

## Our Responsibility To False Teachers

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Romans 16:17; Titus 1:13; 2 John 1:9-11

Shall we remain silent while false teachers rush headlong into destruction? As faithful brethren, we cannot! Shall we say nothing though students of false teachers fall into perdition? We must not! Of course, if blind guides are determined to rush into the dark abyss, then the time comes when warning them is without merit, but we must continue to make known their error and the terrible consequences of following blind guides (Matthew 15:13-14).

The title of our lesson indicates the obligation belongs to all faithful brethren. This lesson assumes you are faithful and that you, as a faithful brother in Christ, want to do what the Bible teaches. We will not be stressing *who* has a responsibility toward the false teacher but *what* are the responsibilities.

### Our Responsibility Is to Realize and Recognize (Romans 16:17).

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them.

Greek scholar A. T. Robertson gives us some insight into the word translated "mark," saying, "Keep an eye on so as to avoid.  $\sigma$  is the goal,  $\sigma$  means keeping your eye on the goal" (Robertson).  $\sigma$  is at the root of the English word "scope," as in "telescope," "microscope," and "kaleidoscope."

The first thing that "mark" indicates is, brethren must recognize false doctrine. Too many brethren say, "I don't see anything wrong with it." Folks, they don't. They don't, because they do not have the knowledge necessary to determine error. Others say, "I didn't hear brother Big preach any error." True, they didn't! They did not because they can not. They do not know the truth, so how could they know error when they hear it?

The problem is not new. Over 2500 years ago, Hosea admonished brethren for their ignorance, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee..." (Hosea 4:6). Brethren need to take advantage of the opportunities to learn Bible truth. We learn the truth through the local Bible classes on Sunday morning and Wednesday night, through special Saturday studies, and, of course, through opportunities similar to the Online Academy of Biblical Studies ([www.oabs.org](http://www.oabs.org)).

Those who recognize false teachers have an obligation to call attention to their destructive doctrines, enabling others to see.

### **Our Responsibility Is to Resist (Galatians 2:11).**

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I resisted ["withstood," KJV] him to the face, because he stood condemned.

Paul opposed Peter to the face because he stood justly accused for his false teaching, perpetrated by his example at Antioch. This is a perfect example for us to emulate. See context.

Though Paul could have taken Peter to the side and admonished him, he did not. He set himself against Peter's error in the presence of all those who could have been misled by his falsehood. Peter's motive in doing wrong was fear (Galatians 2:14). Still, his action was hypocrisy (Galatians 2:13), walking not uprightly according to the truth (Galatians 2:14) and compelling, by his action, others to live according to the abolished laws of the Jews (Galatians 2:13). Similarly, though false teachers may think themselves equal to the apostles, when brethren in error transgress the truth, they too should be resisted or withstood in the presence of all.

### **Our Responsibility Is to Reprove (Ephesians 5:10-13).**

and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them

The ungodly action of publicly proclaiming error may certainly be classified as "unfruitful works of darkness." Such fruits are to be reprovved. Since one's doctrine causes students to turn from the living God, it ought to be exposed and the truth made known. God specifically charged preachers of righteousness to reprove by preaching (2 Timothy 4:2), and to reprove openly (1 Timothy 5:20).

Acting on behalf of the Godhead, the work of the Holy Spirit was to convict the world (John 16:8, 14). Shall we settle for less? Surely not! Pentecost is the first example of the Spirit's reproof (Acts 2), and it was a public action. False accusers of the apostles were first refuted (Acts 2:13-14). Then Peter exposed the murder of Jesus which was committed by the very audience he publicly addressed. Similar to the motive of the Holy Spirit, our reproof must be kindled by the love and salvation of souls (Proverbs 3:11-12). You cannot save souls by hiding error under the rug of ignorance.

Though reprovved, some will still not heed. Wisdom publicly yearns, "Turn you at my reproof" (Proverbs 1:23).

### **Our Responsibility Is to Rebuke (Titus 1:13).**

This testimony is true. For which cause reprove them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith,

Not only did God commission His preachers and teachers to reprove, they were to rebuke. Reproof convinces men, sometimes even the one in sin, of the error. On the other hand, rebuke

does not necessarily expose one's sin. It censures and denounces. On Calvary, the first thief was not brought to see his sin, yet the penitent thief "rebuked" his fellow malefactor (Luke 23:40).

Is there such a thing as being too lenient? Too tolerant? Indeed there is. We learn a great lesson when God rebuked king Ahab for showing mercy unto Ben-hadad (1 Kings 20:2-43).

Our motive in rebuking sin is that the one in error "may be sound in the faith," both in his teaching and his practice.

### **Our Responsibility Is to Receive Not (2 John 1:9-11).**

If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting:

Do not give them the right hand of fellowship (Galatians 2:9). Do not give them money for the proclamation of their error. Do not appear on the same program with them and lend them your faithful name to their unfaithful endeavors. Do not use them in meetings, lectureships, training schools or local preaching. As you can see, this passage means more than simply avoid saying, "Good morning." Obviously!

### **Our Responsibility Is to Remove One's Self from (Romans 16:17).**

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from ["avoid," KJV] them.

Though 1 Samuel 18:11-12 does not address the subject of error, it does illustrate the action of avoiding danger for which Paul called: "... Saul cast the spear; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall. And David avoided out of his presence twice. And Saul was afraid of David, because Jehovah was with him, and was departed from Saul." We avoid and depart from false teachers because the Lord has no fellowship with those who teach doctrines that cast into hell.

### **Responses From False Teachers**

At times, false teachers respond to charges of teaching error by saying, "I didn't say that. You've taken me out of context." No one likes to be taken out of context; therefore, rebuke not, nor receive, an accusation without clear evidence (1 Timothy 5:19-20). Faithful brethren will listen carefully, go slowly, and rebuke scripturally.

At times, false teachers charge that faithful brethren must go to false teachers privately before saying anything publicly, quoting Matthew 18:15-18 to prove their point. The primary application of Matthew 18 is personal sin. It is folly to hide behind a misuse of this great verse. Paul did not take Peter to the side; he withstood him to the face "before *them* all" (Galatians 2:14). Jesus gave a public scorching to false teachers (Matthew 23). Personal sin is one thing while publicly teaching a doctrine that will cost men their souls is another. They are to be addressed differently.

We also hear that it is wrong to judge another (Matthew 7:1; cf John 7:24), and they tell us that no one is without sin (Galatians 6:1). I would not be too far afield to say that "Judge not" is the most used ... or ... misused passage in the Bible. Jesus does not forbid making decisions on the character or actions of another. He forbids the type of judging that permeated the heart of the hypocrite who sought to remove specks out of the eye of others while they themselves had beams in their own. Besides, in John 7:24, Jesus expressly commands that we judge: "Judge righteous judgment." The Lord's righteous judgment is a judgment in which we use the proper standard by which to judge and we must know the facts or have the evidence before we judge. Lack of facts and/or using the wrong standard produces injustice and may bring about tragic results. Such crucified the Christ. Paul did not say, "He who has never sinned go show a brother's sin." He said that the "spiritual" were to help their brother who has been taken in a trespass (Galatians 6:1). The spiritual are not those who have never sinned but those who have been forgiven and are now without sin through the blood of Jesus.

### **Conclusion**

When we biblically resist false teachers, Satan flees, those bent on destructive doctrines fear, and souls are saved (Titus 1:13).

### **Works Cited**

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