



Urgently Devoted – Part 3

Identifying False Teachers

Pastor Mike Fabarez

There's no doubt that AI has changed the workplace. It's changing everything, it certainly is changing social media. And with some concern, it's changing what people are believing in their news feeds. That certainly is a concern. It goes like this. People see a video and it's of some famous person, a politician, a business leader, whatever, an actor or an athlete saying something outrageous and alarming. And of course they pass this news feed on because it's been forwarded already thousands of times, and in a matter of days they find out it's not true. It never was true. The whole thing has been fabricated. Now, it looked real, it looked compelling, it looked urgent. Every bit of it looked like it was real. The tone of voice, I mean, it looks like it was videotaped in a studio. It couldn't have been more real. But of course, what some kid can now do at midnight in his bedroom in 15 minutes, Hollywood studios with millions of dollars couldn't have done just years ago. This is the problem of what people call deep-fakes, which of course is an epidemic now and it's only getting worse. People are being fooled by something that is quickly thrown together with artificial intelligence, and that is a problem.

But it's not a problem that your coworkers think it's been, you know, birthed here in Silicon Valley, but it's not a problem that is new based on new technology. It's an old problem. Matter of fact, it didn't start in Northern California. It started in a Garden in Eden thousands and thousands of years ago. The Bible says that it's nothing other than a carefully crafted and engineered deep deception. That's really all it is. And the most important kind is the kind that did show up in the Garden. And that is where it was a kind of, let's call it doctrinal deep-fakes, a kind of deep-fake that is so concerning that it affects people's lives and their very souls. Now, I know the problem with this topic in general, as we now enter into our third week on it, people think that this kind of deception is for the gullible, right? This is a problem for those who are, you know, just not careful. They just, you know, kind of stroll through life and they're not thinking really about what they should or shouldn't believe. But you just need to understand that the kinds of deep-fakes that are present and have been in the Garden, they were present in Achaea and Corinth, and they're present here in the 21st century in the West. These are the kinds of deep-fakes that are designed, they're engineered, and they're crafted for people who are careful. They're crafted for people who are seemingly discerning, there for people who think they know what their doctrine is, and they know what they believe, and they think they know why they believe it. And yet this is exactly why it is given to them and it's directed toward them. We need to work hard to see through it.

Which is why we find ourselves here in Second Corinthians Chapter 11, beginning in verse 12, the Apostle Paul is going to get past all the rhetoric where he's been being quite sarcastic up to this point, and he's going to just go right at it and say here is the real problem. And in Corinth we've already seen this as we've studied through this chapter and even the chapter before it. And we have a bunch of voices that are trying to influence the church in Corinth and they're not giving the truth; they're not telling the truth. And they're trying to disparage the Apostle Paul and put a wedge between the congregation at Corinth and the apostle who's



bringing the Word of God, the true Word of God. And these guys are stepping in between them and trying to put distance between the church and the Word. And they're saying, hey, you guys need to listen to us. And Paul has been saying a lot of things about them, but now note this in verse 12, he's going to lay into them.

So take a look at this and let's see if we can learn to see through the deep-fakes, the doctrinal deep-fakes that do a lot of damage and still do among us today. Second Corinthians Chapter 11 verses 12 through 15 is what we'll study today. And let me read it for you first from the English Standard Version. Here's how it reads, verse 12, "And what I'm doing," Paul says, "I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do." So he's just right at it now. Like, I'm just going to tell you we're going to just peel the mask off and be clear. They're not working on the same terms as we do. They may say that but it's not true. Verse 13, "For such men are," look at these two words, "false apostles." Now you might remember he called them previously hyper apostles, literally the Greek word hyper, hyper-apostolos. Super-apostles, I think, is how it was translated in the last sermon, super-apostles. Now he's going to call them pseudo, to use another Greek word, "pseudapostolos," false apostles. So we're done with the sarcasm, right? They're not super-apostles. Now, I'm not trying to measure up to the super-apostles. I'm just telling you these guys are false.

They're false apostles. They're "deceitful workmen." Oh, they're working hard, but they're deceitful. They're "disguising themselves as apostles of Christ." They're not apostles of Christ, but they're trying to pass themselves off as apostles of Christ. Now, here's the real crux of the whole passage. "And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants." Now that's huge. Think about this. The people who have been trying to influence the church at Corinth, teaching them doctrines, that are just off a little bit. Right? And Paul's saying that little bit is a big bit, and he's saying they are Satan's servants. That's huge. Satan's servants. They also "disguise themselves as," here's how they saw them, "servants of righteousness." Now think about that. If we were the church at Corinth they would be people among us and we would say, oh, those people, they're servants of righteousness. These guys are righteous people, and they're teaching us and they're influencing us, and they're sharing things with us, and they're righteous servants. No, no, no. Paul is saying they're Satan's servants. That's pretty big.

"Their end will correspond to their deeds." And what are their deeds? Look at the passage. Go back up to Second Corinthians Chapter 11 verse 3 where the theme was really laid before us. Verse 3, "I'm afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ." So all along he's already dropped the hint. The real power behind this is the enemy, God's archenemy. The number one enemy of God is Satan. He showed up first in the Garden with the deep-fake there, "Did God really say?" And that enemy is trying to get you, you Corinthians, to move away "from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ." But Satan is not showing up in some apparition. He's working through people who are passing themselves off as apostles. They actually pass themselves off as better apostles than the Apostle Paul, and he calls them super-apostles. And now he says they're false apostles. Let's just cut right through, they're false apostles. And they are in



league with Satan. They're Satan's servants. I know that you see them as servants of righteousness, but they're not. Matter of fact, "their end will correspond to their deeds." What are their deeds? They're pulling you away "from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ." And I'm telling you, Satan hadn't stopped in the first century. He's still at it in the 21st century,

Satan is trying to get you away "from a pure and sincere devotion to Christ." And as Paul says in the book of Ephesians Chapter 6 verse 12, we're really not battling "against flesh and blood," although that is the means through which it comes. We're battling against principalities and powers that stand behind it, the cosmic forces of evil that are out there trying to make sure the main thing is that you can be pulled away "from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ." That's the main goal. It gets you to not be as devoted and in love with God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind. And so we have to watch out for this and see through it, because the things that pull you away are very subtle. They look like they're right. And the people who are pulling you away, the authors who are pulling you away, the radio ministers who are pulling you away, the YouTube channel people who are pulling you away, or may I even suggest the people who may come and fellowship among us, as Paul said to the Ephesian pastors in Acts Chapter 20 verse 30, they can rise up from within us. They look like sheep as a part of the flock, but they're wolves in sheep's clothing. So we have to see through this deception, and it's going to be really hard because of Second Corinthians Chapter 11 verse 14.

So let's start there. If you have the worksheet, if you've downloaded that from our website, which is posted by dinnertime every Friday, I want you to notice or if you take the printed version of it in your worship packet there you'll see we start in verse 14. I'll take this out of order just a little bit because I want to focus on the core of this passage, which is we need to know the power behind this, which is a person, right? I know Satan is an angelic person, but he has intellect, emotion and will. He's been around for a really long time, and he's all about pulling people away from God. And the Triune God is working for us to stay focused on him. He is God. We should be focused on him, serving him, devoted to him purely and sincerely devoted to him. And Satan is trying to make sure that doesn't happen. That's what he's working at. And he's going to use servants of quote unquote righteousness to get that to happen.

So it's no wonder even Satan disguises himself, look at that phrase at the bottom of verse 14 "as an angel of light." Now, that's no mistake, obviously, that this is the phrase that's used, "an angel of light." And I want to talk about that for just a second because that is drawn from the Old Testament. It's a very important line from the Old Testament and one of two passages I think clearly allude to the story of the fall of Satan in Ezekiel Chapter 28 and Isaiah Chapter 14, though that takes some criticism from modern scholars. I really think both of these in talking about leaders in the ancient world who were archenemies of Israel, the power behind it, as we see in the book of Daniel, there are often spiritual forces that are negative, demonic forces behind those kings who are attacking the people of God. And in this case, Satan is behind them both at different times and Satan is described. And as the prophet, by God's Spirit, is exposing that spiritual power, we see that it's Satan himself and God starts to talk about the background. And so in Isaiah Chapter 14 verse 12, Satan is described here, and he



is described as an angel of light. Okay. But first let's just jot this down because that word I'm going to show you has a bit of a double meaning certainly in our language and I want you to put it down this way because we should see it. His name does give us a sense of something of his wisdom.

Number one, you need to realize our enemy, your enemy to your devotion and your walk with the Lord, our enemy is brilliant. "Realize Our Enemy is Brilliant." If that sounds blasphemous, because I'm lauding our enemy, I'm lauding him in terms of his wicked wisdom. I still obviously see the enemy as evil, of course he is. But he's brilliantly evil, right? He is shrewdly evil. He is a cunning and scheming evil and you ought to respect that. And so let's call him brilliant. But brilliant itself, we know, is a layered word. It has a couple of different meanings. If we're talking about buying some light bulbs this afternoon at the home improvement store, we might talk about brilliance. We may use that word. We use the word lumens now. But the idea is we want to know how bright it is. If it's bright lumens we're talking about light. And light is a metaphor. It's a metaphor of some things glory in the Old Testament, but also in our language we talk about something being brilliant, something being bright, something like your kid is brilliant, your kid is really smart. Your kid has a lot of insight, really bright. I want us to think in terms of Satan's brilliance but do know that is one of his names.

Now, you might be surprised to know that of all the created creatures of any person, Satan is given more names by God in the Bible than anyone else and that's a big deal. In other words, he has a variety of names in the Bible, and God gives more names to Satan than any other created being. That's a huge thing. And when Paul says, "we're not ignorant of his designs," we can learn a lot about the schemes of the enemy just by the names that the Holy Spirit gives this archenemy. Well, when he's described as falling and it says he's "fallen from heaven" because there's sin found in him, Isaiah Chapter 14, verse 12, it says, I'll read the text for you, I don't want to mess this up. Isaiah 14:12, "How you have fallen from heaven." Here's how the English Standard Version reads, "O Day Star, son of the Dawn!" This little phrase "hêlêl bēn šaḥar" is a phrase that is translated into Latin early in church history into a word that makes its way into the King James Version, which translates into the word the proper noun, "Lucifer." Now Lucifer we can even see the English word "lumen" in that, talk about lumens at the Home Depot. You want to know how many lumens this light bulb has. That's the idea. The idea is Lucifer means light-bearer. The one who bears light. And so he's called that. And in our passage, Paul says he is disguising himself as an angel of light. Well, he was an angel of light. He was even described in Ezekiel Chapter 28, a seraph, a burning one. He was among the burning ones. And burning is what seraph means. Seraphim is the plural for the burning angels as we see in Isaiah Chapter 6, the burning ones, the seraphim.

So he is a high-ranking angel, described as a cherub, cherubim, and among the seraphim. And he's brilliant and bright which certainly describes metaphorically his glory, his greatness, his power, his, as it's described, his perfection. And it has a long list of jewels that's described in Ezekiel Chapter 28. And then it says, "unrighteousness was found in you." So he has this fall from the perfection that he has. And then he proceeds to go about his work in the Garden, and his work is to question God. He's already a rebel, but he wants the creation of the human beings that God has made, this special class of beings, like spiritual beings encased in flesh,



he says I'm going to have them rebel against God and he's very successful at it. And I just want you to realize that if you think to yourself, well, if I were there, you know, Eve must have been kind of a dolt and she's not as bright as I am. I could have stood up to that. Or then Adam was so in love. He shouldn't have been so loyal to Eve. And I could have told my wife that she was so dumb for following Satan, and I would have stood strong. Please know this, okay? Satan is a lot smarter than you give him credit for. He is brilliant. He's brilliant in strategy. He's brilliant at what he does.

Matter of fact, put this into your mind. Revelation Chapter 20. In Revelation Chapter 20, I know you think well, you know, he just kind of scored having two simpletons there in the Garden. Do you know at the end of the time frame here, if you follow my eschatology at least, there's going to be a thousand-year period where people are going to be born in a thousand-year period which, according to Isaiah, they're going to live long periods of time. They're going to look a lot like the early chapters of the book of Genesis. If they die at 100, everybody's going to go, oh, you've died as an infant. You're cursed of God. So they're living for multiple hundreds of years and they're going to be obedient. All they're going to know in the Millennial Kingdom, unless you are starting the millennium with a glorified body, and then you're not going to marry or be given in marriage.

But if you're not, if you inherit this, you go in the Matthew 25 division of the nations, you're going to start the Millennial Kingdom with bodies, and you're going to be faithful to do what God has asked you to do, which is be fruitful and multiply. And in a thousand years all you're going to know if you're born in the Millennial Kingdom is Christ on the throne, Isaiah Chapter 9 verse 6, "the government will rest on his shoulders." All you're going to know is his peace. The extent of his "peace there'll be no end." It's going to go all over the planet. There'll be no implements of warfare. You're not going to know tanks or fighter jets. You're not going to know any of that because everything's going to be about prosperity and peace. You're going to be born there and you're going to have all kinds of people who will be born and don't know anything about temptation, because that passage says Satan is going to be bound and will no longer tempt the nations.

But at the end of the Millennial Kingdom it says in Revelation Chapter 20 Satan will be released. He'll be released at the very end. And then it says he'll go out to deceive the nations after he'd been chained up for a thousand years and he doesn't deceive the nations. And I'm thinking how many people do you think he can convince who've known nothing but righteousness? They've known nothing but Christ on the banners of all, you know, the banners and billboards in the Millennial Kingdom. They know nothing but righteousness. So we kind of get the Garden 2.0, like how is it going to go for them, the lion lying down with the lamb, they know nothing of a snake bite, according to the book of Isaiah. This is a great time to live. Satan goes out to deceive the nations and in that passage it says he's so successful, the people whom he gathers against the saints in that last little period of time, that last little generation, it says are like the number of pebbles of sand, the grains of sand on the seashore. I'm thinking he's really good at his job of taking people who know nothing but good and posing temptation to them and dragging them into evil. How good do you think he is with people who are bent towards sin, who've already tasted the forbidden fruit?



How good is Satan at, as it says in Second Corinthians Chapter 4 verse 4, who know what it is to be in this world? And he's so good. He's called "the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers." He's really good at his job and we need to respect that about him. He knows your number, right? He knows your weaknesses, and he knows everything about what we're trying to defend. As debaters will tell you the most formidable foe in a debate is not the most eloquent opponent, although that's helpful. But it's not the most formidable. The guy you should be afraid of in a debate is the guy who knows your position better than you do. The guy who knows your position better than all the allies in the audience who are cheering for your side. He knows all your sources. He knows your logic. He knows where you're going. He knows all your, you know, all your rebuttals to his argument. If he knows your position better than you do then you're toast. And all I'm telling you this and let me ask you this, Sunday school graduate, how well do you think Satan knows the Bible? Do you think you know the Bible better than he does? I mean, just think about that. Here we are English speakers and some of you have taken Hebrew and Greek. Congratulations. Congratulations. How about those Aramaic sections? How good are you at your Aramaic, you know, vocabulary words? Do you think Satan has any problem with those sections? He was looking over the shoulder in all those sections when they were written. I mean, how well do you think he knows the Word of God?

Do you think he in Matthew Chapter 4, when Jesus is being tempted, to have any trouble calling up Psalm 91 when he's tempting Jesus and Jesus is reluctant and Satan says well, let me quote for you the passage, Psalm 91 verses 11 and 12. You know, it says if you were to cast yourself off the pinnacle of the temple he will charge angels concerning you and you won't strike your foot against the stone. That's a great quotation of God's Word. He had it right there. Bam! Satan knows your book. He knows your position. He knows your doctrine. He knows good doctrine. He knows good theology. He knows it. He knows exactly where you're coming from. He knows your position better than you know your position. And his job, according to our passage, is to pull you away, verse 3, "from sincere and pure devotion to Christ." Do you think he's good at doctrinal deep-fakes? I think he's really, really good at it. And he's going to do whatever it takes to pull you off the path.

So we should have a great respect. And it sounds like I'm painting an impossible picture. Well, in that passage in First Peter Chapter 5 verse 8 where it talks about we have this formidable foe like a lion, "a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." Please remember this, right? We're told to "humble yourselves ... under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he can exalt you." Just know this isn't a lost cause. We can endure this. We can win. We see through it. I mean, we "can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one" to quote Paul's discussion about the armor, we can do this. But you do need to have a great respect knowing that he's going to send things your way that are absolutely engineered and designed for careful, discerning, Bible-believing Christians who go to good churches and read great books and know great theology and know their Bible and took a Greek class once. I guarantee you he's great at coming after you and saying this is a better way. Didn't God say this? Be super careful about the fact that Satan knows how to do his job. He knows really, really well.



Just one more passage before I leave this concept. John Chapter 8 verses 43 through 45. Jesus is talking to his opponents and I just want to show you this always gets back to the truth and people not believing the truth. He says, "Why do you not understand what I say?" And if you had to answer that what would you say? You're telling someone the truth about what God says and "why do you not understand what I say?" Well that was a rhetorical statement, of course Jesus knows why. He says, "It's because you cannot bear to hear my word." Why? Because "you are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning," right? He was all about destroying God's Word. He "doesn't stand in the truth, because there's no truth in him." It doesn't mean he doesn't use the truth. He certainly traffics in the truth. But "when he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell you the truth, you don't believe me."

And the point is this: he's always going to try to lie when he encounters the truth. He'll utilize the truth as we saw in Matthew Chapter 4 in the temptation. He'll quote passages of Scripture clearly, but he'll do all of that because he's trying to get you in a different direction. He wants to destroy what God is trying to build up. He wants to separate what God is trying to join together. That's what Satan does. So he's going to lie and lie and lie to pull you away from believing what God's Word has said. Because what you believe about what God says is going to affect what you choose to do, whether it's in your marriage, in your parenting, in your work ethic, or whatever else it might be. And God is saying trust me and believe what I say.

Two things really quick just to drive this home. Do you realize that in Psalm 91 verses 11 and 12 passage, you will not "strike your foot against a stone," he's quoting that passage, and it's not like Jesus says, no, that's not true. Is that passage true? It is true. And there are times in Scripture where God definitely does that. It talks about in the book of Acts that the angel was sent to protect the apostles in prison. There are times when they do that, and there is a time in the Millennial Kingdom, to speak of that, or the eternal state even, where you can think about moral evil and you can think about natural evil, and you take both of those away, but you still think I might be hiking one day and my foot may hit a stone. So I can stub my toe and it's not moral evil and it's not natural evil. That's just, I don't know, physics. But the Bible says no, no, no, angels are going to attend to those who will inherit salvation, and you will not "strike your foot against a stone." When will that happen with 100% consistency? When we arrive. When we are glorified in the eschaton. Right? So that's wholly true.

Now Satan would like to take that truth and say well, here's the truth, it is true. But I'd like to just have you apply it here instead of there. I'd like to apply it universally instead of specifically or sporadically here and then eternally there. Right now, across the country, there are plenty of people, at least in our time zone, and some that just got out of church in other time zones, who are being taught by people taking passages of Scripture that I 100% believe and I 100% affirm. They're teaching them to people right now, and people are taking them in as deep-fakes, even though they're teaching true passages, but they're applying them in the wrong eschatological time zone. This is what we call, as I've often said from the platform, an over-realized eschatology, which means I'm going to go into the eschatological calendar I'm going to pull something out of that time, and I want to try to apply it right now. I'm going to claim my health and my wealth. And, I mean, I want all those things now. Do you think God's going to



give you pleasure and power and wealth and protection? Yes, of course he is. All that's promised. We could spend all morning expositing those passages, but the application of those passages, as Haddon Robinson rightly said, most heresy comes from the application of Scripture. It does because we take it, we explain it, and we put it in the wrong place. We have to be careful. Satan is good at that.

I already quoted Second Corinthians Chapter 4 verse 4. We covered that early in our series. But if you want to know how good the god of this world is at blinding the eyes of the unbelievers, and in that passage it says, "seeing the light of the gospel." Think about that, light. He's an angel of light and yet he's blinding the eyes of the unbelievers from the light. How does that work? Here's how it works. Tomorrow morning, get up in the morning, get up early before you go to work and spend a lot of time in God's Word just doing one thing, thinking about how great it is to be forgiven and saved, the object of God's love. See how great a love God has, you know, given toward us that we would be "the called children of God," First John Chapter 3 verse 10, and just revel in the fact he gave his Son for us. He loved us so much with the love with which he loved us, he called us to be his children, and we're forgiven. "No condemnation in Christ." How great is it to be a Christian. This is so amazing, right? Bask in that for a while. Then go to work.

And then in the lunchroom find a non-Christian, it shouldn't be hard and say I have to tell you how great it is. Let me tell you about salvation. And you want to see how good the enemy is. The god of this world is to blind the eyes of the unbelieving so they don't see the light of the gospel. Watch and they will come up with all kinds of things, and they will think they have the light, a light that's much brighter than the light that you know is the light of the world. They absolutely will say I know I have the light and your light is stupid. Your light is dumb. That's ridiculous. That makes no sense. And it becomes a stumbling block to them; it becomes foolishness to them. Satan is really good at deception, and if he's good at deception, that's the first line of defense for the enemy to murder, right? He goes after "to steal and kill and destroy," John Chapter 10 verse 10. He does it on the front lines by keeping lost people lost. But he does it here in our church by getting you pulled away, Second Corinthians 11:3 from a "pure and sincere devotion to Christ." He's good at his job. He's a brilliant liar. He's a brilliant person based on accumulated knowledge through the millennia.

All right, back to our passage. Let's just move this out. Let's make the sandwich here from Second Corinthians Chapter 11 verse 14. Let's look at verses 13 and 15. Let's talk about the people. That's the spiritual person behind it all, the angelic person, the demonic person. Let's look at the people. "For such men," who are among you there in Corinth, "are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ." Then he talks about Satan disguising himself. And then he says in verse 15, "it is no surprise if his servants," his servants. I made much of that when I read the passage at the outset. That's amazing. Satan's servants also disguise themselves as... You think they're servants of righteousness. That's how good their disguise is. Okay. Number two, you should "Expect False Teachers to be Effective." They're going to be effective, and they're going to be effective because, look at verse 13 once you jot that down, because they're deceitful and disguised. Right? The deceit is what they're really doing and the enemy is using them to do it, to pull you away with a



different doctrine. Some doctrine is going to pull you away from sincere and devoted and pure devotion to Christ. But they're disguised. They're disguised.

Now, here's what time will do if you're trying to be disguised. It will always make you improve on your disguise. The Marine Corps did this about 25 years ago. They've always been working at trying to disguise themselves if they're out in the wilderness or, you know, out in the desert. Actually, they have two kinds of camouflage, right? The wilderness and the desert camouflage. And I've been here in South County, you know, for years and doing ministry on the base and lots of things for decades. 25 years ago they came up with a new kind of camouflage and their combat uniforms started to change. And I remember this, you know, two decades ago, you started to see the camo changed to that pixelated camo. Nod your head if you've seen that. Right? Now it looks weird. It looks like it's digitized. Well, that was a change because they realized if they changed the way the camouflage was actually patterned on your uniform then it would be better. Now it could be the same at certain distances they said. But these guys worked really hard to improve their camouflage because at all kinds of distances, whether it's ten feet or 100 yards, it was better if it was pixelated. If it was pixelated like that then you could throw the eyeball off because you could still see with the old camouflage that kind of had the weird splotches of different shades of color, because you could still see the outline of a shoulder, you could still see, you know, hips and legs, and you could see the outline of a human figure better. But the pixelation helped to kind of blur all that. So that new pattern helped and that new camouflage helped.

So I just want you to think about how long has Satan been working at putting uniforms on his workmen? A long time. He knows exactly how to bring people through the doors of this church to camouflage his workers. Or as it's put in the book of Acts Chapter 20, or as Jesus put it in the book of Matthew, right? The wolves in sheep's clothing, that camouflage, he has that dialed in by now. It's been thousands of years. He knows how to camouflage. Because here's what camouflage is. Just note this when it says, "disguising themselves." Camouflage is not making you invisible because that's not the point. I mean, you can't, there's no invisibility. Because you need to have your gun to get ready to shoot the enemy. That's what you're there for. You're there to have someone look at you and think whatever they're seeing belongs. You belong here. That's what they're thinking.

Now, to call them in verse 15 "servants of righteousness." Well, who doesn't want another servant? I met new people this weekend, a first-time visitor. Hey, great to see you. And I hope we have more "servants of righteousness" coming to our church. Right? That's what I want. And they may say the right things. Oh, I became a Christian five years ago, blah blah blah. Oh, great. All I'm telling you is what we are going to encounter are people who belong. They belong. Book authors, they belong. Radio show hosts, they belong. Right? Podcasters, they belong. YouTube channels, they belong. They belong here. That's what Satan is going to work toward. But you have to look through that initial thinking. This looks like it belongs like a deep-fake you'll see on your news feed. It looks like it belongs. It looks like it's right. But they come disguised. Satan's goal is once you think they belong then the big guns come out and like sitting ducks it's too late.



How do they do that? Let's get specific about it. A couple of examples. Colossians Chapter 2 verses 21 through 23. It starts in verse 21. "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch." Okay, so those are rules of deprivation. Don't go after that. Don't do that. Don't do that. Okay. And Paul says he gives an intervening commentary on that in verse 22, I'll get back to that. But in verse 23 he says, "These have indeed an appearance of wisdom." That looks really wise, that looks really godly. So that's a camouflage, right? That looks like it belongs. Christians should say no to a lot of things. And they say, well, there are a lot of things that these teachers, which was probably an early form of Gnosticism in the church, they're saying these things and it looks like it belongs. And so it has an appearance of it. And he goes further. He says it's "asceticism and severity of the body," that seems like it would be right, "but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh." He calls it "self-made religion." Right? So all of this looks like it's good but it doesn't fit. And he explains a little bit of that in verse 22, it's "according to human precepts and teachings." As opposed to what? What the apostle has said and what the apostle is now saying. It's not according to apostolic teaching. It's not according to scriptural teaching; it's according to human teaching. And as Jesus said that is the constant concern, human teaching and human tradition over biblical teaching. That's the problem.

Paul writes to Timothy and says something in the same vein. He says, there are some people who are teaching doctrines of demons there in Ephesus. They'll come in and they'll say these things like forbidding marriage. Who would forbid marriage? Well, people like this who would say, hey, you'll be godly if you don't handle, you don't touch. Right? There are certain deprivations that will make you more godly. That seems like they have an appearance of wisdom. I don't know, do you know any Christian organizations with the banner of Christianity who claim Christ who think if you want to be really godly you won't get married? Do you know of any? Nobody. Okay. Some of you do. Now does that make the appearance of wisdom? Of course it does. Of course it does. I can think of several passages right now off the top of my head. That seems to make sense. Not to mention just by example. Was Christ married? Well, if you read The Da Vinci Code, you might say yes, but if you didn't, you're thinking, no, I read the Bible, and the Bible says, no, he wasn't married. The Apostle Paul, was he married? No, he wasn't married. And they both seemed to advocate for singleness but read carefully. No, they saw this as a bit of a clear preference with kingdom singleness in mind, but marriage as a great gift. As a matter of fact, look in the rest of Scripture. We have entire books given to the celebration of this, and a set of commands about being fruitful and multiply. And in the book of Micah the marriage covenant is a context in which we are supposed to be raising godly offspring. That's the point. So no, godliness does not equate itself to celibacy. Sorry, that is not biblical.

Now it has an appearance of it. But if you teach that you're teaching human precepts and human teaching, and Paul goes so far as to say to Timothy "doctrines of demons." Wow. That's big. Now that's a deep-fake and it's stuck and it sticks in a lot of places, but we're supposed to see through that. Speaking of, as long as we're talking about your Catholic aunt, let's just talk about the basis of all of this. And again, we don't define Catholicism based on what your uncle and aunt say, right? You need to define it based on what the Roman Catholic Church says. Right? Back to Ratzinger, who was editing the Catechism of the Catholic



Church, which is the official doctrine of the church. And it says, as I've quoted many times, you have to have three things that make up the authority of the church. The Bible, well sure, but also on equal footing is the magisterium of the church, which is the teaching, the official teaching of the church and Roman Catholic tradition. So those three things together, and as it's stated in the Catechism, you cannot have one without the others. So you have to have all three. Okay.

Now, if I say that the pattern of any organization that is going to take human tradition and human precept, human teaching and human precept, and use that in some way to prevail over the Bible, well, then you're going to have to denigrate the Bible in some way. And I'm saying, well, it looks like you're not denigrating the Bible because you're still affirming the Bible. But here's the thing. When magisterium or the teaching officially of the church contradicts the Bible itself, which one are you going to go with? Right? I'm just saying, you see this in every organization that's going to say, for instance, godliness is equal to celibacy or whatever else you want to say, that I can open the Bible and say well, that's not what the Bible says. I mean, that's a contortion of First Corinthians Chapter 7 and Matthew Chapter 19. And that's not exactly what you see there and certainly it doesn't comport with the rest of Scripture. Every organization does this, every organization.

When Joseph Smith says I want to join a denomination, at least he says he said that, and he gets the response back from heaven you can't join any of them. Right? He called it a sect. You can't join any of those sects, any of the denominations, because they're all an abomination. I'm going to start with you. Now there's an ambitious guy, right? He woke up on the right side of the bed that day, right? God's going to start Christianity over with me. Well, guess what happens in the generation. Like with Orson Pratt one of his right-hand men, his intellectual leader of the Mormon church. Well, and he actually puts it in print. He writes a pamphlet about it. The importance is you need to know the Bible is polluted. We cannot possibly think you have the Bible in any pure form. It is polluted and therefore you need what Joseph Smith and the Quorum of the Twelve are giving you. You cannot have the Bible without this. And that's exactly what happened. Matter of fact, when Joseph Smith was done with the Book of Mormon, which a lot of it was plagiarized, and look that up. I mean, we can talk about it another time. You get this book and he says this is the most pure and accurate book in the entire world. That's his claim. After already making clear the Bible's a problem.

As a matter of fact, he comes out with his own Joseph Smith translation of the Bible. Does that sound like, I don't know, maybe the Jehovah's Witnesses coming up with a New World translation written by four guys who weren't trained in the original languages? One of them had a little bit of training, but he bombed out of language training, and they created their own translation. And then they say, here's the deal, the Bible cannot be trusted in its present form. You should trust our translation and the Watchtower and Tract Society is going to tell you how to understand it. You cannot understand the Bible without what we're telling you. We are the sole interpreters of it. Or how about world religions like Islam? Islam is going to say at least in five surahs I can point you to that say the people of the book are following a book that has been tampered with. It has been twisted. And if it's not clear enough in those five surahs, you



can go to the hadiths. And the hadiths say clearly those Christians are following a book and those Jews are following a book that has been polluted, it's been tampered with.

But you know what has not been polluted? This book that was dictated through Gabriel to Muhammad, even though he was illiterate and we don't have it in his generation. Right? That book that we're telling you is pure, and there are no problems with that book that is pure in its Arabic, this is a real revelation and that one's polluted. You will always see a denigration of the Bible and an exalting of another voice. Watch the pattern. That is how you spot a deep-fake, and you have to look behind what you see on the surface, because guess what they all do? Same word, same vocabulary. Not in all world religions but in all of these offshoots that claim Christ, faith, Bible, God, Holy Spirit. Do you know this? In Scripture you can clearly see and in church history Satan has successfully in millions of people's minds, counterfeited the Father, counterfeited the Son, and counterfeited the Holy Spirit. They are really good at that.

We could go on and on, but you need to know what Deuteronomy Chapter 13 says. If anyone comes arises among you, I'm paraphrasing now, but you can read it on your own, Deuteronomy Chapter 13 verse 1 through 4 and says hey guys, come with me. Let's go here. Let's serve other gods. Do "not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the Lord your God is testing you." That's a mind-boggling statement. Hey, if they say in upstate New York I found the tablets and an angel told me what they mean and here follow me. I'm just telling you, it doesn't matter how you view that. The first place you need to start with is God allows in his providence people to say other things so that you can say he's testing me. What kind of test is it? "To know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him." How hard are you clutching on to the truth of what God has given you? You can't "keep his commandments and obey his voice" if you don't know what it is. So it always gets back to the law and the testimony as we quoted last week. It always comes back to whether or not you're going to listen to what God has revealed, what he said, as opposed to what the "dreamer of dreams" is saying. All right.

Quickly. Let's start... I know this is hard, right? This is all hard. I can tell by the look on your faces. It's very hard. Second Corinthians Chapter 11 verse 12, "What I'm doing I will continue to do." That's not me, that's the Apostle Paul. I'm reading a text right now. "What I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do." Again, terms. It's as though they've taken the terms, they use the terms, every deep-fake uses the terms. They just redefine the terms. And so they're saying these guys are using the terms that they're not defining this the way we are. They're not apostles. They like the title. They're not, they're not. And verse 15, bottom of the verse, "their will correspond to their deeds." We know what their deeds are. They're pulling you away as Deuteronomy Chapter 13 says. Now he says I'm going to keep doing what I'm doing. I'm trying to show you, right? I'm trying to show this is different than what the truth is. Now that's hard, but I want you to write it down. Number three, you need to "Keep Distinguishing Truth from Error." You need to keep saying I know that this is the truth, but that is not true.



Now, that's going to make you unpopular with some people. And you don't do it just so you can say, hey, I just slam dunked on you, right? That's false. This is true. But you have to start in your own mind. You have to be a good Berean and say whether this is true or whether it's not true. You have to spend time distinguishing truth from error, always. But can I give you a good motive for it? I already quoted it a couple of times, or at least alluded to Acts Chapter 20, but jot down Acts 20:28 through 31. And I just want to give you one of the great motives that will help you if you're struggling with this, if you bristle at the concept of saying, well, I don't want to start a discernment ministry. I'm not telling you to start a discernment ministry. Don't open up a YouTube channel based on this sermon.

Here's all I want from you. I want you to love people enough as he says in that passage. There will be people he says in Acts Chapter 20 verse 29, as he tells the leaders of the church of Ephesus, he's leaving and he's not going to see them anymore. He says there will be people rising up among yourselves who will be wolves. And he says you need to be caring. That's the word he used. Care for the flock who have been purchased, here's a summary, by the blood of Christ. These people are important and he uses the word "care." Do you care about these people? Care for them. And I just want you to correct error, and I want you to know and distinguish because you care about people. Don't wait until it's your daughter who gets exposed to heresy, right? You should care about someone in your small group. You should care about people whom you're taking through Partners. You care about people who you know who claim Christ but they're being exposed to false doctrine.

Some of you growing up here in this coastal community like I did, you became lifeguards. You went through the junior lifeguard program. Did you go through that? All the cool people went through that. That's why I didn't do it. (audience laughing) All my friends did it though. But you learn this when you go through the lifeguard program. Even though I didn't go through it, I know this. Let's just say you get one of those coveted jobs, and you're there in the tower on the beach, and you see someone getting caught in a rip tide. You don't sit there and think, well, is this going to alarm anybody if I, you know, run out there and, you know, splash around and go after that person? What if they really aren't in danger? I mean, maybe I should just wait, right? What if people misunderstand me? What if I'm insulting them like you're a weakling, right? No, no, no. If you perceive there's danger, this is your job. Go and help. You just need to see this. This is what you must see yourself as. As your brother's keeper. As your sister's keeper. You care about their doctrinal fidelity. And you care about the fact whether they're thinking rightly about God's Word. It's too costly to let concerns of embarrassment or causing a scene or just the hassle of it all to get in the way of you distinguishing truth from error in the minds of your friends.

And secondly, let me give you another motive to keep doing what you're doing. Continue to do what you're doing if in fact you're doing it, if not then start doing what you should do. How about this? Because human liars can become truth tellers and they can avoid the bottom of verse 15. Their end will not correspond to their deeds. God can forgive their deeds and make them a truth teller. That would be great, wouldn't it? That would be great. Paul says in First Timothy Chapter 1, I was the worst of the worst, and God plucked me out of that because I



was ignorantly opposing this. And by God's grace he showed his perfect patience toward me. Sometimes you need to point out truth from error to the person giving you the error at your doorstep. You never know. They are proffering the lies and they could become someone in the service of the truth.

A famous Soviet spy named Whittaker Chambers. Have you ever heard of that name? Through much of the 20th century he was working for the Soviets in the United States. He lived among us, educated, professional, fit in. But he was really causing havoc among the, you know, whole team of espionage experts in the FBI. What was interesting was that as he lived here doing a lot of damage, they were trying to suss out who this guy was. He went through a bit of a political cultural conversion and realized, you know, I'm on the wrong side of this. And so Whittaker really took a departure from his political convictions. And actually, if you read a story, he claims Christ, he becomes a Christian in this whole thing. And then, of course, he becomes from the Soviet perspective a turncoat and starts working for the Americans in espionage, becomes a spy for America and becomes one of the biggest assets through the middle of the 20th century to help the United States in a very critical time during World War II and beyond to be someone who works in the service of the truth, and certainly the well-being of the United States. God's judgment is just. But he's also a tremendously forgiving God for those who repent. And that's what we want. Do this because you want the repentance of those proffering false doctrine and because you love people.

I shop online, I don't know, criticize me if you want. You do too probably, right? But whether you like a product or not, I don't write reviews, so I think that's a waste of time. I know you probably think Pastor Mike surely gets on those reviews, gives people one star, wags his finger, preaches at them. He picks out the little microscopic things he doesn't like. I can just imagine what his reviews look like. I know that's my reputation, but it ain't true. Not true. Matter of fact, I don't return things. If I buy something and I'm disappointed by it, I think I should have done better. I think that's on me, man. The joke's on me. I should have been aware. Right? Buyer beware. I should have been better. That's how I go about it. I don't want to rip anybody for their bad products. I don't do it. But there was one exception I will tell you that. I did write one bad review. I wrote it and it was negative and it was about a year ago. I couldn't bring myself though to give it one star. I gave it two stars. The second star was pure kindness and pastoral grace (audience laughing) and didn't deserve it. But I gave it two stars.

And here's the thing about it. Here's what it was. I purchased a piece of furniture and it came unassembled. Now that's on me. I should have read the description. I saw a picture and I need that, click. Okay. I'm a fool. I should have known. Then I looked at the box really carefully, and I looked again at the description and the measurements and I realized this is way, way, way, way too small of a box to be that. So it's 1/30 of the size. And I'm thinking this is not going to be good. Then I thought, well, I should open this up and see. So I open it up and there are 250 pieces in the box. It made IKEA look like a piece of cake. Right? This was like cams and screws and bolts and brackets and door skin pieces and wooden things. I tried to lay it out on my workbench. I feel like I have a pretty decent workbench, but it was on the floor. It was leaning against a wall. It was all over. It was just crazy everywhere. And I thought, okay, I get one day off a week. And I thought it wasn't going to be an after-work project. This



is like a Monday project; this is going to last all day. So I thought, okay, whatever, this is God teaching me something. You know, I have to learn patience or whatever. I'm okay. Great. Turn the music on in the garage and I'm just going to, I mean, I have tools, I'm not a good steward of my tools. Okay, God, I'm going to do it.

So I reach into the box and I'm sure I'm going to pull out like a 40-page assembly manual. I'm sure of it. It's going to be fat, right? And I can't find it. I don't see it. I went through every bag; I emptied out every little box. It had all the little boxes of little pieces, everything. I pulled it apart. There were no instructions in this. Now all the pieces were marked, you know, J-52, right? L-12. I was like, okay, that's great, but I have no instructions. So I thought no big deal. I still have the box. The box has to have some manufacturer's name on it. Everyone has a website. The web isn't new. So like okay, so I go online, I try to find the manufacturer and I found some website with the same name, but it had nothing. It had no instructions. It had no downloadable manuals. It had nothing. I looked for a phone number. I looked for an email address. I looked for a mailing address. I was ready to translate things into Chinese to send them a letter. But at the end of the day, I was looking for a lawyer. (audience laughing) I was seriously done with this project and then I thought I have to go for it. Daylight's burning. I have to get this project done today. I wasn't going to admit to my wife that I couldn't do it, so I'm going to give it a shot.

Now, again, when you have J-52 or whatever, you just have to try and jump in somewhere and figure this out. I had no pictures, except the picture on the Amazon page of the completed project, but I tried. I felt like it was a success. I only had 8 or 9 leftover pieces at the end of the project. (audience laughing) I thought I was pretty good and it's still standing in my family room. It's still there. It hasn't collapsed yet. But when I was all done and I moved it in, I pulled out my laptop and I wrote a review. I gave it one star from my heart and a second star from the kindness of my heart. And then I wrote a review, the only review I think I've ever written. And it's nicely worded. If you ever come across it, you'll say pastor is nicer than I thought. It's pretty nice, but I wrote it for two reasons. Number one, I wrote it in case you choose to buy it, just to know there's someone in the manufacturing plant who sometimes misses a box when putting the instructions in. And I want you to beware. And I wrote it also to kind of hope that the company repents. I want them to repent. (audience laughing) I want them to make sure they fire the guy and hire someone else who can make sure every box gets instructions. And that's all I'm asking in this sermon, right? Not only do I want you to see through the deep-fakes, because the doctrinal deep-fakes are big, but I want you to care enough. Because if ybacu say something about distinguishing truth from error like the Apostle Paul does, it does show that you love people. And it does show that you want to see maybe a Saul of Tarsus become a Paul the Apostle. Because it may happen, you never know.

Let's pray. God, help us in our day where there are so many doctrinal deep-fakes going on from the Garden forward, and we know our enemy is formidable. We know he's dangerous, he's growling and prowling, and he wants to take us down. And it will start in our minds, in our hearts. It will start by us saying to ourselves, "Did God really say that?" And we want to be careful. So let us first start in our own thinking by making sure we go back to your Word, to not try to get on the edge, not to be novel, just to get right in the center of our doctrine and



say we want to stay right here, right where your Word is taking us. We always want to elevate your Word. We don't want to denigrate your Word. We always want to check the voices who are trying to exposit the word. We don't want to elevate a voice to the place of never questioning that. How dangerous that has been through church history. So, God, please give us diligent hearts, "a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." Thank you for this reminder from your Word. Protect our hearts. Protect our minds. Protect our doctrine.

In Jesus' name. Amen.