

“False Teachers Described”

Holiness

2 Peter 2:10-22

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Bruce: Good to be with you this morning? Is everybody okay?

Men: Yes.

Bruce: You know, one of the things that we don't do well as men is to sit in silence.

Participant: Right.

Bruce: And just meditate. What I'm going to ask you to do as Justin plays for us before we have our moment of prayer and our study today, let's just go into a time of meditation. Think of things that you want to thank the Lord for. One of the things that I read recently was that one of the best ways to manage stress in a man's life is to sometimes take ten or fifteen minutes to just close your eyes and thank the Lord for the things that He has done for you, is doing for you and that you will anticipate that He will do. It's just to create a spirit of gratitude. The point was this. One of the best ways to manage depression for a man is to increase your spirit of gratitude.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: So I'm just going to ask, as Justin plays, that you would just go into a moment of silence, and just meditate and be thankful for the Lord. Then I'll close in a moment of prayer.

(Justin plays “His Eye Is On the Sparrow.”)

Bruce: Lord Jesus, we come to You with tremendous anticipation and awe about Your omnipotence, Your sovereignty, Your grace. Father, we thank You that Your eye is on the sparrow. And we thank You, Lord, that Your eye is on us. Father, cleanse our hearts. Cleanse us of all unrighteousness, that we would be worthy vessels to receive what You would have for us today through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And all of God's grateful men said,

Men: Amen.

Bruce: And Amen. Thank you.

Let's turn in our Bibles, please, to the book of 2 Peter, continuing our examination of the theme of holiness. We'll pick this up today in 2 Peter chapter 2, beginning at verse 10 through verse 22. Again, I'll be reading from the English Standard Version of the Scripture.

“Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions while they feast with you. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed, accursed children, forsaking the right while they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved gainful wrongdoing, but was rebuked for his own transgressions. A speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of the outer darkness has been reserved. For speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. They

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promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. What the true proverb says has happened to them: ‘The dog returns to its own vomit,’ and ‘the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.’” This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Amen and Amen. In the last couple of sessions we’ve had, Peter has been using the nation of Israel as a history lesson to remind us of a warning, a very severe warning in the church. He is using the nation of Israel as an illustration of saying that just as there were Old Testament false prophets with the nation of Israel, there will be false teachers in the church age. The contrast is this. Just as there were false prophets in Israel, there will now be false teachers in the church.

Now he uses some rather scathing language that I just read in this particular passage. He didn’t pull any punches. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he really described in great, great detail what these false teachers are like. And that’s what we want to examine today.

And I think that one of the reasons that he may have taken such a scathing report on all of this is because he heard the Lord Jesus in the Sermon On the Mount say something very, very similar. And no doubt Peter, reminding himself of what the Lord Jesus taught him about false teachers, combined with the ministry of the Holy Spirit in his life, put it together for him to write what we have just now read in 2 Peter chapter 2. So I want you to go to Matthew chapter 7 to see what Jesus said, which is very, very similar to what Peter wrote, although Peter uses more scathing detail. Let’s go to Matthew chapter 7, beginning at verse 13.

“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter it are many. But the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. 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 thornbushes, 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. On that day many will say to Me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and 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!’”

Now that is what Peter heard when Jesus taught the disciples in the Sermon On the Mount. And no doubt Peter, remembering those words of Jesus—his Mentor, his Lord—under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he penned for us what we read in 2 Peter chapter 2. So we want to examine this today and take a look at the description—

Electronic Voice: *“Judge not, that you be not judged.” (Laughter.)*

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Bruce: We’re going to be discerning, not judging. (*Laughter.*)

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Now Peter had previously said that false teachers are to be predicted, and he uses the false prophets of the nation of Israel as an illustration. Then last time we looked at the fact of how they will be judged. These false teachers will be judged. And now he goes into how false teachers are described. And that’s what we want to look at today, to see the description in great detail, and why he uses such vehement language in describing these false teachers.

There are a couple of things we want to look at in this passage. First of all would be their *characteristics*. What are the characteristics of a false teacher in the church age today? Then we want to look at their *seductive influence*. What is the seductive influence that these false teachers render to the church? And thirdly, we want to look at their *final status*. Their characteristics, their subtle influence, and their final status.

The Bible teaches that there are three kinds of false prophets, or three kinds of false teachers. You’ll notice, in Jeremiah 14:14, that here is the definition of a false prophet or a false teacher.

Transcriber’s Note: Jeremiah 14:14. *“And the LORD said to me, ‘The prophets are prophesying lies in My name. I did not send them, or command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination and the deceit of their own minds.’”*

Bruce: Here is the definition of a false prophet or a false teacher in Jeremiah 14:14. It is one who presents himself as a messenger of God, but does not have the message of God, nor the mind of God. Now let me give you that again. Here is the definition of a false prophet or a false teacher. He is one who presents himself as a messenger of God, but does not have the message of God or the heart of God. As Jesus said in Matthew 7:22, “You’ve done things in My name, but I never knew you.”

You see, Christ is not necessarily impressed just because we do things in His name.

Participant: Amen!

Bruce: You’ve got to look at the heart, the activities and the influence of these particular teachers as you look at them.

So first of all, there are three kinds of false teachers in the Scripture. First of all, there would be the *heretics*. I would just quickly define that as one who would say, “I don’t believe the Bible is true.” That’s the basis of what they would teach. Now when you listen to what they teach, they’re basically going to say that they’re anti-Biblical. So just for a quick definition, the heretic says, “I don’t believe the Bible is true.”

Some may say that they believe the Bible. But they teach heresy by misusing the Bible. The heretic will misuse the Bible. They will say that they will teach the Scriptures, but they misuse them for their own gain. And we’ll explore that in greater detail.

Next would be the *apostate*. That’s the one who denies Christianity and departs from it. They deny Christianity and they have departed from it. In their teaching they deny the Bible that they once taught. Matthew 7:16 talks about heretics and apostates.

Transcriber’s Note: Matthew 7:16. *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”*

Bruce: The third type are the hardest to find and the hardest to discern. And they are the ones that we must watch out for. In Matthew 7:15, which we just read, Jesus said that they are deceiving spirits. They talk about Christ. They talk about God. They talk about the cross. They

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talk about the Scriptures. They talk about the church. And they appear to be evangelical. You’ll find many of them on TV stations, radio stations, writing books and doing seminars. We have to be very, very discerning.

I’ve recently done some study on what I would call *neo-evangelism*. Let me give you some hallmarks of neo-evangelism, which means *new*—a new style of evangelism, as opposed to historical Biblical evangelism.

First of all, they would be *ecumenical*. They are always looking for the lowest common denominator to get people to agree.

Now there’s nothing wrong with being ecumenical without violating the Scripture. But what the modern neo-evangelist will do is that he will lower the standard of excellence in the Scripture just so he can get somebody to believe, because his motive is to get a response, not to proclaim truth. So we have to be careful about ecumenicalism.

Secondly, *they deny the inerrancy of Scripture*. Thirdly, *they deny the sufficiency of Scripture*. Fourthly, I would say this. *They use worldly methods of evangelism*. And lastly, in my mind, which may be the most serious, is *they have a low view of worship*.

Now that’s what we have going on in what I would call our neo—meaning new—evangelistic efforts going on in our country today. For about the last hundred years, this has been the characteristic of neo-evangelism. We have to be very discerning, men, about what we listen to and what influences us.

Now they have certain characteristics which Jesus talked about in the Sermon On the Mount that I read in Matthew chapter 7, and what Peter just described for us in 2 Peter 2. They have certain characteristics which both Jesus and Peter describe.

Let’s take a look, first of all, at their internal attitudes. What are the internal attitudes of these false teachers that Peter is warning us about?

He said this. First of all, they are bold and arrogant. They go after their own lusts and they are covetous and greedy. Now he doesn’t mix any language here, men. You know, this is such a serious issue because these people are deceivers. It’s easier to determine the apostate. It’s easier to determine that somebody is teaching heresy. But what is really difficult is to determine and discern somebody who is deceiving you because it looks so good on the outside. But the meat of their message is something that is very deceptive.

And so he describes them as *“bold and arrogant,”* going after their own lusts, and they are greedy. They are also self-centered. They’re proud. They’re jealous of others. They live impure lives. Now I’m just giving you a summary of what Peter wrote to us in 2 Peter.

Now they don’t always reveal this outwardly because of what Peter says about them. Now we need to understand this. Let me show you a contrast in looking at their internal motives.

When we look at their external activities, they appear very, very good, as I just described in this new evangelistic effort. Everything looks good on the outside. But Peter is saying that you’ve got to determine their internal attitudes. So take a look at 2 Peter chapter 1 verse 4.

Here is a description of somebody who has the correct internal attitude in 2 Peter 1:4. *“By which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, so that through them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desires.”* You see, they have received the very nature of God and escaped internal corruption.

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Now we’re looking at the internal attitudes of false teachers. And so we have to discern. Have they overcome the internal corruption, because attitudes are a reflection of either your corrupted internal spirit or your redeemed internal spirit. And 2 Peter 1:4 gives us a description of the one who has the correct internal attitude. You’ve overcome this because of regeneration and the work of grace. You have a new heart. And the difference is this. You’re no longer rotting internally. You have a new heart through regeneration—2 Peter 1:4—and you overcome the lusts of this world and the corruption of this world because you’re no longer internally rotting.

Now let’s compare that to what Peter says about these false teachers. They are never changed on the inside by the description I just gave you, that they have internally cleansed themselves from all the dirt of the world. So when you look at their external life conduct, they look like they’re clean, but they are continuing to rot on the inside. That’s why Peter uses such scathing language to describe these deceivers who are in the church, teaching falsely.

You see, they look good on the outside.

Participant: That’s right.

Bruce: But you’ve got to examine their motives. Let’s take another look at Matthew chapter 23. Go to Matthew chapter 23, specifically verse 27.

Again, the words of Jesus which Peter heard him say. *“Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness. So you also appear outwardly righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”*

That means this. When you hear something that looks so good on the outside, you’ve got to discern to the best of your ability—discernment is what we need—to discern their internal motives. Can you discern their motives just by how they are acting themselves? Let me give you some ways in which we need to discern their motives.

Jesus says in Matthew 7:15, which we just read, that they are ravenous, ferocious wolves. Now let me explain what that means.

The true prophets in the Old Testament were known by what they wore. And that’s why Peter is saying that they may look good on the outside, but you’ve got to look at the inside, their internal attitudes.

True prophets were known by what they wore. 2 Kings chapter 1 verse 8 said that a true prophet wore hairy burlap garments because they were foregoing their creature comforts. John the Baptist is an example. He wore a rough camel hair coat.

Now in the nation of Israel a false prophet who wanted to pretend to be a true prophet, would put on the prophet’s clothing. That’s why Peter is saying that you’ve got to be careful of the clothing, meaning their external conduct. These things may look good on the outside. But they are rotting on the inside. And a true prophet had certain clothing that he wore. When somebody wanted to pose as a true prophet in the history of Israel, he would put on the garments of a true prophet and be deceiving.

An example of that would be this. Zechariah chapter 13 verse 4.

Transcriber’s Note: Zechariah 13:4. *“And if anyone again prophesies, his father and mother who bore him shall say to him, ‘You shall not live, for you speak lies in the name of the LORD.’ And his father and mother who bore him shall pierce him through when he prophesies.”*

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Bruce: They put on the prophet’s garments of hair—now notice this—in order to deceive.

Now Jesus makes mention of sheep’s clothing. Now that doesn’t mean that you look like a sheep on all four legs. That’s not what he’s suggesting. The mark of a shepherd was his woolen cloak. Because it was cold in the nation of Israel in the desert and the plains of Israel, the shepherd would put on a woolen cloak to keep warm on the cold evenings. And Jesus is referring to the shepherd’s clothing as really another term for *wool*. It’s another term for *wool*.

And just as the false prophets would wear the clothes of a true prophet and look like one, so will false teachers in the church put on the sheep’s clothing and look like a true teacher. He would look like a true shepherd.

And what we’re talking about, men, is this. A false shepherd looks like a true shepherd, but he’s really a what? A wolf. He has got the outer garments, but he’s really a wolf.

So when do these false prophets and false teachers appear as shepherds? When do they appear? It’s when the sheep are in need of a shepherd. Whenever the sheep are in need of a shepherd, that’s when these ravenous wolves who put on the sheep’s clothing look like shepherds, and so they come as deceiving shepherds, but they are ravenous wolves. Those are scathing words that Jesus and Peter have written to us, warning us about the need to be discerning about who we listen to and what we follow.

So that means we’ve got to explore, as we listen to their teaching, their attitudes and their thinking. And there are certain attitudes that are going to come out when they start teaching. And you’ll understand this. The big thing that we need to discern is this. What is their vision of God? That’s how we can discern what’s going on in their internal motives when they describe who God is.

Let me give you some examples of this. Look at Jeremiah chapter 5. In verse 31, we’re told that these false prophets or false teachers will please the ear, not profit the heart. They will use wit rather than reverence. They will use wit, humor, excitement, entertainment rather than reverence. That’s why, in my study of neo-evangelism, one of the great deceptions is their low view of worship. Worship has now become something that’s entertaining. They just want to make you feel good. It’s entertaining. We have to be very discerning about that.

Another example of discerning their attitudes would be this. Isaiah chapter 30 verse 10.

Transcriber’s Note: Isaiah 30:10. *“Who say to the seers, ‘Do not see,’ and to the prophets, ‘Do not prophesy to us what is right. Speak to us smooth things. Prophecy illusions.”*

Bruce: They preach to men’s desires, not men’s needs. They preach what they desire to hear, not what they need to hear.

And then lastly, go to the book of Jude. It’s right before the book of Revelation. Now follow along, men, as you open your Bibles, because this is one of the best descriptions of a false teacher.

There are seven things we can find in this chapter. First of all, they creep in unnoticed. That’s verse 4 of Jude. They reject authority—Biblical authority, the inerrancy of Scripture, the sufficiency of Scripture. They reject authority. That’s verse 8.

They care only for themselves. That’s verse 11. They grumble and find fault—verse 16.

They speak arrogantly—verse 16. They flatter to gain advantage—verse 16. And then in verse 19 they cause divisions.

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They creep in unnoticed. They reject authority. They care only for themselves. They grumble and find fault. They speak arrogantly. They flatter to gain advantage. And they cause divisions within the church. That’s why Peter is using such scathing language in warning us, trying to get your attention, men. This is a serious issue in the life of the church. We need to be careful about who we listen to. What is their vision of God? That’s the best way for us to determine their internal attitudes and their internal nature, which would be their view of God Himself.

Now you contrast that with what I just read from Jude. Did you all get the verses? In order, they are verse 4, verse 8, verse 11, verse 16, and verse 18.

Participant: What was the definition on verse 11 again?

Bruce: Verse 11 would be that they care only for themselves. Now contrast that, men, with this. Go to Matthew chapter 5—a Beatitude attitude. Contrast what we just read in Jude with what Jesus says in the Sermon On the Mount in the Preamble, teaching His disciples that this is how you enter into the kingdom, and this is how you live a kingdom life. Listen to the description that Jesus gives in the Beatitudes.

First of all, is the person poor in spirit? In other words, does he recognize his spiritual bankruptcy? Does the person come across as recognizing that he can do nothing to please God apart from receiving Christ as Lord and Savior? Do they really communicate that? Or is there a sense of arrogance, and a sense that I’m the only one that can make things happen and I can change the world? Do they have a sense of being poor in spirit? Do they recognize their poverty of spirit, their spiritual bankruptcy?

Secondly, do they mourn over their sin? Do they really mourn over their sin? How much do you hear these guys talking about their personal sin and that they mourn over it because it’s an offense to God? Do you hear much of that?

Thirdly, are they meek? Do they live according to the power of God and do they have a servant’s heart? Do they really want to do something for someone and expect nothing in return? Or do they always want something back? You see, the person who is meek is the one who understands that God’s power is working and controlling their lives, and they have the freedom to be servants and expect nothing in return. Is that the spirit they give off as they teach and give their ministries?

How about number four? Do they hunger and thirst for righteousness? Do these people really hunger and thirst for righteousness? Or are they looking for applause? Do they realize this, that the way we demonstrate the internal attitudes of our lives is our pursuit of righteousness, and that is what fulfills me. What is it that fulfills them? Applause? Position? Power? Possessions? Or is it the fact that they are hungering and thirsting for righteousness, for the Bread of Life and the Living Water that has no end? What is their hunger source, their drinking source? What really fulfills them?

Fifthly, I would suggest this. Do they long for mercy? Do they really long for mercy? Are they peacemakers?

And lastly, this. Are they willing to be persecuted for Christ’s sake? So men, contrast what I just went through as a quick overview of the Beatitudes and those character qualities compared to the seven ones found in the book of Jude. That’s what we’ve got to be discerning about.

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Now we are not here judging people. We’re discerning, as we listen to their message, what they are teaching. Does the message reflect their internal attitude of having been regenerated and understanding that they have overcome the world’s corruption through the grace and regeneration of God? Do they really understand that as we listen to their words? I’m not saying that you go and analyze somebody, or judge them. I’m saying this. Listen to what they teach and you’ll discern their internal attitudes. What is their vision of God? It’s a tremendous warning that Peter gives us, because he heard the Lord Jesus in the Sermon On the Mount give a tremendous warning about what will destroy the church.

You see, these false shepherds, these false teachers, are really wolves. They want pride, power, prestige, position and promotion. That’s really what they’re about. They want to be famous. They want to be loved. But they don’t necessarily want to be persecuted for righteousness’ sake.

Now I’m not saying that you can discern this all the time. All I’m saying, men, is that when you listen to somebody preach or teach, you’ve got to really examine the content of what they say, because that will reflect their internal attitudes, how they view God.

The gospel is basically this—the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the Person and work of Christ, and repentance and faith. Is that what you hear in their message?

Participant: Bruce, I didn’t know that you were preaching on the Presidential campaign. *(Laughter.)*

Second Participant: Amen.

Bruce: I’m going to stay out of politics. *(Laughter.)*

Take a look at 2 Corinthians 2:17. Paul writes about these deceiving false teachers in the church. Would somebody read 2 Corinthians 2:17?

Participant: *“Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak for God with sincerity, like men sent from God.”*

Bruce: That word means *merchandisers*. It basically means this. They merchandise the Word. They profit off of Jesus.

Now that doesn’t mean that a man shouldn’t get paid if he is worthy of his hire. That’s not what I’m saying.

Participant: Right.

Bruce: But is there an intention to profit from the words of Jesus? That’s a merchandising attitude that these guys have because they want power. They want prestige. They want pride. They want position and they want promotion. And so they will merchandise things off of Jesus.

I think I’ve told you before that years ago, when I was with my friend Don Kistler, who was running the ministry of Sola Deo Gloria Publishing, bringing back the great Puritan works of several generations ago, that we would go to the Christian Booksellers Convention. *(Laughter.)* It was one of the most discouraging events I’ve ever attended. It was just incredible! Let me see if I can remember some things.

There were different booths selling things—mints to put in your mouth to clean up your bad breath called New Testamints. *(Laughter.)* And they had a little Bible verse on each little mint. If you didn’t like that, they had Old Testamints, which were different colors with different verses on them. It was merchandising the Word. Another one had soap. It had a cross with soap. You hung it on your shower, and it had on there “wash my sins away.”

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Participant: Did it work? *(Laughter.)*

Bruce: You would have to ask the person who tried it. *(Laughter.)* Let’s see if I can think of another example. They had a picture of a cross on a tee shirt. It had the picture of a man doing a push-up with a cross on his back. “Do one more for the Lord.”

Now I was with two of my favorite pastor friends who were there with me. And we walked through this, and we just basically kind of concluded that this is what Jesus saw at the temple when He was kicking people out of the temple.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: But that is essentially what it was. I came away grieved in spirit just because of the merchandising concept. They were making money off of Jesus in the things they did. People were flocking over it. Over here in our little publishing company we had our books on the great Puritan works. People just walked by with their tee shirts on, eating their mints and washing their hands with soap—whatever they were doing. *(Laughter.)*

My point is this. We didn’t do very well at that. But the people who were merchandising sure made a lot of money. Men, we’ve just got to be discerning. I can’t tell you what to do and what not to do. We just have to be discerning. And that’s why Peter and Jesus both give us such vehement warnings about these men. They profit off of Jesus because they teach the sensational rather than the Savior.

Another indicator is this. They will teach the sensational rather than speak of the Savior. Yes, please?

Participant: I don’t want to qualify myself by saying, “not all.” But it seems from my experience that many Christians, even in Christian leadership, have bought into this wolves-in-sheep’s-clothing teaching. And then the man or the woman who is spiritually discerning and given the gift of spiritual discernment comes and exposes this stuff, and they’re the ones that look like the—

Bruce: Absolutely.

Participant: Do you know what I’m saying?

Bruce: That’s correct, because here will be there response. *“Judge not, lest you be judged.”*

Participant: Yeah, right.

Bruce: You see, they’ll hang their hats on that. “How can you do that to somebody?” Yes, Carl?

Carl: Bruce, I wanted to add a Scripture to what you’ve just said.

Bruce: Please.

Carl: And that comes from Acts the twentieth chapter, where the Word says, *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves and all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers. Feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. For I know that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them.”* So he has given us the solemn charge to watch over the flock of God.

Bruce: Amen to that.

Carl: And then when we watch over them, we’re to be willing to look for deception, as you have been teaching.

Bruce: That was going to be my closing verse. *(Laughter.)*

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Participant: Let it be, let it be!

Second Participant: Thanks a lot, Carl! *(Laughter.)*

Bruce: I’ll still close with that because that’s a very, very important thing that Carl just read for us.

Let me read from a passage describing these wolves in sheep’s clothing by Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Here’s what he says about that particular verse in Matthew that we just read.

“A Christian can generally be known by his very appearance. The man who really believes in the holiness of God and who knows his own sinfulness, the blackness of his own heart, the man who believes in a judgment of God and the possibility of hell and torment, the man who really believes that he himself is so vile and helpless that nothing but the coming of the Son of God from heaven to earth, His going through the bitter shame and agony and cruelty of the cross could ever save him, and reconcile himself to God—this man is going to show all that is this is in his whole personality. He is a man who is bound to give the impression of meekness. He is bound to be humble. Our Lord reminds us here that if a man is not humble, we are to be very wary of him. He can put on a kind of sheep’s clothing. But that is not true humility. That is not true meekness. If a man’s doctrine is wrong, it will generally show itself at this point. He will be affable and pleasant. He will appeal to the natural man, and to the things that are physical and carnal. But he will not give the impression of being a man who has seen himself as a hell bound sinner who has been saved by the grace of God alone.” Men, we’ve got to be discerning about these wolves in sheep’s clothing.

Not only are we to examine their internal attitudes by listening to what they teach about God and their view of God, but we also have to look at some of their external activities. As we go to 2 Peter chapter 2, look at verses 13, 14, 15 and 16.

Now speaking of their conduct, Peter says this. *“They blaspheme in matters they do not understand.”* He’s referring to Gnosticism. They claimed a very special revelation.

Now let’s talk about that for a moment. Apply that idea. Any revelation in addition to Scripture you’ve got to watch out for.

Let me give you some examples. Colossians 2:8.

Transcriber’s Note: Colossians 2:8. *“See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”*

Bruce: Colossians 2:8 says, “God plus something.” We’ve got to be careful. Is it God, or is it God plus something? Colossians 2:18.

Transcriber’s Note: Colossians 2:18. *“Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head.”*

Bruce: Do you worship anything other than Christ, for example, the worship of angels. We’ve got to be sensitive here. I’ll just mention this. It’s sensational to worship the Holy Spirit. But that is not the Holy Spirit’s job description. The job description of the Holy Spirit is not to be worshiped. It is to call attention to the Person and work of Christ so that Christ will be the object of our worship. I’m not saying that we don’t study and pray to and understand the Holy Spirit. That’s not what I’m saying. But I’m saying this. The Holy Spirit must guide us to Christ

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because Christ is to be the object of our true worship, not something sensational in the works of the Holy Spirit. We just have to be discerning about that.

And last, I would say, how about 2 Corinthians 11:4?

Transcriber’s Note: 2 Corinthians 11:4. *“For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus other than the One we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit than the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel than the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.”*

Bruce: Do they preach another Jesus? Is it the Jesus of human imagination? Or is it the Jesus of Biblical revelation? We have to look at some of their external conduct.

“They carouse in broad daylight,” he says. Some are utterly shameless. *“They are experts in greed.”* They do things for position and for possessions and for power.

Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 7, verses 16 and 20. Grapes don’t grow on thorns. You can stick a grape on a thorn. But it may not be there because of growth. It may be on there just because of attachment.

And secondly, don’t pay attention to them. You’ve got to hold your mind against them because they will pervert the mind and poison the soul. Now Carl, would you read your verse again? Look at Acts chapter 20:29-32. Watch, warn, because the Word is our protection.

Carl: *“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves men will speak perverse things, drawing away the disciples after them. Therefore, watch and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all of them which are sanctified.”*

Bruce: Our protection, men, is that phrase *“word of His grace.”* Hold your mind against these false teachers. And our great protection is *“the word of His grace.”*

Participant: That’s why we’re here every Friday. Let’s pray. Father, this is very, very serious business, the warnings that You give us in Your word. Father, give us a discerning spirit—not a judgmental, critical spirit, but a discerning spirit. Help us understand, Father, that it is the Word that will be our protection—the inerrancy of Scripture and the sufficiency of Scripture. May that be our guard and may that be our weapon, that we might stand against the evil one this day of spiritual warfare. And may it be so for Jesus’ sake. And all the Brave Men said, “Amen.”

Bruce: Thank you. *(Applause.)*