

METHODS OF FALSE TEACHERS

Jon Macon

False teachers have a typical *modus operandi*. Romans 16:17-18 says, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; *and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*” We need to be keenly aware of false teachers and thoroughly familiar with their devices. Why? First of all, we have been *promised* to have them: “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Pet 2:1). Secondly, they are very effective in their methods, as the very next verse says, “*And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.*”

The father of false teachers

We are introduced to the Devil and his underhanded methods in the third chapter of the Bible. Genesis 3:1 says, “*Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.*” Satan does not try to make evil look evil. He is very subtle and crafty and tries to make evil look good. Satan deceived Eve by undermining her faith in the word of God (adding the word “not” to “ye shall surely die”), and making the forbidden fruit to look like it was “good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise” (Gen 3:6). *False teachers are Satan’s spiritual children!* Jesus told the false and wicked leaders of the Jews in his day, “I speak that which I have seen with *my Father*: and ye do that which ye have seen with *your father*” (John 8:38). He then plainly told them, “*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.* He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44). We are all slaves to whom we obey, “whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness” (Rom 6:16). It is one or the other. As the Lord states it in 1 John 3:10, “*In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*” False teachers not only personally refrain from doing what is righteous, they proceed further to corrupt those (i.e. Christians) who *are* trying to do what is right in the sight of God by obeying him. Paul and Barnabas confronted this on the island of Cyprus, when preaching God’s word to the Roman deputy, Sergius Paulus. There, “they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus” (Acts 13:6). In verses 8-10, this false teacher, Barjesus, or “Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the

METHODS OF FALSE TEACHERS

(continued)

faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, and said, *O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?*” Notice that false teachers are enemies of righteousness and children of the devil because they pervert the right ways of the Lord.

Satan’s ministers

Like their spiritual master and father, Satan, false teachers use “good words and fair speeches” to accomplish their deception. False teachers do not come into the church of Christ by announcing with a trumpet that they are wolves and are ready to begin devouring the sheep. In Matthew 7:15, Jesus gives this warning about false teachers and the methods they will employ to infiltrate us: *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”* These wolves will try to make themselves look like sheep. Paul said, “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; *for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness*” (2 Cor 11:13-15). Again, false teachers, Satan’s ministers, operate in the same manner as their master (see 2 Cor 11:3-4). They “privily bring in” (Strong’s 3919, *pareisago*, meaning “to lead in aside,” or introduce surreptitiously, secretly or craftily) their “damnable heresies” (2 Pet 2:2). They use “feigned” (Strong’s 4112, *plastos*, meaning “molded” like plastic) words (2 Pet 2:3), or “good words and fair speeches” as they are described in Romans 16:18. Ephesians 4:14 says they “lie in wait to deceive” with “sleight” (Strong’s 2940, *kubeia*, meaning “gambling” from the word for “cube” as in dice) and “cunning craftiness” (Strong’s 3834, *panourgia*, meaning “adroitness”). False teachers *creep in unawares* (Jude 4; Gal 2:4). They come in “privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage” (Gal 2:4). We are warned in 2 Corinthians 2:11 against being ignorant of Satan’s devices, as ignorance of his devices gives him “an advantage of us.” Rather, we must heed 1 Peter 5:8-9: *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”* Ephesians 6:10-13 says, *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”* Amen to that!