

Who Is A False Teacher?

The answer to the above question seems obvious. If one teaches falsely, that one would rightly be called a "false teacher." However, some brethren have challenged this answer in recent years. More and more, in churches of Christ there has been a "playing down" of the importance of purity and necessity of doctrine. Notwithstanding, the scriptures explicitly and irrefutably teach the importance of sound doctrine (2 John 4; Ephesians 4:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; 2 Timothy 3:8; Galatians 1:6-9).

The emphasis of 2 Peter 2:1-3 is that the false teachers were teaching damnable or destructive heresies. Yet not all teaching which is incorrect is necessarily destructive or damnable in that it leads to sin and condemnation if practiced. However, the nature of a destructive heresy is that not only is it not true, but if the false idea is put into practice, it would result in sin. As a result of sin, the soul is destroyed.

The false teachers were known by their destructive heresies. Those destructive heresies bring "*upon themselves swift destruction*;" thus, the destruction is caused by the heresies before evil character is discussed. When Peter says, "*their destruction slumbereth not*," he emphasizes their character. Nevertheless, they were false teachers prior to his statement. Are they false teachers because their character was a threat? No! It was because they turned people away from the truth. This is why they were not called "false characters" or "false hearts."

False teachers are recognized by false teaching -- just like it sounds. Efforts to narrow the meaning go hand in hand with willingness to compromise. We must always rebuke error which leads to sin if put into practice. Neither Jesus or any apostle ever instructed a person or church to tolerate doctrinal error -- it was rebuked and purged!

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