diversity.

1. In the 1970's many of us were involved in a major confrontation over the doctrine of "unity in diversity."
 - a. Some taught that since our faith (personal faith) was not infallible (which is evident if we have ever changed on any understanding of the Bible), then we cannot be certain about anything.
 - b. They tried to defend faith in Christ as essential (by making it Gospel), but all disagreements were not important (by making those doctrine).
 - c. Peter said: "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption" (2 Pet. 2:19). Some write "Free in Christ," and mean "free from Christ."
 - d. We had diversity and unity (we agreed in practice without 100% agreement in belief), until they came up with this "unity in diversity doctrine" (agree to disagree). They equated **love** with **compromise**, and **respect for authority** with **legalism**. (I fought that battle in the local church where I was working, and know the difference between working together in truth, although we may disagree on some subjects, and participating with everyone regardless of the truth.)
2. Many problems with this teaching:
 - a. It assumes that Scripture cannot be understood - therefore ignore it. (Eph. 5:17 "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.") There is a difference between saying **we may not understand** it (acknowledging our fallibility) and that **we cannot understand** it (impeaching the wisdom of God).
 - b. It denies the Lord's prayer (Jn. 17). He prayed for unity in truth, not diversity. Satisfaction with diversity is a contradiction of the Lord's prayer.
 - c. Paul told the Corinthians to speak the same things (1 Cor. 1:10), and **"not to think** (of men) **beyond what is written"** (4:6). We may fall short, as they did, but we must not "whittle God's standard down to (our) size" (Robert Turner).
 - d. Apollos was sincere when he was teaching John's baptism (Acts 18), but he was wrong and needed to change his teaching. The "unity in diversity" spirit would say "when you worship with Apollos practice what he teaches" (the purpose of baptism is doctrine, not gospel!)
 - e. When false brethren wanted to bind circumcision on Titus, Paul said "we did not yield submission even for an hour" (Gal. 2:4,5). Sincerity would not have changed that error into truth - and it never does.
3. We do have disagreements, but this does not justify rejecting the standard of truth; just as the failure to be "holy in all your conduct" (1 Pet. 1:15), does not justify lowering the standard to fit our conduct.

E. **One Hundred Percent Agreement - another false extreme.**

1. If we can have no fellowship with anyone who believes or practices anything we believe to be false - will exclude all new converts and probably anyone else that we know well.
2. Special issue of "**The Gospel Guardian**" (Aug., 1970): **Bryan Vinson**: "We can be in fellowship - and are - without necessarily having fellowship in every area of activity in which other brethren engage. If this were not true I can not conceive how anyone can claim to be in fellowship with any other brother! Why? Because I doubt that there is a single one of us completely, one hundred percent, in agreement both in faith and practice, both jointly and singly, with any other one. If I am conscious of having sinned, (none of you) would fellowship me in the thing that I have done that is wrong, would you? Then, if you cannot fellowship with one whom you do not have complete fellowship with in every act of his, you are in fellowship with no one."
3. **Franklin T. Puckett**: "There may be many things in which people commonly share while at the same time they may be unable to jointly participate in other things. A denial of fellowship in one realm does not always exclude a sharing together in other realms."
4. **Robert Turner** wrote about attitudes: "For example, two men who do the same thing religiously - one because he sincerely believes God wants it that way, and the other because he likes it that way and has no intention of changing regardless of God's word - may be less in fellowship than two men whose practice is different, but who are both sincerely searching for truth, and are willing to conform to all truth they find. The first two will drift further apart; the second two will be drawn together in the paths of God" (GG, Aug. 6,13,20, 1970, p. 14).
5. We all fellowship people with whom we disagree - as did **the apostle Paul**. Phil. 4:15 the church fellowshiped him; v. 2 "I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord." He did not fellowship their squabble - whatever it was, but accepted their support.
6. In quoting these men - I am not thinking of men above what is written. In fact I **DISAGREE WITH SOMETHING** each of them believed and taught. They did not "teach the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth" - in my understanding of certain Biblical teachings (doctrines).
7. Both the teaching that **disagreement is inevitable** - therefore we should be content with it and agree to disagree, as well as we **must agree on every teaching** to fellowship any teaching - are false extremes.
8. One brother said concerning the latter: "Those who are advocating the position that one cannot extend fellowship to anyone with a wrong belief are charting new ground and no one knows for certain where it will take us, although where we think it will lead is to fragmented, factional groups" (**Mike Willis**, from his notes about fellowshiping a brother in the congregation where he was preaching, who had believed, or did believe but promised not to teach, the 70 A.D. doctrine.) When we teach that anyone who does not "teach the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth" (meaning they must agree with my interpretations) and are fired by elders

because we believe or teach something that one of the elders believes is false, we should not cry. Elders cannot fellowship false teachers, so they are simply applying what they have been taught.

F. **Five principles for participating or not participating:**

(These are principles that I have followed, not a code, or creed, that I would bind on others. I believe that what I teach is true - but it is not THE TRUTH. I have changed, and no doubt will again, but THE TRUTH does not change. I once heard a preacher say he had never changed on any teaching. He knew it all when he started, had learned nothing since, or there is another possibility!)

1. **Some doctrinal differences have no practical effect on our activities.**
 - a. Acts 2:38 - "the gift of the Holy Spirit" - miraculous? personal? fellowship? or another? The passage only teaches one! Which? The one I believe - but many of you differ with me.
 - b. Unless one believes in present miraculous power, or special guidance by the H.S. in you, or that the word is the Spirit - no practical difference (though we should continue to study the subject).
2. **Does it involve me in the practice of what I believe to be wrong?**
 - a. 2 Cor. 6:14-17- *be not unequally yoked with unbelievers* - is this all participation, or participation that identifies me with evil?
 - b. Woman married to unbeliever - if unequal, must come out; but 1 Cor. 7:13 says stay. (Not all yokes are unequal yokes.)
 - c. Sapphira was yoked to Ananias (Acts 5), did not need to deny her marriage - but needed to disfellowship his lie.
 - d. Members of congregations in first century worshipped with (fellowshipped) brethren with whom they did not participate in sins. Some in Corinth were not 100% right about idols. "However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled" (1 Cor. 8:7). (In every church that I have been a part of, we had members who believed things I thought were wrong - even about instrumental music, institutions, etc. - but they were not "causing divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine" (Rom. 16:17). If, in our judgment, they had, we would have withdrawn from them.)
3. **Is the activity individual or collective?**
 - a. There are matters of personal faith - which do not involve immorality, or collective action (**which Rom. 14 discusses**) - that do not attach guilt to one who does not participate.
 - b. Bryan Vinson, Sr. illustrated with the veil. "One brother told me that if his views on this teaching in Corinthians were the same as mine, he would have every woman who didn't comply therewith withdrawn from! I think he is entirely sincere, but equally and fully as wrong as he is sincere."
 - c. We have personal responsibility for what we teach - and hearers have

responsibility for what they accept.

- d. Parents sometimes feel responsible for what their children believe and practice. **We are responsible to teach and exemplify** - not to learn or live for them (Ezek. 18).
 - e. **Bob Crawley**-(Richmond, Va) "preachers are preachers, not policemen...Our job to teach - not to enforce the law." Not our job to preach on it until they "shape up or ship out." If young men don't learn this will have problems everywhere they work - and should. (If one comes to a conclusion that would have me participating in, or endorsing something I believe sinful - another problem.)
4. **Does it involve me in compromising with teaching and/or practice of evil or error?**
- a. "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them" (Eph. 5:11). Includes **moral** and **doctrinal** issues. (I understand the **withdrawal of association in the local church** to be any that would make me a partaker, or approver of the evil/error.)
 - b. Each individual must make a judgment in this area.
5. **Does it restrict my ability to teach the truth and expose evil or error?**
- a. A congregation where half the women believed in the veil. One said "How can I support you, when I do not believe that you teach the whole truth?"
 - b. If we must agree on everything - forget about churches supporting preachers.
 - c. What I apply to others - they have right to apply to me. How could those who do not believe in the veil support a preacher who does? Others have a right to apply to you, what you apply to them? (If **he** has to teach the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth - does that apply to **you**?)
 - d. When I taught what I believed was the truth on that issue, men who disagreed were given opportunity to present why they disagreed - and one did! (When you cannot teach what you believe is truth - attitudes are wrong - and change is necessary.)
 - e. Churches have split over this and other such issues. If I judge everyone who disagrees with me on any subject as factious, and unworthy of fellowship - they have right to so judge me. The consequences of this attitude are mind-boggling.

Conclusion:

- A. Back to Jude's conclusion: "**There are some whom you must pity because of their doubts**" (they need to be convinced by teaching). "**Some you must save by snatching them out of the fire**" (they need more drastic action, maybe even discipline). "**Others for whom your pity must be mixed with caution, hating the very clothes which their deeds have soiled.**" (They are False with a capital "F," and cannot be pampered, lest they contaminate the souls of those who try to help them).

- B. Paul wrote a letter to a church that was filled with doctrinal and moral problems.
1. He did not tell them to have unity in diversity, nor did he tell them they could do nothing together until they were perfectly agreed on everything.
 2. I struggle with the application of these principles - and have decided that even the first century Christians did not always deal with everyone the same way. The seriousness of the doctrine, the fervency with which it is advocated and the five principles just discussed have a bearing on my militancy.
- C. There are False teachers who are devious, destructive and defiled in doctrine and character - these will receive the wrath of God, and should receive ours. Others teach falsely on some subjects (in this sense someone thinks all of us are false teachers). We must treat others as we would have them treat us, but we dare not **participate in a teaching or practice** that we believe to be contrary to the Truth.
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