

False Prophets and False Professions

by Bob Utley

The sermon explores how to discern true prophets from false ones through biblical evaluation and personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Duration: 49:50

Scripture: Matthew 7:15, Matthew 7:21-23, James 2:14-26, 2 Peter 2:1-3, 1 John 2:18-19, 1 John 4:1-3

Topics: "False Prophets", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

This sermon delves into the presence of false teachers and false professions within the church, emphasizing the need for discernment and biblical grounding to identify and combat deceptive doctrines. The speaker highlights the importance of ongoing repentance, faith, and evidence of a transformed life as indicators of true belief, cautioning against complacency and superficial Christianity. The message urges believers to be vigilant, rooted in Scripture, and prepared for spiritual warfare against deceptive teachings that can lead astray.

Transcript

I do thank you so much for praying for me. Thank you, Larry. I know others of you have.

I'm so grateful, grateful for that. I do believe that prayer is the key, that preaching is a two-way street. It is a willingness for me to speak and a willingness for you to hear.

I stand before you as one who believes that I have been called by God, gifted by God, theologically trained, and have a track record of 40 years of gospel ministry. I have a clear conscience and a sense, a sense, that I am an instrument in the hand of God. Now, the problem is in what we talked about last week on the difference between revelation, inspiration, and illumination.

Revelation is the doctrine that God has revealed himself, revealed himself in creation, revealed himself in the call to both Adam and Eve and Noah and Abraham and Israel, that God has acted to clearly show human beings made in his image who he is and what he desires from their life. We believe that God chose certain people to record and explain his revelatory acts and words, and we believe that these people were the writers of what we would call Scripture, both Old Testament and New, and that that period of revelation has ceased, that there is no current inspired speakers, that the apostles who walked with Jesus Christ and Paul who viewed Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus were the last of those who were uniquely equipped by the Spirit of God to record and explain. From the death of the apostles, we moved into a

period of illumination.

Illumination is the view that the Holy Spirit helps the people of God and the people who are not yet the people of God to understand what God has said and draws them to a personal encounter with the only living God. Now, the problem with illumination comes... Well, I guess maybe this will be a good way. You call me to preach to a gathered group, but before there's a gathered group, there are men and women who teach the Bible out of the best they understand that we call Sunday school.

We believe that the Holy Spirit's involved in both of those processes, but I would bet that not all the Sunday school teachers at this church agree on what the Bible teaches. So now we come to a place where sincere people believe they are speaking for God, but there are many other sincere people, equally trained, equally prayerful, equally called, who see it a different way. And the question comes, how do we know who to believe? Now, I have struggled with this.

I believe that there is, within biblical guidelines, the possibility of theological plurality. Now, what I'm saying is, I don't think when it comes to the differentness among the people of God that we should or need to say, this one's right, this one's wrong. I believe that we are called with different emphases in a biblical message to reach different personalities in different cultures.

So there is some valid, spirit-led disagreement among the people of God, which I not only affirm, but glory in, because it took me forever to realize as a preacher, as a teacher, that I cannot please everybody. And if I please everybody, I cease to be an instrument in the hand of my God. I'm also smart enough to know that I don't know.

I also know that when I've done my best with the priority of exegesis, that the text is priority over everything, and my view of how to interpret text, that what all is said and done, we are not going to agree. I am comfortable with that, and I have tried to affirm that as I have spoken to you. I want the freedom to preach what I believe with gusto, and I want you to have the freedom to reject it with gusto.

We are not going to take a vote. But on the other hand, I don't think it's fair for you to say to me, you don't agree with me, you don't agree with my parents, you don't agree with my favorite preacher, so you're a heretic. You may be a heretic, fool.

How do you know? What makes you right and me wrong? Now this is a question that haunts the human heart, the believing human heart. How do you know who to believe? It's not a new question, but it's a question that must be answered, because the text today is about false teachers and false professions. They have always been with us, and they are sharp, logical, dynamic people.

So I think if you would let me play the proof texter, as I come to Scripture and I ask myself, who do I believe, there are two Old Testament texts and two New Testament texts that seem to me logically to help me decide who to believe. Not who I like, not who I'm logically drawn to, not who my personality would go to even if they were not believers. No, no, no.

None of that personal preference deal. How can I evaluate when I hear somebody speak? Here is Mr. X, Mrs. Y. They claim to speak for God. Now how do I evaluate that? There are two Old Testament texts, both from the summary of Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy, the beginning of chapter 13 and the ending of chapter 18. Both of them seem to say, if they predict and it comes true, but they do it in the name of another God, they are a false teacher. If they do the

miraculous.

Now, friends, I think we've been captured by the miraculous because I want to remind you that Matthew 24, 24, as Jesus looks into the future and affirms that false teachers will always be with us, Jesus says, in the last day will come false teachers doing signs and wonders and lead even the elect astray, if that were possible, which says that we cannot put overemphasis in the supernatural, supernormal, to affirm who speaks and does not speak for God. The next text that haunts me when I come to any discussion on false teachers is the concluding chapter of the Sermon on the Mount, beginning at about verse 15 through the end of the chapter. And there are three things in that chapter that really, really speak to me.

Number one, if someone claims to speak for God and their life is different from what they say, they're a false teacher. By their fruits ye shall know them. We used to say to young students that one way you can tell a false teacher or a heresy is three things that really come back to my text in just a minute.

If they want your wife, if they want your money, and God only speaks to them, run as fast as you can because these people are sexually exploitive, financially exploitive, and claim a unique word from God, a plague on those people, curses from God on those people. Then we come down to these guys look so squeaky Christian, verse 21 through 23. And that day many will say to me, Lord, Lord, that's our profession of faith.

Whosoever calls my name the Lord. Going back to Habakkuk and then to Romans 10. Here's some guys who are saying, Lord, Lord.

Didn't we preach in your name? Didn't we cast out demons? There's effective exorcism. Didn't we do miracles in your name? There's confirmation signs. And Jesus said to them, Depart from me, you accursed, for I never knew you.

Which seems to say that it is not outward signs, that's the last word, but personal relationship. And then the conclusion to chapter 7 is the analogy of the person who builds their house on the rock and the person who builds their house on the sand. And the difference between those two is the one who heard the word and responded not only in a one-time place somewhere in the past, but heard the word and does the word.

It's the Old Testament word of shema, which means to hear so as to do. And yet here are ones who do and are not his. Ah, confusion, confusion.

Then to me, I guess, what has become the heart of my ability to evaluate a false teacher is not how they dress or how they speak or where they went to school or what theological system or denomination they are identified with, but what do they do with the person and work of Jesus Christ. Now, this is 1 John 4, verses 1 through 3. I know this text. I'm an exegete.

I know this text originally refers to Gnosticism, which affirmed the deity of Jesus and denied the humanity of Jesus, but it does fit that the person and work of Jesus Christ is the issue for the New Testament church on who speaks for God and who does not. So we must listen to the content, evaluate it biblically. We must look at the lifestyle and evaluate it biblically.

And if either one of those comes up with warning lights, then we must be certain to check what is said by the ultimate authority for all Christians, which is Scripture, and allow some freedom inside that understanding. Now, this is what I come to you with today, and I come to you with it with somewhat of a

heavy heart. And here's my dilemma, and I'm trying to be as transparent as I possibly can.

I do believe that the Holy Spirit leads in my decisions on what books to teach and what books to preach, but it is not like lights and bells. It's not like an audible voice in my ear. It's not like my Bible floats open.

I mean, it's a faith sense of leadership. So when I really believe that God wanted me to teach the book of Hebrews, knowing that there are some terrible warnings in Hebrews that make Baptists very nervous, I still believe that moving through books is the only way to understand the original author's intent, and that we as evangelicals need to get away from just pulling a verse here and there. So moving through books was very important.

I did not think about, I did not estimate, I did not foresee that going through the letters of Peter, particularly 2 Peter, would bring me right back to these terrible warnings because for me, the most severe, the most difficult to handle, the most problematic of all of the warnings for Baptist theology is 2 Peter 2, and I cannot get out of it. So what I want to do today is for you to allow me the freedom to express myself and for me to allow you the freedom to check it. Just because it's said from a pulpit doesn't mean it's true.

Just because it's said from someone with a doctor's degree doesn't mean it's true. Just because it fits your personal preferences doesn't mean it's true. So this is not going to be a, let's sit back and enjoy what Bob has to say day because I assure you Bob's not enjoying today, but if I am an instrument in the hand of God and you have to decide, I can't decide that.

If I am the spokesperson for the Spirit and you must decide that, I cannot decide that for you, then at least you can give me the benefit of the doubt to hear what I say in context and check it, not by what you feel comfortable with or what you've always heard, but at least pay the price to look at the biblical text afresh. Is that fair? Because the Bible is the only source for faith and practice. I guarantee you if I didn't preach through books, I have never done a sermon on this chapter.

Never done a sermon on this chapter. Never would do a sermon on this chapter. And now right in the middle of me having a hair pull with you on Sunday night in Hebrews, here comes 2 Peter 2. So let me work through this as best as I can, best as I can, and then pass it off to you to evaluate.

I want to do that. I hope you know and I hope you look at the margin of your Bible that 2 Peter 2, I'm only going to do three verses this morning, just three. 2 Peter 2 is very similar to the book of Jude, a really good study Bible that's out now online free and in a bound set.

It's from Dallas Theological Seminary called the Net Bible. It's a very wonderful textual, exegetical tool. And they assert, I don't know who wrote this particular book for them, but they assert, and I tend to agree with it, that Peter is prophesying about what's going to happen and that after his death it did happen.

And Jude is dealing with the reality of the false teachers that Peter prophesied about. Now, they are so similar. I mean, there's literary borrowing going on here.

There is no way these two are not somehow purposefully related, intentionally related. They're too close. They're not exact, but they are too close.

The Old Testament examples, the wording, there's a relationship here. It also seems to me that whenever we go back, and I'm not going to do that, but starting in chapter verse 4, we're going to start dealing with Old Testament examples. But these examples are going to move from the Old Testament that always

involved angels to the inner biblical, non-canonical, but very popular book of 1 Enoch.

And then also Peter is going to draw Old Testament examples, 1 Enoch, and pagan, pagan sources that were well known. Now, he's not affirming the pagan sources. He's using well-known illustrations that 1st century people were familiar with to make his point.

Now, this is not saying that because 1 Enoch is alluded to, 1 Enoch is canonical. No, no, no, no, no. Paul quotes Greek philosophers.

The Greek philosophers aren't canonical because Paul quotes one of them to a certain place that knew that philosopher well. No, no, no, it's not that. But it is meant to say that some of these allusions are going to bother you because they're not, quote, biblical allusions.

They're cultural allusions, and that always causes a problem. So let's look at this text together. But false prophets.

Now, I hope you know, and this is what bothers me about how we have to divide up our worship times into 30-minute or so sessions. I want to remind you that last week we talked about the priority of the Word of God. And in the closing little few verses of chapter 1, we talked about true prophecy, that true prophets didn't get it from their own personal opinions, but they're moved by the Holy Spirit.

Now, that's true revelation. That's true inspiration. We don't have any more inspiration.

It's gone. But this man is talking about true inspiration versus the claim to false inspiration. How many false teachers claim to know God? How many false teachers claim to have a unique word from God? How many false teachers claim that they and only they know God? This is a characteristic of false teachers.

Now, we're going to contrast the true prophet of God, chapter 1, 20, 21, 22, right through there, with a false prophet. How can you tell the difference? Well, this book is going to do it. Now, notice it says, but false prophets also arose among the people.

Now, I assume the way we're phrasing that, that's got to be the Old Testament people of God. And if you go back in the Old Testament, there are all kinds of false prophets and prophetesses and false leaders of the people of God. There are people who grew up in the covenant community and claimed to have a relationship with Yahweh that their life and their leadership showed they did not.

And those peoples caused destruction and judgment to fall on the people of God. Well, that's who he's alluding to first. These false prophets arose among the people just as there will be false prophets among you.

You hear the contrast? You see the parallelism? They were there in the past. They disrupted the old covenant people and they're here today and they're going to disrupt the new covenant people. False teachers.

They never come from CNN. They never come from Guru Maharishi Yogi Yagi. They come from us.

They come from within our fellowships. They come out of our seminaries. They come out of our Sunday schools.

They come out of the families in the church. These are wolves in sheep's clothing. They look like us, talk like us, carry our book, use our vocabulary, but they do not know our God.

And they're leading the people of God astray to destruction and a sooner-than-normal death. You say, well, I don't know if they're around. They're around.

Trust me on that. Now, how do we identify them? There's the issue. Who will secretly introduce? Now, this is the word used in Jude verse 4 for coming in alongside secretly.

Stealth. Stealth teachers. Stealth people.

They know this is not the norm. This is not ignorance. This is willful penetration of orthodox groups for the purpose of another doctrine.

You say, are they alive and well today? You don't get around much, do you? You don't watch much TV, do you? Who will secretly introduce destructive heresies? Now, the word heresy simply means divisions. It can mean a sect, like a sect of Judaism, the Pharisees versus the Sadducees versus the Essenes. Or it can mean dividing.

Now, I've heard it, forgot exactly who I heard this from. It was somebody of Southwestern, but I forgot who it was, that a heretic is someone who raises one truth to the exclusion or eclipse of all other truths. Raises one truth to the exclusion of all other truths.

So the real tricky, tricky, tricky part of this is there's a half truth in what they say. There's an element of truth in what they say, but their inferences from that one truth hurt and damage other biblical doctrines in the way they spin it or put it together. Now, this little phrase is the one that just drives me up the wall.

Even, this is a Greek way of showing the ultimate example, I think. They're destructive heresies, and here's how they're most destructive. Denying the master who bought them.

Oh. Now, the word master is the Greek word despotes. We get the English despot from it.

Now, I know it has a negative connotation in English, but it doesn't in Greek. It's used quite often for God the Father, just numerous times, and here it's used for God the Son, which, by the way, is another New Testament way, applying Old Testament and New Testament Septuagint titles to God the Father, to the Son, is another way of asserting his full deity, by the way. Here, the text is obviously about Jesus, who bought them.

Now, here's the question. Are we in the context of the Old Testament people of God? Now, bought them is an Old Testament metaphor. The word ransom, the word redeemed, both those words mean to buy back, buy back from slavery.

One of them has the connotation of a near relative doing it. The other one is to buy back. The opposite of this would be, think of the Book of Judges.

He sold them into the hands of the Midianites. He sold them into the hands of... That is the way of expressing God's rejection, and buying them back is a way of talking about physical deliverance, physical deliverance from some financial, military situation. Now, here's the problem.

Are we still talking about the Old Testament people of God, talking about the deliverances during the wilderness-wandering period and the Book of Joshua and the Book of Judges and historical? Is that what we're talking about? Or is this talking about that Jesus bought them? Now, think of all those texts about he bought them with his own blood. I wish I knew. It'd solve some of my hair pull, but I don't know.

I'm tending to think we're talking about Jesus as the word here and not the Father, although the context could refer to the Father. And if it's talking about Jesus, then this is a John 3, 16 verse. You could say this is meaning that God purchased everybody potentially.

This is Romans 5, 12 through 21, in Adam all die and Jesus all are made alive. Now, we know that in Adam all sin, but only those who repent and believe are saved. So even though the redemption is universal, you got to buy into the covenant.

Is that what we're talking about here? I wish I knew. I really do. If you look down at verse 20 through 22 in this chapter, you'll see why I'm bothered about this.

Just look in your own Bible at verse 20 through 22. Just read that a second. Oh, God have mercy on us.

Now, here's what happens, and I want to read a little bit of my commentary here. I've been using my notes to do these sermons. I hope you don't mind, but it doesn't matter whether you do or not.

I mean, I just can't hold this in my mind anymore. I'm starting to forget names. I'm starting to forget verses I used to know.

It's just part of an aging process. So I want to be as accurate as possible if I'm dealing with false teachers, holy moly. The real question is, were these heretics truly saved? Look at verse 20 through 22.

Would you look at me a minute just for a second? No one in the New Testament period would ever ask that question. That is not a biblical question. That is not a question any believer in the 1st century would ask.

Just like they wouldn't ask, do you have to be baptized if you're saved? They would never think about asking that question. They would think, if you know him, you're going to live like him. That's what they think.

So the very fact that this is a modern denominational issue based on denominations who emphasize assurance and denominations that do not. You cannot fully know in Roman Catholicism. You cannot fully know in Church of Christ.

You cannot fully know in double-edged Calvinism. You cannot know. Baptists have emphasized you can know.

Now, the word can is what bothers me because I believe assurance is not empirical, but faith assurance based on evidence from a changed and changing life. That's what I've been saying to you over and over, and I have been grieved that my attempt, as a Bible teacher, to define and critique overemphasis in doctrine has caused some of you to doubt. I want to say as loud as I know how.

There are some evangelists in the Southern Baptist Convention that all they do is preach to doubt. A plague on their house. I would never, ever think about preaching to doubt because most Christians that I know in their life have struggled with this issue.

Can I see your hand if you've ever struggled with assurance? The problem is making sure we get it right, really dealing with all the Bible texts, not a selected few. That is the issue. I assume as a Bible teacher that the more you understand the Bible, the more confidence you're going to have in your relationship with Him.

My fear is, but this way, I've been thinking, how do I present this again? If you've come on Sunday night, I know you feel I'm being repetitive because I am. I believe the New Testament is Eastern literature and we are Western people and we're used to propositional truths and syllogistic logic, and they present truth in stories, in parables, and in opposites. And our mentality causes us to prove one half of paradoxical, tension-filled, dialectical relationships.

Let me get this quickly. Does the Bible teach the sovereignty of God that nobody can be saved without His drawing and will, or does the Bible teach that humans must, in their free will, respond to God's offer? The only answer to that is, absolutely. And yet denominations with huge systems of proof texts grow up on both sides of this because they only look at certain texts.

As I think about this, does the Bible present truth in A or B? And my answer is no. The Bible presents truth in A and B. But the minute I get with a group whose all their life, all they've heard is, it's A or it's B, the minute I say anything about the validity of B, I'm a heretic. I'm a liberal.

I'm a false teacher. Because, you see, our mentality is, this is true or this is true. But, see, that's Western.

And Eastern people put that together and live in the tension. Now, the tension I'm talking about here is the absolutely free and finished salvation in Jesus Christ plus nothing. It's not in baptism.

It's not in speaking in tongues. It's not in we don't spit, dance, or chew. It's not what group I join.

Everybody, anybody can be saved by faith in Jesus Christ plus nothing. Can I hear an amen? Now, here's what bothers you. Here's what bothers you.

A is absolutely true. But by their fruit ye shall know them is also true. To him who overcomes I'll give the crown of life, every letter of the seven churches.

That's also true. And it's not an either-or, it's a both-and. So what I have found in my life, when anybody preaches toward this, two things happen.

In the pew there are those who are absolutely certain that they're saved because they pray a prayer and I'm never able to reach them, though I really try to. Those who pray to prayer somewhere but have no vibrant, life-change, contemporary evidence of being a Christian. Man, I am really after those folks.

Unfortunately, what happens, and it happens so often, I ought to get used to it, but I never do, is that an attempt to show the Eastern way of presenting truth, an attempt to show the biblical pattern that salvation is not a product but a relationship, it is not a decision but a discipleship, that the Bible teaches absolutely free and cost everything at the same time. The people that I run over like a truck is the sincere, struggling believer. And I do not want to run over them.

I want to encourage them and love them and help them to see the biblical way of understanding their true relationship. I try to put it this way. If you love reading the Bible, if you long to know more about the Bible, if you, when you have problems, you pray, you ask God to help you, to give you wisdom, when trouble

comes and you see a hurting person and you want to help them, and when you sin and you feel terrible about it, you've got to get taken care of.

And when you see Haiti and you want to give money and when you can't wait to hear the Christmas musical and you can't wait to go next door and take them a welcome pie and invite them to church, these are the evidences of a believer. The one I'm after is the one that thinks they're a believer, who never attend, never read, never pray, never give, never sing, but somewhere in the past they did something religious. Oh, these warnings are for them.

It's not for the struggling Christian. It's for the arrogant, self-satisfied, self-directing, self-deceived, false teacher and false professions. It is a difficult task, so I want to read this and maybe what I've said will elaborate it.

I read it to Peggy. She said it was good. I believe that biblical doctrines are given in dialectical or paradoxical pairs, which is characteristic of Eastern literature.

Modern Western readers and interpreters tend to propositionalize and decontextualize verses. I surely affirm the security of the believer, but I am more and more uncomfortable with once saved, always saved because of passages like this. Security is evidenced by, not based on, godly living, James and 1 John.

Believers struggle, yes. Believers sin, yes, but they continue to trust in Christ. However, the parable of the soils, Matthew 13, and the active but lost religionist of Matthew 7, 15 through 27, assure me that there does exist false professions of faith.

Now, see, that's what really just... It's not that there are false professions of faith, but we go back to the previous question, can you be saved and be lost? Now, see, that's what we want to answer and that's what we can't answer with these warnings, but would you agree with me that in the Bible there are false professions of faith? What about Judas Iscariot? What about Simon Magnus? What about Demas? What about Alexander and Hymenaeus? Have you ever read those texts? Well, then don't tell me it can't happen. What about these? I often think about verse 20 through 22 in this chapter. It just scares the socks off me.

As Matthew 7, 21 through 23, scares the socks off me. As 1 John 2, 18 and 19, they went out from us because they were not of us and their leaving was evidence of that. Always start in the group, always tear up the group, and then always leave the group to start something else.

And I don't think that our people are prepared for spiritual warfare on a biblical faith issue. I don't think our people have done enough Bible study to protect themselves from the charismatic, I don't mean that term negatively, I mean that term in dynamic personality, charismatic, gifted, logical, false teachers that take a little Hinduism, a little Buddhism, a little Christianity, a little nature worship, a little what I think about flowers around my hair and take a hot bath with some candles. That's what Jesus really is.

And by the hundreds, Oprah tricks people like that, of millions. Spirituality is not what'll get you into heaven. A personal relationship in the finished work of Jesus Christ plus the change in changing life as evidence of that encounter.

False teachers have caused and still cause great turmoil in the church. In 1 John, there are several tests. 1 John, there are several tests of a true believer.

Listen to this. Number one, willingness to confess in. Number two, lifestyle obedience.

Number three, lifestyle love. Number four, victory over evil. Number five, forsaking the world.

Number six, perseverance. And number seven, biblical doctrine. Now, there's a test.

Now, you put give me any Christian and none of us completely pass that test. Sincere people say to me, well, I don't like that person, I must not be saved. Shoot, there are five or six people I hate.

None of us pass this test completely. There's no perfection here, but this is the way the evidence points. When I get crosswise with a student and I gotta go make it right.

When I do something I believe is not with the will of God and I gotta get it fixed, I can't live with it. When I see somebody in need and I gotta reach out, something's happened to me. I wasn't that way first, I just kicked you in the face first.

Something's happened to me. My priorities have been changed. The allocation of my resources, my time is focused on.

These are evidences. They'll never get me to heaven, but they point that something happened when I trusted. And I want to tell you the truth, I've tried to share it with you.

This really didn't happen when I trusted Jesus Christ at 12. This really happened when I struggled with call of God to ministry at 21. Now, that's when the black and white change came in my life.

And before that it was, Jesus, yes, but I'll see you in a couple of hours. I don't know where you are, but I think we're all in this. Peter also lists the inappropriate actions of the false teachers.

Now, listen to these inappropriate actions. I don't know you, but you know you. Verse 1, secretly introducing destructive heresy.

Are you trying to introduce some false doctrine, some personal privilege, some personal preference in your Bible study group? You think you're the only one that knows and everybody ought to agree with you? Two, deny the master. I don't care what you do, if you deny him, you're not a Christian. Number three, following sensuality.

All of us struggle with human sexuality. All of us have bad thoughts and bad days. We're not talking about, oh, I had a sexual temptation, I must not be saved.

We're all lost, if that's true. That's not what we're talking about. Is your life characterized by more and more for me sensuality at any cost? Is pornography your God? That's the problem.

Greed. Is Christianity just a way for you to become rich? Do you give 100 so God will give you 10,000? Is this all about you and your business? Well, I prayed, so now I ought to be successful. I hope you have a downturn.

You think nobody but the good business, but Christians who pray? What's the matter with us? We've been poisoned by health, wealth, and prosperity preaching on our radio and TV and bookstores. Despising authority, which means, this is angelic authority, which basically says railing against spiritual powers they do not know and thinking they are the authority. You ever met one of those? Acting like animals.

I sometimes look at human beings and say, what's the difference between that kind of act and what these animals do? None. Seeking pleasure, there's the God of the Western world. Subverting Christian love thief.

This would be going to the Lord's Supper just to find a real foxy date. I just attend church to see how many women I can date in that group. Now, by the way, the singles you listen to me, I think that finding a mate is the will of God for every believer if you don't have the gift of celibacy.

I thank God for single Sunday school classes. I think singles ought to date. It's hopping in bed with everybody.

It's a problem. That's a problem. I don't care who thinks that's wrong or right.

Sensuality beyond God-given bounds is a marker of a false teacher, causing weak Christians to sin. Oh, God won't mind. We'll pray before.

Get out of here. You got to know the book, know where the boundaries are, and then promising freedom, but in the end they're slaves to this other agenda that's not God's agenda. These are the false prophets.

They're among us and they speak so cleverly in Jesus' name. They speak with such passion. They speak with such logic.

What tears my heart out is the people of God have not prepared themselves with Bible study and prayer and the joy of collective worship and family of church to be ready when these temptations come. The last statistic I saw was so shocking I almost don't quote it, of how many new believers in evangelical churches are sucked into heretical groups within the first five years. Because once we do something with somebody, we dunk them in the water, we give them a Sunday school class, go to room 432, then we go on to the next person because we're evangelicals.

We are terrible at discipling. If it wasn't for the grace of God, all of us would be in groups that are weird. Well, my personality has presented this with a raised voice, and I know that bothers some of you.

I need the freedom to express what I believe, and you need the freedom to think through it and pray through it. There are false teachers among us. I really believe there's a New Testament call to holiness.

I don't believe any of us are going to make it, but I believe all of us ought to be pointing toward it. So maybe the question is, in the last ten years that you've known Jesus Christ, have you grown more intimate, grown more like him, grown, or is it just the same? Without the evidence of repentance and faith ongoing, there is no possibility of assurance. Assurance cannot be based on a past act only.

Thank God for a past act. I believe in that past act. I preach that past act.

I do evangelism with that past act. I present the freeness of salvation in Jesus Christ to whosoever will. But friends, the next day I've got to go back and say, you've got to start reading John.

You need to start learning how to pray. You need to give a little bit of your money to the kingdom causes. You need to avoid these sins that are obvious.

I believe what's happened. In my heart, it's going to be a political statement, but you just take it. We are furious about abortion in the United States where tens of millions of people have been killed before they

were ever able to breathe.

What a tragedy. But as a gospel preacher, I'm just as appalled at tens of millions of baby believers that have not been loved and nurtured to maturity and we're playing a game of initial baptism or initial numbers and Jesus loves these sheep with no shepherd and nobody's willing to be their shepherd and we're focused as evangelicals on the initial response and we forget that we're called to be disciples and we're called to lead others to Christ's likeness and we totally ignore this and anytime someone touches this, anytime someone brings this up, they become the enemy. I'm not your enemy, but I'm not going to hold your hand either as you live fake lives and think that Christianity is a building to sit in once a week and not a love that permeates 24-7 and a heart for God and a willingness to repent and be different.

The world is looking. Unbelievers are looking. And what do they see? American, decision-oriented Christianity that has no dynamic relationship of Monday through Saturday.

And we wonder why there's no power in the Church of Jesus Christ in the Western Hemisphere. My son said to me, he didn't know. My son doesn't hear me preach a lot.

He said, well, I'm so tired. These preachers are always telling me how bad it is. Isn't there a positive message? Oh, it just killed me.

It just really killed me. I wish I could. I really want to, but I find myself trapped in these warnings.

I don't know why I'm trapped in these warnings. I'm tired of seeing this stuff. I'm ready to move on, but the Holy Spirit put me here for some reason.

There's got to be a purpose. This can't be just coincidental. Now, I don't know what God is trying to say to you, but I do believe God is trying to speak.

I don't know if I articulate it well, but really the key is not my articulation, but what the Holy Spirit's been saying to your heart as I've been trying to say it. Now, all I ask you to do is be open and available. All I ask you to do is be as Christian tomorrow as you were today.

Well, Lord, I'm glad this is over. I am glad it's over. Don't know quite what to do.

Don't know quite what to say. But we prayed for your presence. We've sung for an intimacy with you.

We try to teach the Bible every Sunday. Try to encourage Bible reading. We try to encourage prayer.

Lord, we're trying to do the things you want us to do. We get trapped and caught by culture. We get trapped and caught by false Christians.

We get trapped by people mixing religions together and don't know enough about our own. I pray you'd have mercy on us. We are a damaged people, but we are a loved people.

We have the indwelling Holy Spirit. We have the eternal inspired Word of God. We have leaders among us.

We have places to meet and opportunities to grow. We have training events regularly. Oh, Lord, the banquet table is set.

Now, will your people come? Will your people feed? Will your people be willing to change? Will your people be available for your Spirit to touch them and the lives of others? I hope so. Amen. We always give a time of invitation.

We believe it's crucial after looking at the Word of God, whether you agree with me or not, the power is not in what I've said. The power is in the text we've looked at. If the Holy Spirit has said something to you in whatever area of your life, we invite you to respond.

I don't know what that is, but we feel it's just an act of responsibility for us to provide people a chance to deal with this and move on. We want you to move on into Christ-likeness. But if there's a barrier, a doubt, a fear, then we want to help you as loving Christian leaders that do not have all the answers.

We want to help you. The staff is going to stand here. I hope you trust them.

I'm going to stand here. I hope you trust me. I don't want you to agree with me, but I hope you trust that I'm doing the best that I know to present the Word of God with power.

I hope you know that. May we stand together.

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