

# Matthew 7:15

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[ 0 : 00 ] We shall turn now to the gospel according to Matthew, the seventh chapter, reading at verse 15.

Matthew chapter 7 and verse 15. Matthew chapter 7 and verse 15.

Now the New Testament shows an astonishing interest in false prophets. And we have numerous allusions to the problem that they constitute for the people of God.

We have the Lord's reference in this part of Matthew's gospel. We have the apostle Paul speaking equally solemnly in Acts chapter 20.

We warn the church at Ephesus that from their own number there would come men who spoke perverse things and would make havoc of the church.

[ 1 : 28 ] We have the same problem in 2 Peter chapter 2. False prophets who come in with their damnable heresies, their divisive heresies.

We have the same teaching again in Jude who tells us of men who come and deny the Lord who bought them.

Men who come in privily and stealthily. We have the apostle John in his first epistle speaking of those who deny that Christ has come in the flesh.

And in the apocalypse we have the same teaching again. References to the false prophet and to sects of Nicolaitans and so on.

So it's quite evident that even in the apostolic days this class of men were a great problem to believers.

[ 2 : 24 ] We find the Lord first to give teaching with regard to those false prophets. We find the apostles in the same precise situation. That today the danger is equally great.

And that in our day as much as in the apostolic day. There are those who come in denying the faith. Lying in wait to deceive. And working enormous damage in the church of Jesus Christ. And there are still those who are weak and unstable in the faith.

Those who are young in the faith. And who too often fall a prey to the devices of those men who do lie in wait to deceive.

In fact one can even say that it isn't only the young and the weak and the immature who are at risk.

[ 3 : 37 ] But that the whole church of God is at risk. Because of the threat caused by the presence of men of this kind.

On the perimeter of the Christian faith. And I want this morning to try to reflect. I hope not too negatively.

Upon false prophets. And the problems which they do constitute for the church of the present day. We notice first of all.

That these men according to Christ. Are wolves in sheep's clothing. Their wolves as Christ do enormous damage.

They ravage the flock. They come in. They destroy our faith. They injure our consciences. They take away our comfort.

[ 4 : 40 ] They sap our strength. They take away our evangelistic momentum. They take away our unity in the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet for all the damage they cause.

For all the threat which they constitute. The artist says. Almost impossible. To recognize. Because all the flock sees.

Is another sheep. All the shepherd sees. Is another sheep. And it is so difficult to distinguish. This kind of man.

From the real. God sent teacher. We see those men. Occupying prominent pulpits. We see them in high office. In the church of God.

We see them teaching. Those destined to. Become the church's. Ministers and pastors. We see them addressing. Large public gatherings.

[ 5 : 43 ] And nobody feels. Any sense of fear. Any sense of foreboding. Because. They're dressed. Just like the sheep. They seem to be.

So utterly harmless. And so totally. Innocuous. Now it's worth asking yourselves. Why is it. That these men.

Can creep in. So stealthily. Why is that word used. So often. Stealth. Why are we told. That they come in. Privily. Or come in.

Privately. Why are they told. That they. Lie in wait. To deceive. Exercising. Cunning. And guile. How can these men.

Catch. The flock of God. God so easily. Utterly off guard. Lord. Well the first reason. Surely is this. That.

[ 6 : 40 ] They themselves. Belong. Visibly. And outwardly. To that flock itself. Remember. Paul says. Of your own selves.

Shall men arise. In other words. This isn't a threat. Which arises. From outside the church. It doesn't come.

From the ethnic religions. It doesn't come. From Marxism. It doesn't come. From articulate. And explicit. Unbelief. But it comes.

As the apostle. From. Among your own selves. These are people. Who have been. Baptized. People who sit.

At the Lord's table. People who may even. Say. That they've had. What's today called. A born again. Experience. They are usually.

[ 7 : 39 ] Accredited pastors. And ministers. In the church of God. They may be bishops. They may even be. Professors. Possibly. And. They have. The most. Marvelous.

Accreditation. They belong. To the church. They have. All the credentials. Of. Christian. Belonging. Of. Christian. Commitment. And it is. Far more difficult. For the church of God. To. Marshal. It's out. To meet.

This kind of problem. Than to meet. An external. Threat. Threat. This is. An internal. Threat. It comes.

From. Those. Who stand. In the apparent. Life. And fellowship. Of the church. Of God. Itself. And to speak. To the church.

[ 8 : 33 ] Of God. With the authority. Of acceptance. In the church. And the authority. Of high office. And the authority. Of eminence. In the church.

Of God. Now it's safe. To say. That. The greatest. Damage. Done. Done. To the church. Of God. In the last. Hundred years. Has been done. Not. By Charles Darwin. Not. By Karl Marx. Not. By Freud. Not. By Bertrand Russell.

Not. By those. Who stand. Outside. And attack. The church. Intellectually. Socially. Culturally. The damage. Has been done.

By men. Within. The church. Itself. With those. Who have come. With their. Plausible variations. With their. Spurious. Panaceas.

[ 9 : 27 ] And that's. Why Paul. Says. They shall arise. From among. Your own selves. And they shall. Spoil the flock.

And they shall. Do it. From the inside. And that is. The first. Reason. Why. It is so difficult. To identify. Those men. They come. From within.

The church. Of God. And then again. There is this. There are people. Who speak. The language. Of Christian.

Orthodoxy. You see. How well the Lord. Puts it. In this whole context. There are those. Who come. And say. Verse 21. Lord. Lord. Lord. Lord.

They call. Christ. Lord. And in their. Devotions. In public. Before their. Deliberations. Before they go on.

[ 10 : 23 ] To attack. Evangelical. Listen. Their prayers. Will sound. Perfectly. Orthodox. And they will sing. The great psalms.

And the great hymns. Of the church. And they will recite. The great creeds. Of the church. And they will speak. Of forgiveness.

Of sins. They will speak. Of the resurrection. Of the dead. They will speak. Of the life. To come. All the terminology.

Of atonement. Of justification. Of incarnation. Of God. Of Christ. Of the Holy Spirit. All the language. Is there.

Now the theologian. May know. As he listens. To that language. That it is only language. He may notice. As we shall see. In and on.

[11:19] That. That it is lack of precision. That there is a certain vagueness. A certain openness. But all the great words. Are there. The saddest thing.

Very often is. That when. We have Christian conferences. That come to. Revolutionary. Destructive conclusions. Which receive wide publicity. We'll always be told.

Yes. But we pray together. And we'll be told. How marvelous. What's the devotion life. Which lay behind. Those deliberations. Liberations. Will be told.

That the conclusions. Will come to. In a context of prayer. In a context of fellowship. In a constant of praise. And devotion.

The language is right. And the words are right. Although those words. There. Are very subtly. After meaning. And that is why.

[12:19] So often. People are deceived. Because these men. Seem to. Maximize Christ. They will speak of. A Christocentric gospel.

They will speak even of. Christ. Demonstrant Christ. The Lord. They will use. All the great words. And because they use.

The words. Then they look. Exactly like sheep. And then there is. A third thing. That these false prophets.

Are very often. Accredited. By what the context calls. Wonderful works. You see the terrible teaching. Of verse 22. Many will say to me.

That day. Lord. Lord. Have we not prophesied. In thy name. And in thy name. Have cast out devils. And in thy name.

[13:16] Done. Many wonderful works. And isn't that. Too often the problem. That the ordinary teacher.

The ordinary preacher. He doesn't. Cannot claim. To be a prophet. Cannot claim. To cast out devils.

Cannot claim. That he has ever. Performed miracles. He doesn't heal. He doesn't speak. In tongues. And there is this false prophet.

And he's got it all. He is prophesying. He is bringing. He says. Great words from God. He has a message from God.

God. He will tell us. He will tell us that. God has spoken to. That God has given him a message. For this particular day. On this occasion. He may not only claim.

[14:14] To perform mighty works. He may indeed. Have performed those works. He may quite literally. Have cast out devils.

He may quite literally. Be engaged in. A very credible. Healing ministry. He may quite literally. Speak.

In a way that. For all men know. Is exactly the same thing. As New Testament. Glossalalia. Or tongue speaking. He is accredited.

By wonderful works. And it becomes. Very very difficult. For those who confront. That situation. To actually condemn the man.

Because even in themselves. There is something saying. We may be fighting. Against God. Who are we to go against. Those.

[15:14] Accreditations. Do I not necessarily say. That all the prophesy. And all the cast out devils. And all who heal.

I am not necessarily saying. That all these men. Are false prophets. I might indeed. Surmise that. I might. Say it in a certain context. I am not saying it for the moment.

I am saying for the moment. Only this. That these men. Very often. Look like sheep. They look like the real thing.

They look like real prophets. Because they come. Attested. And accredited. With all those. Miracles. Exorcism.

Healing. Tongue speaking. And so on and so forth. So they look. Exactly like sheep. They belong to the church. They have orthodox language.

[16:10] They are attested. By all those. Mighty works. But then there is also this. They are very often men. Of immensely. Pleasing personality.

Now that. Is a thing. That is not confined. To the Christian faith. There are very many. Natural men. Who are exceedingly pleasant. Almost.

One might say. Charismatic. There is something. Singularly attractive in them. As far as. The natural temperament goes.

And that's why. If you go through. Recent church history. And look at those. Who have been so influential. In a non.

Orthodox direction. You will find. Almost invariably. That they have been men. Of immensely. Attractive personality.

[17:09] And of great. Personal charm. If you remember. For example. John Macleod Campbell. Deposed. In the 1830s.

From the church. Of Scotland's ministry. Because he denied. Certain points. In her confession of faith. Of anyone today. Who mentions. Macleod Campbell. Will speak.

Of his piety. He is the godly. He is the saintly. Macleod Campbell. Always. That is the episode. His errors. Were commended. They were rendered plausible. By this great aura. Of personal charm.

This charisma. It may even. It may even. Have been. That there was. A real. Personal godliness. There. I have seen. Nothing on that. But he was.

[18:07] A man. Of captivating. And utterly. Wimson. Personal disposition. You take again. Robertson Smith.

Who. More than. Any other man. In the. English speaking. World. Undermine. The church's. Historic. Confidence. In the.

Infallible. In the. Infallible. Authority. Of holy scripture. That man. Was. Academically. Brilliant. A brilliant. Mathematician.

A brilliant. Historian. Brilliant. Philosopher. Brilliant. Lang. Linguist. Brilliant. As a literary. Critic. Absolutely.

Incomparable. In terms of. Of mere intellect. And not only that. But again. Immensely attractive. Immensely.

[19:02] Wimson. In his own. Personal character. And it was. No great difficulty. For his friends. To portray him. As a martyr. As a great.

Champion. Of Christian. Freedom. And academic. Integrity. And to this. Day. It is the men. Who opposed him.

Who are the scoundrels. Because he had. This great. Personal charisma. Take again. John Henry Newman. Who became.

Cardinal. Cardinal Newman. A man again. Of mighty intellect. A great master. Of English prose. But above all. A man. With an aura. A man. Almost. With a halo. A man. Whose personal. Force.

[20:00] Of character. Was such. That he literally. Dominated. The oxford. Of his own day. By his. Mere. Physical presence. And that.

That meant. That when he began. To. Romanize. The church of England. When he began. To. Bring in. Medievalism.

To bring in. All the accretions. Of. The dark ages. To bring those back. Into the reformed. Church of England. He did so.

With all the authority. And all the prestige. Not only. The intellect. Not only. The skill. Of us. English prose. But also.

His immense. Force. Of character. And the great. And very. Very. Real. Real. Beauty. Of his own personality. And therefore.

[20:57] Again. You have a wolf. A man. Who in many ways. Did. Irrevocable damage. To the church of England. And yet.

Did it. Not as one. He looked like a wolf. But he looked. For all the world. Like a sheep. Like the genuine. Christian article.

And then. There's one thing more. These false prophets. They're sheep. Because they belong. To the flock. Literally. Or outwardly.

They're sheep. Because they speak. Orthodox language. Again. They are sheep. Because they perform. Mighty acts. Again.

They're sheep. Because of their own. Great. Personal charm. But they're also sheep. For this reason. They tell. The church of God.

[ 21 : 54 ] Exactly. What the church of God. Wants to hear. I'm utterly convinced. That before.

A false prophet. Can emerge. There must be. A predisposition. In the church itself. For such a thing. To come.

Into its midst. He's a man. Who is going to. Move with the tide. A man. A man. With an idea. Whose hour has come.

In the sense. That you will tell. The people. Exactly. What the people. Want to hear. You find that. So clearly. In Jeremiah's day. Peace.

Peace. When there was no peace. Jeremiah. Told them. God's will. That conquest. That conquest. And exile. In Babylon.

[ 22 : 49 ] Were actually inevitable. Jeremiah told them. God's will for you is. That you should not fight. The Babylonians. God's will is.

That you should surrender. Without a struggle. That is what God wants you to do. Peace. But the false prophets. They came along.

And they were the patriots. And they said. We are secure. We have the temple of God. We are the people of God. We are the chosen race.

And therefore. Peace. Peace. Peace. Now it may not always be. That the false prophet. Speaks peace.

But he will always say. What the people want to hear. People of itching ears. And the false prophet. Is going to speak.

[ 23 : 50 ] To that mood. I would say today. That anyone. Who is optimistic. As to the free church's. Immediate future.

Is telling us. Exactly. What we want to hear. I would say. That anyone. Who is optimistic. As to the survival. Of the reformed.

Faith. In this land of ours. Is again saying. Exactly. What people want to hear. In my view. We have been pushed. To the very.

Perimeter. Of the national life. We are. Totally. Inconsequential. Culturally. Politically. Educationally. Religiously. Theologically. And yet. We have always been tempted. Tempted by the people.

Tempted by you. We have been tempted.

[ 24 : 47 ] To be optimistic. Tempted to be comforting. Because. The false prophet. The false prophet. Will always say. What people want him to say. And so we have this terrible phenomenon.

Of men who are wolves. But who look like sheep. How then. Are we going to distinguish. How can we know.

The false prophet. Let me remind you. What Paul says. In Acts 20. To the Ephesian elders. He said.

Of your own selves. Shall men arise. Speaking. Perverse things. They will speak. Perverse things. In other words. The great test. Is their message. Their false. Prophets.

[ 25 : 45 ] There is a standard. A theological standard. By which you contest. The prophecy. You contest the message. Now Christ will mention.

Ultimately. That there is a test of character. By their fruits. You shall know them. But before you ever get to that point. There is a test.

Which is. A theological test. There is a test. In terms of truth and error. There is a test. Of a message. There is a test.

That is concerned. With the kind of words. That these men speak. Let's look at it for a moment. In a little more detail. What kind of words.

Does a false prophet speak. Well I would say. First of all this. He speaks words. Characterized.

[ 26 : 42 ] By theological ambiguity. His message. Will be theologically vague. It will be doctrinally. Obscure.

It will be indefinite. It will not speak with clarity. On the great theological issues. Now this man very often.

Will not deny the truth. He is not an explicit false teacher. He is not an explicit heritage.

It is the vagueness. It is the vagueness. And the indefiniteness. It is often the absence. Of certain great.

And pointed affirmations. For example. He will often say to you. That he has no patience. With the creeds. He has no patience.

[ 27 : 39 ] With the confessions. Because he says. The Bible alone. Is what I go by. But that man wants the Bible.

Not because of his great love for it. But because he thinks. It is less definite. And it is less pointed. Than the creeds.

And the confessions. This man does not want precision. He does not want to be tied down. Now on the contrary. The real prophet.

Is precise. He is precise. On the great fundamentals. His trumpet. Will give. An absolutely certain sound.

He believes. In the deity of Christ. His consubstantial deity. With God the Father. He believes. In the literal resurrection of Christ.

[ 28 : 38 ] He believes. In the literal virgin birth. He will tell you. Where he stands. On the issue of inspiration. He will tell you. Where he stands. On justification.

By faith alone. He will tell you. Where he stands. On human depravity. He will tell you. Where he stands. On election predestination. He will tell you.

Where he stands. On heaven and on hell. He will tell you. Precisely. Of the need. To be born again. Of the need for conversion.

And of the need for faith. Now I am very conscious. That there are areas. Where theologian. Must speak modestly. And must say.

I am not quite certain. And must say. I need time to reflect. Before I answer that. But I am speaking. Of the great.

[ 29 : 36 ] Core doctrines. Of the great. Foundation doctrines. And I am saying. That the false prophet. Is very often.

Vague and ambiguous. Not where there is a place. For illegitimate. Modesty. But where. The bible. Has made its mind.

In the mind of God. An ambiguously clear. And where there is no call. Whatever. For modesty. Theologically. But only a call. For precise.

And totally certain. And totally confident. Affirmation. So the false prophet. First of all. Will speak vaguely. And ambiguously.

On theological topics. Our second thing is this. The false prophet. Does not point men. To the straight gate.

[ 30 : 33 ] Now you come back. To this mighty. Word of God. With all its glorious logic. And all the glorious dynamics. Relationships. Different parts.

You see. How here in this chapter. Of Matthew's gospel. The Lord has spoken. In verse 13. Of the straight gate. And again. In verse 40. Straight is the gate.

And few. There be that find it. And immediately. He says. Beware of false prophets. Now I suggest. That in the mind.

Of Christ. The straight gate. And the false prophets. Are directly. And intimately. Related. And the relation is this.

Why is it. That so few people. Find. The straight gate. And the Lord says to us. It's because of the false prophets.

[ 31 : 34 ] Those men. Have great prestige. And when people. Have spiritual problems. Or questions. They ask them. And these false prophets.

They do not point men. To the straight gate. And that's why. Few there be. That find it. Now the terrible thing. Christ is saying to us.

Is that even in the church itself. If you ask. What is the road to salvation. Many. Many people. Many people. In the church. Will not point you.

To the straight gate. And that's why. So few find. The straight gate. These people. Will not say. Today. Christ is the only savior.

They will not say. The cross. Is the only salvation. They will not say. That the Christian faith. Is the only true religion. They will take out of the gospel.

[ 32 : 32 ] This whole terrible element. Of uniqueness. And exclusiveness. This whole. Onlyness. Only. There is only one way. There is only one name.

There is only one savior. There is only one atonement. But the false prophet. Will not say it. He will say today. There are many roads.

To God. He will say today. There is truth. In all religions. But Christ says. I am the way.

And the terrible tragedy. In the church of God. Is that even its great men. Are not pointing sinners.

To the straight gate.

And saying that's the only way. They are not saying to sinners. You must go through that gate. They are not pleading. With men.

[ 33 : 31 ] To come to Christ. As the only savior. And it really surely. Is one of the most. Monumental criteria. Of the integrity.

Of a Christian pulpit. Whether it is. Preaching the straight gate. Whether it is. Pointing out clearly. Its location. Defining it precisely.

And pleading with men. To go through that gate. Saying to them. It's not enough. To find it. It's not enough.

To be able to describe it. You must go through it. The false prophet. Will not say that. He will not preach.

The exclusiveness. Of Christianity. And equally. He does not preach. The narrow way. And the narrow way.

[ 34 : 29 ] Of course. Is. What's been defined. For us. In Matthew. 5 to 7. The false prophet. Makes discipleship easy.

He makes the road broad. He takes all the difficulties away. But Christ says.

It's a narrow way. It is narrow. In terms. Of its ethical stringency. This sermon.

With its terrible demands. That we turn the other cheek. That we go the extra mile. That we love our enemies. That we be free.

From covetousness. And. From anxiety. And from weariness. That isn't to be pushed. Away to the fringe.

[ 35 : 25 ] Of our discipleship. The only way. To God. Is the way. Of those great chapters. It is the way.

Of holiness. And there is no tolerance. In this sermon. Of any antinomianism. Of any. Lawless discipleship. A discipleship.

A discipleship. Lacking. In ethical stringency. But the false prophet. Will say. The latter killeth. The false prophet.

Will say. We're not under law. We're under grace. And he'll distort. Those great words. Whereas. Whether it's a true prophet. He will say. If you love me.

Keep my commandments. That is the narrow way. So this prophet. He is theologically vague. He doesn't point men. To the straight gate. He doesn't.

[ 36 : 19 ] Point men. To the narrow way. And insist upon conforming. To that. Narrow will. And again. I would say this. The false prophet. Is not faithful.

Now I'm using the word. Faithful. In a very specialized sense. For a moment. Faithful means.

Rebuking. The actual sins. Of his heroes. Now the false prophet.

May very often. Have a reputation. For faithfulness. And he may have. That reputation. On the basis. That he is. Always rebuking. And always criticizing.

Absent friends. He may stand. In a Protestant pulpit. Condemning the papacy. Condemning. Jehovah's witnesses.

Condemning Mormons. Condemning modernism. Condemning. Condemning. Condemning.

Condemning. But he will not tell. Free church people. What's wrong with them. That is her big problem.

[ 37 : 21 ] That's what sometimes. Makes the ministry. Such a terrible strain. That we have to tell you. What's wrong.

Knowing that. You are not less. More guilty than we are. Are we less guilty than you. Knowing that very often. Her judgmentalness.

Must seem like arrogance. And yet her mandate is. Not to tell those. In churches across the road. What's wrong with them. But to tell you.

What's wrong with you. That is a problem. And the false prophet. Is not prepared. To do that. He will condemn. Those who are not there.

Do it very eloquently. But he is not pointed. In relation. To the audience. That he is actually facing. And that again.

[ 38 : 15 ] Is part of the. Pressure that you exert. The terrible pressure. On the pulpit. To say to you. What we know.

That you want to hear. And. Then again. There is this. That the false prophet. Is very often. Not realistic. He is. Not faithful. At one level. Is not telling you. You are false. At another level. He is not realistic. I mean. Particularly this. That the false prophet. Comes often. With a panacea. With a cure-all.

And he will say. To a church. Listening. With bated breath. And sitting agog. He will say. To them. I have. The answer. And it is always.

[ 39 : 15 ] One answer. What we need. Is. One thing. It will cure everything. And it is. Mightily plausible. Men will say.

What we need. Is an educated ministry. Our men will say. We need. Holy Spirit. Baptism. Our men will say. We need revival. And the whole thing.

Becomes so simple. So. Monogrammatic. One thing. And ignores. The terrible complexity. Of the church's disease.

And the glorious complexity. Of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I don't believe. The church is one problem. And I don't believe.

That there is one answer. I don't believe. There is any panacea. I don't believe. To be more pointed still. That the answer is revival. That may be part of an answer.

[ 40 : 18 ] It may be the umbrella. Over a great complex of answers. But it is an emphasis. Which you preach too much. Is only going to paralyze the church.

And reduce us to a hopeless. And impracticable. Inertia. So there is your false prophet. He is theologically vague. He doesn't point men to the straight gate.

Doesn't point to the narrow way. Doesn't deal in fidelity. With the sins of his own people. Isn't realistic. After the church's problem.

And the cure. For those problems. The effect. The effect. But then there is another approach too. Is this Christ. Look. Not only at this man's message. But look also.

At the effects. Of the message. Look at the fruit. That it bears. And do so. I suggest.

[ 41 : 17 ] In two different directions. The effect. The effect. Of that message. On the prophet's own life. What kind of man is he.

What kind of man. Has his message made. Let me remind you of Paul. And his soul. Response. To his own message.

The way. It affected him. The fruit. It bore. In his own personal life. For one thing. Paul didn't care. About his own reputation. He tells the church. At Philippi. That. Men were going away. With his converts.

And they were alienating. Paul's converts. From himself. Those converted. Through Paul's ministry. They were being.

[ 42 : 16 ] Filled. With unfavorable. Ideas. About the great apostle. And they were losing. Their love. And their affection. For him. And what does Paul say?

I don't mind. He says. Because these men. Have the right message. They may be. They may be. They may be. Pitching it. From the wrong motives. They may be.

Using it. For my detriment. And for my downfall. But they've got. The truth. And so long. As they have. The truth. I don't care.

What they think. Of me. Or what effect. They have. On the work. That I began. And of which. I laid the foundation. To Paul. The message. It was everything.

Whereas very often. To the false prophet. His own reputation. His own standing. His own popularity. Rating. Is the thing that matters.

[ 43 : 16 ] Put it another way. Paul says. I preach not myself. There was a deliberate. If facing. Of the apostle's.

Own personality. He wasn't trying. To project. An image. Of his own. Cleverness. He didn't. Go on. Constantly. About the sacrifice. That he had made. In becoming. A Christian. He didn't. Parade his talents. Or indulge.

In autobiography. He obscured. His personality. And he preached. Christ. And preached. The cross. That was the fruit. That is message.  
Paul. But the greatest thing. Of all. I think. Was this. That great word. In which the apostle. Says. That he preached. In weakness.

[ 44 : 10 ] And fear. And much trembling. He was weak. He didn't feel. Strong enough.

To support. The message. He was. Frightened. Frightened. Not so much. Of the messages. Of his own. Inability.

To handle it. He was. Always afraid. That the assignment. Would prove. Too big. And the burden. Would prove. Too great. Because the message.

Was so vast. And Paul. Was so small. And Paul. Was so weak. And so Paul. Quaked. And Paul trembled. He was never. The master. Of the message. He never felt.

He had it under control. Never felt. It was his. It was always. The gospel. Of Jesus Christ. And I do think.

[ 45 : 04 ] It's important. As we try. To evaluate. Men. In the complex. Church. Situation. Today. To ask. Ourselves.

Are these men. More concerned. With their own popularity. Than with the message. That they bear. Are these men.

Projecting. Their own personalities. Trading them. Quite deliberately. Are these men. As they stand. Before you. With their jokes.

And their stories. Are they. In weakness. And fear. And much trembling. Is there any hint. Of a stammer. Or stutter. A reservation. As they. Preach the message.

Because. They're afraid. Of the message. In all its grandeur. What effect. Is the message. Having. Upon themselves. And what effect.

[ 46 : 01 ] Is the message. Having upon the church. Look at the churches. Where you have had. False prophets. Look at the.

Mainstream. Churches of Scotland. Churches of Scotland. Today. And ask yourselves. What harvest. Has been reaped. From the sowing.

Of Macleod. Campbell. Of Robertson. Smith. Of George Adams. Smith. And Robert Rainey. What harvest. Has been reaped.

Look at churches. In dusk. Are these churches. Bearing. The fruit. Of truth. Has the distinction. Between the church. And the world. Been obliterated. Are the services. More like discotheques. Than the solemn.

[ 46 : 59 ] Gathering. Of the church. Of God. Not that I want. Long fists. And that I want. Pietism. And sanctimoniousness. But if worship.

Is about the presence. Of God. Then. People. Must. In that presence. Say. Worse be. This is a dreadful place.

There is no worship. Without holiness. There is no worship. Without anxiety. There is no worship. Without unks. And tension. The moment. We have turned it.

Into a discotheque. We have the alarm bells ringing. I'm not going to say. One discotheque. Kind of service. Means Pharisee.

Means Antichrist. I'm not saying that. But I'm saying. The bells are ringing. And the danger signals are flashing. If men are not afraid.

[ 47 : 55 ] If men are unconscious. Of the holiness of the God. In whose presence. They stand. What fruit. Is the message bearing. In the man's own life.

What fruit is it bearing. In his congregation's life. Is it a worldly congregation. Is it entertainment oriented. Is it evangelistically committed.

And passionate. Let's ask ourselves. Ask ourselves that. Is it united. In the love of Christ. Is it tolerant.

And loving. In its attitudes. To other branches. Of the church of God. I read this week. A book. By a man.

Who is a reformed Christian. With capital R. And italics. And underlining. And neon signs. Reformed.

[ 48 : 50 ] Reformed. But he doesn't think. That Jim Packer. Is reformed. He doesn't think. See it's. Perkins.

Was reformed. Or Charles Hodge. Or B.B. Warfield. Or J.G. Metron. Or even John Calvin himself. And I stand aghast.

What is the spiritual condition. Of that kind of mentality. I'm saying in other words. There are not only. Liberal false prophets. There are also.

High. High. Orthodox. False prophets. There are churches. Which are like discotheques. And there are churches. Which put a sign up.

And say. The gospel. Pitched here. Next Lord's Day. At 6.30 p.m. All. Welcome. And that is their. Whole response. To the great commission.

[ 49 : 48 ] God. Fitch. Put up a notice. And say. All sinners. Welcome. Well let me close. There are two great dangers. The danger.

First of all. Of censoriousness. There are two great things. And I don't want any of you. Leaving this church this morning. With a smell of. Hasentive heresy. In your nostrils.

I don't want you going out. To look. For all those heretics. And becoming. Hyper sensitive.

Theologically. And finding fault. With all the preaching.

You hear. There is a good deal. Of that. A good deal. Of the easy test. Does he use. The AB. There are powers.

Of the reformed world. Today. And if you go. To the pulpit. And you announce. Your text. From the AB. Then you are. Absolutely orthodox. Because.

[ 50 : 48 ] You have passed. The simple test. Again. Do you say. Thou and thee. Or do you say. You. It's a marvelously. Simple test.

Do you use. The word. Rapture. Do you speak. If Holy Spirit. Baptism. Do you condemn. The Pope. As Antichrist. The simple test. And so many.

Poor brethren. Fail it. And. They're condemned. Now let's have. No. Censoriousness. And yet. Right beside that.

The other peril. The peril. Of credulity. And that is the emphasis. Of the text. We have this morning. Credulity.

But the Lord's people. Are so easily. Led astray. Oh that marvelous word of Paul. In Galatians. Oh foolish Galatians.

[ 51 : 48 ] Who has bewitched you. Who has put a spell on you. That you've abandoned. All the teaching of Paul. All the teaching of your fathers.

All the teaching of those. Who taught yourself. Who has put the spell on you. And often. As we look today. As I look at. Many parts of the church.

And parts of the free church. That's exactly what I feel. It's like people with a spell. There is such credulity. People.

Yield their assent. So readily. To false teachers. Especially. If he happens. Not to be free church. If he happens.

To be handsome. If he happens. To have a pleasant voice. And good musical backing. That's not being too harsh. Because sometimes.

[ 52 : 45 ] That is all it amounts to. You dissect the message. And there is nothing. There was nothing. But personality. And yet.

Those who have been grounded in truth. They go after it. And what then do I say? Let's not have censoriousness. But you've got the Bible in your hands.

Search the scripture. Whether these things be so. Check if the message contradicts the scripture. Check. This above all.

Does it emphasize. What the Bible says. Ought to be emphasized. Because it may deny no truth. And yet it's balanced.

It's proportion. It's emphasis. Be totally wrong. Check. If the message helps you understand. The word of God.

[ 53 : 44 ] Check. If it helps you love your neighbor. Christian and non-Christian. Check. If it impresses upon you. The holiness of God. Check.

If it impresses upon you. The glory of God's love. And fills you with zeal. For the magnifying of his name. And if not. Then let there be no God's speed.

If not. Then do not. Give the false prophet. The encouragement. Of your attendance. Or.

Of your presence. You bear in mind. These men count heads. Every single person. In their audience.

Is a trophy. Every single member. Of their audience. Is a confirmation. Of the correctness. Of their own egotistical.

[ 54 : 41 ] Self-assessment. There comes a point. When I say. When I say. Not only. Know God's speed. When I say.

Not only. Don't attend their meetings. There's a point. When I say. Let them be another. If any man. Preach. Any other gospel.

Says Paul. That I have preached unto you. Let him be another. I wouldn't say it often. And I haven't said it often. But there are times.

When we are confronted. By such monumental. And monstrous discussions. Of the gospel. Of the glory. Of the blessed God. That all we can say.

Is let that creature. Be another. Take heed. How you hear. Take heed.

[ 55 : 38 ] What do you hear? Let us pray. O Lord.

We ask thee. To give us thy blessing. Upon thy word. And to help us. To relate to it. Not negatively. But to relate to it positively. We thank thee.

O Lord. For all who have been through prophets. For all who have taught us. And ministered thy word. To us. We pray thee. In grace. To raise up.

Many more such. For thy name's glory. In our day. Guide us. O Lord. Through this holy day. That it may be. For all enriching. Through Jesus Christ.

O Lord. Amen. Thank you.