

Beware of False Prophets

by Tim Conway

This sermon emphasizes the call to choose between being hearers and doers of the Word or simply hearers who do not act. Jesus presents the narrow way of life that leads to life and the broad way that leads to destruction. The focus is on being aware of false prophets who may appear as sheep but are inwardly ravenous wolves, identified by their fruits. The importance of true prophets speaking forth God's message with authority and believers surrendering all to follow Christ is highlighted.

Scripture: Matthew 7:13, Matthew 7:15, Matthew 7:21, Matthew 7:24, Deuteronomy 18:18, John 6:66, John 14:6

Topics: "Faith in Action", "Discernment of True Prophets"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the call to choose between being hearers and doers of the Word or simply hearers who do not act. Jesus presents the narrow way of life that leads to life and the broad way that leads to destruction. The focus is on being aware of false prophets who may appear as sheep but are inwardly ravenous wolves, identified by their fruits. The importance of true prophets speaking forth God's message with authority and believers surrendering all to follow Christ is highlighted.

Transcript

Matthew chapter 7, as I pointed out two weeks ago, the Lord Jesus has basically finished with the Sermon on the Mount. Now He is simply confronting us with whether or not we've heard what He said. And that's what you have in verses 13 through the end of the chapter.

Jesus is calling us to one group or the other, whether we're going to be hearers and doers or simply those who hear and don't do. There's a narrow way, there's a broad way. This is what we find here.

Here's the sermon, now, enter, verse 13, enter by the narrow gate. This is the narrow way of life that He has described in this sermon. Enter by this narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.

For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. Beware of false prophets. And this is the verse that I'm wanting to deal with specifically today, verses 15 through 20.

Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? So every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.

A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, you will recognize them by their fruits.

Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does, the will of my Father, who is in heaven. And by the way, this is what Jesus has just laid out in this sermon, the will of His Father. It's not everybody who just talks religious talk that is going to enter the kingdom.

On that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, cast out demons in your name, do many mighty works in your name? And then will I declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. Very sobering view of judgment day.

Everyone then who hears these words of mine, what words? Well, the words in this sermon on the mount. Listen, this is his last statement. That if you hear what he said in this sermon and do what he said, you're like the wise man who built his house on the rock.

Rain falls, flood came, winds blew, beat on that house, it didn't fall. Why? Founded on a rock. That's what a life is, that hears Christ and trusting Him, follows Him, submits to Him.

That's a person built on a rock. Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. Rain fell, floods came, winds blew, beat against that house and it fell and great was the fall of it.

And if you've got eyes to see all the way through here, you've got two ways. The end of one way is destruction. You've got two sorts of prophets The end of one is to be cut down and thrown into the fire.

You've got two sorts of people in verses 21 through 23. You've got the people who do the will of the Father and those who are lawless. And the end of those lawless is depart from me.

And then here in this parable, this analogy, this picture that Jesus creates of the wise man and foolish man, there's a great fall of the house. I hope you have eyes to see that that's all the same thing. These are all pictures of destruction.

These are all pictures of a way you don't want to go. There's two categories of people that are being summed up through here. Now, verses 15 through 20 is where I want to focus our attention.

Beware of false prophets. Why? Why would we want to beware of them? Well, verse 19, every tree that does not bear, you see what's happening here. I mean, let's just look at the construct here.

Beware of false prophets. And then he creates a picture of somebody wearing sheep's clothing, but inwardly ravenous wolves. So first he creates a picture of somebody who inside is a wolf, on the outside, they're dressed like a lamb.

And then he switches his metaphor here. You will recognize them by their fruits. He goes from speaking sheep and wolf talk to now fruit talk and trees and fruit.

You recognize them by their fruit. You recognize who? Well, the false prophet. Verse 17, every healthy tree has a certain kind of fruit.

Every diseased tree has bad fruit. Obviously, the diseased tree here is the false prophet. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.

You see what he's doing? He's laying down an absolute principle with regards to the different sorts of prophets. And he's saying, look, if you've got a bad prophet, it's going to show itself in bad fruit. And it always does.

And a bad prophet cannot bring forth good fruit. He may disguise it. There may be hypocrisy, but at the root, it's not good and it never can be.

There's nobody that's... Jesus is very dogmatic. He doesn't paint any middle ground here. It's one or the other.

You see the picture. Why should we beware of the false prophet? Why? Well, verse 19 says, because these guys are going to be cut down and thrown into the fire. And if they get thrown into the fire, what do you think happens if you listen to them and you follow these guys? Where do you think you end up? You see, what you end up doing is what they did, bad fruit.

You end up not doing the will of the Father. You end up not doing what's prescribed here in this sermon. And you end up being one of these people that hears and doesn't do.

And the fall of your house will be very great. That's why you don't want to follow these guys. These guys will lead you wrong.

And now, I think this. When I read this, it begs the question, are there prophets today? You see, if your automatic conclusion is, well, there's no prophets today. Well, then case closed.

You don't even have to look for good prophet and bad prophet. It's just if anybody says they're a prophet, just dismiss them, right? Somebody comes along and they say they're a prophet. Well, there aren't prophets today.

So anybody that claims to be a prophet, they're a dead giveaway. You can just basically ignore what Jesus is saying about all the good fruit, bad fruit. Because if they even claim to be a prophet, they must all be bad fruit, right? Because they don't exist anymore.

Well, I don't actually think that that's the way you want to process this. Because of the Lord's analogy. I mean, when He says there's a healthy tree with good fruit and a diseased tree with bad fruit.

And He's just got done talking about false prophets. What's He obviously indicating? He's indicating that there are bad prophets and there are good prophets. And that there were in His day and that there will be.

Because He's giving this as a warning. This is kingdom talk, by the way. This isn't something that wears out in time.

This is something very much in principle and in power. And something that's very much true right to our very day. He's talking kingdom talk.

He's talking about entering the kingdom. And this goes all the way on to the end when people are told to depart from Him. I mean, you don't want to dismiss this kind of talk.

Let's just think here for a second. What's a prophet? Before any of you get all upset and uncomfortable with the terminology. What is a prophet? Well, basically, you know, we tend to have this idea about foretelling.

Somebody prophesying the future. Somebody that's predicting a future event. Now, look, that's true that many of the prophets did exactly that.

They predicted the future. But the reigning characteristic of a prophet is not foretelling. It's forth telling.

F-O-R-T-H telling. Listen, prophet. Pro means before.

It means in the place of. It means in front of. It means to take the place of somebody else.

That's pro. And then you have the second part. The phetase.

Pro-phetase in the Greek. Phetase is a speaker. And so basically what you have when you put them together is somebody who speaks in the place of somebody else.

That is basically what a prophet is. A prophet is somebody who receives a message from God and speaks that message. That's basically the idea.

Remember this. Deuteronomy 18, 18. I will raise up for them a prophet.

You remember God said this to Moses and he's speaking of Christ. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers and I will put my words in his mouth. You see, that's what a prophet is.

A prophet is somebody that speaks the words. And you see how this relates to this sermon. Jesus is looking for the person who takes his words.

In this sermon and says them. Does them. Says them.

Teaches them. And characterizes his own life. Prophet has a range of meaning in scripture.

Listen to how Peter uses it right here. Just listen. Second Peter 2.1. False prophets also arose among the people.

Just as there will be false teachers among you. Now that's very interesting. Now listen to it again.

False prophets also arose among the people. And he's talking about in the Old Testament. False prophets arose among the people.

And then he turns to his New Testament crowd and he says just as there will be false teachers among you. Isn't that interesting? You know what he does? He synonymously interchanges false prophet and false teacher. So here's the thing.

If you really study. And I have. I've exhaustively studied the idea of prophesying in scripture more than once.

Just to get a feel for what is the word. And it's used in different ways. I mean it's got a range of meaning.

All the way from basically being a synonymous term with a teacher. All the way over to a very exclusive Old Testament inspired scripture writer like Isaiah. Who definitely prophesied about massive future events concerning Christ.

And so you kind of get that range of meaning. You know what Jesus is talking about right here. He's not talking about resurrecting Jeremiah's and Hosea's.

That's not what he's talking about when he's speaking the way he does. He is speaking about in the most basic sense of the word. Somebody who says what he says.

A false prophet is somebody who says what he doesn't say. Or doesn't emphasize what he emphasized. Or puts it entirely out of proportion to the way that he says something.

You consider the nature of a prophet. Because this is the same. No matter what we're talking about when it comes to a prophet.

You know one of the things you find when you go back to the Old Testament. And you look at the prophets. Nowhere in the Bible.

Nowhere do you ever find a prophet ever preface his words. Preface his words. When he's getting ready to speak.

Nowhere does he say. Well in my opinion. Or well I believe.

Or it seems likely. Or any such evasive language that announces that he's about to say something. That can't really be depended on.

And brethren I'll tell you this. You get people in the pulpit. They um, um, em.

You do more of an em here. People that just hem and haw in the pulpit. That's never what a prophet did.

Prophets know what needs to be said. They're going to say what Christ said. They stand and they speak very dogmatically.

Very plainly. He's got something to announce. And he announces it.

Preachers that try to impress audiences by talking. You know they go on and on about original languages. Or they want to tell you about what this Puritan said.

Or that Puritan said. Another Puritan said. They want to tell you what the Confession said.

They want to quote all these man made documents. I'll tell you this. Old Testament prophets never did that.

They want to tell you what God said. And you know what? Can we glean some things from what man has said? Perhaps. And yes undoubtedly we can.

But you know what? Men can be wrong. Even the best of men can be wrong. Even reformed men can be wrong.

And I'll tell you. When Jesus got done speaking, you know what they recognized? He spoke as one that has authority and not as the scribes. Anybody know how the scribes spoke? How he's quoting a rabbi.

And you know what? You can find guys. You can find preachers today. They won't hardly preach the Scriptures.

They've got to tell you what everybody said. They've got to tell you what this guy said. And another guy said.

And what John Owen said. And what Edward said. And what Spurgeon said.

And they've got to tell you what the 1689 and Westminster Confessions say. And they've got to go on and on. As though what? As though that stuff trumps the Scriptures and what God has said? As though that's somehow preeminent? Brethren, the prophet speaks in dogmatic terms.

And that is whether he's in the Old Testament or in the New Testament. You can look for that very thing. He's not given to opinions.

He's not given to the doctoral systems. You know a lot of times you get men who they want to talk about systems. Doctrinal systems all the time.

Brethren, I know theologians love to systematize things. But when that's where we talk and that's our basis of authority, we've gone wrong. The prophet, like Jesus, he dogmatically declares what it is that God has said.

God's prophets do not stutter. They're not always looking for a word. Mmm, you know, as I remember, and he's talking about the prophet of God and when he speaks, it's like you can't hardly make room for the next word that's coming out of his mouth.

It's like the one word he's saying now has to get out of the way of the next word that's coming. Brethren, there's no question about it. In this context, what we're faced with, the issue is this, does that teacher say what Jesus said in this sermon? That's the, you know, he just got done with this sermon on the mouth.

That's the issue. He set forth kingdom righteousness. He set forth those who are blessed.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those that mourn. Blessed are the meek.

He went through, this is kingdom people. Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you won't enter this kingdom. This is it.

Jesus says it. What he's looking for, is he's looking for the teacher, the prophet, who says what he said, emphasizes what he emphasizes, says it in proportion to how he says it. Brethren, this is key.

Says all of it. You know, one of the things about false prophets is they say lots of truth, but they like to leave certain things out or they like to stick certain things in. None of that.

None of that. And you know what, you know what mostly is that issue here? See, Jesus is interested in the people that know the Father's will and they actually do it. Those who hear his words and they actually do them.

You see, the issue with the false prophet is they don't like to tell you the hard things. They don't like to tell you that the way is narrow and that the gate is narrow and that the life is narrow. They don't like to say that.

But the true prophet will say that. Does the prophet teach the narrowness? Are Jesus' words truly in his mouth? That's the issue. Now, these false prophets, he says, beware of false prophets.

Let me tell you two things about the false prophet as we're thinking about being where? Weary, watchful. Here's two facts about these guys. One, Jesus says there's many.

You see that if you look down in verse 22. When he says, on that day many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy? Well, who's prophesying? Obviously prophets. There's many of them.

And he's going to say to many who are prophesying, I don't know you. Depart, workers of lawlessness. Over in Matthew 24, he says this, many false prophets will arise.

John. John tells us in 1 John 4, one tests the spirits to see whether they're from God. For many false prophets have gone out into the world.

2 John. 2 John 7. Many deceivers have gone out into the world. You think about it.

Think about even in the Old Testament. When Jeremiah was setting forth his truth, how many true prophets were there? Think of Elijah on Mount Carmel. There he is, the true prophet of God over against 400 prophets of Baal.

Brethren, this has always been the way. There's many, many false prophets that you need to be aware of. Now, here's the second thing.

They're disguised to deceive. He says, beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they're not sheep. And we know this verse, such men are false apostles.

I know it's not false prophet, but an apostle is one who's sent. People who are being sent. And it can be false apostle, false Christ, false teacher, false prophet, all these pseudo.

In the Greek, it's pseudo. Didaskalos, a false teacher, pseudo apostolos, a pseudo prophetes. That's pseudo.

We get our word from that. It's these fake workers. Now, listen to this.

Deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it's no surprise if his servants, that's key.

Because you need to recognize something about these false prophets. The Joel Osteens and, but brethren, people much closer to home. These guys don't just come up out of nowhere.

Scripture says things like this. The spirit expressly says that in later times, some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons. Brethren, spirits, demons.

What we have is fallen angels. We have cosmic powers over the present darkness. They hate you.

And you know what? They don't want you going in at the narrow way. And they send their servants to hover right around that gate. And since there's many, you know what that means? You know what that equals? There's many voices.

And they're coming at you. Don't go in that way. There's other ways.

Or even that's not the right way. They've got lots of things to say. And you know what the problem is? See, we always think we know what the false prophet's going to look like.

We think we have an idea, but it's always not what you expect. Because the devil's in it. You say, but that's Brother Joe over there.

We all know him. We love him. He knows his Bible.

Beware, they're disguised. And they look like sheep. And they're there sent on a satanic errand to damn you.

And you know what? If this was just something, oh, well, we're Christians. This can't touch us. Don't be so foolish.

For Jesus to say to his 12, you guys better beware. You better watch out. Now, how can we know them? Well, simple answer.

Fruit. I mean, that's the answer here. Fruit.

Listen to how often fruit shows up here. Verse 16, you will recognize them by their fruits. So every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.

A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit. Or can a diseased tree bear good fruit? Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, you will recognize them by their fruits.

Seven times you get that word here. So, I mean, Jesus making it very obvious about beware. This is how you beware.

This is how you can tell them. But you know what? It feels like, yeah, but that, Lord, that's an analogy. I mean, what does that really look like? I mean, I can tell a bad apple.

I go through apples and I can pick the good ones out and I can leave the rotten ones. I know what that looks like. But Jesus isn't talking about apples here.

He's not talking about peaches and plums. He's talking about people. So Lord, what is it? Has He just left us without an answer to that? I don't think so.

You see, brethren, this is a complete sermon. And one of the things about these three chapters is it's taken us, you know, the better part of a year to go through this thing. But you know, when it was originally given, chapter five would have been said just a few minutes before chapter seven.

Look at chapter five, verse 17. Jesus actually has said something about teachers and about what fruit to look for. He's already told us.

Notice what He says in verse 17. Don't think that I've come to abolish the law and the prophets. You see, basically what this whole sermon has been is the spiritual realities of the righteousness.

You basically sum up the law and the prophets. We know what it comes down to. Love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.

On those two commandments, hang all the law and the prophets. That's what Jesus says in another place. And what He's doing in this sermon, He's basically saying, look, I'm calling for this kind of righteousness of love.

I'm calling for this kind of being light and salt in the world. This kind of radical righteousness where you love even your enemies. You're not anxious, running all over, afraid about how your needs are going to be met, even willing to take your money and store it up.

I mean, this is entirely a radical life that He's laid out here for us. And He says, don't think that I've come to abolish this. I haven't.

I've come to fulfill this thing. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, and you see this whole thing, this whole thing about this sermon and about the prophets and the bad prophets and the good prophets and all of this. You see the time frame here.

This whole sermon is all about, this thing is going to exist until heaven and earth pass away. Not an iota, not a dot will pass from the law until all is accomplished. This whole age from Christ's first coming to His second coming is to be characterized by Christianity that looks like this sermon.

Now, I watched verse 19. Therefore, whoever... Ah, you know who this whoever is? It's a teacher. How do you know? Oh, you just keep reading.

Whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. Now, this is kind of like language of your house falling down. It may not sound too bad.

I'm not being least. Well, at least I'm in there. No, you want to realize what he's saying there.

That's not a good thing. Whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. You know, if we're looking for fruit here, the whoever being described as a teacher, and this is a person who either relaxes these standards of Christ and teaches others to do that, they're least.

Those who teach what Jesus teaches and actually does them, they're the greatest. That's where you want to be. So, two categories.

You can tell them by their fruit. What's the fruit? Two things. Look at their teaching.

Look at their life. That's it. You know what happened? Take it in context with the Sermon on the Mount.

The true prophet teaches the narrow way that Jesus has set forth in this sermon. What Jesus says, he teaches. You know what you'll find about the true prophet? He doesn't have any problem shying away from the hardest things that Jesus says.

And do you know Jesus says some hard things? He doesn't back off. And what he teaches, he lives out. Not perfectly, but he's striving to live what he teaches.

He's not the hypocrite. The false prophet relaxes. You know what relax means? The actual word means to loose.

It means to untie. It means to set free. So, if you're relaxing, you see what he's saying? The false prophet will seek to set you free from what Christ has laid down.

That is dangerous. The false prophet is smooth, and reasonable, and logical, and can quote lots of scripture. But he also knows how to put a twist and a spin on things to make it really not such as it might appear.

Always a way to tone it down. Always a way to make it soft. That's so narrow.

That's the idea here. The false prophet, much, much, he says, is true. But he eliminates the narrowness.

And you know why? Because it's the narrowness of Christianity that makes it so offensive. And men don't like it. An easy Christianity.

And oh, they're all over the place to sell that to you. That's what we've got here. False prophet, he says much.

He can talk about Christ. He can talk about God. He can quote certain passages out of scripture.

But I'll tell you, in the end, what he says is not what Christ says. It's not Christ's message. This man's teaching and lifestyle.

When you boil it down, it comes down to this. When Jesus says that the wise man hears my word and does it, do you recognize what that's all about? It's about obedience to Christ. And brethren, for freedom Christ has set us free.

But in our freedom, we are a free people in Christ. We're a free people to not be under the bondage of Moses, to not be under the bondage of any other authority. Christ is our authority.

Now Christ would say, when it comes to the Old Testament scriptures, I did not come to abolish it. He basically upholds the righteous aspects of that law. The heart, the very heart and soul, the spirit of the law, he upholds.

That which, when you boil it down, has to do with love. Even muzzling the ox isn't got rid of in the New Testament. But we know it doesn't have to do with oxen.

It has to do with people. It has to do with taking care of one another. Being unequally yoked, it doesn't have to do with yoking a donkey and an oxen together.

It's got to do with human beings. We've got to interpret these things in a right way. But look, you know what happens? You know where this sermon starts? See, it can feel very like there's a lot of things we have to do there.

But you have to remember how it all starts. Blessed are the poor in spirit. And you know the thing about the false prophet? He's not big.

I'm broken. Deep, deep views of sin. I'm desperate, clinging need to Christ.

Showing us the poverty. The thing about the false prophet is he doesn't attack hypocrisy because he himself is a hypocrite. He doesn't go deep into the greed and the lust and the selfishness.

Why? Because those things characterize him. He doesn't know them by their fruit. And even though he tends to put on this hypocritical front, the thing that controls most of these guys is lust and greed.

And they try to not show it a lot. Well, some of them are just ridiculously in your face with it. But a lot of these guys, they, I mean, look, you get reformed guys.

All of a sudden it's found out the guy was having a 20-year affair with his church secretary. I mean, do you think that he got up and he was able to proclaim gouging out eyes and doing it with this poverty of spirit? You see, a lot of times those who are most guilty, they'll be the biggest legalist and demanding regulations on others. But that's not what we're talking about.

We're talking about the true prophet is going to emphasize a brokenness, a meekness, that desperate poverty of spirit. Brethren, one of the things that you want to notice here, Matthew 7, 15 through 20, notice brethren, this is not primarily to threaten the false prophet. This is given to you as a listener, as a hearer.

Primarily, this is given as a warning to those who listen to the prophets, not to the prophets themselves. You will know them by their fruit. You see who's in the second person here? It's you.

It's not the preacher. You are the one he's talking to. You need to beware.

Oh yeah, there's a warning here. I mean, the false prophet is going to get cut down and thrown into the fire. There is a warning here.

But you recognize what Jesus is doing in these verses is he's speaking to you and he's telling you there is a danger here. And you'll know them by their fruit. And the fruit that Jesus is looking for, it's not a lot of degrees.

It's not PhDs behind the name. It's not popularity. It's not financial success.

It's not a big church. It's not a large internet ministry. It's not how many books the guy has written.

The fruit comes down to this. It's conformity to that standard set forth in this sermon. Brethren, if you sum up what's been said here and apply it to your life, this is the Christian life.

That's what the Sermon on the Mount is all about. It's kingdom righteousness. I mean, you think about it.

It is obedience to the Lord. Hear my word and do it. It's a prayerful life.

You ask. You seek. You knock.

You fast. No anxiety. You know how many verses he took himself up with about no anxiety? You're trusting your Father.

Your Father knows your needs. He clothes the flowers. He takes care of the birds.

How about when it comes to lust? Gouging out eyes and amputating hands. Loving those who persecute you. Brethren, if we sum up what's here, this is life.

Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. This is the life He's calling us to. This is radical purity.

He's calling us to sacrifice. Lay up treasure in heaven. To kindness.

To humility. To genuine Christianity in the secret place. Remember he says when you give and when you pray and when you fast, you don't do it to be seen by others.

You do this secret. You don't let one hand know what the other one's doing. It's that kind of life.

You see the picture. Brethren, just imagine the picture. Enter by the narrow gate.

The gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life and those who find it are few. So here you are. You've heard the sermon.

You stand confronted. And brethren, every single day of our lives, we're confronted by this narrow way. Every day.

And there it is. You've heard the sermon. It's narrow like this carpet going down.

And you're confronted by it. You've heard the sermon. There it is.

It's laid out. Jesus looks at you. He looks right at each of you individually.

And he says enter that way and walk that way. No other way. Don't even bother with any other way.

You've listened to my exhortation to pray, to trust your Father. You've listened. You've heard me.

The exhortation to gouge out eyes. You've heard that. To lay up treasure.

To love those who persecute. Pray. Pray thy will be done.

To be a surrendered people. A submissive people to God. Pour in spirit.

You've heard it all. There you are. Now you consider what you should do about it all.

And I'll tell you what happens. It's right here. You're confronted by this narrow gate.

This straight gate. And you know what's hovering all around? Satan sent his prophets. Don't go that way.

You don't really need repentance. Holiness is not all that important in your life. They don't like to tell you without holiness, no one sees the Lord.

They don't like to tell you that unless you repent, you will likewise perish. Oh no, none of that. Repentance is works.

No, it's not that hard. They will whisper also. It's right at this place.

It's right here that Jesus comes up beside you and says, beware of these voices. Beware of these false prophets. And they're always there.

And they're always present. They're always hovering around the straight gate. And there's many of them.

And they're disguised. And they come looking like they're true preachers of God. And you know what happens? If you listen to the voice of these people, I'll tell you what happens.

You don't go in on the narrow way. And the end is not good. And they sound good.

They look good. And they're very convincing. They have very convincing arguments.

They say, you know, that way is really not that narrow. And you've heard this. And see, Paul dealt with this in his own day.

People come and say, well, grace, grace. I mean, come on. Grace is so gracious that you'll find grace even if you don't have to go in this way.

I mean, God's grace is sufficient if you don't go in at this narrow gate. It's just grace. And there's lots of talk about the love of God.

And there's lots of talk about justification by faith. Justification by faith undoubtedly is the heart and soul of our gospel. But you know what? You can emphasize being justified and just leave out the necessary fact that faith by which we're justified, faith without works is dead.

You can leave out the reality of sanctification. You can really leave out the reality that there must be holiness. You'd leave out the reality about these absolutely necessary aspects to the gospel.

The danger is being misled by appearances. And oh, but you know, they're Calvinists. They're reformed.

They say so much that's true. But you remember they're disguised. I come back to this again.

We tend to think we know what the disguise will look like. There's just something. You know, I think I've said this before.

Lloyd-Jones said that God's prophet is typically ugly. He's typically rough around the edges. He's typically this, that, and the other.

It's the guy that's more smooth. It's the guy that's more likable. You see, we almost are going to have a tendency to suspect the guy that oftentimes is the real prophet just because he's, you know, he's eating locusts or some weird thing.

And we tend to just imagine what the disguise is going to look like. But the disguise ends up being the very thing we least expected. Brethren, the thing is, the reality is living out this sermon is the narrow way.

And it's the false prophet. They don't stress poverty of spirit. They don't stress the absolute allegiance to Christ.

They like to comment on these things. They'll comment on the sermon without urging us to live it out. You know, the false prophet tends to be vague.

False prophet tends to do things like, you know, when it comes to anxiety, false prophet likes to do things like, you know, tell us about mumbling and complaining. Almost like, you know, they mumbled out there in the wilderness. And, you know, kind of like mumbling's a bad thing, but it's not that bad.

I mean, it's bad. And so it's good to do a whole sermon on it. You can get people to feel and probably laugh and cry.

And without really telling you, you realize all those people, their mumbling was the exact thing behind their unbelief, and they perished in the wilderness because of it. And those things were given to us for an example so that we don't go the same way. You see, the false prophet, he'll talk Jesus, but he talks a harmless Jesus.

He likes to give you a Jesus that is not like the Jesus of Scripture. I'll tell you what, it's very common too to get these false prophets, they can talk about some good doctrines like the imputed righteousness of Christ. Is Christ's righteousness imputed to us? Yes.

Yes, we can prove that from Scripture. We can prove that he who knew no sin, basically our sin is imputed to him and his righteousness to us. And we can make a very strong case for that from Scripture.

But you know what? You can still emphasize the imputed righteousness of Christ that you totally gloss over a practical righteousness, which Jesus says, unless your practical righteousness, I know I'm adding that, but in context there, he says, teach and do. He's talking about what we do, not what Christ did in our place, what we do. This is a practical righteousness.

You get very smooth. Oh, I've heard this repeatedly. You can get people talking very smooth, and they will convince you that basically you can live a godless Christianity and they'll base it right on Romans 7. And oh, you're good.

You're good. After all, the apostle Paul, look at him. He never did the things that he wanted to do, and he basically evil he didn't want to do.

And so you're good. And after all, grace, I mean, sin abounds, grace all the more abounds. And you know, justified by faith and very smooth.

It can sound very good and very persuasive. Brethren, we need to be careful. We need to be very careful.

Do you know what Jesus says? And this is a verse that fails to get mentioned, or I think it's mentioned by these smooth talkers. It's always discipleship, which is kind of some higher form of Christianity. But Jesus says this.

So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. Oh, the false prophets as well. See, if you make that a condition for salvation, then that's work salvation.

And we, we know, oh, they, they love to quote Ephesians two, eight and nine. Somehow failed to remember that there is a verse 10 there. That says we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

We are his workmanship and he is working in us to do good works. Brethren, do you recognize this? This is not works to say, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. This is actually a manifestation of faith.

You see, it says what you really believe is most valuable. It says tons about what you believe about this Christ. Listen, let's just think for a second about the historical Jesus, because I'll tell you what the false prophets love to do.

They love to reinterpret Jesus for us. False prophet paints a picture of a Jesus that we tend to be comfortable with, who makes us feel good. But brethren, I want us to think about the Jesus.

I'm talking the historical one that remember now I'm not just talking biblical one. I'm talking the historical one. You say, what's the difference? Well, what I'm wanting to emphasize is this.

The biblical Jesus is the real Jesus, and that real Jesus lived. He actually lived. He lived in history.

He was a real man. He walked this earth for three years before he ascended. This Christ is the Christ with whom we have to deal.

Our interpretations of him don't do any good, because in the end, this is the one that we have to deal with. It's not the one that makes us feel good. This person I'm talking about is the one who does indeed appear before us in the pages of the New Testament.

We need to ask this question. What does he really like? You see, men are constantly there as we come to that narrow gate, and they're ready to whisper in our ears. Let me tell you what Jesus is really like.

They want to analyze. They want to theorize about him. They want to redefine him for us.

They speak. You ever hear men like this speak? They speak. All Christians, not just certain false prophets, but people who speak like their approval or their disapproval is what defines Christ.

Men talk about the biblical Christ as though he's the one on trial, and we're kind of the judges that sit back and say whether we approve or whether we disapprove. They're ready to bang the gavel down. And the moment they disapprove, they put him on trial.

And so the Christ of Scripture is responsible to answer to us for who he is. Listen. Listen to this.

I will raise up for them a prophet like you, Moses, from among their brothers, and I will put my words in his mouth. Now, I already quoted that to you, but listen to what's said next. He shall speak to them all that I command, and whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.

Do you recognize what Scripture says about the true biblical historic Christ? God has put his word in his mouth, and if you don't listen to him, God's going to require it of you. Behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them. A voice from that cloud said, This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased.

Listen to him. And then there's this. But as for these... This is Jesus Christ speaking.

But as for these enemies of mine who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me. Here's the point. We can't come as spectators.

And what Jesus is saying is this. Beware. Beware.

Because you know what the false prophet does? He says other than what Christ would have him to say. He's not saying what God wants you to hear. What God wants you to hear is this.

Surrender to Christ. Brethren, he is good. He is a good master.

He is a good savior. Surrendering to him is the most glorious thing you can do. But the false prophet doesn't want any of that.

We can't come and just simply analyze him. You see what's happening? The Christ of Scripture demands allegiance. It's like he slaughters his enemies that would not have him to reign over them.

Is anyone shocked that there's no room in the kingdom of Christ for unbroken rebels? You ought not to be. Unless you forsake all that you have, you can't be his disciple. Brethren, you know I love Andrew Fuller talks about surrendering to his mercy.

Because that's really what it's all about. Can you imagine what we're being asked to do? We're being asked to give our allegiance. To bend our knee to him who is altogether good and has our greatest good in mind.

To save us to the uttermost and to get us safely to the end. We're not talking about a tyrant. We're not talking about something torturous.

We're not talking about that. We're talking about him that is altogether good and came to save men. But here's the thing.

If you're going to have faith in this Christ, you believe him. You trust him to save you the way he came to save you. And that is to the uttermost.

Not slightly. Not a little bit. Not partially.

He came to save you fully. Brethren, yes. Yes, he's a lamb.

But have you read in the book of Revelation? This lamb. There's wrath in this lamb. False prophet.

Well, have you stand there facing that narrow way with just some idle curiosity? Or even worse, as a critic. Just, he'll lull you to sleep with stories. You know, when I was first saved, I remembered Easter services.

Christmas services. Oh, you know, you can, people can just give you this sentimental, warm feeling about the baby in a manger. And you feel warm.

I want you to consider the claims of the historic Jesus. The one that, you know what he claims to be? He claims to be Lord. Christ is always Lord and he is never anything less.

He claims to have no sin. He claims to be able to forgive sin. He claims to be the only way to God.

Though he's only 30 years old, he claimed to be God. He was not ashamed to say, I and my Father are one. That's the reality.

He claims he's a son of man, who all people are going to stand before in glory. He's going to judge the nations. Think about what he claimed throughout the Sermon on the Mount.

He said, you have heard but I say. Who is that? You say. I mean, you're talking like you actually have authority.

He was not ashamed to say exactly that. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. He says, in the end, he says the way is narrow.

And that's the Christ we're dealing with. And we don't want to downplay this. We don't want to minimize this.

We don't want to back away from this. Yes, brethren, you've got lots of preachers. They'll gladly paint a picture of some anemic, weepy-eyed Christ that is soft and mild and gentle.

Now listen, did he say, come unto me and learn of me? Yes, he did. But out of that same mouth, he could say, look, you want to know what judgment day is going to be like? Those that were not willing to submit to my reign, come bring them before me and slaughter them. So we recognize, did it come? Yes, he came in such a way that the ugly, I mean, think about that prostitute.

I mean, the woman taken in adultery. No one, Lord, neither do I condemn you. The woman of the city, her hair is let down and she washes his feet.

I mean, yes, did he weep? Yes, but he was a man's man and we don't want to forget that. What are we going to do with this Christ? I'll tell you what he's saying. I am to be believed.

I have authority. I am to be followed. I am the Christ.

This is who we're dealing with here. And he actually expects people to leave everything and follow him. I mean, how unreasonable and inconvenient is that? But that's his expectation.

The false prophet says, no, he doesn't. That's works. Brethren, don't you love the account with the rich young ruler in Mark, where it says that Jesus loved him? I love that.

Brethren, when you think about that, here's this young man. He runs up to Jesus. He bows down.

He's asking him the way of eternal life. What good thing must I do to obtain eternal life? And it says that the Lord loved him. And I'll tell you this, the Lord loved him too much to waste his time.

The Lord loved him too much to skirt the real issue. He didn't mince words with him. He laid it on the line.

Young man, you want eternal life? You've got to deal with me. With you? Yep. I'm Lord.

Surrender everything. Surrender everything to me. All your money.

Oh, men don't like to give up their money. And you know what? That's classic for a false prophet. You don't really have to give up your money.

He was speaking of the rich young ruler. Brethren, let me tell you this. Unless you forsake all that you have, you cannot be his disciple.

Now, when you forsake all that you have, he may allow you to keep some of that in your bank account. But he also may tell you that there's a need somewhere and it needs to go there. He is Lord.

You've been bought with a price. And he loved this young man too much to tell him it any other way. And when the man said, nope, I'm not on that wagon, case closed.

I mean, I keep saying this about this account. He didn't plead with him. He didn't beg him.

He didn't try to rephrase his words. He let him walk. You know why? Because Jesus only wants committed people.

And you see that commitment says everything about whether you really trust him or not. See, when you look at this Christ and you size it up, man, if he calls me to walk in this narrow way and I have to resign everything. You see, we're afraid to resign everything to him.

Why? Because I'm not really sure about that part of my life over there. If I can really give it up to him, because I mean, what might it cost me? And see, if you know your Bible well enough, he is in the business of having Abraham take his Isaac up to Mount Moriah. And we know it too well that he does like to put to death some of our greatest idols in our life.

And see, we're afraid. What might it cost me? And I come back to this. He's no tyrant.

The false prophet, he can tell you all sorts of things. What I'm going to tell you is this. And brethren, you better beware.

How do you know I'm not a false prophet? I mean, well, because you're brother Tim. See, there's a familiarity aspect that makes this whole thing all the more reason why you ought to beware. Brethren, this Christ is no tyrant.

This Christ means to save you well and to save you from what you perhaps don't know you need to be saved from. I was just listening to, again, some of you may know that Tim Challey's son is several years back. He just died.

He was off at seminary and he just died. They didn't even see it coming. He just like laid down dead.

And Challey's was talking about just the pain, the hurt of that. You know, we don't know. We don't know the future.

False prophet says, just believe. Just believe. As though what? Just some assent to the truth.

I believe there's a God. No, no, no. Jesus, uh-uh.

We're talking about real faith here. And Jesus wants commitment behind that faith. Because if you really believe something, you'll be committed to it.

You know, I love this account. I keep telling you about it. But you know what happened there in John 6. They said, this guy, he says hard things.

Remember? Hard, straight, narrow. This guy says hard things. We're out of here.

And he let them walk. Just like the rich young ruler. In fact, he didn't just let them walk.

He turns to the 12. And he says, guys, you want to go too? Hey, we weren't going. Why are you picking on us? We were hanging tight over here.

They were the ones leaving. Why are you pulling? I'll tell you why. He wanted them all over again to be committed to him and to say it.

And brethren, that's a reality. Because true faith is going to stay committed to this Christ to the end. This not works.

This never works. This is just Jesus saying to us, you want to be saved? Well, I save people who trust me enough to fully surrender everything to me. And these are the facts.

And brethren, this is a battle. Because you walk this narrow way. It's not just going in there one day.

You walk it. Which means we're constantly being challenged with our self and our selfishness and our tendency to want to be independent. Oh no, the false prophet smooths over this.

But brethren, that's what this sermon is all about. This is Jesus Christ saying, this is my kingdom. This is my people.

This is my standard of righteousness. Now you come and enter this way and you follow me. He wants decided followers.

Just remember those 12. You guys going to go too? What's he after? He's after reaffirmation. That's what he wants.

Are you still all in or not? While others are not willing to follow me on my terms. Guys, are you still in this on my terms? Which means what? It means whatever he wants. But he's good.

That doesn't mean that he doesn't take us down paths sometimes that we don't want to walk. But I guarantee in glory, we'll know it was good. What does Christ call us to surrender? In a word, everything.

I don't know if you're challenged with this. I'm challenged with this all the time. False prophet doesn't preach these things.

You know what? There's a real contrast between lost life and saved life. The false prophet doesn't tend to preach these contrast rather similarities. Like, well, you basically become a Christian.

It's just whatever you had in the world. It's just kind of better. You have that in the world.

When you come over, be a Christian. It'll be better. You know, you did drugs over there and you had a high over there.

Come get high on Jesus. There's that kind of talk. Brethren, that's not the way Jesus talked.

The way of the lost man, pleasure in sin for a season. Eat and drink for tomorrow we die. This is the mindset of the world.

No, you come over here. The way is very narrow and it's hard. That's what he called this massive contrast.

Well, you live out there in the world. You can live for money. You come over here.

Nope, lay it up in heaven. You live out there. He'd be anxious about all sorts of... Nope, you're going to follow him.

No anxiety allowed. Say, really? Yeah, did you notice how many verses he spent? You see, we can casually go over all those things as we were going through the sermon. But you come back and recognize, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you'll not enter this kingdom.

You say, are you telling me to work this out? No, I'm telling you, it starts with that first beatitude. Blessed are the poor in spirit. This is you walking this narrow way, where it's like you're just clinging to him, Lord, help me.

Every step you take. Ruby and I watch this movie that I still want to show to everybody, when things seem impossible. And this guy is getting out of the jungle in the pitch black, and he's trying to find his airplane.

He's escaping from these gorillas in Colombia. And he's walking this path in the dead of night, pitch black, every single step. Lord, help me.

Lord, help me. That's this. You want me to love my neighbor? You want me to love my enemies? You want me to live this life? Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and you don't do the things I say? Okay, that's what you want.

You're Lord. You want me to do the things you say. Lord, you say some pretty hard things.

You want me to hate my mother and father. I know that's hyperbole, but you want that. You want me to love you more than anybody else.

You want me to live this life. Lord, I need you. I need you to help me.

I need you to walk this. So, brethren, I would just say this. This is this coming to this point in the sermon.

I mean, I want to prove to you the true prophet. And I want to say to you this, what Christ would say, unless you forsake all that you have, you cannot be his disciple. And so you see, he's calling for commitment.

When he says enter, that's what he's, that's precisely what he's calling for. And brethren, we just need to be in a place where we can go to and broken and surrendered. It doesn't mean you're perfect.

It doesn't mean you've made yourself perfect. But you can say to the Lord, my time is yours. My house is yours.

My body is yours. What I eat is yours. The years I have left are yours.

What I do with my spare time is yours. What I do with my work time is yours. Lord, my lawn, my yard, my mind, my will.

Oh, isn't this one hard? My hopes, my desires, my dreams, my dreams, the things that I wanted out of life. Lord, I consecrate, I surrender, I give to you. Lord, all of it.

My TV, my computer, my family, my cell phone. All, Lord, I'm yours. What would you have me to do? Lord, I bow.

My heart bows before you. Nothing between my soul and the Savior. There's nothing standing.

I can do inventory. Lord, I know I'm not perfect. I know there's areas that, oh, Lord, I want to shine more brightly.

Brethren, I say this, say this. You say this to the Lord. You go to him.

This is the narrow path. I mean, brethren, do you recognize what repentance is all about? He did. He rebuked and reprovved those cities in Capernaum because he did all of his signs and wonders before the vast majority of all of the things he did miraculous in nature.

He did before just a handful of villages and cities. And he denounces them. Why? Because they saw this and they didn't repent.

Brethren, you know what he's looking for? Us to see this Christ in Scripture and to say, you know, as I said on Tuesday, he's not looking for, well, are you saved? Are you not saved? It's not that kind of thing. Have you had this certain experience? Or haven't you? That's not what he's asking here. That's not what he's even looking for.

He's saying, you know who I am, the true Christ. And you know what my terms are. Guys, are you going to go away too? When everybody else is going, are you going to reaffirm? Peter did.

No, we're not going anywhere. Whatever may lie down this path, the Lord wants it all. Brethren, no reserve, no reserve, nothing held back.

This Christ is my only hope. And whether I feel anything or don't feel anything, whether I sense some kind of experience or not, the real issue is not that. Jesus isn't even concerned with that here.

What have you felt? Have you been zapped by God? No, none of that. What think ye of Christ? What do you think of me? Am I your only hope? You see, that's what he wanted from those cities. That's why he denounced those cities.

After everything they saw, they didn't repent. Their whole thinking wasn't changed. They didn't come to themselves like the prodigal we heard about just recently who came to himself and said, I'm out of here.

This, beloved, it's an issue of trust. Does he demand my full unconditional surrender? Yes, but he's not a tyrant. He's simply saying, my people trust me.

You trust me. Like that rich young ruler didn't and all those people in John 6 who walked away, he says, trust me. You come in this narrow way, but you trust me in here.

And to get tight, brethren, the moment you get to the place where you feel like you've been stretched, things have been taken from you, brethren, you get to that breaking point, that place where you feel like you want to complain, you just remember He came and He did His Father's will and He submitted. You just let your eyes go to Gethsemane and you think of Him just being wrung out so much that blood came forth from Him. Or you think of Him on that cross.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? When He said, Father, if it's possible, deliver me from this. Yet not my will, but Thine. When you get to the place, because brethren, He will bring us to those places.

He promised to put the sons of Levi into such purifying places and it gets hard and there's times tears flow and groans come forth and it's not easy, but look at Him in the garden on all fours and you watch that blood like sweat fall off of Him as He surrendered to His Father's will. Brethren, He put that old terrible cup to His lips. And brethren, the gospel is pretty simple.

It always gets rid of complications. What is it? Narrow way. Follow me.

We need to be a church ready. Lord, where are you going to take us? What's the way forward? The way is narrow. I don't know where it goes.

I just know it's narrow. Yes, Lord, You are enough. If I have You, though You strip all else away, I'm satisfied.

You beware of those voices. They will try to tell you otherwise. Let me just end with the voice of a true prophet of God.

John Wesley, I am no longer my own, but Thine. Put me to what Thou wilt. Rank me with whom Thou wilt.

Put me to doing. Put me to suffering. Let me be employed for Thee or laid aside for Thee.

Exalted for Thee or brought low for Thee. Let me be full. Let me be empty.

Let me have all things. Let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to Thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Thou art mine and I am Thine, so be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

And that is the voice of the true prophet. Beware of false prophets. Father, we need your grace to walk this narrow way.

I pray, Lord, that the folks in this room would prove true to this path all the way to the end. I pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

You are dismissed.

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