

False prophets
Phi 3:17

Our lesson from Philippians chap 3 tells us that

“many live as enemies of the cross of Christ ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.”

We who live in the love of Christ, sometimes forget that there are those who live as enemies of Christ. Who are these enemies? Well, the Devil, in particular, is one of them. God has warned us about him. The Devil and his fallen angels seek our downfall. Even though you may not have come face to face with the Hollywood version of the devil, do not underestimate his influence. He achieves our downfall with spiritual weapons. His artillery is lies. His artillery is temptation. His artillery is false doctrine. But God has given us a spiritual defense. God has given us artillery to stand firm against the devil. God’s artillery is His Word, the Bible. His artillery is the truth. His artillery is the Holy Spirit who will keep us strong in the face of temptation.

But the Devil is not the only one who lives as an enemy of Christ. Humans sometimes carry out the work of the Devil. Like the Devil there are many people who would lead us away from Christ. Scripture has a special name for them. Scripture calls them “false prophets.” Matt 24:24

For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect— if that were possible.

And if you accept their false teachings, even if you accommodate some of their false teachings, you will be in a heap of trouble. Any teaching which leads you away from faith in Christ, automatically leads you on a path to Hell. This is why it is so very important to examine the teachings of the people we listen to, to distinguish between the good teachers and the false prophets. The Bible warns us to watch out for these false prophets. A false prophet is someone who tries to look like a Christian, but in reality, seeks to draw people away from God. A false prophet is anyone who teaches something contrary to the word of God. False prophets do the work of Satan. You will know them because they speak the words of Satan.

How do you recognize the voice of Satan? The Devil’s way of temptation has always been the same since the beginning. When Adam and Eve were in the garden of Eden, it was Satan in the form of the serpent who lead Eve to sin, to

disobey God's command. He did this by questioning the Word of God. It was the serpent who said "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" By leading Eve to question "what God said," the serpent eventually led Eve into sin. It is Satan's way to say false things about God's word, to say things which question God's word. So, it is with false prophets the tools of Satan, who do the work of Satan. They try to lure people away from Christ by denying the Word of God. They will look friendly, they will act sincere, and they will appear trustworthy. In fact, in the book of Revelation it says we find that there will be many who will speak in God's name, who cast out demons, who perform great miracles. Prophets, who if judged solely by outward miracles, would fool us all. In fact, many people today are drawn into cults lead by false prophets, who are capable of performing seemingly great miracles, who talk like "ones who know the ways of God." But they are nothing more than "wolves in sheep's clothing" who mimic the walk and the talk of the great shepherd himself. Yet, their teachings about the great shepherd are false.

One of the primary techniques which false prophets use is to take the focus off of Jesus. The one thing common to all cults, all false churches, is to take the focus off of "the saving work of Jesus on the cross." In answer to the question - "How are we saved?" - the false prophet will give you all kinds of logical answers. But any answer which says you are saved by anything else other than the death of Christ at the cross is a lie. Any teaching which says YOU must do these things. 1, 2, 3, 4... to be saved, is a lie of Satan. Any person who says "there is no sin" or "there is no Hell" does the work of Satan. Why? Because if there is no sin... if there is no Hell, then there is no need for repentance. There is no need for a savior. This leads people away from the truth, our need for a savior. Scripture tells us that though false prophets may look like real prophets we will know them by their teachings, their false teachings. Interestingly enough, false prophets all have something in common. They want to take the focus off of Jesus. How do you identify the false prophet? How do you identify Satan's lies? Anything teaching which leads us away from "faith in Christ" is false.

So, conversely, how are we to discern GOOD fruit, that is how are we to test for good teaching? God has provided the answer for us. He has given us His word to test the teachings of all prophets. This is why it is so important that we each continually study the bible, so that we can test the doctrines we hear. For the "word of God" will be the test. The "word of God" will be the test by which we discern the good prophet from bad. The test to discern the difference between *those who would lead us along the road which leads to life* from *those who would lead us to death*. The good prophets will teach us what the Christian church has

taught for ages. As Christians, we take a stand and say that the wages of sin is death, that our very human nature is sinful making us deserving of eternal death, separating us from God. But we also say that God has not left us there. We say God loves us. Because God so loved the world, He sent his son Jesus Christ to die on a cross to pay for that sinfulness. Because Jesus Christ died for us, we received the forgiveness of our sins. Since we have now received God's forgiveness, the sin which blocked our relationship with God no longer separates us. And we enter into that relationship through faith in Jesus Christ. That is the Biblical promise. That is God's promise. The focus is on Jesus. This is the word of God. This is the good teaching. For it points us to Jesus Christ, and to Christ alone.

It is for this reason that as Christians, we take a stand and declare that Jesus Christ is the only way to God. God has sent his Holy Spirit to illuminate us through God's word together as a church to be able to discern good teaching from bad. Because of Christ, we are no longer just sinful creatures, creatures blind to God's ways. But we are new creations through faith in Jesus Christ. We are vessels holding and being empowered by God, the Holy Spirit.

This leads me to a final word about the spiritual discernment of false prophets and the subject of churches with differing doctrines. A false prophet rejects the word of God, A false prophet seeks to lure someone away from faith in Christ. As Christians, we take a stand that God has revealed an absolute truth in the Bible. and that absolute truth will not be hidden for long. There is come a time when, the heresies, the lies of the false prophets will be made clear. Christ will one day come back to Earth, and all will be made clear. The second coming of Christ will be visible to all. The second coming of Christ will be in glory. All nations will bow before him. There will be no question no doubt. All will know the truth. Some will come to the truth to their damnation. Others will come to the truth to their salvation.

But until then, scripture says, there will be antichrist's in this world and they will not be good. They will try to lead people away. And this is where our calling comes in. This is where we, as Christians, are called to do battle, against the false prophets. People will be led astray because they do not know God, they do not know Jesus. They do not know scripture. So, this puts a great challenge before us. Because WE know Jesus, God is calling us to share Jesus with them. For us alone there is a great challenge. There are thousands of people out there who are prey to false prophets. It is open season on them. Because they do not know the truth they are easy game for cults. Have pity on them. God is calling us to rescue them, to protect them, to teach them by telling them the truth by letting them know about

Jesus The fate of these people are in your hands. Do not be afraid of the challenge. I saw this great poster in the mall. It has a picture of a warrior. But he is kneeling with a cross. And in the caption is the words. No matter how great the obstacles before us - the challenge before you is not as great as the power behind you. Do not be afraid of battling false prophets... Do not be afraid of the enormity of the task of reaching the world with the word of God... for the challenge before us, is not as great as the power behind us. Amen.