

False Prophets and Teachers | 2 Peter 2

Happy Valentines day! Valentines is all about love and romance, so we're going to appropriately hear this morning about false teachers :P

As you can see from the bible reading this is very heavy passage and a very heavy sermon. So we'll take a short break before we get into the sermon.

Introduction: Roses and Vines

It's Valentine's Day and you can't talk about Valentine's Day and not mention roses.

If you ever visit a winery you'll notice that at the end of each row of vines is planted a rose bush. You might think that this is for decoration, but there's actually a very clever reason for it.



See, vines take years to cultivate – from seedling to drinkable bottle of wine could be around 10 years.

In the meantime your little vine has to battle the elements – storms and hail in Australia, frost bite in colder countries, and probably the worst of all – disease.

Now to check if a vine is diseased or not, the vintner needs to go around checking each individual vine. But here's the problem. You don't just grow one vine to make hundreds of bottles of wine. You need to grow a series of vines in a series of rows, and those rows can stretch over acres and acres. Imagine having to check each and every plant in that vineyard – it would be impossible.



Here's where the roses become important. Each row of vines in a vineyard has their roots all intertwined, and the rose bush at the end of each row does the same. And here's why it's important: the rose bush is very closely related to vines genetically but with one very important difference: rose bushes are weaker than vines. So any disease that will threaten a vine will first attack the rose bush. So instead of having to check each individual vine, the vintner just needs to walk down the row of vines and check the rose bush.

Here's the point of this comparison today: rose bushes are like young, less mature in their faith Christians, and vines are like older more mature Christians. The disease that threatens comes from false teaching and false teachers. And false teaching has a way of hitting younger Christians first before attacking the rest of the church. It's a point that Peter makes a few times in this passage. There is a big danger to the church, and especially to younger Christians – the danger of being lead away from the safe ground of the gospel and into the destructive territory of falsehood.

Some Caveats...

Before we dive into the passage, let me make three caveats – let me raise three flags for us.

First, I joked with Ben the other day that I seem to always get the difficult passages to preach on – it's either sex, or adultery, or false teachers. So firstly I want to say that I personally and SLE Church want to be known first and foremost for what we stand for rather than what we stand against. When people think of me or when they think of SLE Church I want them to think, 'Yes, that's a place where the gospel is heard, where Jesus' death and resurrection and lordship over the world is always preached.' I want us to be known for that first and foremost.

Saying that, we also need to know what we stand against. And today's sermon is about this: what we stand against as a church.

Second, every letter in the New Testament deals with the issue of false teachers and false teaching in some shape or form. You cannot miss it – every single letter deals with the issue. Sometimes the references are short and brief, other times they are long. 2 Peter 2 is one of the longest and most heavy and sustained attacks against false teaching. So I don't want to soften the blow, we need to feel the weight of these words this morning.

Third, we are focusing on false teachers today. Not everyone is going to have rock solid perfect theology, not everyone is going to have above standard lives of holiness and godliness. Some of us might blog, or tweet, or Facebook post, or write an email that contains imperfect theology, an imperfect understanding of the bible. I want to be clear that is not what Peter is against this morning.

We're all hopefully on a trajectory of growing maturity and understanding. We do need to judge our trajectory, where we are headed, and it's helpful to ask those who know us how we're going in godliness and maturity.

What Peter is warning against is what's happening in this space here: this little 1.5m x 2.5m stage that I'm standing on and this music stand that we use for a pulpit. He's warning all of us to be careful about the people who stand up here on Sunday mornings, the people who claim to be elders, even the people who may be leading the bible study groups you are a part of. He's warning us about the people we listen to online, the preachers on TV and YouTube,

the books that we buy from Koorong, the people that we follow on Twitter and Facebook. Peter is giving a loud and sustained warning that some of these people who lead and teach, they claim to be sheep but they have the sharp teeth of wolves.

Ok, three caveats out of the way, let's dive into the passage.

1. *Their rise and fall (v1-3)*

Our first point looks at the rise and fall of false teachers. We're going to spend a bit more time on these three verses because they sort of act as an introduction and summary of all that Peter says next.

Read with me again 2:1-3

[1] But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. [2] And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. [3] And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

Let's look at this verse phrase by phrase.

First – but false prophets also arose among the people. Remember that Peter has just finished talking about how the Old Testament prophets confirmed the word of God to his people. How every part of scripture does not come from a prophet's own interpretation of things, but from the Holy Spirit himself.

But even as God spoke clearly and truthfully through the prophets there was, at the same time, false prophets and teachers present. They were always there with a different message, supposedly from God as well. And it was usually the case that God's true prophet was there to warn his people about their sin and repent before judgement, the false prophets were there to say everything was fine and to carry on as usual.

The point that Peter makes is in the next part of the sentence – *false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you...* The point is that just as there were false prophets in the Old Testament, there will be false prophets and teachers in the present. We must not think that false teaching is just an historical thing, but realise it's a present danger.

Second, what they will bring into the church is devastating. They will secretly bring in destructive heresies... they will exploit you with false words. What they say will essentially be different to the gospel. It may not sound bad, it may even sound right, but the end result is that it ends in destruction for the teacher and for the listener and follower. The words might sound positive, they might sound spiritually uplifting, but they are ultimately a different gospel that will lead people to eternal destruction. We're not talking about a different interpretation of things, we're talking about things that contradict the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Now here is where we need to be careful about who and what we label as false teaching. Just because someone disagrees with you on baptism doesn't make them a false teacher. Or something more contentious – disagreement on predestination, or the end times and Jesus' return. Disagreement on these matters does not equate to heresy. These are what we call secondary issues – issues that don't affect the gospel and salvation.

What is heresy? Heresy is that which changes the gospel irreparably. Something that changes the gospel so much that it is actually no longer the gospel.

We'll work through some examples later in the passage of what this looks like. For now, let's keep moving on to what these guys do.

In the middle of verse 1 you'll notice that they *even deny the Master who bought them*. These are people who call themselves Christians, they say that Jesus died for them, but they have now turned their backs on him. Jesus died for their sins, and with their teaching they are ignoring his death. They are ignoring all that He has done. And they are teaching people to ignore what Jesus has done for them. So it's no wonder that Peter says at the end of verse 1 that they are bringing upon themselves swift destruction. You do not mess with the gospel of Jesus – you mess with the gospel and you mess with God himself. You mess with God and the only thing you should expect is fearful judgement. It is guaranteed. Peter says that at the end of verse 3. Their condemnation which has been waiting for them for so long is not idle, it's not parked in some desolate place gathering rust. It is not asleep, hibernating for some unknown length of time. It will come.

Two things will happen as we wait for that judgement to come. The first is in verse 2 – many will follow their sensuality... in their greed they will exploit people.

False teaching is very rarely served up as the disgusting dish that it actually is. It's always dressed up, it's always sweet smelling.

A few months ago I saw an ad on tv advertising an air freshener. The company filled a living room with dirty laundry, open cans of garbage, old rotting food. Then they walk through and spray their air freshener, bring in a blind folded person and ask what they smell. And every person who is brought in thinks the room is beautiful and pleasant to be in.

False teachers dress up their teaching in such a way that it is like the air freshener used to cover up was is in actual fact a pile of garbage.

How do they dress it up? By appealing to our sinful desires. Many will follow their sensuality – it's like there's almost a sexual energy that people are drawn to. Then in verse 3 Peter mentions greed as one of their motivations. Greed gets mentioned a couple of times in our passage. Their love of money is the root of their evil (cf James 6:10). These false teachers are greedy and promoting a kind of hedonistic greed to follow. They are living a lifestyle that people want to copy: the fast cars, the nice houses, the beautiful women. How do they pay for all that? They exploit people.

One of the most common types of false teaching in the church today is the prosperity gospel. On one end of the spectrum there are hardcore prosperity preachers – those who say that God will bless you financially and materially and relationally if you will send money to their ministry, if you will sow a seed of monetary faith God will increase that to your bank account. Not only is that biblically untrue, but it exploits people. They feed off the desire of many people for financial security – if a million people watch them on TV and each of them gives \$10, that's \$10 million dollars in their pockets. They exploit people with false words, using their false teaching to make money off of believers.

So they exploit people with false words.

The second thing that will happen before their judgement comes is that the Jesus will be mocked and the gospel will be put to shame. See that there at the end of verse 2 – because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. This line comes at the heart of verses 1-3, and I think is the heart of why Peter is writing all of this.

Again I want to be clear that this is not just a matter of difference of opinion. What these teachers are saying is not just a different interpretation of the same things we believe in. Nor should any of us be quick to say, 'Well, we shouldn't judge, we need to let God judge.' Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount it's our responsibility to identify the wolves (cf Matthew 7:15-20). Because if we don't, if we just let it slide, then what they are doing, what they are teaching, how they are living, is going to bring shame upon Jesus and the gospel.

Let that sink into your heart and bring you to despair about these men and women. God the creator has come into this world; the glorious, eternal, all-powerful, infinitely beautiful creator came into this world, humbled himself, died on the cross for us, and was raised to life. His death and resurrection is the root of our hope, it brings us into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for us, guarded by God himself. Even in the middle of the deepest trials and despair we have rock solid hope and can rejoice. This is wonderful, life changing, joyful news.

Now these guys come in, preaching something different, putting the name of Jesus on it – and it's causing those in the church and those outside of the church to spit on the beautiful saving name of Jesus.

It's no wonder that judgement is upon them.

2. The Judge and Saviour (v4-10a)

To make this point of judgement even more clear Peter goes in verses 4-10 with a long 'if... then...' argument. You'll notice 4 'ifs' that start verses 4, 5, 6, and 7, and then one 'then' in verse 9. Peter is arguing that if all the 'ifs' parts are true, then the 'then' part is really, really true! Make sense? If this is true, then this is really true.

The first if in verse 4 refers to angels being judged. It's a reference to an Old Testament tradition from Genesis 6 of angels mating with humans – which was a great sin in God's sight and cause for their judgement. The second in verse 5 if refers to God's saving of righteous Noah during that same period. The third if in verse 6 refers to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, cities famous for one thing: being judged by fire from heaven. The final if in verse 7 refers to the saving of righteous Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah.

Here's how the argument in verse 4-7 works. If God judged the angels, and if God saved Noah out of that flooding judgement, and if God judged Sodom and Gomorrah, and if God saved Lot from that judgement then – verse 9 - *then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment...*

If God punished and rescued in the past, then he will certainly do it again today. He will certainly punish these false teachers, and he will certainly rescue his people.

So this is what Peter has said so far. He's said that there are false prophets and teachers running around – just like there were in the past. They will teach things so different to the gospel that it will not build people up but bring about their destruction. They will entice people away from Jesus and exploit them for their own greed. Then in very clear terms in verses 4-10 Peter says that their judgement is 100% guaranteed.

3. False Teacher Character Qualities (v10b-22)

With all that said Peter now moves back to what the false teachers are like and what they teach.

Right, I think it's time break up this heavy sermon with a bit of a funny story. At least I think it's funny!

In July of 2006 a Senegalese man with a French passport attempted to enter Cyprus. He rocked up to the security checkpoint and suspicions were immediately raised. Checks were made and it was discovered that the man had a forged French passport – it was fake.

So, what gave him away? According to the checkpoint officer it was easy – the man had a French passport, claiming to be a French citizen, and he was wearing an English football jersey. The officer said, 'Being a football fan, I found it highly unlikely that a Frenchman would want to wear an England football jersey.'

An English football jersey was enough to give away this man.

Now when it comes to false teachers there are a number of giveaways. Peter details them in verses 10-22. We're going to jump around these verses a little to try and group the qualities together.

a. Slander and Ignorance

The first one to notice is their slander and ignorance.

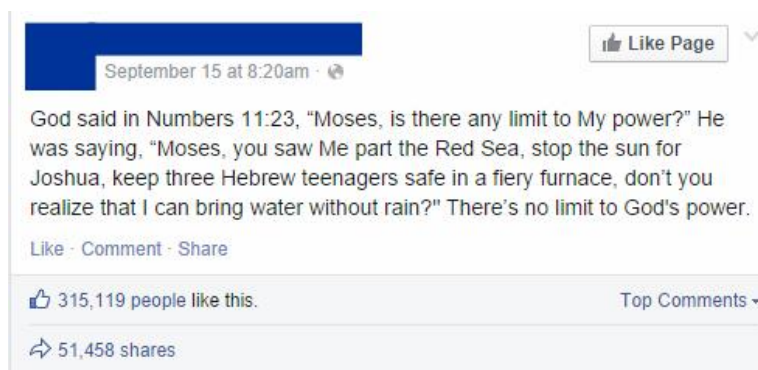
We see this in verses 10-11, and it's a little bit tricky because it's hard to know what's going on for certain. For some reasons the false teachers are blaspheming the glorious ones – they are slandering angels. To slander is to insult, or defame. What were they saying? We're not sure, but there are certainly two things we know for sure: 1) the angels themselves do not slander false teachers before God. It's God's job to judge them. What the false teachers were saying was going too far, they were being judgemental. And 2) what they were saying was said out of ignorance – you see that in the middle of verse 12: *blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant*.

False teachers have a habit of making declarations with certainty but basing it on ignorance.

Now, I don't know many false teachers who say insulting things about angels – but I do know that many false teachers today say things out of ignorance – especially ignorance of the bible.

Here's an example of from one false teacher who I'm going to refer to a lot. I'm not going to say his name, you can ask me later. I'm not going to say his name because sometimes we hear the name and actually miss the point – so I'm just going to quote from a number of his works and you be the judge of his faithfulness.

Here's a facebook post that he sent out to his then 10 million followers:



Now what he says at the end is true – there is no limit to God's power. But I hope you can already see what's very wrong with this. First, the stopping the sun for Joshua story happened well after Moses had died. And the saving three Hebrew teenagers from a fiery furnace probably happened around 700 years after Moses died. Does this guy even Bible?

For someone who claims to be a bible teacher it is an astonishing ignorance of the bible. And yet, as you can see the post has gained 300,000 likes, 50,000 shares.

b. Revelling in Greed

This particular false teacher is not only ignorant of the bible – and he constantly misuses it in his sermons and in his books – but he also has fulfils another give away for false teachers: greed.

In verse 13 Peter notes that the false teachers in his day *count it pleasure to revel in the day time*. At the end of verse 14 he notes that *they have hearts trained in greed*. Then in verse 15-16 he mentions another Old Testament story of a false prophet consumed by greed – the story of Balaam, son of Beor. You can find that story in the book of

Numbers and it's a brilliant parallel to what Peter is trying to get at. Basically a supposed prophet of God accepts money to prophecy against God's people – and it backfires. His donkey ends up rebuking him!

The words from an ass silence the words of an ass.

But the story highlights for Peter and for us as his readers that false prophets love their money. They love their wealth, they love greed – and they will flaunt it in front of others.

So back to our false teacher example of today.

This is his family home and property – valued at \$10.5 million in 2010.



This false teacher has a personal net worth of \$40 million. He has earned this money primarily from the revenue of his books – which have been repeatedly described as basically motivational self-empowerment books which consistently strip the gospel of any meaning and power. He has exploited Christians with his false teaching for personal gain.

And he makes no apology for his wealth, saying, 'One needs to thank and praise God for the acquired wealth.' Which is pretty much the same as saying to someone who is morbidly obese that they shouldn't feel guilty about their KFC and McDonalds diet 'but thank and praise God for the yummy food you have acquired.'

As I mentioned, his wealth has been amassed by exploiting Christians with false teaching for personal gain. His teaching, time and again, promises freedom and breakthroughs, but comes up empty of any real goods.

c. Empty promises of freedom, slavery instead

That's Peter's point in verse 17 and 19. False teachers are like *waterless springs and mists driven by a storm*. Springs and mists promise something refreshing, but in actual fact nothing is produced.

Verse 19 – *They promise freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption*. Again, what the exact promises were in Peter's day we are not sure, but we know that the promise comes from a hypocrite who is still in slavery to their corruption and sin.

You should not take financial advice from someone who has failed many business ventures and is a bankrupt. You should not have as a personal trainer and diet counsellor someone who is morbidly obese. False teachers make extravagant promises, but it comes from a corrupt heart.

So back to our false teacher for today. In one of his recent books he promises a breakthrough if you will keep praying and pestering God for things. Throughout the book he constantly twists and misuses scripture – a couple of times completely making up what scripture says. His message is that you're life will have a 'Break Out' and that you will live

the best life you have ever dreamed of now. It's a message he's a slave to, he's living proof of it. Of course, it helps when you're the author of a message that desperate people so desperately want to hear.

The problem is that his message is not one of hope. It's ultimately one of condemnation. See, if your dreams aren't being fulfilled then either you don't dream enough or something is wrong with your faith. You are your own saviour.

d. They have followers

It's striking that this man is so popular with so many Christians. His church is one of the largest in America. He has over 7 million views each week to his sermon broadcasts. Why does someone who offers fairy floss to hungry souls be so popular? Why does he have so many followers?

The answer is in our next point in verse 14 and 18. Back in verse 14 Peter warns that false teachers *entice unsteady souls*. Peter is talking about young Christians. Less mature Christians who are not strong in their knowledge or grounded in their faith. They are open to being shaped and moulded, helpfully or unhelpfully.

In verse 18 he expands on that a little more and says *they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error*.

Again, those who are 'barely escaping from those who live in error' is a reference to young, less mature Christians.

And false teachers will teach what will resonate not with the gospel, but with our sinful desires – the sensual passions of the flesh. We all want a house, a car, a good education and a job. Everyone wants that. What false teachers do is spin the dream and say that it is God's plan for you to get all these dreams. God wants you to have the cash, the car, the credit card, the condominium and the country club membership. If you dream big enough, and have enough faith, then all of this is yours.

Or they'll soften it a little, and say that God intends for his people to be blessed and live a blessed and positive life. God wants you to have great relationships and a positive outlook on life, just have enough faith, speak the right words into your life and it will come true. And keep having faith and speaking the words until it comes true.

It all sounds really good, but really at the heart it's an appeal to our sinful desires. No false teacher ever questions whether your dream or desires are actually sinful.

Now some of you might be saying that it's not a bad thing to be positive and want to have God's blessings right? It's not bad to be nice and to speak positive words into your life and into the lives of others right?

But here's the thing – all this positive blessing talk is actually devoid of the gospel. If you only have fairy floss and coke for one meal there's no real harm done – though my dentist friends probably disagree. But if you're constantly fed fairy floss and coke you are going to starve. Positive blessing talk is like that.

4. Conclusion: the end is worse for all (v20-22)

It promises great things but leads to slavery to our sinful desires. And the conclusion of it all is that it ends worse for everyone who follows a false teacher.

Read with me Peter's conclusion in 2:20

[20] For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. [21] For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. [22] What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."

Hear what Peter is saying? It would have been better that the followers and false teachers not hear the gospel at all. Do you get how shocking a statement that is? How serious this issue is? Having heard the truth, come to some form of understanding and acceptance of it, they then walk away and distort the truth. It would have been better for them to have never known the truth in the first place – why? Because their judgement will be all the more serious.

So what is Peter saying here in chapter 2? He's saying that false teachers come into the church bringing destructive heresy and false teaching. They live in open sin, they are particularly greedy, and they lure the less mature in their faith with their sinful desires. Yet they are destined for destruction.

Application: Grow in maturity

So where does that leave us today? I think there are 4 takeaways from all of this:

First, keep growing in your maturity.

At the end of chapter 1 Peter gives a very long list of reasons why God's word is trustworthy and all that we need to grow our faith in God. It's our responsibility to keep growing in this, to grow our knowledge of God's word so that we will be wise enough to spot false teaching and strong enough to rebuke it.

You don't have to be a scholar or a bible teacher, but every Christians should be growing and progressing in their growth to be able to recognise the smell of false teaching.

If you're not growing your knowledge of God's word you are opening yourself up to being seduced. Already I know that there are some here who like and follow and share and retweet unhelpful teaching from false teachers. The words you're sharing sound so positive and life affirming – but it actually reveals a worrying lack of discernment. I hope Peter's warning today has made you uncomfortable, and I pray that you will heed Peter's warnings.

Application: know the difference between good and false teaching

Second, know the difference between good and false teaching. I've been wondering over the past few weeks why the false teacher I've used as an example today has over 12 million followers on facebook, 7 million people who watch him every week on TV, and so much global influence. And the answer I've had to conclude is that people don't know the difference between good and false teaching.

Why is that?

I think partly it's because the church has a serious lack of biblical teaching and preaching and leadership. And in the absence of biblical teaching and preaching young Christians will listen to anyone who steps up to the microphone. They're so thirsty for it, they'll crawl through the desert toward a mirage and when they discover there's no water they'll drink the sand. They drink because they are thirsty, and they drink because they don't know the difference.

Let me tell you the difference – and I hope this will be self-evident, otherwise I invite you to test my words against what the bible says and come back to me if you have any questions or concerns.

Biblical teaching is gospel-centred. It will open up the unfolding plan of God through the whole bible, and show how the gospel of grace flows through every page of scripture. Biblical teaching will point out that our biggest hurdles in life are not just negative thinking, but our ongoing battle with sin. Biblical teaching will then keep pointing to the solution: to keep trusting the finished work of Jesus as we pursue repentance and holiness.

Biblical teaching is not generally very sexy, it's not very glamorous, it probably won't have as many 'fist pumping/yeah I'm gonna do this!' moments. But it will prayerfully be faithful and open up the scriptures for us.

If you're a leader here at SLE Church, or if you become a teacher of God's word at another church – from Sunday School helper and teacher, to teens group leader, to bible study coordinator, and all the way up to preacher – I hope you see the heavy weight upon us to be faithful to the gospel in every part of scripture, and faithful to the gospel in our lives. If we lead people away from Jesus because of our own passions then we can only expect fearful judgement at the end.

Application: Recognise the tricks

Third, and related to the previous point, recognise the tricks.

I won't list every trick that false teachers use but let me point out some that I've noticed – particularly false teachers of a lighter, but no less dangerous, prosperity gospel.

First, realise that false teaching is rarely upfront. Nobody comes to you and says, 'Here's a plate of fat, unhealthy heresy... Now give me your money.' It's always way more subtle than that, and can sometimes take a while to spot.

What makes it hard to spot sometimes is the second point: false teachers are nice. They will be nice people and say a lot of nice things. They will have the nice family, nice kids, and they look like they have their life together. Now, this doesn't mean that all preachers with nice families are false teachers – but when you couple false teaching with this nice image it's very hard to see the teaching for what it is and to resist it.

Third, and related to their niceness, the preacher becomes the litmus test for blessing. Prosperity preachers will often use themselves as an example for you to follow – that if you would simply follow their teaching and example then you will be as successful as they are.

This is why I've noticed over the years that prosperity gospel teachers – their books all look the same. They have a very catchy title, and they are always on the cover looking impossibly good-looking. The message is clear – if you follow my teaching and example then you will be successful like me.

Four, their teaching will mix truth and error together. Often I have found that false teachers use a lot of bible passages in their sermons and books, but hardly any time will be given to explaining what those passages mean in context. Some false teachers may actually have their hearts in the right place. But a teacher is going to be judged by God on far more than their heart motivations – they will be judged on the fruit of the ministry and their faithfulness to the gospel. So watch out for a preacher who sprays bible verses at you but doesn't take the time to explain what they mean.

Five – Jesus death and resurrection, sin and judgement will be rarely mentioned. Instead their teaching will emphasise that your greatest problems in life are not our internal battle with sin, but our external environment working against us. The solution in their preaching is rarely to repent of sin and trust the gospel as you persevere. Their solutions are always within your personal power to overcome.

Those are 5 tricks that false teachers consistently use. Know them and watch out for them.

Application: get defensive about the right thing

Final point for today – get defensive about the right thing.

A few years ago I blogged about false teachers and their book covers. I don't think I've ever seen my Facebook feed and website blow up that much. Most of it was positive, but there were some negative responses. Most of the negative responses were from people who thought I was being judgemental.

Here's where I think Peter's motivation for writing what he has today should guide us. We need to understand what's at stake: people's eternal lives, the glory of God being robbed by a false gospel, the outside world blaspheming Jesus in response to false teaching. Some people get really defensive when talking about and naming false teachers – they are quick to say we should not judge, which is actually a misuse of that scripture.

Christian, your job is to defend the gospel not the teacher. A teacher will be responsible for themselves when they stand before God, we are responsible for whether the gospel is defended or watered down in our church and in our lives.

So if another Christian warns that someone is a false teacher, take that warning seriously. Investigate it. Understand if that teacher has been misunderstood, or if their teaching really does change the gospel. We're so quick to defend the temporary reputation of people and so slow to defend the eternal glory of the gospel.

One final word

At the end of all this the goal is not to run out there with our pitchforks in a lynch mob hunting down false teachers and their followers. 2 Peter 2 is warning us of the danger. First and foremost we should be praying that we keep growing in gospel knowledge and maturity to be able to identify false teachers and defend the gospel from their teachings. We also need to be prayerful about our friends and family who may be caught up with false teachers – prayerful for them, and asking God for wisdom to know how to interact with them on what they are hearing. May we all grow in gospel wisdom as we heed these warnings from Peter today.