

FALSE TEACHERS; PHIL. 3:17-19 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

TODAY, ~ WE'LL LOOK AT A VERY BRIEF SECTION OF PHILIPPIANS, ~ 3:17-19.

▶▶ In [verses 1-16](#), ~ we could say that Paul dealt with false teachers on a specific basis.

▷▷ I.e., ~ in [verses 1-11](#), ~ he specifically refuted the false teachers who were teaching false gospels.

↪↪ And in [verses 12-16](#), ~ he specifically refuted the false teachers who were teaching the false doctrine of spiritual perfectionism.

▶▶ In [3:17-19](#), ~ which we'll be looking at today, ~ as I see it Paul zooms out and gives us a more general or broader picture of the subject of false teachers and false teaching.

▷▷ So we can say that [Phil. 3:1-19](#) form a unit, ~ in which Paul deals with heresy and false teachers, 1st, ~ in a specific way and then, ~ 2nd, ~ in a more general way.

IN VERSE 17a, ~ PAUL HAS AN EXHORTATION FOR BELIEVERS.

BROTHERS, JOIN IN IMITATING ME. ~~ OR, ~ BROTHERS AND SISTERS, ~ FOLLOW MY example.

▶▶ This is to be an ongoing thing. ~~ "Continue to follow my example."

THE QUESTION IS, ~ "IN WHAT SENSE DOES HE WANT US TO CONTINUE TO FOLLOW his example?" ~~ "Follow my example" is a pretty broad statement.

▶▶ So what is it specifically that Paul is exhorting us to do?

THE PREVIOUS CONTEXT DEFINES IT FOR US.

▶▶ As we know, ~ in [3:1-11](#), ~ Paul rejected and refuted those who teach or hold to false gospels and gave us the correct teaching when it comes to the true gospel. ~~ By grace . . .

▶▶ And in [3:12-16](#), ~ he rejected and refuted those who taught the false doctrine of spiritual perfectionism by teaching us the correct view of the concept of spiritual perfection.

▶▶ What we can say here is that Paul was teaching us sound doctrine and rejecting and refuting false doctrine. ↴ ↴ 1/10

▷▷ A logical conclusion of this is, ~ of course, ~ that Paul held firmly to sound doctrine.

▷▷ Putting all of this together, ~ we can succinctly say that Paul firmly held to, ~ passed on, ~ and defended sound doctrine.

▶▶ Then he immediately follows that in [verse 17a](#) with his exhortation to keep on following his example.

▷▷ Again a pretty broad statement.

SO, ~ WHAT'S THE EXAMPLE HE'S SPECIFICALLY SPEAKING ABOUT?

▶▶ Based on the context, ~ it's this: ~~ firmly holding on to, ~ passing on, ~ and defending sound doctrine.

▷▷ So more specifically, ~ Paul's exhortation in [verse 17a](#) is this: ~ ~ ¶¶

↳↳ "Brothers and sisters, ~ continue to hold firmly to, ~ pass on, ~ and defend sound doctrine.

↳↳ Sound doctrine being all that Scripture teaches from *Genesis* to *Revelation*.

→→ 2 Tim. 3:16-17, ~ [LEB](#) ~ All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, in order that the person of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

↳↳ Sound doctrine is referred to by *Jude* as "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints."

BUT WHY? ~~ WHY DOES PAUL WANT US TO CONTINUE TO HOLD FIRMLY TO, ~ PASS on, ~ and defend sound doctrine? ~~ I would suggest at least three reasons.

▶▶ 1st, ~ he does not want us to ever compromise with false teaching.

▶▶ The 2nd reason: ~~ he wants us to grow in the faith. ~~ To grow in the faith, ~ we need a steady diet of sound teaching.

▷▷ In [1 Pet. 2:2](#), ~ Peter exhorts us, ~ [NIV](#), ~ "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk ~ [talking about *God's word*], ~ so that by it you may grow up in your salvation."

↳↳ Peter is pointing out that we grow and mature spiritually by feeding on the word of God. ¶¶ 2/10

▷▷Ps. 119 illustrates Peter's point.

↳↳Ps. 119:97-100, ~ ⁹⁷ Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. ⁹⁸ Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. ⁹⁹ I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. ¹⁰⁰ I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.

↳↳Ps. 119:130, ~ The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.

▶▶And the 3rd reason: ~ holding to sound doctrine will lead to right behavior.

▷▷E.g., ~ we see from Rom. 6, ~ a correct understanding of justification and God's grace will show us that we are not to continue in sin.

↳↳In that chapter Paul asks, ~ "Well then, ~ since God's grace has set us free from the law, ~ does that mean we can go on sinning?" ~ His answer? ~ "Of course not!"

↳↳Holding to sound doctrine will cause us to agree with Paul and change our lives accordingly.

▷▷And look at what Paul says in Titus 2:11-15.

↳↳¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. ¹⁵ Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you ~ [i.e., ~ let no one disregard what you say].

▷▷Holding to sound doctrine will lead to right behavior.

▷▷And teachers and preachers of sound doctrine will, ~ along with teaching sound doctrine, ~ exhort believers to godly living.

IN VERSE 17b, ~ PAUL BROADENS HIS EXHORTATION.

HE SAYS "AND KEEP YOUR EYES ON ~ [OR, ~ OBSERVE]; THOSE WHO WALK ACCORDING to the example you have in us [most likely Paul's missionary team]."

▶▶The idea here is to observe in order to imitate. ↴ 3/10

▷▷ So believers are to observe others, ~ who, ~ like Paul, ~ firmly hold to, ~ pass on, ~ and defend sound doctrine, ~ in order to follow their example.

▶▶ Notice here that Paul is just repeating his exhortation to us to continue to firmly hold on to, ~ pass on, ~ and defend sound doctrine.

NOW, ~ THE QUESTION COULD BE ASKED, ~ "WHY DID HE REPEAT IT?" ~~ WELL, ~ Most likely, ~ Paul repeated his exhortation for emphasis.

▶▶ Stressing the seriousness and importance of this. ~~ Not something to be taken lightly.

▶▶ This is so serious & important that Paul includes it in the list of qualifications for elders.

▷▷ Titus 1:9, ~ "He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it."

▶▶ In Titus 2:1, ~ exhorts Titus, ~ "But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine."

▶▶ In 1 Tim. 6:3-4a, ~ Paul has harsh words for those who teach false doctrine.

▷▷ If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.

▶▶ And twice in Gal. 1, ~ Paul says let those who preach a false gospel be under God's curse.

THIS IS NO DOUBT WHY PAUL REPEATED HIS EXHORTATION.

▶▶ Continuing to firmly hold on to, ~ pass on, ~ and defend sound doctrine is of the utmost seriousness and importance.

▶▶ Jude points out the utmost seriousness and importance of this matter.

▷▷ Jude 3, ~ Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

↪↪ "the faith" refers to the special revelation of God that Scripture contains. ~~ TPID, ~ what God has said and revealed from Genesis to Revelation.

→→ Or, ~ simply put, ~ sound doctrine.

↪↪ Jude calls us to strenuously defend this body of truth. 📖 4/10

↪↪ And according to the overall context, ~ it is against false teaching that we are to strenuously defend the faith that God has entrusted once for all time to his people.

▷▷ In *verse 4*, ~ Jude presents the necessity for this strenuous defense.

↪↪ 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.

→→ The false teachers sneak into a church. ~ Peter tells us that they introduce their false teaching secretly.

▶▶ So, ~ I think we might see why Paul repeated his exhortation to continue to firmly hold on to, ~ pass on, ~ and defend sound doctrine

▷▷ Because it is of the utmost seriousness and importance. ~ Not to be taken lightly.

PAUL WANTS US TO CONTINUE TO FIRMLY HOLD ON TO, ~ PASS ON, ~ AND defend sound doctrine.

▶▶ And when we consider the fact that false teachers come in disguise and secretly introduce heresy, ~ it is incumbent upon us, ~ believers, ~ **to constantly be on our guard against false teaching.**

IN VERSE 18, ~ PAUL POINTS OUT THAT FALSE TEACHERS ARE ENEMIES OF THE cross.

FOR MANY, ~ OF WHOM I HAVE OFTEN TOLD YOU AND NOW TELL YOU EVEN WITH tears, ~ walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.

▶▶ Now, ~ keeping the larger context in mind, ~ Paul's refutation of false teaching, ~ the word "**many**" here refers to false teachers.

▶▶ This reminds me of John's words in 1 Jn. 4:1, ~ **Beloved, 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.**

▶▶ So there were many false teachers running around in the early church.

▶▶ Now consider this. ~ I've noted some of this before and I think it bears repeating.

▷▷ If there were many false teachers in John and Paul's day, ~ think how many more false teachers there are today. **↯↯ 5/10**

▷▷ Just think of all the churches and pulpits that are being filled with teachers and preachers who claim to be true followers of Christ but are really not.

↪↪ Just think of all the books, ~ the radio and TV programs, ~ and what goes out over the internet, ~ all claiming to speak in the name of Jesus.

▷▷ And yet Jesus has not sent them to speak for Him.

↪↪ Jer. 14:14, ~ And the LORD said to me: 'The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. ~ They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds.'

↪↪ Jer. 29:8-9, ~ "For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, declares the LORD."

▷▷ And Ezek. 13:6 tells us that the false prophets "have seen false visions and lying divinations. They say, 'Declares the LORD,' when the LORD has not sent them, and yet they expect him to fulfill their word."

▷▷ Loved ones, ~ not everyone who claims to speak for God is actually speaking for God.

BACK TO VERSE 18, ~ PAUL DESCRIBES FALSE TEACHERS AS ENEMIES OF the true gospel.

▶▶ Notice, ~ false teaching is not neutral. ~ So we see that there can be no compromise with false teaching.

▷▷ False teaching is the natural enemy of the true gospel. ~ It does not promote the genuine gospel.

▶▶ Furthermore, ~ nothing beneficial comes from it. ~ Quite the opposite in fact.

▷▷ Peter says that false teaching is "destructive." ~ Something destructive doesn't indicate something beneficial.

▷▷ Jude compares false teachers to "hidden reefs" that will suddenly destroy ships that come too near.

▷▷ Acts 20:28-30, ~ ²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ↴↴ 6/10

↪↪²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ☞☞ Doesn't sound too beneficial does it

▷▷ And recall back in [Phil. 3:2](#), ~ where Paul used vivid language & repetition to awaken us to the dangers of false teaching.

↪↪ He called false teachers "mutilators." ~ I.e., ~ their work does only harm.

▷▷ Nothing good comes from false teaching. ~ So false teaching must be exposed and rejected.

▶▶ Of course, ~ false teachers *pretend* to be teachers of the true gospel. ~ Disguise, ~ already mentioned but bears repeating.

▷▷ In 2 Cor., ~ Paul tells us that false teachers "disguise themselves as servants of righteousness."

▷▷ And in [Matt. 7:15](#), ~ NIV ~ Jesus said, ~ Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing ~ [i.e., ~ they look innocent], but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

▶▶ Something else to think about here. ~ While there may be some exceptions to this, ~ I would suggest that often false teaching leads to ungodly living.

▷▷ Scripture definitely shows us that ungodly living often goes along with false teaching.

▷▷ In [1 Tim.](#), ~ Paul calls on Tim. to hold firmly to sound doctrine and a good conscience.

↪↪ Then he goes on to say that the cause of some making shipwreck of their faith was their rejection of sound doctrine and a good conscience.

▷▷ And back in [Phil. 3](#), ~ take a look how Paul describes false teachers in [vs. 19b](#). ~ "their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things."

↪↪ I.e., ~ they replaced God with their own sinful desires and obey them. ~ Their desires are their highest concern.

↪↪ They are proud of what they do, ~ but it's behavior they should be ashamed of not proud of.

↪↪ And they think only about this life here on earth. ~ Most likely in the sense that eternal things don't enter their minds and their focus is only on material things.

▷▷ Look what Peter says in 2 Pet. 2:1-3a. ~~ "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. ^{3a} And in their greed they will exploit you with false words."

↪↪ Not only will they teach false doctrine, ~ immoral, ~ greedy, ~ & will exploit people.

▷▷ Jude says that false teachers "pervert the grace of our God into sensuality." ~~ I.e., ~ they say that God's marvelous grace allows us to live immoral lives. ~~ And deny Jesus.

▷▷ So we see that ungodly living often goes along with false teaching.

▷▷ And since ungodly living often goes along with false teaching, ~ there is not only the danger of abandoning sound doctrine, ~ **there is the added danger of adopting an ungodly lifestyle.**

▷▷ As Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:33. ~ NIV ~ Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."

↪↪ So, ~ here's how it goes: ~~ If we listen to false teachers or follow their teachings, ~ we will start to believe what they believe. ~~ ↴ ↴

→→ And when we start to believe what they believe, ~~ then we will start to behave the way they behave. ~~ Peter: ~~ "many will follow their sensuality."

▷▷ I think we may see why all false teaching must be exposed & rejected.

↪↪ And keep in mind what we noted earlier: ~~ sound doctrine leads to godly living.

LOVED ONES, ~ AGAIN WE MUST STRESS THAT WE NEED TO BE ON OUR GUARD against false teaching.

GOING BACK TO 1 JN. 4:1, ~ JOHN SAYS, ~ "BELOVED, DO NOT BELIEVE EVERY SPIRIT, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God." ~~ Simply put "spirits" = teachers.

▶▶ We are to constantly examine to see whether a person who is preaching/teaching God's word genuinely belongs to and speaks for God.

▷▷ TPID, ~ we're to test to see if the source of their teaching is God the Holy Spirit.

▶▶ But how do we do that? ~~ How do we test? ~~ We are to check all teaching against Scripture. ↴ ↴ 8/10

▷▷ Here we are to take our cue from the Bereans. ~~ Acts 17:10-11.

↳↳ The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

→→ They searched the Scriptures day after day to confirm whether or not Paul and Silas were teaching the truth.

↳↳ Stand as a model for us. ~~ We're to test all teaching through grid of Scripture. ~~ But are we doing this? ~~ We're to test all teaching through grid of Scripture.

↳↳ If we find a teaching to be biblically sound, ~ we are to hold to it. ~~ But, ~ if we find a teaching to be false according to Scripture, ~ we are to expose and reject it.

WE FINISH OUR LOOK AT THIS BRIEF PARAGRAPH WITH A FOCUS ON THE ultimate fate of false teachers.

VERSE 19a. ~~ THEIR END IS DESTRUCTION.

▶▶ Ultimately, ~ they will not get away with what they're doing. ~~ God will judge them.

▶▶ But they can do, ~ have done, ~ and will do ~ a lot of damage in between.

▶▶ False teachers tell people what they want to hear, ~ instead of preaching the word of God in an honest and faithful manner.

▷▷ And because they tell people what they want to hear, ~ they are quite popular.

▷▷ 2 Tim. 4:3-4. ~~ For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

▷▷ Is. 30:9-11, ~ ⁹ For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the Lord; ¹⁰ who say to the seers, "Do not see," and to the prophets, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ "Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, ¹¹ leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel." ¶¶ 9/10

→→Not much has changed since Isaiah's day. ~ Present today. ~ "Yes, ~ let us hear only about Jesus meek and mild"

▷▷People are always looking for someone to tell them what they want to hear.

↪↪And Satan is more than willing to help them find a false teacher or preacher who will do just that.

▶▶Now, ~ this should show us that just because someone draws a crowd, ~ it doesn't mean that it's a work of God.

▷▷They may just be itching peoples' ears, ~ telling them only smooth or pleasant things.

↪↪Focusing only on Jesus "meek and mild."

▶▶Loved ones, ~ we need to do our best to prevent false teachers from doing their damage and to repair the damage that they've done.

CONCLUSION.

AND THAT BRINGS US TO THE END OF THIS BRIEF PARAGRAPH.

▶▶Much to take in, ~ think about, ~ and act upon.

LET'S PRAY 10/10