

# The Danger of False Teaching

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 27 October 2014

Preacher: Tom Holland

[0:00] You might recall that last Monday night we examined four factors that motivate us to serve the Lord.

! The purpose of the work and the promise of eternal blessing.

And we had a good time last Monday. You might call a lot of you stayed. I think all of us had a great discussion. Several of you guys came up and said you were benefited by the lesson, and that always blessed the heart of a teacher.

I think we had a comforting time in the Lord. But let me say, whenever you're teaching or sitting under a teacher or studying not the inspired word but commentaries or whatever, there is always a danger lurking in the shadows.

And it benefits us to know there's a danger and to be able to identify that danger.

[1:27] And this evening we're going to expose the danger for what it is. Now, several of you have been to my farm. I think it's very beautiful. I wish over the years I had taken more walks on its paths and talked more to the Lord out there.

And maybe that's reserved for the winter of my life, which I'm not there yet, but I can see it from here. When I retire and whatever.

When the weather turns cooler, my woods remind me of the Robert Frost poem where he says, the woods are lovely, dark, and deep. And to me they are.

But when I walk in the woods, there is always danger lurking, even when it's very tranquil.

In my woods are ticks and chiggers, copperhead snakes, bobcats, and coyotes. And if you know what you're doing, those things won't hurt you.

[2:41] First of all, I only take a walk in the woods after one or two heavy freezes. I want the ticks and chiggers to go to sleep until spring.

You know, Oklahoma State did a study of ticks because Oklahoma is overrun with ticks. And they took those things down to almost like absolute zero. They even took some amount with a little hammer and they went beep and it just shattered.

Then they gradually brought them to room temperature and they started crawling around. There's a theory that the colder it gets, the less ticks. You're a wood guy. You know they just bore deeper in those woods.

You can walk through my woods in the summer with an umbrella and you can hear them dropping on the umbrella. I mean, they're nasty. But I want ticks and chiggers to go to sleep.

Snakes are pretty much in hibernation. I've got one area where I'm convinced there's a cave. And I know, you know, I'm very familiar with the entrance. But 15 years ago I saw a black snake crawl in there so I won't go in there because it might still be in there.

[3:50] I really would like to go in there and check it out. But even the bobcats and coyotes are leery of making contact with me unless they're really hungry, you know, and they pack up.

And I always carry a gun just in case. I also have poachers that come on there, deer, killing deer. Well, there's some danger.

Beautiful woods. Love them. But there's some danger. Paul has been writing to his young protege, Timothy. And he's been giving Timothy very sound advice on how he is to carry on after Paul has departed this life.

And Paul's writing from prison. He's not in the winter, but it's gotten cold and he can see it. He's not going to get out this time. This is not his first time in a Roman prison.

In many respects, Timothy is Paul's legacy. And all of you should have a legacy. Maybe it's your sons, your grandchildren, people you teach, mentor, whatever.

[5:06] But we should all have a legacy. But because his writings are inspired by the Holy Spirit, they are useful to every generation of believers.

What Paul told Timothy, he would tell to every believer in this room. It would be the same advice. In that regard, all students of God's word are part of Paul's legacy.

But now Paul, writing from a Roman prison, is at a point where he is going to warn Timothy about a danger that is lurking, not in the woods, but in the pulpits.

And that danger is false teachers. I've taught in the last year Acts, 1 Timothy, we're in Thessalonians.

I've taught Jude, Peter, well some of Peter, not much, going to John, and the Gospels.

[6:14] The Lord and the apostles have a lot to say about false teachers. It's everywhere.

Warnings about false teachers. And Paul's going to talk to us tonight about the danger of false teachers.

And he's going to talk to us next Monday night. False teachers have plagued the church since the day of Pentecost. They were prevalent in Paul's day.

They are very prevalent in our day. Diane was talking about some guy that's claiming he's Jesus and all his people are bound down. And then there's this Puerto Rican guy living in Chicago, claims he is the greater than Jesus.

He's succeeding where Jesus failed. You can look at that on YouTube. There are false teachers across our land.

And dare I say this, some fill pulpits in our community. Some fill pulpits in our community. Listen to what Paul has to say. 2 Timothy 2, verse 14 and following.

[7:20] 2 Timothy 3, verse 14 and following. Remind them of these things and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers.

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth, but avoid worldly and empty chatter for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene.

Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who have gone astray from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already taken place and they upset the faith of some.

The significance of their life. They thought they'd miss the resurrection, the second coming.

Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands having this seal, the Lord knows those who are His.

And everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness. So Paul here is issuing a warning concerning false teachers.

[8:32] By the way, I apologize, Wes and others, I don't have any handouts tonight. I didn't get to finish this, but I'll get them to you. Here's warnings concerning false teachers.

Remind them of these things, Timothy and Highland Park leaders, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless.

Timothy received his calling from the Lord Jesus Christ through the Apostle Paul. The calling was twofold.

First, Timothy was to boldly and firmly hold on to the truth that he had been taught by Paul. That is a principle for each of us.

Second, comma, because it came out in 2 Timothy. Second, comma, Timothy was to pass on these truths to those who would then pass on the same truths to others.

[9:36] And you see how that's replicated down through time? Timothy to others, to us, on down through the quarters of time. That, again, is a principle for us.

That is the way that Christianity has grown through the ages and continues to spread. And let me just add here, you don't do it through crusades. You can't force people to believe.

What you do it through is the exchange of ideas in a free environment. That's how Christianity grows and spreads. Accurate knowledge of the truth of God is the only way that falsehood and deceit can be identified and defeated.

Let me read that again. It's very important. Accurate knowledge of the truth of God is the only way that falsehood and deceit can be identified and defeated.

There's an old story. It's been around, but it's very applicable to us. And a question was asked one time, how can we identify false teaching that comes from a false teacher?

[10:51] Well, the great example of this is the U.S. Secret Service. They have their academy. Much like I went to the FBI academy, there's a Secret Service academy. Part of their responsibilities, in addition to guarding the president and dignitaries, is work counterfeiting, counterfeit money.

So they go through this elaborate training for months, and they have to learn how to identify counterfeit money. And over the years, as the courses have developed, they've discovered the very best way to be able to identify counterfeit money is to know what the real, genuine money looks like.

That's the best way to tell a fake is by knowing the real deal. The best way to identify a false teaching is by knowing what the true teaching on the subject is.

And, you know, when a false teacher comes into our midst and says something, we ought to go on point. You know, we just ought to go on point. I remember not long ago, some of you might have seen it on the Internet, but Victoria Osteen, Jill, and she was talking about, you know, we're not here for God.

We're going to make ourselves happy. We're not here to make God happy. I mean, she went on, and Joe, old bobblehead, was up there, yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, someone, I kept waiting for someone in that audience to stand up, rip their clothes, and say, this is blasphemy, and I'm getting out of here.

[12:26] Before the roof falls. I kept waiting for that, but it didn't happen. There is a small passage, and I love to memorize small passages.

Jesus wept. Yeah, Jesus wept. That's the standby. There's a small passage, though, in Romans. Jesus wept is in John 11.

In Romans 4.3. Paul asked a question there. I've used this a thousand times. What do the scriptures say?

Somebody comes to me with this elaborate theological question, theological argument, yearning for information, or trying to spread false information.

And I look at, you know, the issue of homosexuality. Lesbianism. What do the scriptures say? You know, God comes up to me. Are you for that or against it? What do the scriptures say? Let's study what the scriptures say.

[13:33] Your answer to any question, thought or teaching is right in the book. All you've got to do is figure out what the scriptures say about it.

Now, Paul again begins this section of scripture with the word remind. We saw that last week. It's an imperative. That means it is a command to be obeyed.

Paul then uses, injects the word them. Remind them who are the them. They are the congregation that Timothy served, namely the church at Ephesus.

That's where Timothy was the pastor. By the way, that's in southwestern Turkey. I really kicked myself. I was within 20 miles of there, and I didn't go over there. I said, I'll do it the next time.

Well, there was never a next time. That's happened to me a lot. The word things refers to the things that we have already studied in this chapter.

[14:38] One thing is our responsibility to pass on truth to others so they will do the same. We are also to remind others that the Lord's work is like that of a teacher, soldier, athlete, and farmer.

Remember that? We are also to remind others that Jesus is the preeminent one. And that there is power in God's word and purpose in God's work.

We have studied all this in this chapter. Peter understood just what his duty was to the Lord. He understood what do the scriptures say. He expressed it clearly in his second letter.

Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them and have been established in the truth, which is present with you.

I consider it right as long as I am in this earthly dwelling to stir you up by way of reminder, knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me he's going to die.

[15:42] And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure, you will be able to call these things to mind. You'll remember them. Well, we're in the 21st century.

We're remembering the words of Paul and Peter and John and so forth. Now, Paul gives to Timothy a stern warning. He says, I solemnly charge you.

That is a very strong in the English. I'm going to solemnly charge you. But it is even stronger in the Greek language. Again, we have an imperative so that it must be obeyed.

It is to be obeyed. And then he adds some words here because it makes it doubly important because Paul says, I solemnly charge you in the presence of God.

So God's the onlooker. Of course, he always is. And there's never a time when God is not present in the life of a believer.

[16 : 48] But when we are doing battle with false teachers, I would submit God is especially and uniquely present to defend his own from error.

He's there with them. When we really look onto the truth that God is always present, it should increase our fear of him.

And by the way, that's reverent trust. It's not cringing in the corner. And increase our desire to serve him faithfully. Those things should be increased.

With the certain knowledge that God is present, Paul then solemnly charges the church at Ephesus not to wrangle about words which is useless.

You know, we're from Oklahoma. Wrangle. We kind of know that word. You know, Texas, Oklahoma, whatever. We're not to wrangle about words which is useless. This carries with it a waging.

[17 : 52] It basically means waging a war of words with false teachers. Paul says that's useless. You know, I've witnessed a lot of guys in cults.

I never got to first base with them. And I studied up on those things even. But a false teacher is present to undermine God's word and not be instructed by it.

If we debate them using the word of God, we run the risk of allowing the word to be on the same level as that of human wisdom, which is what the false teachers use against us.

They want it brought down to that level. A number of years ago, I entered into a bait with the leading Mormon elder in this region. The battle raged.

And after four hours, I realized we're not getting anywhere. There were a bunch of people on both sides. So I asked this guy, I said, if Jesus Christ walked into this room and we all knew who he was, and he walked up to you and said, Joseph Smith was wrong and a false prophet, how would you react?

[19 : 21] What would you say? And the elder said, I would look Jesus in the eye and tell him that he's wrong. And I turned to the host in the home I was at, which only about one or two guys in here will even recognize the name, Kenny Smith.

And I said, Kenny, I really don't think we have further need to debate our positions, which was a real polite way of saying, Kenny, you need to toss this guy out on his ear because we weren't going to get anywhere after that.

And I've never done that again. Again, I didn't realize, but it really was fruitless. Now, if a Jehovah Witness comes to your door, he wants to talk to you about the theocratic kingdom.

And then you say to him, do you believe in the Trinity? Oh, no, I don't believe in the Trinity. Why not? It's not in the Bible. The word Trinity is not in the Bible, and it's not. Then you say, neither is the word theocratic kingdom. And then they say, we've got to go.

Well, there they go. The Lord warned us that in these last days, do that on your porch. The Lord warned us that in these last days there would be a proliferation, for you guys from Oklahoma, that's a gaggle, of false teachers.

[20 : 35] Why is that? One thing, well, first of all, because Jesus said there would be. That settles it. We don't need any more. But I'm going to give you more.

I'm a Baptist guy. One thing that lends itself to such hostile false teachers is the fact that we live in a day when Christians are less and less familiar with Scripture and sound doctrine.

They're easily led astray. Fellas, you know there are 265 people leave the Southern Baptist Convention every day and join a cult. 265. 265. Pretty amazing.

There are churches surrounding ours that will not touch the study of doctrine because they say, oh, it's divisive. Don't ever teach doctrine. It's divisive.

By the way, doctrine is a glue that holds us together. This attitude leaves people defenseless from the onslaught of false teaching. They go into a church.

[21 : 37] The guy up there says, we don't study doctrine. And now the masses are in confusion. They have no ammunition, nothing in their quiver to shoot back.

And they fall prey to serious error. There was a church in this town. And it's still sort of around, but it's almost ready to close. One time they had 450 people.

The pastor got up one Sunday. He said, God talked to me. He came into my study last night, and I was sitting there. He sat down. We visited for a long time. I'm thinking, oh, man, John fell at his feet as if dead. You're something else. And he said, God told me no more Sunday school, no more children's church, and no more sermons, no more preaching.

So I'm going to invite people every Sunday, special guests, just to come and tell us what they believe. He had a guy from the American Atheist Association come to tell him what he believed. Stood in the pulpit. Now, we are not told the specifics, but we do know that the church at Ephesus was being threatened by those holding to doctrinal error.

[22:47] Paul had already warned Timothy in his first letter. The Spirit explicitly says that in the latter days some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.

And if you keep it record, that's 1 Timothy 4.1. Demonic doctrines were already attacking the church where Timothy was the pastor, and Paul was aware of this, probably through what he had heard, but also through the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ working in him.

Now, you can read about Ephesus if you go over, don't do it now, but in the second chapter of the book of Revelation. It's on the way out, and right now the only thing there is ruins.

Interesting, the church at Smyrna, the persecuted church, it's still in Turkey. It's in a little town called, a big town called Ismir. I don't need a gin. I've been there. And there's still a church at Smyrna.

Ismir was the Arab name. They took the Roman name Smyrna when they captured that and made it into an Arab name. Well, good.

[24:00] We're 24 minutes in, and I got the introduction out of the way. So now let's get to our lesson. Paul is going to teach us the reasons we must avoid and oppose false teachers.

And here are the six reasons. None of them are original with me. And we're not going to get through all six tonight. Why do we oppose these guys? It lays to ruin those who listen to false teaching.

I mean, if you make a head, there used to be a guy, he died, and I can't think of his name. We had people in this church that watched him every Sunday night after church for the entertainment. And he was a false teacher.

He was horrible. It lays to ruin those who listen to false teaching. It brings shame on the teacher. It leads to ungodliness.

It spreads rapidly, infecting the church. It upsets the faith of some. It characterizes those who do not belong to the Lord. So let's get a few of these under our belt before we dismiss.

[25:11] False teaching ruins those who hear. People that subject themselves to false teaching ruins them. And in 2 Timothy 2.14, the second part of that verse, Paul says, And leads to the ruin of the hearers.

Pretty plain. If left unchecked, false teaching can damage and destroy an individual.

It can damage and destroy a church. It can damage and destroy an entire denomination. And trust me when I say there are denominations that are gone when you're talking about faithfulness to the word or are departing, you know, in a stature of departing.

In my lifetime, whole denominations have been destroyed through the embracing of false teaching. And I think there's enough young guys in here that have not been around this church that I can say this, although it will be repetitious for some of you older guys.

I'm trying not to look at Mike and Jerry. Our denomination came very close to destruction. We flirted with disaster in the 70s and early 80s.

[26:35] And the reason it didn't happen is God raised up godly men to do battle with the deadly cancer of biblical error. God raised up Adrian Rogers, W.A. Criswell, Paige Patterson, Tom Ellef, John, our former pastor's father.

And there were others. And the interesting thing was these guys, they had to be very careful because the Baptist press, our newspaper, you get the Baptist messenger.

Well, the national one is Baptist press. In those days, they were very liberal, as were the professors, as were the heads of the Nashville offices. Oh, yeah, Pressler was also instrumental, Judge Pressler.

These guys couldn't just go and say, well, let's meet Sunday at your church because they were being surveilled. Do you believe that? They had to sneak off, so to speak. And they hatched the plans of taking back the convention. And Judge Pressler is really responsible for that. He wrote a book called A Hill to Die On. And it's a good book.

[27 : 50] They hatched the plan. And they went and found this little old church history professor. Taught church history for 50 years.

Tried. But he was a great guy. And he had a little house in Missouri. And they snuck to that house, avoided the Baptist press, and spent hours hatching the plan.

These great men. And that man's name was Dr. Crozier. And he had a daughter named Lucille and a son-in-law who was a pastor named Mike McBride, who preached here for 17 years.

And they were in his father-in-law's home. And Mike and Lucille were serving coffee and cookies.

And Mike said, I was like the, you know, who to our big old ears that I was listening, you know.

And the greats there were hatching the plan to take back the Southern Baptist Convention. And it started in that little Dr. Crozier's home. When a church allows false teaching in their midst, two things happen.

[29 : 08] False teaching erects a barrier between unbelievers and truth. They will not be able to understand salvation by grace apart from merit.

The false teaching, though, also damages true believers, does great harm to true believers. Such false teaching can spread seeds of confusion and doubt.

And these things can lead to discouragement and disobedience. Now, the word ruin there, it ruins, leads to the ruin of the hearers.

It's very interesting. The word ruin in the Greek language is catastrophe, from which we get the English word catastrophe. Except Greeks with a K, transliterated.

And ours, of course, is with a C. But it leads, you didn't know you knew a Greek word. It leads to catastrophe. You probably don't pronounce it like that. But over the centuries, false teachers have had a catastrophic impact on the church.

[30 : 16] The word has the idea of being overturned or overthrown. It is used here in the use here in 2 Timothy. It refers to one that is spiritually ruined by something false that is being believed as something true.

Does that make sense? You've got a falsehood. But we believe it because we think, well, that's got to be true. And that leads to catastrophe.

And I would suggest catastrophe to the individual, to the church, and even to the denomination, if it grows. Now, we need to understand something here. Paul is referring to a false teaching whereby the false teacher intentionally subverts the truth.

We can fall into error. We can make mistakes that are unintentional. But this is intentional subversion of truth. Once subverted, the truth, there's a vacuum.

And nature abhors what? A vacuum. And once truth is subverted, it is then replaced with the falsehood by design of the false teacher.

[31 : 38] And by design of he who stands behind the false teacher. And that's Satan himself or a demon in the service of Satan.

Because that's where false teaching comes from. It is all very intentional and it has wreaked havoc on the church. Dare I say this? What we believe here at Highland Park.

We're in the minority. We're in the minority in the Bible Belt. That's disappointing. We're in the minority in the country and we're in the minority in the world.

We really are. The only other use of the word catastrophe in the New Testament is when Peter refers to God condemning Sodom and Gomorrah.

And he said, and it led to their catastrophic destruction because of their great sin. Someone needs to explain that to our Supreme Court justices.

[32 : 39] It leads to catastrophe. Sodom and Gomorrah style living leads to catastrophe. Peter's greatest concern was that false teachers would introduce destructive heresies and this would lead to a denial of Christ.

You can read about that in 2 Peter chapter 2 starting at verse 1. False teaching also brings shame on the teachers. Verse 15.

Be diligent to present yourself approved of God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed handling accurately the word of truth. In context, Paul is referring for teachers to be diligent and give

their maximum effort to be approved of God.

Teachers do that when they study, interpret, explain, and preach or teach God's word. In the book of 1 Timothy, we learn that elders who rule well will then receive, be worthy of double honor, especially those who work at preaching or teaching.

1 Timothy 5.17. We should always remember that we are not here to please men. We're not here to please men.

[34 : 00] The word is designed to be a presentation to God so the teacher can be approved by God.

God's the approval here. It's nice when people come and say, hey, you did a good job. Sure, a lot better than what you normally do. But we're here to please God. We are to present ourselves to God.

And that concept there in Greek is to stand alongside of or in front of God. It is like standing inspection in the service.

If we pass, then God approves or counts us worthy. Now, what should be the supreme purpose of the preacher or teacher of God's word?

The supreme purpose is to please God. I've told you before, when you go to bed, turn out the light and don't wake your wife up and just say, even in your mind, are you well pleased with me today?

[35 : 02] And if the answer is no, get up, go into your living room, don't turn on the lights, talk to the Lord about it. He's got very big ears. Leave me eat and talk to God.

The supreme purpose is to please God. Paul had to explain that to the church of Galatia when he was on earth. Hey, guys, you're not here to please men. You're only here to please God.

Look, the Spirit of God is using these examples, but all the while, it is a commentary on false teachers. He talks a lot here through Paul about true teachers, but he's really talking about false teachers.

He is in effect saying that false teachers have every reason to be ashamed. The true teacher can stand before God and not be ashamed, but the false teacher has every reason to exercise fearful shame knowing that he will stand condemned before the judge of the universe.

The irony is that even in our day, false teachers claim to be servants of God. In Jesus' day, it was the scribes and Pharisees.

[36 : 13] In our day, it may be the extreme liberal church, their leaders, or it may be the extreme charismatic guys who are in it solely for financial gain.

And I'm certainly not going to single anyone out, but Joel Osteen and others of that ilk have much to be ashamed of. Much to be ashamed of.

False teaching leads onward to ungodliness. Verse 16, But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness. So the third danger here of false teaching is that it leads to ungodliness.

Worldly chatter is that which is time-wasting, confusing, and spiritually harmful. It's harmful. Paul is saying that unbelievers can fall prey to false teaching, but so can true believers.

That's why you've got to be grounded in the Word, and that's more than 30 minutes on Sunday morning and 30 minutes on Monday night. That is the great danger to the church, that true believers can fall prey.

[37 : 21] This has been the spiritual blight of churches and denominations that have fallen into unbelief and apostasy. They have adopted ungodly practices. When you submit or subject yourself to false teaching, you have no strength and no defense to do what is right and God-honoring.

I'm upside down again. And the danger, like I said, is not restricted to unbelievers or even to immature believers.

No one is exempt from corruptive influence or falsehood. You know, a doctor, and we're learning this with Ebola, when a doctor treats someone with a dangerous disease, he has risk of getting it. The same is true if we're under the disease of a false teacher. We run the risk of catching whatever he's handing out. When false teachers are unopposed or exposed, many follow them.

The scriptures say follow their sensuality. Because of them, the way of the truth will be maligned. Again, that's 2 Peter 2. Error. Mark this thought down.

[38 : 47] Error. That's an Oklahoma word. E-R-R-O-R. Error. Cannot restrain the flesh. We live in unredeemed flesh.

Error can't. If we're going to be in doctrinal error, we can't restrain the flesh. We can't halt the devil. We can't be protected from the world.

False teaching provides no defense against iniquity and no strength for doing what is right and God honoring. It's erroneous.

And to be rejected. And I think I'm going to close with this one. False teaching spreads rapidly. Paul said, and their talk will spread like gangrene. We're all probably familiar with gangrene, right?

Not only that, but false doctrine propagated by the talk of false teachers will spread. And Paul says its infection is like gangrene.

[39 : 48] And in the ancient world, gangrene could often have been cancer. It was literally cancer. But even the gangrene of the modern era here, both of them are diseases that spread rapidly and if untreated or deadly.

Whether you're dealing with cancer or with gangrene. False religion and satanic lies spread faster than truth.

Isn't that amazing? Why is that? Because sinful human hearts are more receptive to them. We have itching ears. Hey, we want to hear it. You know, we had a family that lived in the church.

He says, I don't want to hear how bad I am, only how good I am. I said, well, if you're ever good, we'll let you know. There's none good.

Not even one. Paul, Romans chapter 3. It is because false teachers are in the world and serve the prince of the world, that's the devil, that they're so dangerous.

[40 : 52] They're all around us, guys. And if you've got young ones at home, it's coming in on your TV, so be careful. Rapid growing technology has helped worldliness and every other form of ungodliness to grow more rapidly, expose more people to evil teaching than those who lived even a few generations ago could have imagined.

Christians today have more reason than at any time in biblical history of the New Testament to test the spirits to see whether they are from God.

And the Spirit of God says there, and that's in 1 John 4.1, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. They are from the world, therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them.

Christians, therefore, have no excuse for listening to them, much less buying into ungodly beliefs in ungodly ways.

.