

TRUE OR FALSE?

The apostle Peter paints a vivid picture of the nature and the tactics of false prophets and false teachers. In 2Peter 2, he says a) false teachers flaunt the flesh not the Spirit; b) false teachers are wolves in sheep's clothing; and c) false teachers and their converts are known by the worldly fruit of their lives.

1- False words lead to loss. Peter warns his readers against false teachers, which can be spotted in spite of their camouflage, by the impure and sensual fruits produced in their lives. Wolves in sheep's clothing can be outed, as believers trust and obey the truth of God's Word, as empowered by the Holy Spirit. In 2Peter 2:3 he says, "*in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.*" It's echoed in Jude 4, "*for certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*" They claim to be speaking for God but they deny the truth of God's written Word, favoring their own claims of special revelation. Their lives are not holy but worldly, sensual and unsanctified, as exposed in 2Peter 2.

2- False converts are greedy. The apostle Paul also writes about true apostles not being greedy for worldly gain, while false teachers will say whatever false words it takes to enrich themselves. Today we see this in the sad heresy of the "prosperity gospel" that takes advantage of people's needs and greeds. One of my relatives in ministry is personally acquainted with pastor Costi Hinn, who recently left the prosperity movement. Hinn traveled the world in private jets, staying at \$25,000 per night venues, living a life akin to royalty or mafia. "When I finally saw what I had become, I was disgusted," he says. "The Gospel became real. I had been greedy, I was ambitious for all the wrong things, I was exploiting the poor, squeezing every last dollar out of people so that we could live the way they couldn't - using Jesus to do that. When you take the promises of heaven and make them a 'now' thing, you have a model for 'your best life now' - but that's not the heartbeat of Christianity. We have to say 'no' to such things." Peter agrees! Sensual living does not define the Gospel, it defiles it. False promises of false teachers will lead to false "blessings" and real loss. True faith is in the Blessed One, not in your desired blessings.

3- True words lead to real life. Peter also warns that counterfeit teachers and their false converts will face terrible judgment, as opposed to the eternal rewards awaiting true believers. After Jesus talked about wolves in sheep's clothing, He says in Matthew 7:22, "*on that day many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name and cast out demons and do mighty works in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, I never knew you, depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.*" The distortion of truth leads to exploitation which leads to destruction. Are you a false teacher? Are you a false convert of a false teacher? The Bible warns that righteous judgment is coming. "False" will not survive. Jesus says in Matthew 7:24, "*everyone who hears these words of Mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.*" To survive the storms of life, build your lives on the true words of Jesus, written down in the Bible as your guide for real life. The rewards are eternal.

4- True converts will survive. 1John 4 says, "*do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world... the spirit of the anti-christ, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*" Beware Christians camouflaged like the world, bearing the fruit of the flesh. Because whether they know it or not, they are somehow wrapped up in false teaching. Their lives will reveal demonic results. That's why reading and knowing and obeying God's Word is so important. God revealed and wrote down His Word in the Bible - written down for you to trust and to obey, by the divine power of the Holy Spirit within. Read it and do it daily. As Jude 24 says, "*now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen!*" □