

False Teachers - cont.

We are told by some brethren that for one to be a “false teacher,” it must be shown that he has a bad character. There has been a shift from doctrine influencing character, to character influencing doctrine. This is backwards. The fruit identifies the tree (Matthew 7:15-20). A man’s teaching defines his character (1 Timothy 6:3-5). Limiting “false teachers” to those with bad character makes few false teachers in the world. Men like , Joel Osteen, Benny Hinn, the Pope, and your local denominational preacher, would not be a “false teacher” according to this definition.

To say that a “false teacher” has to have bad character to be “false” leads to several problems. It causes brethren to receive, rather than mark and avoid (Romans 16:17; 2 Timothy 2:16-18). It leads brethren to become partakers of evil (2 John 9-11; note the word “any” in v.10). It requires one to be a heart reader; to know the inward character and motive of every teacher (1 Corinthians 2:11). Lastly, those with good character who teach what is false could never be “false teachers”.

- Chris Reeves -

[continued next week]

- Word of the Week -

“Do good” (Gr. *agathoergeo*), used just twice in the NT, is an important word, especially in today’s world where so much bad is done to others. God in heaven does good to all of us (Acts 14:17) and Paul calls upon Christians to “do good” to others around them (1 Timothy 6:18). Let’s all go out this week a “do good” to someone around us. It’s much need!

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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 -

False Teachers and False Teaching - Part 2

But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.”

- 2 Peter 2:1 -

The Issue At Hand

We are examining the issue among some brethren concerning calling others a “false teacher”. Is it proper to call a fellow-brother, or fellow-sister in Christ a “false teacher” if he or she is teaching what is false? You may be thinking, “Well, yes of course you can.” But not all brethren think you can.

So, what is the issue? The issue is not, “Do some false teachers have bad character and motives?” Yes, of course the Bible teaches this. The issue is, “What makes one a false teacher, his teaching, his character, or both?”

The truth is, the Bible uses the word “false” for one’s words without reference to one’s character. What one teaches rather than why one teaches it is the key. The Bible does not label one as “false” solely on the basis of one’s motives, intentions, or character. If we want to “Speak as the

Bible speaks...”, as we so often say we do, then we need to be willing to call someone a “false teacher” solely on the basis of his teaching and not on his character.

Four Possibilities Concerning One’s Teaching

What are the possibilities concerning one’s teaching:

- First, one may teach the truth with good motives (Philippians 1:17). This is the kind of teacher we all need to be.
- Second, one may teach the truth with impure motives (Philippians 1:18). This kind of teacher ends up causing problems for those who are doing God’s will.
- Third, one may teach error with good motives (Acts 18:24-28). This kind of teacher can change with the right, humble attitude.
- Fourth, one may teach error with impure motives (Ephesians 4:14). This kind of teacher is to be avoided.

Some Points to Consider

The Bible speaks of those who were “false,” at times, without mentioning their

character or motives. Where do we read that they were “false” because of their bad character? We don’t read that in the Bible.

In the Bible, you can read about “false prophets” (Matthew 7:15), “false witnesses” (Matthew 15:19), “false Christs” (Matthew 24:4-5,24), “false apostles” (2 Corinthians 11:4,13; Revelation 2:2), “false brethren” (2 Corinthians 11:26; Gal. 2:4; Ac.15), “false swearers” (1 Timothy 1:10), and “false prophets” (2 Peter 2:1). Question: “Were all these people false because of their character?” No they were not.

Yes, Peter speaks of “false teachers” (2 Peter 2:1). First, he writes about their false doctrine (v. 1); then, their immoral character is mentioned (v. 2ff). But, their character is not necessary for them to be “false”.

The Apostles would have been “false witnesses” by their denial of the resurrection alone (1 Corinthians 15:15). John identified some “false prophets” by their denial of Jesus alone; what they spoke (1 John 4:1-3, 5). Paul and angels would be accursed even without bad character (Galatians 1:6-9).

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