

What About Preachers Who Tell You What You Want to Hear?

[2 Peter 2:1-3](#)

2 Peter, Day 7

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. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. 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.

- 2 Peter 2:1-3, ESV

Promises. Promises. Promises. When I was in college waiting tables, I used to get home really late sometimes, when it seemed the only thing on TV was infomercials. I know no one under the age of 30 understands what I'm talking about, but if you're over 40, I know you've had the same experience I used to have, and you probably know how interesting those infomercials used to be at 2:00 in the morning when you couldn't sleep. They would make astounding promises of wonderful benefits to be had for just \$14.99, plus shipping and handling. Were they true? I don't know. I can honestly say I never ordered anything from a late-night infomercial. I was tempted several times, but I lived with my parents and I knew my dad would be really mad at me.

Infomercial pitchmen aren't the only ones who specialize in making incredible-sounding promises. In the Gospel, God makes astounding but true promises, promising us what we really need - redemption, forgiveness, adoption, eternal life, and more. But even though these are the things we really need, they're not always the things we most feel we want or need. Our "felt needs" could be for greater self-esteem, more money, a happier marriage, more successful children, or miraculous healing from some disease or disability. Sadly, too many religious peddlers will promise the things we want or think we need, even if God has not promised them to us.

How should we respond to preachers who seem to be telling us that, if we just believe strongly enough or do the right things or give enough money, God will answer all of our prayers and we'll be healthy and wealthy and completely happy? Or what do we do about other preachers who proclaim that God accepts everyone just the way they are - no faith or repentance are required - and that everyone will get into heaven in the end?

Peter calls these men and women "*false teachers*" who "*secretly bring in destructive heresies.*" These people are so often motivated by greed, and in their greed they seek to exploit the people of God with false words. God foresaw such people's rise in the church and proclaimed condemnation and destruction for them.

So, far from seeing such teachers as harmless or as basically good people who mean well and are doing the best they can, Peter openly and strongly condemns false teachers and warns us against them. They are heading for a really rude awakening, for destruction and condemnation. Would we want to risk falling under their charm and following them into such a future? Of course not!

So, what do we do? We must study the Scriptures and test everything by the clear light of God's word. We must discern carefully and at times we must warn those who teach falsely of the error of their message and the consequences of their actions. We should pray for their repentance and for the protection of the church. And we should make sure we are helping to teach and spread the truth of the biblical Gospel, for the glory of God!