**FALSE TEACHING**

False Teaching abounds. Does it matter? It makes people feel negative to have to deal with such a hard issue, and in a generation of ease and comfort, the work involved in knowing and living the truth is not a shortcut, it is hard work. And few desire the expenditure of such effort regarding false teaching. It doesn’t make one feel good to discern, and be found wrong and therefore have to correct course.

Nevertheless, the Bible is full of warnings. While the Old Testament generally emphasizes warnings about false **prophets**, the New Testament generally warns against false **teachers**. Here are some warnings on both fronts:

**Matthew 7:15** “…Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves…” nkjv.

Notice they are disguised and at first glance would not appear to be dangerous. Instead they are appealing. Equally deadly is that they don’t deny Christ, they call Him Lord. Their inward life-motive is sobering, called “ravenous.” They do not appear outwardly to be false teachers. V.21 shows that they don't necessarily deny Christ: they call Him "Lord." This is followed by very searching words:

**Matthew 7:21-23** “…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. 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?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’…” nkjv

This is a warning to be on guard. It is also a warning that MANY will be affected. Not few, but many. These teachers may have done many outstanding things from all outward appearances. And frighteningly, they themselves seem to think they are serving God. And they will one day hear the worst words ever heard by an individual from God, “depart from Me, I never knew you.” Is it worth paying attention now?

**2 Corinthians 11:13-15 “…**For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works...” nkjv

False apostles are deceitful workers who may look, sound, and say they are followers of Christ. Yet Paul tells the Corinthians that they are like Satan who presents himself as an angel of light. One reason false teaching is terribly dangerous is DECEIT, and we are warned about it. Does it matter? Is it divisive to discern and expose evil teaching? Paul did.. Satan's most skillful endeavor is to disguise false teaching and make it appear as truth.

The serpent in Eden led Eve to sin by deceiving her. She was deceived and then Adam willfully transgressed. Satan has used that technique ever since, and his recorded first words are “yea, hath God said?” If he cannot get people to question God’s word, the evil one places something else in its place, whether tradition, the teachings of the “church”, or even spiritual experiences. Satan makes coun­terfeits that fool people because they seem close to what God said. And he promotes them by men who seem to be so kind, good, sincere, and even anointed, but there is just enough error to cause people to be misled and ultimately, lost forever (Matt. 15:14).

**1 Timothy 4:1-3 “…**Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth…” nkjv

The Holy Spirit *expressly* (in the greek this word is not a “hint” nor a “symbolic” meaning, but a “clearly expressed” one!) …He expressly warns… that some will fall away from the faith and people will give heed to those who speak lies and teach doctrines of demons. This includes an emphasis related to forbidding marriage, and dietary restrictions like commanding people to abstain from certain foods.

The teacher of such things isn’t necessarily an immoral rebel, instead he/she may be moral, believe in God, speak well of the Bible and so on. But such a person is a skilled deceiver: able to fool people into thinking he (or she, increasingly) is upright and godly when he or she isn’t. Sadly, very sadly, those who believe his/her teaching may be sincere people who have been deceived.

**That is the danger of false teaching.**

**2 Timothy 4:2-5a “…** Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things…” nkjv

The time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine, but will gather to themselves teachers after their own lusts, and will turn aside from truth to fables. This is ever so true today. Paul charges the teachers to preach the truth and rebuke such errors. Yes, it says to rebuke, as well as convince & exhort, and all is to be done patiently with care.

**2 Peter 2:1-3 “…**But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber…” nkjv

This passage that expressly mentions the phrase "false teachers." In the days of Israel, there were false prophets among them. In the church there are false teachers. They bring in destructive heresies, that include denying the deity and vicarious suffering of Christ. It may not be bold or clear as to how the truth is denied, but often the appeal will be to something other than his person and substitutionary work. Often what is put in its place is prosperity, good deeds, unity without truth, and a universalism without discernment. And perhaps then a quasi gospel is tacked onto the very end, after the people have had good laughs, good feelings, and emotional highs. People are excited by a message that meets their desires, and they go into destruction with the false teacher. Notice also that covetousness is also characteristic. It may be and often is a coveting for money, but it can also be an underlying ambition for position or power or influence (ie..pride). Their destruction does not slumber.

**Lastly, a word of caution**.

**Matthew 13: 24-30** “…Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”’”…”

The goal is not to uproot everything and to emphasize a ministry that only discerns error. It has been said the best defense is a good offense (and vice versa), and the promotion of the truth of the gospel & sound doctrine can be a strong check against error. Nevertheless there are many warnings about false teaching and false teachers and they should be heeded. The skill that is needed is: to never uproot the wheat in addressing the tares. The Christian is not commanded to fix the world, nor its religion, even Christendom cannot be fixed. Yet in the sphere of the local church and the saints, there is to be convincing, exhorting, rebuking, with patience and love. There is a battle for ManSoul going on, as Bunyan’s book aptly speaks.  At the end of the age, the Lord will sort out the truth from the error and the false from the true. While we aren't called to fix all now, we are to be faithful in the local sphere we are in. Faithful first in affection to Christ and also in love to one another, then also to the truth and sound doctrine. Good works naturally should follow when we love Him, love His own, love those that need to be reached, and we protect those who have been reached.