

**The Book of Ephesians**  
**Learning to Use God's Armor, Part 5**  
**Ephesians 6:10-17**  
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If you've been a part of our church any time at all, you know that before coming to Countryside some seven years ago this fall, for sixteen years I served in southern California. The land of granola, all those who aren't fruits and flakes are nuts, as they say about California. I served there as part of Grace Community Church, a large inner city church, and it was my joy to be there. I learned so much and was so heavily influenced by the ministry of the Word and the life of the church that I saw there. The time there also occasionally brought its challenges.

On a couple of occasions while I was at Grace, I received physical threats against me. There was someone who sufficiently disliked what I had told them that they sincerely wanted to hurt me. In one case the man even threatened to take my life. Because I didn't think at the time that it was a credible threat, I didn't bother sharing it with Sheila which later got me in some trouble.

That week, the following Sunday I wasn't slated to teach in our Sunday school class that I shared as I mentioned earlier with a couple of other men including Doug Bookman. And so, when I'd finished leading the music, which I did each week in that class, I came and sat down, next to my wife, and I was sitting there. And a few minutes later Sheila happened to glance down the row, and at the end of the row there was seated an off-duty police officer in a suit.

You say how did she know it was an off duty police officer? Well, we have a number of officers in our church, and I'm sorry, but you can just tell. And when she saw the ear piece and him talking into his sleeve she figured either, this man had a serious personal problem, or he was on duty with security that weekend. and she began to put it together, and a few seconds later it connected, and she leaned over and whispered to me, she said, "Tom, is he here for some reason because he needs to be near you?" And I had to tell her yes I'd gotten a threat that week and even a death threat, and she wasn't real happy with me for having held that piece of information to myself.

The story didn't finish however, that particular story didn't finish until a couple of years after I moved to Texas. The man who made those threats against me, and who I really didn't think was a serious threat, as it turns out, was. He ended up shooting his best friend, barricading himself in his apartment. And the LAPD Swat team bulldozed the front door of his apartment, and rushed in, stormed the apartment to see if they could save the man who had been shot. At that moment, the man turns his gun upon himself and died instantly.

When you have an enemy who hates you and wants to destroy you, it can be a little unsettling. Let me ask you? Have you personally had that kind of experience? Have you ever had an enemy who desperately wanted to hurt you, and who you really believed was willing to do so? If you're a Christian, the answer to that question is yes. What we're learning from Ephesians 6 is that there is an enemy of your soul, of every individual Christian, who absolutely hates you with an utter hatred and who would absolutely love to destroy your soul. And he will stop at nothing until he has accomplished that goal.

Satan's goal for every Christian, for every Christian sitting here this morning, is to undermine your faith. And if he can't undermine your faith, it is to prevent your growing into real likeness to Jesus Christ. As we're learning from Ephesians 6, we are in a war. Listen, the Christian life is not a bed of roses, it's not a fairy tale existence. You are locked in a war with an enemy that would absolutely love to destroy your soul. We don't think like this but Paul wants us to know we better start thinking like this. If we're going to spiritually survive the war in which we're engaged, then we'd better go to boot camp. We better go to the boot camp of Ephesians 6 and learn, as Paul teaches us here, how to prepare for the battle.

Let me read this text for you, Ephesians 6, a very familiar passage, Ephesians 6 beginning in verse 10.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, **HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL**

OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

The paragraph goes on verses 18 - 20 as well. The theme of this paragraph is, "In the war of the Christian life, we can only stand firm in the strength of Christ and in the armor of God." We're just looking at the first four verses, and in the first four verses of this section that I just read for you, Paul helps us understand our orders.

We're in a battle. What are our orders? Well the overarching command comes in verse 10, "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might," and in the beginning of verse 11, "put on the full armor of God." That's what you need to do. To what end? What's the objective? Verse 11 goes on to say, "put on the full armor of God, so that," here's the objective. "You will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."

As we've discovered together, the Greek word translated "schemes" here is the word from which we get our English word "method." In light of the sort of military image of this whole passage, the best way to translate this word may be "tactics," or "strategies." In 2 Corinthians 2 Paul tells us not to be ignorant of Satan's "schemes," his "tactics," his "strategies." And so, that's what we're trying to do. Paul's audience (he was in this church for a number of years) would have understood what Satan's tactics are. We need to get up to speed, and so we are looking at Satan's tactics or Satan's strategies against believers so that we understand why it is that we need to put on the armor of God.

Now Satan's strategies against believers are extremely diverse. There's no way we could cover them all or all that the Scripture has to say about them. So, what I've tried to do is sort of pull all of this Scriptural data together and synthesize his tactics into three primary strategies or three primary tactics that Satan uses against us. I haven't given you all three of these yet. Let me give them to you, and we're just going to finish up with the first one today.

The three strategies he primarily uses against believers: Number one, he attacks the Word of God. Number two, he intimidates with fear and persecution. That isn't as common for us who live here in America as it is for our brothers and sisters who live in other places in the world. Some day it might become more common for us. The third tactic that Satan uses, and this is universally true, and Lord willing we'll talk about this next week, is he entices with external temptations. He entices us into sin with external temptations.

Now, last time I was with you, we began to look at just the first of these tactics of Satan to sabotage the spiritual health of Christians, and that is he attacks the Word of God. And we discovered that this is really his chief strategy with Christians and with the church. And we discovered that he carries out this attack on the Word of God in several ways.

Last time we discovered four ways that he carries out this relentless attack on the Scripture. number one by denying or questioning the truthfulness of Scripture. He started that way in the Garden of Eden and that has continued to be his approach.

A second way he attacks the Word of God is by questioning the sufficiency of Scripture. He's happy for Christians to have the Bible as long as they will add something else that undermines its effectiveness in their life.

Number three, he attacks the Word of God by perverting the meaning of Scripture. He gets people to distort what the Scripture really means so that they think they're embracing the Bible, but in fact they're embracing something else. And the meaning of the Scripture is the Scripture. You take it out of its context, you twist it, you distort it it's not the Scripture anymore. It's something else.

A fourth way we discovered that he attacks the Word of God is by promoting our disobedience to the Scripture. We saw this with the church in Revelation where he encouraged Christians to embrace that that the Scripture forbids.

Now today, I want us to look at just one more way Satan accomplishes this first strategy of attacking the Word of God. We want to take all of our time together today to look at this fifth way he attacks the Bible.

Number five, Satan attacks the Word by distorting the true Christ and corrupting the true gospel, by distorting the true Christ and corrupting the true gospel. As we begin our time I want you to turn to 2 Corinthians 11. The church in Corinth was absolutely ripe for this approach of Satan, this tactic of Satan. They fell for it hook, line, and sinker. And Paul writes 2 Corinthians urging them to believe him, to embrace him, and to turn from the false.

He begins in 2 Corinthians 11 to defend his apostleship which the false teachers had brought into question. And he says to them, "I'm going to do this, but it's going to appear foolish." Verse 1 of chapter 11,

“I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me.” [And here’s why I’m going to do this.] “For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you *as* a pure virgin”

As Doug reminded us last week in the illustration of marriage, when we came to Christ, when you were saved, you were betrothed to Christ. Now our husband, as it were, is preparing a place in the Father’s house for us, and someday He will return and receive us to Himself as His bride and will take us back to the Father’s house. And we’ll follow the wedding and the wedding feast. That’s the image of the New Testament. Paul says to the Corinthians, I’ve betrothed you to Christ. You’ve embraced Christ as your Lord and Savior, and you’re waiting for Him to return. I want to present you to Him a pure virgin, but there’s a problem.

“I am afraid” Verse 3, that “as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness,” [So immediately we understand Satan is involved in this strategy,] “your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.” [How does this happen? Verse 4,] “For” [Here’s why I’m concerned about it,] “if one comes and preaches [to you]” [This is the church in Corinth folks, okay, we’re dealing with a real church that Paul was intimately involved in,] “if one comes and preaches another Jesus ...”

[In other words, he talks about Jesus, he says he loves Jesus, just like you love Jesus, you really believe in the same Jesus, but it’s a different Jesus than the one you’ve learned about from me, Paul says.]

“or you receive a different spirit which you have not received,” [In other words it’s not the Holy Spirit that’s influencing all of this, it’s a demonic spirit.] “or a different gospel which you have not accepted,” [A different way of salvation, a different good news, you receive this or] “you *bear* this beautifully.”

So here comes somebody along, and they are presenting to you a distorted Jesus, under the influence of not the Holy Spirit, but an evil spirit, and a different way of salvation, a different gospel, and Paul says, “and you’re buying it.”

Now with that in mind he begins to tell them, “look, the reason I didn’t take any financial support from you is because the false teachers there in Corinth were, as they always are, after

money. They wanted your money. They were after (and Paul teaches they're always this way) they are motivated either by power or by money and greed or by sexual favors from women. And this is what motivated these false teachers in Corinth, and Paul shows that to be true as he works his way through this letter. And he says because of that, I didn't let you support me because I wanted to draw a clear line between those false teachers, those false apostles, and the true."

Now verse 12, after he says that and develops that he says, "But what I am doing I will continue to do," [In other words I'm going to continue not to let you support me] "so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting." [In other words I don't want them to be able to say,] "they're the true apostles, and look we're just like Paul." Paul says, "no I don't want your money because I don't want to be connected to them."

[Here we get to the heart of it, verse 13,] "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ." [Here were men in Corinth claiming to be true apostles and attacking Paul. They came with a different Jesus, oh it sounded like the same Jesus, but it was a different Jesus and with a different gospel. And the Corinthians were buying it.] They disguised themselves as the real thing.

Verse 14, "No wonder," [This shouldn't surprise us] "for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore, it is not surprising" [Underline this] "if his servants" [The false teachers are the servants of Satan] "if they also disguise themselves as the servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds."

Listen, understand this, Satan is not just into paganism and blatant idolatry. He's not just trying to get people to fall down in front of a rock or a stone. Instead, he is very much involved in perverting the true gospel and distorting the true Christ. In fact, verse 14 says he 'transforms himself into an angel of light.' What does that mean? It means he disguises himself as a messenger of truth. It's what he did in the Garden, and he's been doing it ever since and so do his servants, pawns he uses to accomplish this in the lives of others.

So why does he do this? Well not only does he do it as we've discovered in 2 Corinthians 4:4, "to keep unbelievers blinded to the truth of the gospel." He comes up with this false Jesus and false gospel to keep unbelievers in spiritual blindness, but he also does it to confuse believers and to sabotage the growth and spiritual health of those who are truly Christ's own. In fact look, look at Ephesians back in Ephesians 4 you remember this passage? Ephesians 4 after Paul says here's how the church works, Christ has given gifted men to the church to teach you, to equip you to do the work of service and when all that works, the church grows.

Here's why it's so important, verse 14, Ephesians 4, "As a result," [When all that works the way it's supposed to work] "we are no longer to be children" [And here's what spiritual children are like,] "tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine," [And where do these doctrines come from?] "trickery of men who are crafty in deceitful scheming."

They have deceitful schemes, they're crafty, they're subtle. They have a plan to lighten your wallet and to get the power they want. Now how does this happen? How does Satan go about corrupting the true gospel and distorting the true Christ? Listen carefully. By raising up false teachers who connect themselves to the people of God. This is how Satan works, he raises up false teachers who connect themselves to the people of God, and who look like the real thing, but they aren't. This part of Satan's strategy permeates the entire Bible.

In the Old Testament there were often false prophets among the people who taught the people this is what God says, listen to God. But it wasn't God's message at all. There are so many places we could go in the Old Testament, let me take you to the most famous – Jeremiah 23.

Turn to Jeremiah 23. Here Jeremiah denounces the false prophets of his time. He begins in verse 9, but let's start down in verse 14 because his primary prophecy is against the prophets of Jerusalem. Jeremiah 23:14, "Also among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: the committing of adultery and the walking in falsehood;" [Watch this] "... they strengthen the hands of evildoers. So that no one has turned back from his wickedness. All of them have become to Me like Sodom, and her inhabitants like Gomorrah." Here the false teachers they don't confront people with their sin, they don't urge them to repentance, everything's okay, God loves you anyway.

Verse 16, Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; they speak a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the Lord. They

keep saying” [This is a key verse, verse 17] “They keep saying to those who despise Me, “The Lord has said, ‘You will have peace.’”; and as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart, they say, ‘Calamity will not come upon you.’”

There is the heart of their message. They are happy to tell people who don’t have a right relationship to God, who’ve not repented of their sins that everything is fine between them and God, it’s going to be okay. He goes on to say that He’s going to bring His wrath like a hurricane, verses 19 and 20.

Verse 21, “I did not send *these* prophets; but they ran. I did not speak to them, but they prophesied. ... if they had stood in My council, then they would have announced My words to My people, and would have turned them back from their evil way and from the evil of their deeds.”

A true prophet is recognized by the fact that he is faithful to the revealed Word of God. And the fruit of his ministry is people turning away from sin to the truth of God and the righteousness of God. Now that was a problem in the Old Testament. There’s just one example, Jeremiah 23.

But this mission of Satan to raise up false teachers among the people of God only intensifies in the New Testament. Look at the ministry of Christ, turn over to Matthew 7. Matthew 7, in the Sermon on the Mount, verse 13, you’re familiar with this image, he describes salvation as entering the narrow gate. Look at verse 13,

“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. But the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” You say why? Why is the way which leads to destruction broad and wide and many find it? Look at the next verse.

“Beware of the false prophets,”

It’s because Satan has a very effective strategy to raise up false prophets who paint the way to heaven when it’s actually the road to hell. Beware of the false prophets. And Jesus says they’ll come to you in sheep’s clothing. In other words, they’ll look like Christians, they’ll smell like Christians, they’ll talk like Christians. They’ll talk about loving Jesus, and they’ll use the Bible, and they’ll tell you they are just looking out for your good, they want what’s best for you, but inwardly Jesus says, they are ravenous wolves. How do you recognize these people?



“You will know them” [Jesus said, verse 16,] “by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes* nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits.”

You say, what is their fruit? It is the character of their own lives and the character of the lives of those who follow them. That’s their fruit. Where there is the truth, it will produce, just as we saw back in Jeremiah, conviction of sin, a desire to walk in holy living. And where the tree is bad, it will produce a sinful lifestyle characterized by wickedness.

Jesus encountered this in His own ministry. He was constantly dealing with false teachers in His time. Look over at Matthew 23. This is where Jesus announces His woes against the Pharisees. Listen to how He describes the Pharisees.

Matthew 23:13, “But woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people;” [Now watch this,] “for you do not enter in yourselves,” [In other words, you’re not true believers, you’re not going to heaven.] “nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.” [Verse 15,] “Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.”

You understand that first century Judaism was not the faith of Abraham. It had been hijacked. It had become a satanic substitute. Was created and maintained by a group of powerful false teachers called the Pharisees and the scribes. So, Jesus encountered constantly false teaching, that’s what first century Judaism was.

When you come to the first century church, when you come to the time of the apostles you see this same problem unfolding. Look at Acts 20. Paul in his last words to the Ephesian elders before he departs from them. In Acts 20 he warns them of what’s coming, verse 29,

“I know” [This isn’t a guess, this isn’t might be, this is I know] “that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from

among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert....”

Paul tells the Ephesian elders, “listen, it’s coming, get ready.” The church in Ephesus, the church to whom Paul is writing, the letter we’re studying together. Paul says they’re going to be false teachers. We saw it to the church in Corinth, didn’t we? When we looked at 2 Corinthians 11, they’re going to be, there are false teachers.

The churches in Galatia experienced the same thing. Galatians 1, you remember Paul writes in verse 6 of Galatians 1 as he writes to all the churches that he’d planted on his first missionary journey.

“I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you ...” [Less than five years after Paul’s first missionary journey, he’s writing them this letter and already they are deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ. By the way, there’s what the true gospel is about, it’s not what you do, it’s about the grace shown to you in Christ.] “for a different gospel: which is *really* not another: only there are some who are disturbing you and want to” [here it is,] “distort the gospel of Christ.”

The churches in Galatia had to deal with false teachers, in this case the Judaizers who said, “oh yeah, you know Christ is good, His death is great, you need that, you need grace, you need faith, but you also need to add circumcision and keeping the law if you’re going to be right with God.” And Paul says that’s not a little add on to the gospel, that’s a different gospel.

Later the church in Ephesus continued to struggle with the presence of false teachers. Sometime after he warned them in Acts 20, he sent Timothy to the church in Ephesus, and then he wrote to Timothy, look at 1 Timothy 4, he writes Timothy and in his letter, first letter to Timothy he warns him about false teachers again. Verse 1, 1 Timothy 4,

“But the Spirit explicitly says that in the later times” [That’s Biblical language for the time from the life of Christ ‘til His return. And because he’s warning Timothy, we can bet that this was a problem Timothy was going to face.] “some will fall away from the faith,” [So they’re going to start out in the Christian church, but where they end up can’t even be called Christianity.] “paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,” [There’s the source of false teaching, ultimately it comes from satanically inspired men propped up by

demons. Verse 2, they are liars and hypocrites,] “seared in their own conscience” [So here’s the pawn, if you will, the men are the pawns in this game,] and they teach [Verse 3] “to ... forbid marriage and [they] *advocate* abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.” [They add to the Scripture. Paul says to Timothy,] “beware, it’s coming to Ephesus.”

If you fast forward to the very end of New Testament history, you look at John’s letters written at the very end of the first century. You see the same warning, in 1 John 4 he says as he writes, “don’t believe every spirit, but test the spirits, that is the spirits behind and influencing the teachers you’re hearing because many false teachers have gone out into the world.” And then he warns them about these false teachers. This is the very end of the first century and at the end of the New Testament age, the New Testament era when the apostles were alive and living, ministering.

If you want to read what false teachers look like, how to sort of see their characters, you may have to take a bath after reading it, but read 2 Peter 2, and read Jude’s letter, those two passages describe in detail these men, and women in some cases, who are in to false teaching. But understand this, Satan distorts the true Christ and corrupts the true gospel, and he does that by raising up false teachers who are somehow connected to the true faith.

Now who are these false teachers? How do you recognize them? Well first of all, I want to give you just a couple of common manifestations of Paul’s teachings. How it comes.

Number one, as heresy within Christian churches and denominations, as heresy within Christian churches and denominations. Heresy is simply a denial of a defined established Christian doctrine. So, in other words, here you have someone within the Christian church who holds to some, perhaps all but one, of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian church. But through Bible study, through his own mind, through his careful study he comes to a conclusion that puts him outside of historic Christianity where the spirit has led other men and women to understand the truth. and he’s sort of out on his own on this one cardinal doctrine, and it’s heresy, it’s contrary to established Christian doctrine.

You can see this, by the way, in some of the main-line protestant denominations of our day. Some of them have denied almost every cardinal doctrine. Others of them hold to all of the cardinal doctrines except for one. You can see it in denominations like Catholicism and the

church of Christ where they teach that baptism must be there for a person to be saved. That it is where your confidence should be placed. That's heresy, a Christian denomination with an abhorrent teaching on one of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith.

A second manifestation of false teaching is cults, cults. Cults are different because cults are not true Christian churches and denominations. Cults are separate groups that may identify themselves as Christians, but whose primary doctrines are in conflict with historic Christianity. Usually, you'll recognize a cult by its being off on at least two of the following; either the person of Christ, the way of salvation the gospel, or the source of authority.

Usually a cult will be wrong on two of those three. Often they'll have revelation beyond the Bible. Some own their own translation, like the Jehovah's Witnesses, or some other book, like the book of Mormon. So, the examples of cults would be Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, etc.... There's long list and litany of cults. They are not Christianity, but they often prey upon those who are.

So, there's heresy in Christian churches and denominations, there are cults, and then a third common manifestation of false teaching is a slow departure from the truth. This one is not often understood, but I think this one is really the most serious to us. Look over in 2 Timothy 4, Paul's last letter his last letter to his son in the faith. And he ends it with the charge, in 2 Timothy 4:1 and 2 to preach the Word. He says when it's in season, and when it's out of season, when people want you to do it, when they don't want you to do it. Why?

Notice verse 3, "For the time will come when they" [Who's they? People in churches.] "when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires." [And then eventually they] "... will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths."

Heresy often happens from the top down, among leaders and teachers. This strategy of Satan starts from the bottom up. It's a demand from the people of the church for what they like and enjoy. I'm convinced that for most Christians this is the most dangerous version of false teaching, because it doesn't begin as false teaching.

It begins with a desire to be more relevant. Let's just be more relevant. We don't need sound doctrine. We don't need verse-by-verse exposition of all that God wanted us to know. Let's

pick and choose those parts that just seem to be more relevant to us, that scratch people where they itch. Things like well intention? But eventually what Paul says is when people in the church begin to accumulate teachers who will scratch what itches, eventually, verse 4, “they will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.” You’ve seen it, I’ve seen it. It’s exactly what happens.

Now if you think that you cannot be led astray from the truth of the gospel, you say listen, you know I’m a part of the Bible church, I’ve been a Christian for many years. I’m well taught. I’m in the Bible every day. I know what the gospel is. I know who Christ is. No chance this strategy would ever work on me. You better think again. “Let him who thinks he stands,” what, “take heed lest he fall.”

Turn back to Galatians 1. Galatians 1, here are churches in verses 6 - 9, people who less than five years before were converted under the ministry of the Apostle Paul and sat under the teaching of the Apostle Paul, and they were quickly willing to turn to a different gospel. But it gets worse. Go to chapter 2 verse 11. The Judaizers, this group of false teachers who wanted to add the keeping of the law and circumcision to how you needed, what you needed to do to be justified before God, they influenced others.

Verse 11 of chapter 2, “... when Cephas” [That’s Peter] “when Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was self-condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James,” [That’s our Lord’s half-brother, the pastor of the Jerusalem church,] “he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.” [And it went on further, verse 13,] “The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.” [Now what’s at stake here? Verse 14.] “But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel,”

It goes on then to confront Peter, and the confrontation is recorded here. What I want you to see folks is that you and I had better beware, regardless of who we are or what our level of knowledge is. You could be Barnabas, a traveling companion of the Apostle Paul and compromise the gospel. You could be James, the half-brother of our Lord, and the pastor of the Jerusalem church and compromise the gospel. You could even be an apostle, Peter, and compromise the gospel and fall into this trap of Satan. So, you and I better be alert. We better beware.

You say how can I recognize a false teacher? Very quickly let me give you a couple of ways to recognize a false teacher.

Number one, their message is widely appealing even with unbelievers, their message is widely appealing even with unbelievers. This has been true of false prophets from the Old Testament and through the New. Listen to our Lord's words in Luke 6:26. "Woe when all men speak well of you for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way."

Beware when unbelievers like a professed Bible teacher's message. Look at how they treated Jesus. Look at how they treated the apostles. Beware.

Number two, you can recognize a false teacher because they deny one of the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Usually, and you can always go here when you're trying to figure out if somebody's orthodox or not, usually if either they're wrong on the person of Christ, or they're wrong on the way of salvation – sometimes both. Ask them who they believe Jesus is. I mean really, don't let them sort of skate the issues. Ask them who they really think Jesus is. Get them to define it for you. And secondly how is a man made right with God. False teachers are wrong on those questions. Galatians 1, they were wrong on the gospel. First John 4 they were wrong on Christ.

I had a conversation with some Mormons who came to our church on a Sunday night, a couple of Mormon elders attended and wanted to demonstrate that really there were no differences between us, and we had a chat right out here in the lobby afterwards. And they were telling me, "listen we worship the same Jesus." I said, "I'm sorry but we don't because your Jesus is another Jesus. Your Jesus is a Jesus who is the physical offspring of a sexual union between God the Father and a woman. Your Jesus is the half-brother of Satan. That's not the Jesus of the Bible."

Number three, you can recognize a false teacher, their ultimate source of authority is often outside the Word of God. Their ultimate source of authority is often outside the Word of God. Shouldn't surprise us, Jeremiah 23 says we should expect false prophets to speak of dreams and visions and direct revelations from God. So, you have the Mormons for example. Who, you know Joseph Smith proclaimed to have a direct revelation; the angel Moroni gave him the book of Mormon. Instead of listening to those who claim authority outside the Scripture, we should be evaluating their message by the Scripture. That's what the Scripture teaches.

Turn back to Deuteronomy 13. Moses lays down here the primary way to test a prophet, a teacher to see whether or not they're genuine. Deuteronomy 13, and here is a case of a very bad chapter break. Look at the last verse of chapter 12,

“Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add nor take away from it.” [He says listen, I’ve given you commands, I’ve given you my word. Don’t add to it don’t take away from it, so verse 1 of chapter 13,] “If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you,” [In other words if a guy comes along and he does something that is truly miraculous, but he’s telling you to do something contrary to My word, don’t believe it.]

[Verse 3,] “you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” [You, here’s the key,] “You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him and you shall keep his commandments, listen to His voice....”

You test everything you hear, whether it’s something I say or something another teacher says by the Word of God. That is the standard. What does the Bible say? If he adds to the word of God, if he subtracts from the Word of God he is not a prophet even if he can work a miracle. He’s demonically inspired.

That’s what Paul says in Galatians 1 isn’t it? He tells them listen, if an apostle shows up, if we, he says, or an angel from heaven should come and preach to you a different gospel than that that you heard from Christ and His apostles, what? Let him be cursed, anathema, let him be damned. Even if an apostle, if Paul himself showed up here this morning or if an angel from heaven showed up here on this platform and told you something other than what you find on the pages of this book, grab them by the seat of the pants and throw them out. That’s what Paul says. This is the standard.

Number four, the way you recognize a false prophet, this is the last. In practical living they tend to stray in one of two ways. Either they turn grace into license to sin however much they want, or they turn grace into legalism, and they establish man-made rules. You see, license in both 2 Peter and Jude, you remember what Jude says, Jude says they’re these ungodly men who have

crept in, and they turn the grace of God into licentiousness, that's a word for a license for loose living. Oh, God's grace is wonderful, He'll forgive us, let's do whatever we want.

On the other hand, 1 Timothy 4 describes those who turned the grace of God into legalism. They say, oh you can't get married; no, no a priest shouldn't get married. And you know there're foods you shouldn't eat. Beware on both of those extremes. False teachers will either turn grace into license, or they'll turn grace into legalism.

Don't be tossed here and there by every wind of doctrine. Don't let Satan attack the Word of God in your life by getting you to follow a false teacher who distorts the true Christ, who corrupts the true gospel. That's Satan's strategy to sabotage your faith. Listen, it's possible there are people listening to me this morning who have been hoodwinked by false teachers. You're putting all of your hope in a false Jesus and a false gospel.

For your sake let me just say this, the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is the eternal uncreated Son of God. He is equal with God the Father in every respect, and He is one of three members of the blessed Trinity. He, being fully God became fully man, everything that you are. He took on full humanity, and He suffered and died on a cross in the place of every sinner who would ever believe in Him.

What you need to do is never can you earn that on your own, never can your efforts be good enough. No baptism, no confirmation, no signing of a card, walking an aisle the only thing you can do is what Jesus said, repent and believe. That's the gospel. That's your only hope.

What about for us who are believers? Listen folks, we are no match against Satan and his false teachers in our own strength. Our only hope is Christ. That's why, how does Paul begin this passage in Ephesians 6? "Be strengthened," how? "In the Lord and in the power of His might." Listen Jesus lived His life in an absolute atmosphere of false teaching. First century Judaism was nothing but false teaching.

The entire Old Testament faith had been hijacked by the Pharisees. But Jesus was unmoved by their error, unmoved by their false teaching. He clung to the truth. He lived it. He taught it. He defended it. And you and I can stand as He stood but only in His strength. That's why we have to put on the armor. Next week, Lord willing, we'll look at how Satan uses temptation as a tactic in our lives.

Let's pray together.



Father, thank You for the warning, forgive us for not taking it seriously. Lord remind us that we live in an atmosphere, a Christian culture where all around us that is permeated with false teachers. Father, don't let us fall for another Jesus. Don't let us fall for another gospel. Help us to evaluate everything we hear, every teacher, every claim to be genuine by the Scripture.

Father, I pray that You would help us to be diligent in that way. Guard and protect our souls, help us to stand in Christ, in His strength. Help us to learn how to put on the armor in the weeks ahead.

Father, I pray for the person here this morning who is still blinded by Satan's lies, may this be the day You remove the blinders and the glorious light of the true Christ and the true gospel comes blazing into his or her soul. I pray in Jesus name, Amen.