

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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WHAT DOES FALSE MODIFY?

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Over a decade now, controversy has continued over identifying a false teacher. Some, who believed Homer Hailey taught error regarding divorce and remarriage, also believed that he was not a false teacher. In their thinking, a man sincerely teaching something, cannot be a false teacher regardless of the character of his teaching. Another approach to dissect a teacher from his teaching in order to avoid the label of “false teacher” is to say “false” modifies “teacher” not “teaching”.

An editor recently wrote, *“It matters not to those who bandy the term about so much that the adjective “false” modifies the teacher and not what he teaches... To illustrate, a man could be a false teacher who says nothing but the truth. Those seeking to add affliction to Paul’s bonds were false teachers; but Paul rejoiced because what they were teaching was the truth.”*

Examining the editor’s example of a “false teacher”, those seeking to add affliction to Paul’s bonds are **not** called “false teachers” by the Holy Spirit (Phil. 1:15-18). The word, “pseudo”, trans-

lated *false*, is not in this text. The motives of the teacher of truth are revealed. People were cloaking their motives of envy, wanting to cause strife for Paul. Could it be that “false teacher” was not used by the Holy Spirit here because the teachers were teaching truth?

When the Bible speaks of “false witnesses”. The witnesses are described as being false, but not apart from the lie they are saying. In Jesus’ trial, *“many false witnesses came” (Matthew 26:60)*. That which is emphasized, making them false, is not their sinful motives, but that they were *“saying, We heard Him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands and in three days I will build another made without hands” (Mk. 14:57-58)*.

Paul speaks of “false brethren” (Gal. 2:4. 2 Cor. 11:26). While the people are called false, it is not apart from the relationship they are trying to portray. Whether hypocritically or sincerely, they presented themselves as brethren while trying to bind circumcision as a prerequisite for salvation (cf. Acts 15:1ff).

Homer Hailey, in His com-

mentary on the Minor Prophets, gives Deuteronomy 18:20-22, and Jer. 28 as scriptures describing “false prophets” (p. 18). Both passages emphasize what *“they speak”* in determining the false prophets. In Jer. 28, Hananiah is a false prophet because he was saying *“within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of Jehovah’s house that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away...” (Jer. 28:3)*. He was causing the people *“to trust in a lie” (Jer. 28:15)*. He was a false prophet because of the lie he prophesied.

As false prophets of old existed, Peter warns of false teachers. He labels them so because of the *“destructive heresies”* they present, *“denying even the Master that bought them” (2 Peter 2:1)*. “False teachers”, like “false witnesses”- “false brethren”- “false prophets” are so labeled emphasizing what is conveyed in the modified word. “False” modifies “teachers” which points to one in his “teaching”. Therefore, one can accurately be labeled a false teacher due to the character of his teaching.