

Philippians 3:1-3

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 3/13/2011, a replacement for the same passage preached on 7/29/2007

How do we keep from being ensnared by false teaching?

Prayer

Father, we're so thankful for Your grace and Your mercy. You are so wonderful to us. You are so kind and so loving. You gave Your only begotten Son for us. We are so thankful for Your Son, Jesus Christ, Who willingly came and took on human flesh, Who died for our sins. We are so thankful that You, through Him, delivered us from darkness into the kingdom of Your beloved Son. Father, thank You that for those of us You have saved, You are making us like Christ. You're using Your Word to bring about Your desires so that You will be glorified. And I do pray as we look into Your Word today that You would, first of all, convict us of any sin, that we would confess that. That we would be clean before You. That we would receive your Word in our hearts. That we would believe what You say. And we would, by Your power and strength, act appropriately for Your glory. Lord, I just commit this time to You. May Your Son be magnified. And it is in His name that we pray. Amen.

Sermon

Well, most of you are probably aware of the earthquake that Bob talked about earlier in Japan, and the tsunami that followed. And you've probably seen on TV the devastation as the waves just kept coming and just destroying houses and cars, and obviously there is great loss of life. And it's heartbreaking to see. It's heartbreaking to see the damage and destruction because you know within that damage, within that wave, that there are probably those who perished. You know very clearly, as we look at it, it is a horrible, terrible disaster. Yet one thing puzzles me at times when we look at these physical disasters, that often we have spiritual disasters on the same magnitude that we don't seem to recognize. We don't seem to recognize at times a tsunami of false teaching infiltrating the church and wreckage throughout the church. We see people's lives scattered and strewn all over in the context of sin and unfaithfulness and immaturity. And yet, no one says anything. It doesn't seem like people care.

But the reality is God cares. God cares very much about the sheep that He purchased with the blood of Christ. And God cares so much that He, in His Word and throughout His Word, warns us of those threats that come in and ravage the church.

And so with that in mind, as we were looking in Matthew chapter 12, as I was looking through that passage and studying it and going through it, the Lord just put a roadblock in my way. And we'll see next week, Lordwilling, that Matthew 12 is about the wreckage that the Pharisees have brought forth through their wicked traditions which have invalidated the Word of God and the Lordship of Christ for those who don't believe.

And from that, I was just prompted to go back and share a passage that we share here; usually about once a year we share this passage but it's been about two years. Getting old; wow, time's gone by.

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But the apostle Paul in Philippians chapter three says he considers it right to remind you of these things. And it is no trouble for him. And for me, it is no trouble to remind you also and to prepare our hearts as we look and see the Lord Jesus assault the false teaching of the Pharisees. And I wanted to lay a little context for that. So, would you turn your Bibles to Philippians chapter 3, and we will be looking clearly at how we are able to keep from being ensnared by false teaching. How we're able to not get caught up in this wave that seems to be impossible to avoid.

So again, would you turn in your Bibles to Philippians chapter 3. I want to give some context to the book of Philippians. We obviously went through it before back in 2007, if you were here, you'll remember. We went through the book and it was a wonderful book as we saw the gracious heart of our Lord to the apostle Paul. And we see very clearly as we look at our passage here in Philippians chapter 3 verse 1. Let me read it for you.

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you. Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; ³ for we are the true-circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, [Philippians 3:1-3]

The apostle Paul begins in chapter three in verse one, he says "Finally, my brethren." Now, that word in the Greek doesn't mean "finally" because Paul continues going on, so I'm not sure why they translated it "finally". It means "as for the rest". "I've got some more things to say," Paul is saying.

And within that, what has Paul said already? What is in the book of Philippians? What, if you were to have read it this morning, what would you have seen if you looked in there? Well, first of all, Paul is writing to the saints who are in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi. He's not speaking of those who have been elected as saints through some man-system but those who have been declared righteous through faith in Christ. Holy ones; every true believer. The apostle Paul is on house arrest in Rome. He is chained to a Roman guard 24/7. And obviously the apostle Paul is very close to the Philippian church. He has already in this book lovingly shared his circumstances, that he is in prison but the gospel isn't. He has shared his attitude that to live is Christ and to die is gain. He understands that through everything, whether death or life, that it is Christ he desires to be magnified. And then, at this point he addressed the Philippians' attitudes. They were to be united, humble in spirit. They were to be like Jesus Christ, having the mind of Christ. They were to think of others as more important than themselves. They were to be like Christ, thinking the way He did where He came and took on human flesh and He obeyed to the point of death, death on the cross. We see that perfect humility of Jesus Christ who humbled Himself, being obedient to the point of death. We see that He was exalted back to His rightful place. And then we have the command to work out our salvation obediently with fear and trembling because God is at work in you. And then we have the first real command after that, to not complain and argue. Do all things without complaining and arguing so that we would appear as lights in a rotten, sinful world. And then he

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gave three selfless examples, I believe, of Christ-likeness. Those who were working out their salvation in obedience- himself, Timothy and Epaphroditus.

And now in chapter three, he transitions to point out that there will be opposition, opposition that was just like the way he was before he was saved by the Lord Jesus Christ. So he is very familiar personally and also from the revelation that God gave him concerning false teaching. And we see here, I believe, what we'll see as we come to this portion- how we are to keep from being ensnared by false teachers. We're going to be warned about them and given a picture into what they look like but that we really can't see. And then we're going to be given a picture of what a true believer is like in comparison to false brethren. That will help us also identify false teachers. And it may help you identify where you stand with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ok, so how are we to keep from being ensnared, how are we to not get caught up in this wave that is going from church to church? It's all over the place, folks. You can't turn on the TV without seeing bad doctrine, false teaching. You can't talk to people who share about these churches these days, how bad they are. It's all out. How do we keep from being ensnared? First of all, we're commanded, first of all, to have the right attitude. We're commanded to be rejoicing in the Lord, chapter 3 verse 1.

¹ ***Finally, my brethren, (or, as to the rest, my brethren) rejoice in the Lord. [Philippians 3:1]***

This is a command that they're to continually, habitually rejoice in the Lord. They're to keep on rejoicing. And can we obey a command from God to rejoice? Well, what if I'm not happy? Can we obey a command to rejoice? Well, if we understand that it's not about our circumstances but that Christ is the source of true joy and that we are to rejoice here in the Lord, I believe we can because whatever God commands a true believer and we submit and obey by His power and strength, we can do everything, He says.

Indeed, we see in Scripture that true joy is always linked to our relationship with the living God. And I believe all our difficulties are linked to a relationship with what we're looking at, if we're not focusing on Christ. Our attitudes and whatever it might be. Let me share a couple passages from the Psalms, and let's turn there. I want to share about joy, first of all, then we'll come back. Because, as we will see, if you are not joyful, if you are not focused on Christ, you are a prime suspect for someone coming around and working through and massaging the Word in a way that turns you towards your flesh rather than Christ. You see, if you're not joyful and things are not right, you are ripe for someone to come alongside you and deceive you. And so, the first command here is "rejoice in the Lord", and if we go to Psalm 16, verse 11 we see this wonderful portion of Scripture. Psalm 16, verse 11.

In Thy presence is fullness of joy; In Thy right hand there are pleasures forever. [Psalm 16:11]

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Don't go hunting for happiness or joy anywhere apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. We can only truly rejoice in the Lord. Turn back to Psalm chapter 5, verse 11 and while you're there I'm going to read Nehemiah 8:10. We have the statement,

Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength. [Nehemiah 8:10]

¹¹ But let all who take refuge in Thee be glad, Let them ever sing for joy; (And by the way, on a side note, our singing and our joyous heart-attitude is an evidence that we are filled with the Holy Spirit, that the Spirit of God is working in us. Ephesians 5.) And mayest Thou shelter them, That those who love Thy name may exult in Thee. ¹² For it is Thou who dost bless the righteous man, O LORD, Thou dost surround him with favor as with a shield. [Psalm 5:11-12]

Up the Psalm 32, verse 1. We have a Psalm of David, a maskil. And in here we see true blessing; it's a relationship with Christ through the forgiveness of sins.

¹ How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, (Are you blessed? Are your sins forgiven?) Whose sin is covered! ² How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit! [Psalm 32:1-2]

How blessed is the man, that God does not hold you accountable for your sin. Your sins have been put on Christ, and He has paid the penalty for your sins. How blessed are those true believers who have trusted in Christ.

Down in verse 10, Psalm 32.

¹⁰ Many are the sorrows of the wicked; But he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him. ¹¹ Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones, And shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart. [Psalm 32:10-11]

When we meditate on what Christ has done for us, we recognize this tremendous sacrifice of Christ, we should be joyful. We should be praising Him and thanking Him and rejoicing. Skip down to Psalm 43. We see that the reality of our joy is tied up in the person of the living God. Psalm 43, verse 3.

³ O send out Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me; (That's a good prayer.) Let them bring me to Thy holy hill, And to Thy dwelling places. ⁴ Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And upon the lyre I shall praise Thee, O God, my God. [Psalm 43:3-4]

Joy is tied up in the living God. Psalm 71, verse 23.

²³ My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises to Thee; And my soul, which Thou hast redeemed. [Psalm 71:23]

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On a side note, I always get a little discouraged when I look out at you all when I'm singing up here, and I see people that aren't singing. If you're not singing, something is wrong. Just want to encourage you in that- if you don't sing when we come together as a body corporately, saying "Stand and sing", if you don't have that from your heart something is wrong. And I would examine yourself. "My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises to Thee". Psalm 95, verse 1.

¹ O come, let us (Zip our lips- no, that's not what it says) **sing for joy** [not to each other but...) **to the LORD;** (That's why we come- to sing to the Lord) **Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation.** **² Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.** **³ For the LORD is a great God, And a great King above all gods, [Psalm 95:1-3]**

We should come together praising and singing to our Lord. And if you are a true believer and you are not rejoicing in the Lord, you are vulnerable, I believe, to false teaching. You are vulnerable to someone who will come alongside to resolve your difficulties apart from focusing on Christ. So first of all, we see very clearly the joy of the Lord is our strength. And joy is summed up in the person of Christ and what He has done for us. When David sinned, he recognized that his joy was gone because of his sin. And he said, "Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation." You see, sin robs us of our joy. Now, sin isn't what robs us, it's "we" that sin, and then that robs us from our joy, right?

One pastor shares, he says,

Now he again refers to that which was so much upon his heart. He would have the saints always rejoicing in the Lord. Joy and holiness are inseparable. A holy Christian is able to rejoice even when passing through deepest afflictions; but a believer who, through unwatchfulness, has permitted himself to fall into unholy ways, loses immediately the joy of the Lord, which is the strength of those who walk in communion with Himself.

See, joy and holiness are inseparable. See, we can't have Christ as our joy, we can't be walking with Him in joy if we are in sin. As the apostle Paul says, rejoice in the Lord. And then in chapter 4, verse 4, he says, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I will say, 'Rejoice!'" We are commanded by the living God to rejoice in Christ.

My question to you would be, "Have you lost your joy? Has sin caused you to lose sight of Christ and focus on yourself? Are you shriveling under the weight of your sin?" Confess your sin to the Lord. Come before Him. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And, brother and sister, we are tempted throughout the day to not be joyful. We are tempted to focus on things apart from seeing them through God's sovereignty and His loving hand and the truth that He has revealed in His Word. And we need to turn from that to Christ. We need to turn from those temptations to Christ. He is faithful.

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Now, the point here, I believe in the context, is if we are not joyful we are vulnerable. Why would he say this at this point? Why would he say, "As for the rest, rejoice in the Lord" And then go into this warning concerning false teachers? I believe that's the reason why- because we are terribly vulnerable when we are not rejoicing in the Lord. We've all recognized that. So are you joyful? If you're not, it could be because you don't know the Lord. You have no true reason to rejoice, and I would encourage you to hear the Gospel, to believe the truth concerning Christ that you are a sinner and that He died for your sins. And when you are truly saved, repenting and trusting in Christ, you will rejoice. You will be like the blind man who sees the lame man who walks. You will rejoice because of what Christ has done for you. So, we need to rejoice in the Lord- that's foundational.

Secondly, I think we need to heed the warnings that come for us from the Lord. Chapter 3, verse 1 again from Philippians.

³ Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you. [Philippians 3:1]

He says it's literally no effort to write the same things again. He's saying to remind you (as we will see in context) of the dangers to your walk with Christ is no trouble for him and yet it is a safeguard. Now, if you are in a church that focuses on you and on your felt needs, you will never be warned about these things because being warned is not a felt need. Yet Paul continually warned believers concerning the threats to their faith, continually because God loves us. He sent His Son to die for us. He cares for His sheep, and He has ordained the protection of His sheep. And one of the ways He protects them is to alert them to the warnings and calls upon us to obey those warnings.

The apostle Paul warned believers throughout Scripture. We see many passages where Paul warned believers. You see very clearly throughout almost every letter. Paul warned them in Acts 20; we'll look at that in a minute. Jesus warned, as we will see in Matthew chapter 7, "Beware of the false prophets." Paul warned in Romans 16, Galatians 1 and 3, 2 Corinthians 11, here in Philippians 3, Colossians 2, Titus 1, 1 and 2 Timothy; Peter warns us in 2 Peter chapters 2 and 3. We are warned by Jude, and we are warned in Revelation by the Lord in chapter 2. Throughout Scripture, there are warnings to the body of Christ concerning false teachers. Obviously, God is concerned to warn us. He cares about His sheep.

Acts chapter 20. The apostle Paul, as he is giving his final words to the Ephesian elders. He says in Acts chapter 20, verse 28,

²⁸ "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd (That's the feeding and protecting of the sheep with the Word of God) the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. (Very valuable.) ²⁹ "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ "Therefore be on the alert,

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remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. [Acts 20:28-31]

Paul was an example of Christ-likeness, and he admonished them day and night with tears. He was concerned for their safety. And Paul says here, it is literally no trouble, no effort. But it is a safeguard for you. That term “safeguard” translated there speaks of that which is firm. That which cannot be thrown down. That which is steady or sure or immovable. It speaks of stability and firmness. It is a safeguard for you. The same word is used in parallel in Hebrews chapter 6, verse 19, concerning Christ the anchor of our soul. This hope. A hope both sure and steadfast, immovable. Safe. It is a safeguard. It is that which will keep you from being toppled over. It is a safeguard to stabilize us in the midst of the wave of false teaching we see throughout the church on a continual basis. And it’s just getting worse and worse. Do you realize the living God is concerned about the spiritual threats to your faith in Christ? God is concerned about that, and He’s concerned about His sheep, He’s concerned about us.

So we need to rejoice in the Lord; we need to heed the warnings also. So then it’s not a problem for Paul to share these warnings. He makes it clear it’s a safeguard for them. Now, with that in mind, what were the dangers that these Philippians were encountering. What were they encountering? Most likely, it is what we would call the Judaizers. Indeed, later on Paul would call them the mutilators, the false circumcision. Most likely, they were Jews who had said they had come to faith in Christ but yet were still relying upon the Law. They did not trust in Christ. They were adding to a relationship with Christ, works.

They would add man’s work to salvation. “You need to do this to be right with God. You need to do that to be right with God” rather than repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

Now you say, “This isn’t a danger to the Philippians because they’ve already been saved.” Yes, it’s not a danger to their salvation or their justification. It is a danger to their sanctification. It is a danger to being made like Christ. It was a serious threat to the Philippians if Paul would not share it with them. And it is a serious threat to us. Do you remember Paul’s exhortations to the Colossians? He says,

⁶ As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, [Colossians 2:6]

We received Him by faith; we so walk in Him by faith. There are threats out there that attempt to have you follow Christ by what you do rather than by trusting in Him and obeying His Word. We’ve seen this in our Saturday study- Galatians chapter 3. And turn there for a second. Galatians 3. There are spiritual dangers out there. I was looking at a message preached by S. Louis Johnson. He was back in the 50’s, 70’s. He was talking about a missionary who came back from the field, and had gone to a Christian bookstore. It’s like 1960-something. And he was appalled at all the stuff in there, how it was so un-Christ-focused. He would really be appalled if he went today. There’s a lot of bad people putting a lot of stuff out there to draw away Christians from the sufficiency of Christ. Galatians chapter 3, verse 1.

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¹ You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? ² This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? [Galatians 3:1-3]

False teachers come along and attempt to have you follow Christ by your flesh, not by faith in Christ through the power of the Spirit. And it's very subtle, and we need to be warned. We need to be warned. What are the dangers we have today? There's nothing new under the sun. There are the obvious cults- we saw it this morning, the Mormons. Jehovah's Witnesses. Many of the Churches of Christ, where salvation is from works not faith in Christ alone.

But these dangers come in more subtle shades. They say salvation is from Christ, we believe that, but you need to get baptized. Salvation is from Christ, we believe that, but you need to receive grace from the sacraments. Salvation is from Christ but you need to keep the Sabbath. We'll see that next week. Or even more subtle ways that we are assaulted in the church these days. Systems of sanctification. Follow this prayer, like the Prayer of Jabez. Follow these purposes, like the Purpose Driven Life. Be a part of this group, do this list of things and you will have "a good marriage". Rather than sanctification through Christ alone through the Word alone. Colossians 2:6, again.

⁶ As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, (How did we receive Him? We repented, we trusted in Christ alone. We didn't do anything from ourselves.) so walk in Him, [Colossians 2:6]

It's by faith in what God has said in His Word. When we received Christ, we believed the Word, we were born again through the living and abiding Word. We received the Word implanted, which is able to save our souls. We grow when we feed on the Word of God. It is that which grows us in respect to salvation. It is that which performs its work in us. Yet we see people who come would pervert and twist and dismiss that which God uses to protect us and grow us like Christ. And those are the devious dangers we see flooding through churches these days.

2 Peter chapter 2, turn there with me for a second. 2 Peter 2. You're wondering, why would God allow this stuff to happen? I'll share that in a minute in Deuteronomy. Why would God allow these things if he's so concerned about them? 2 Peter chapter 2, verse 1.

After making it clear that we have the prophetic Word made sure, that we have the prophecy in the Scriptures that is of no one's interpretation but men moved by the Spirit spoke from God, we have the written Word of God. He says this, 2 Peter chapter 2.

¹ But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, (It's going to happen. And look what they do.) who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing

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swift destruction upon themselves. ² **And many will follow their sensuality,** (I don't believe he is speaking of sexual sensuality. I believe he is speaking of worldly sensuality. They will follow that, right? Many will follow their sensuality) **and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;** ³ **and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; [2 Peter 2:1-3]**

And go to chapter 3 of 2 Peter. As Peter is making it very clear that God is patient, the reason why He hasn't poured out His judgment upon wickedness of mankind is because He is still saving people. 2 Peter chapter 3, verse 15.

¹⁵ **and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,** ¹⁶ **as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. [2 Peter 3:15-16]**

The untaught and unstable, those on the path to destruction, they take the difficult passages of the Word of God and they distort them to their own destruction. We have those who take the Word and twist it; we have those who de-elevate its value. We see in the evangelical churches these days the equally dangerous person who doesn't feed the sheep, who knowingly or unknowingly attacks the process of sanctification which is what God uses. He uses His Word to make us like Christ. He attacks that by not declaring the Word of God. I almost went out of my head this morning, driving over, listening to a program on KPDQ (radio station). The guy kept talking about worship and this and that and was all lovey-dovey, but not one bit of Scripture. Dangerous people who do not preach the Word; they water it down, leaving sheep as prey for the enemy.

Turn to Ezekiel 34, a familiar passage for those of us who were in Ezekiel together a couple years ago. Ezekiel 34. And while you're turning there, there are other threats too. We see it in the charismatic movement. Exchanging experience for the Word of God. Ezekiel 34, verse 2.

² **'Thus says the Lord GOD," Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? [Ezekiel 34:2]**

They should be feeding the flock. Shouldn't shepherds be feeding the flock? Shouldn't Israel's spiritual shepherds be giving them the Word of God? Jeremiah chapter 23 very clearly relates that Jesus said, "I didn't send these prophets. If I sent them, they would've declared My Words and turned My people from their sin. If you go down a little further; Ezekiel 34, verse 8.

⁸ **"As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock, but rather the shepherds fed themselves**

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**and did not feed My flock; 9 therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:
[Ezekiel 34:8-9]**

Dangerous, dangerous threats out there. Dangerous threats to our faith in Christ. Turn to 2 Timothy chapter 4. Probably a familiar passage for you as Paul gives his last words to Timothy. This is basically the last thing he's going to say to Timothy, his trusted, faithful disciple. 2 Timothy chapter 4, verse 1. After comparing the wickedness of the false teachers with the sufficiency and adequacy of the Word to bring about every good work and produce that in the life of the true believer, we see this statement. 2 Timothy chapter 4, verse 1.

¹ I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: (This is pretty serious, isn't it?) **² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.** (None of that's going on in many churches these days) **³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine;** (They can't handle sound doctrine.) **but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires;** **⁴ and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.** (Or stories.) **[2 Timothy 4:1-4]**

We see this all the time, felt-need, movie-clip preachers giving stories rather than the Word of God. And it's a shame. It's a shame and we need to be warned. Where is the concern in the church these days about those who are hurting Christ's precious sheep? Go back to 1 Timothy chapter 4. We're in 2 Timothy; go back to 1 Timothy 4.

¹ But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, (You think he's talking about some satanic cult where they're doing devil worship? Well, look what he says.) **² by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,** **³ men** (this is doctrines of demons) **who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods,** (Do you see their wickedness? If you're not married, you're more holy. If you don't eat this or that, you are more holy. Doctrines of demons. Abstaining from foods....) **which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.** **⁴ For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude;** (That's thankfulness.) **⁵ for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.** (You can eat anything you want because God said so in His Word, and it is sanctified as we give thanks by prayer. And then notice verse 6.) **⁶ In pointing out these things** (Those doctrines of demons) **to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following. [1 Timothy 4:1-6]**

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Point it out to them, Timothy. Point it out. Elders are to be able to refute and exhort in sound doctrine. They are to silence those who contradict. I rarely ever hear of elders silencing the story-tellers and the movie-clip-preachers. I rarely have ever heard of elders standing up, saying, "No, this is wrong." Elders and congregations are allowing false teachers and teaching to shipwreck their faith time and time again.

And if you look in Deuteronomy 13, we see from an Old Testament perspective why God allows false prophets, and you can go read that later. He says very clearly to see if they love Him or not. If they love Him or not.

Where is the concern these days? Jude chapter 1. There's one chapter. Jude 3 & 4.

³Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith (That's the body of truth we believe, the faith. He says,) which was once for all delivered to the saints. ⁴ For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, [Jude 1:3-4a]

It's like a slimy bug crawling in unnoticed. They've crept in unnoticed. Where's the concern these days in the church? Do you see the warnings as a burden, or something that bothers you, or a safeguard for you? Or a safeguard? "In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus," Paul tells Timothy.

Are you a pastor, an overseer, parent? Are you concerned? Are you willing to be a good servant of Christ and warn your families? For everyone else, are you willing to hear the warnings, accept them and heed them? Those who are charged with watching over your souls, who are watching when they warn you of these things, are you willing to accept it?

So then, how can we keep from being ensnared or caught up by this? We need to have the right attitude; we need to be rejoicing in the Lord, we need to be not sinning, right? And when we're not sinning, we are rejoicing in the Lord.

Secondly, we need to heed the warnings. We need to take them very seriously. And third, here, we see we need to diligently look out for these false teachers. Now we'll go back to Philippians 3, verse 2.

Paul tells the church at Philippi, the saints, those who are holy, those who are righteous because of Christ. He tells them here,

²Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; for we are the true-circumcision, [Philippians 3:2a]

Beware. Three times: continually, habitually keep your eyes planted and observe for the purpose of avoiding. When someone says, "Watch out you don't slip off that cliff", they're saying, "Look out so you don't slip!" Right? Beware; watch out so you don't do it, so you don't get caught up by them.

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Well, what are they to beware here? What does he say? He gives three things. He says first of all, beware of the dogs. And I believe he's talking about those things which are dangerous. He is using ways to describe the nature of the threats so that it will elevate it in our hearts to what they really are because we can't see that. Beware of the dogs. What does he mean by dogs? I've got a dog and I like my dog. Beware of the dogs. What does he mean? Well, there were two different words, as I've shared before, for dogs in Scripture. One was a word for a little household pet. We see that in Mark 7 with the Syrophoenician woman who's asking for crumbs. Even the dogs get the crumbs. She uses that illustration with Jesus. Then there's another word which speaks of those scavengers, those half-starved, vicious, rabid scavengers roaming the streets. These dogs who are mean and ready to devour anything in their way. In an interesting twist, Paul uses the same term the Jews would call Gentiles. They could call them dogs. Paul is saying these false teachers, I believe, are dangerous. They are self-serving. They roam around and they harm the unsuspecting.

Now, we don't really have paper boys anymore these days, but I used to be a paper boy and one of the things I watched out for besides spider webs (I'd put my hand up) would be dogs. When you're a paper boy, dogs were a threat and they would attack you. And here, it's that idea. Something coming and attacking. It's vicious. It's got a vicious nature. It wants to hurt you. Beware of the dogs. Constantly be looking. They may seem harmless, they may seem sincere. They may have what appears to be good motives but as Jesus would say, they are wolves in sheep's clothing.

Matthew chapter 7; He says

⁷"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, (That's shepherd's garb) but inwardly are ravenous wolves. [Matthew 7:15]

On the inside, they're like a wolf ready to tear you apart. They're saying, "We love Jesus." But you'll know them by their fruits. The fruit of false teachers is a group of people who claim to follow Christ but don't follow Christ. There are some churches around here where when someone says, "I go to this church", everyone I've seen from that church isn't following Christ. They have open sin in their lives. That's the fruit of false teaching.

Beware. Paul's speaking of the false apostles in 2 Corinthians 11. Turn there for a second, and we see that they disguise themselves. And God is gracious to warn us of what they look like internally. 2 Corinthians chapter 11. We see very clearly, he says in verse 13,

¹³For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, (Or workers of deceit. What's deception? Well, when someone's trying to deceive, they are portraying themselves as one way, and they're not really that way, are they? They're trying to deceive. They are deceitful workers. He says,) *disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.* ¹⁴ *And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.* ¹⁵ *Therefore it is not*

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surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds. [2 Corinthians 11:13-15]

A guy's not going to come up and say, "I'm a wolf." He's gonna say, "I love Jesus." But you'll know them by their fruits, as we will see. We see it in Jude. "Creep in unnoticed", we saw. 2 Timothy, chapter 3. We see very clearly that,

¹³But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. [2 Timothy 3:13]

It's going to get worse. And this is where we get thrown off, brothers and sisters. People say "I love Jesus. We want the world to be saved." They say all the stuff; they disguise themselves but you'll know them by their fruit. I hear this quite often at times, "But he loves the lost so much." I say, "Well, he doesn't love Jesus because he doesn't obey Him. He doesn't preach His Word, he doesn't care about the sheep. No matter what he says."

Again, back in Matthew chapter 7 we see very clearly that

¹⁶ "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷ "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. ¹⁹ "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ "So then, you will know them by their fruits. [Matthew 7:16-20]

And later on, we see in that same passage in Matthew 7, their fruits are these people who are deceived in their own minds that they're following Christ. They're saying, "Lord, Lord, didn't we do this?" He says, "Depart from Me; I never knew you, you who practice lawlessness." The fruit of false teaching is people who think they're following Christ but yet they are still in their sins.

Beware of the dogs. They're dangerous. Secondly, he says, "Beware of the evil workers." Back to Philippians 3, verse 2.

Beware of the evil workers, the workers of evil. Paul calls it like it is; they're evil workers. They work evil. No matter what the motive, no matter how kind the person might be, no matter how sincere one appears, if they are taking the Word of God and twisting it or changing it or de-elevating it, or leaving it out, no matter how they appear they are workers of evil. It is evil to mess with God's children. It is evil to mess with God's Word. It is evil to mess with any aspect of salvation, whether justification or sanctification.

There are evil workers who say, "You've got to keep the Sabbath." They're evil workers. There are evil workers who say, "You need to be baptized to be saved." There are evil workers who say, "You must receive grace through the sacraments." There are evil workers that very clearly say, "Just try Jesus" apart from repentance and faith in Christ. I believe they are evil workers who add man's wisdom to the

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Word by sharing stories and topics rather than preaching the Word of God. Constantly be on the alert, and turn away from them; they're dangerous.

Well, thirdly, we see they twist and distort the gospel. Beware of the false circumcision. Now, Paul uses a play on words here. A play on the word "circumcision" which is *peritome*. And he uses the word *katatome*, which means "to cut down," "to mutilate." Beware of the mutilators. And obviously, these mutilators were those who would say one would need to be circumcised at this point to follow Christ, to be saved. But there's a spiritual reality, too. They mutilate the spiritual reality. They are false. They are the false circumcision. They're not the true. Their understanding and relationship to God is false. Beware of that. Beware of that. Circumcision was the outward sign of the covenant. It was an outward symbol of a covenant relationship with Christ. The outward symbol was always linked in Scripture to an inward reality of a heart change. Deuteronomy 30, verse 6.

⁶ "Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live. [Deuteronomy 30:6]

Paul makes it very clear that one who is truly saved, a Jewish believe, if you want to see a true Jewish believer-

²⁸For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. ²⁹ But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God. [Romans 2:28-29]

That's a true believer.

And, folks, those who are false teachers always elevate the shadows. They mutilate the spiritual reality, they elevate the shadows. As we'll see next week in Matthew chapter 12, they elevate the Sabbath apart from the Lord of the Sabbath.

Beware. Beware of the dogs. Beware of the evil workers. Beware of the mutilators. Beware, brothers and sisters. It's no problem for me to warn you; it's no problem for God to continually warn us.

Bob read this earlier in 2 John. We're to watch out that we don't lose our reward, that we don't allow anyone to come in and teach, someone who doesn't agree with the Word of Christ. I want to ask you, Are you participating in the evil deeds of false teachers through books, radio, whatever it might be? We're warned, it's going to hurt you. It's going to hurt you.

So how do we keep from being ensnared by false teaching? First of all, we need to have the right attitude, rejoicing because we're not sinning. Our sins are forgiven, we're confessing those sins. Secondly, we need to heed the warnings. Thirdly, we need to diligently be aware that there are false teachers out there. We need to look to avoid them. And lastly Paul, I believe, gives us very important

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information as he shows us what a true believer looks like. Here's how you can spot false teachers, by seeing what a true believer looks like. Verse 3.

³for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, [Philippians 3:3]

That is a summary of a true believer. Do you want to know what a true Christian looks like? This is a summary of that. And so true teachers, those who are of the Lord, are going to look like this. False teachers are not. We're given a glimpse of what a biblical teacher should look like in contrast to those who are not, which we are to avoid. Well, what are the marks of a true believer? He says, "For we are the true circumcision", speaking probably of Timothy, Epaphroditus, possibly the saints in Philippi also, I believe. He says, "We are...", and then he gives us three participles. He explains it with three things. Here's what it looks like. First, "who worships in the Spirit of God." We are the true circumcision who worship in the Spirit of God. He's saying outward forms do not constitute worship. They continually, habitually worship by the means of the Spirit of God. And there is an implied contrast that those are not true worship in their flesh. Jesus reveals this truth to the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4, verse 23.

He says,

²³"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. ²⁴"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." [John 4:23-24]

For such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers, for God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. No worship takes place apart from the Spirit of God and the truth of God. No worship takes place apart from the spirit of God and the truth of God. That cuts out all kinds of so-called worship songs. And folks, we've compartmentalized worship. We think of it as the music time. That's not worship. We can worship during that time, certainly, but that's not worship. What does constitute worship?

Do you remember how those who saw Jesus calm the storm worshipped on the boat in Matthew 14?

⁴And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!" [Matthew 4:33]

We saw in our study of Revelation that worship was associated with the declaration of truth concerning the living God, not concerning ourselves. Revelation chapter 7, verse 11.

¹¹ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

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¹² saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen." [Revelation 7:11-12]

That is worship. That's worship. One pastor writes, rightly so,

Real worship is when the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and shows them to us, and we are occupied in response of true praise, adoration, obedience to the Father.

Remember, Jesus said the Spirit will glorify Him. John 16:14

¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. [John 16:14]

He takes His truth, and He makes it real to us. He helps us understand it. Be careful to watch who gets the glory in worship. Worship is not a bunch of people playing a concert to you out here. That's not worship. Real worship occurs when the Spirit of God reveals the things of Christ, and we respond rightly. I challenge you to rethink your view of worship. True believers worship in the Spirit of God. They don't worship in the flesh. It is not a flesh-satisfying experience; it is a spiritual experience where one, through the Spirit of God, reflects on the truth of God before the living God.

Now, remember there's a contrast here between true and false believers. And the implied contrast is those who aren't saved are doing their worship in the flesh. Spot them; beware. Watch out. Watch out.

And I see this all the time, unfortunately. Worship that is flesh-driven, music-centered, need-filling; lacking truth concerning Christ. It should grieve you when you see brothers and sisters worshipping this way, and it should cause you to wonder whether they are brothers and sisters. True believers worship in the Spirit of God. Again, that terrible show I was listening to, in the middle of his talk without the Word of God, he played a song. Something about "Coming back to the heart of worship, it's all about You." But the song was all about him! It wasn't about Christ. Folks, those who continually, habitually worship in their flesh are false brethren. Beware.

Do you worship in the Spirit of God? Does your worship center around the truth of God as revealed by the spirit of God or does it center around your experience? Experience. Is your worship the Rock and Worship Road Show, like we hear on the radio? Or is it about Christ? Is it about Christ? Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen. That's how you can spot it.

Secondly, true believers boast in Christ Jesus. Back to Philippians three. He says,

² Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; ³ for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus... [Philippians 3:2-3a]

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The term “glory” is not *doxa* like glory, God’s glory. It speaks of literally boasting. True believers continually, habitually boast in Christ. It’s how you can spot them. Who gets the glory? Christ does. True believers realize there’s nothing from self to boast about. Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 1; we see this. 1 Corinthians 1:26.

And I challenge you- if you claim the name of Christ, and all you do is worship in your flesh, I challenge you. And secondly, if you claim to be a true believer here and all you do is boast in what other people do or you do and not Christ, I challenge you. Or if you are following men who are like that, then you need to beware and you need to get out. 1 Corinthians 1:26

²⁶ For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; ²⁷ but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, ²⁹ that no man should boast before God. ³⁰ But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, ³¹ that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD." [1 Corinthians 1:26-31]

True believers give God the credit for everything.

²³ Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; ²⁴ but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things, "declares the LORD. [Jeremiah 9:23-24]

True believers boast in Christ alone. One way to spot the false is who do they give the glory to? Not just lip service. I hear a lot of praise, “Praise Jesus! Praise this and that!” or Christian clichés, but who really gets the glory? Do you continually, habitually boast in your own achievements or in Christ? Examine yourself. Think about your life; when you do well, do you give God the glory? Think about your abilities and talents. Who gets the glory?

Thirdly, we see the last characteristics of a true believer.

³ for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, [Philippians 3:3]

Now, it’s interesting at this point we have two participles- those who continually, habitually worship, those who continually, habitually glorify Christ or boast in Him, and here we have a perfect participle.

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What does that mean? It's something that's already done, but the results proceed into the present. He says, basically, "And in the flesh, having had no confidence." You see, when someone is saved they realize there is nothing they can do to be saved. They have no confidence within themselves; that they can come to God. It is through Christ alone. A true believer comes into relationship with Christ through that means. Repentance and faith, nothing from myself. And that remains with them; a true believer recognizes that. And in contrast, those who don't know Christ put confidence in their own flesh. It's how you can spot them.

This is the center of the new covenant. It's the center of a relationship with Christ. 2 Corinthians chapter 3.

⁵ Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as *coming* from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, [2 Corinthians 3:5]

Turn with me again; let's turn to Jeremiah chapter 17. And we see very clearly God relates those who trust in the Lord and those who trust in themselves or other men as the blessed and the cursed. You can spot where someone is with the Lord, you can analyze yourself, based on these truths. Jeremiah 17, verse 5.

⁵ Thus says the LORD, "Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength, [Jeremiah 17:5]

You see, that's how those without Christ function all the time. That's how I functioned apart from Christ. I'm tempted to function that way now, but by God's grace we don't. Cursed is the one who trusts in mankind, and makes flesh his strength. Do you trust in yourself day in and day out or do you trust Christ?

Verse 7.

⁷ "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD And whose trust is the LORD. [Jeremiah 17:7]

We're not adequate, but Christ is. Jeremiah 17:7, then 17:9.

⁹ "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? [Jeremiah 17:9]

Are you blessed or cursed? Where do you put your confidence? How do you live your day in and day out life? Do you live it trusting within yourself? Do you just trust your own abilities? Or do you recognize in humble dependence before the Lord, "We're not adequate, Lord, but what You call me to do I trust You to do it through me."

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True believers have humbled themselves before the mighty hand of the Lord. They have humbled themselves to recognize they are totally inadequate to be saved on their own. It's through Christ alone. And true believers continue in that; they do not trust in their flesh. You want to spot the false? They trust in their own abilities, wisdom. You see it all the time with speakers; they trust in their speaking abilities rather than declaring the Word of God. Listen to Paul's testimony in 1 Corinthians chapter 2. He says,

¹ And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. (I didn't come with a slick tongue) ² For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. ⁴ And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. [1 Corinthians 2:1-5]

He didn't talk them into the kingdom that their faith would rest on his slick presentation. He proclaimed the Word of God that their faith would be in the Lord. You can spot the false and the true, and we are to beware. We're to beware. It's for our protection; God loves us. God loves us, so much.

Do you see these warnings as a safeguard? God is very gracious. Our current church these days has been taken over, like I shared, by a tsunami of unrighteousness. Day after day, week after week, everything but the consistent preaching of the Word of God by the power and strength of the Spirit of God. Marketing, polls, felt-needs, flesh-driven music; it should grieve you. It should cause you to be cautious. It should cause you to care for brothers and sisters who are in those. You should desire to snatch them out of the fire. You should come with the Word of God and say, "Brother, you are not in a good church; you are at risk. God loves you. Let me show you the Word. Let me show you the Word."

So how can we keep from being ensnared by false teaching? How can we do it? First of all, we need to have the right attitude. We need to be rejoicing in the Lord, which means that we're not sinning. Trusting the Lord, obeying Him, rejoicing in Him. Secondly, we need to heed the warnings. We need to heed those warnings; they're a safeguard. We need to keep our eyes peeled for those ravenous wolves who come in sheep's garb. Thirdly, we need to know what a true believer looks like: Worships in the spirit of God, glories in Christ Jesus, and puts no confidence in the flesh.

Friend, where are you at today? If you were to take your life and lay it across this passage, do you worship in the Spirit of God. Is your worship related on what God has said and revealed? Or is it related on your feelings and experience? Who do you give the glory to in your life? Who do you depend upon consistently, habitually? Who do you boast in? Where is your confidence? Is it in Christ? Or is it in yourself?

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I encourage you to examine your hearts. See if you're in the faith. And if you're not, God is gracious. He loves you. He sent His Son to die for you. And if you turn to Christ in faith from your sin, He will save you. "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."

And what about for us believers? We need to beware. This is not just to elders; this is to the whole church. We need to be on guard. There are dogs, there are evil workers, there are mutilators out there. We need to be alert.

Are you an elder or a parent or a pastor? Are you willing to be a good servant of Christ Jesus? For everyone else, are you willing to submit to those who are watching out for your souls when they say, "That's not good. That's bad; let me show you in the Word this is wrong."? Are you willing to submit for your own protection?

And lastly, do the marks of a true believer fit you?

Prayer

Lord, thank You for Your Word. And I thank You for the warning. It is a safeguard for us. It's something our flesh doesn't want to hear. But for those of us You have changed, we rejoice in Your Word. We rejoice in Your warnings because behind that is Your love for us. We praise You for Your Word. We praise You for Your Son. And I pray we would not take these things lightly, as you have warned us multiple times in Your Word concerning these wicked men who disguise themselves. May we have no tolerance for them. May we beware, and turn from them. May we see Your people the way You do. May we be concerned for them. May we care for them. And, Father, I pray for anyone here who doesn't fit the picture of a true believer, who worships in the flesh, who boasts in self or others, who puts confidence in their own flesh or men. I pray they would recognize they're cursed before You because they're in their sin. I pray they would recognize there's a Redeemer. That Christ Jesus paid the price for those sins. And that it is free to turn to Him and cry out for salvation. I pray they would do so. Thank You for Your Word today. We pray this in Your Son's precious Name. Amen.

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