Introduction: The church (people of God) have always faced dangers and challenges; persecution, temptation, lukewarmness, etc. Congregations such as Corinth, those in Galatia were spiritually challenged**. 2 Peter 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.**

**I) Warnings to The Early Church**

**A) Various dangers associated with false teachers**

**1. “Come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.” - Mt 7:15**

**2. “but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.” - Mt 13:2**

**3. “False brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth . . .)” - Gal 2:4**

**4. “By the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,” - Ephes. 4:14 (NKJV)**

**5. “Creep into households and make captives of gullible women” - 2 Tim. 3:6 (NKJV)**

**6. “Crept in unawares” – Jude**

**B) The early church was warned and instructed**

1. LEARN, GUARD & CONTEND for the Truth –

a. Learn – spend time reading the letters, listen to instruction.

b. Guard- to protect, pay attention to.

c. Contends- defend, speak up for the truth.

2. **TEST** every doctrine – 1 Jn 4:1

a. Do not be gullible, naïve

3. Mark, Avoid, Withdraw, Shun - Rom. 16:17; 1 Tim 6:3-5; 2 Tim 2:16-18;

**Romans 16:17 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.**

**1 Timothy 6:3 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, 4 he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, 5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.**

**2 Timothy 2:16 But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. 17 And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort**,

4. Mouths MUST be STOPPED

**Titus 1:10 For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, 11 whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. 12 One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." 13 This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, 14 not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth**.

5. Paul did not say to ignore, coddle, or accept the false teacher.

**C) False Doctrines The Early Church Faced**

**1. Idolatry - Romans 1:21-25**

**2. Judaism - Acts 15:1; Acts 21:20-25; Galatians 3:1-6,18**

**3. Gnosticism – 1 John**

**4. Stoicism – Acts 17:18 Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this babbler want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.**

**5. Epicureanism - Acts 17:18**

**6. Denial of the resurrection - 1 Cor. 15; 2 Timothy 2:17 And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, 18 who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.2 Tim. 2:17,18**

**II) Warnings And Challenges For Today**

**A) Beware of false teachers**

1. Idolatry - Images / Individualism / Experientialism / Creedalism

2. Judaism -- Messianic Judaism / Traditionalism

3. Gnosticism - Mysticism / Spiritualism / Emotionalism

4. Stocism -- Asceticism / Extreme rejection of pleasure or enjoyment

5. Epicurism -- “If It Feels Good Do It”

6. Materialism -- Greed / Worldliness / Carnality

**B) By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words**

**1 John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.**

1. How To IDENTIFY A False TEACHER:

a. The Bible vs. What They SAY

b. The Narrow vs. the Wide Gate

c. Spiritual Unity vs. Ungodly Division

d. Godliness vs. Godlessness

e. Good Fruit vs. Bad Fruit

2. TYPICALLY, FALSE Teachers:

a. Minimize the Need for Authority

b. Depend on human wisdom

c. Minimize the need to OBEY Jesus

d. Teach that God’s love & grace permits a continuance in sin

e. Redefines terms to support their error

f. Misuses scripture - (Mt 4:6; 2 Pet 3:16)

g. Ignores scripture that exposes error

**C) Common Problems**

1. Denominationalism – **1 Corinthians 1:10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11 For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. 12 Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?**

2. Ecumenicalism – **2 John 1:9 Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him**;

3. Calvinism – T.U.L.I.P. **— 2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance**.

4. EASY Believism — Luke 9:23-26

5. O.S.A.S. — Hebrews 10:35-39

6. Premillennialism / Hyper-Preterism — John 5:28,29; 1 Thes 4:13-16

7. Social Gospel/ MDR/Neo-Calvinism, etc.

**D) They are destructive**

**2 Corinthians 11:13–15 (NKJV)**

**13 For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. …**