

Beware of False Prophets, Pt 1

Sermon On The Mount

By Richard Warmack

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Bible Text: Matthew 7:15-20

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Grace Baptist Church

c/o Richard Warmack

900 Wedgewood Dr.

Ruston, LA 71270

Website: www.gracebaptistofruston.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/graceofruston

Ok. I want you to take your Bibles with me this morning and turn back to Matthew chapter seven. And, like I said earlier, this is not one of those messages that you look forward to preaching, because it is quite controversial. There is no doubt about it. And we truly have to get our emotions out of this thing of the gospel and particularly when it comes to our relationship with other men and women in the gospel. It is a foregone conclusion that when our passions and our emotions are involved, we make wrong decisions. And the natural tendency is to judge based on a wrong standard. As I told them in the Sunday school hour this morning: We don't try to conform the Word of God to our thoughts and our ideas. Our thoughts and our ideas have to be brought under the standard of God's truth, God's justice, God's Word. And so we don't want to reverse that. We never want to go against the standard of God's law. Now our Lord Jesus Christ, as we started here in Matthew chapter seven a couple of weeks ago, now, he has put before us or putting before us in this seventh chapter eight principles to be practiced by the Church, by God's children, by those who are children of God, those who are included in the kingdom of God, those who, indeed, are blessed of God according to the Beatitudes. We can't expect the world to do this. We can't even expect the religious world to do this, but God's children, God's elect, those redeemed by the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, those whom he bore their sins in his body on the tree, those who were justified in his resurrection from the dead, it is our responsibility—and we are, indeed, accountable—that we put into practice these principles our Lord Jesus Christ places before us. **We have looked at four so far.**

One is, "*Judge not, that ye be not judged.*"¹ And as I told you when we looked at that, it doesn't mean that you don't judge. It just means that we have to use an accurate standard, the standard being the testimony of God.

The second principle is this. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine."² The second thing we don't do, there are some people out there we just don't give the gospel to. If they would do us harm, if they hate the gospel and the message so desperately, it would be better to keep our mouth shut and just leave

¹ Matthew 7:1.

² Matthew 7:6.

them alone. It doesn't mean that we think that they are lost and they are gone forever. There might be another time and another place in their life where God will bring them under the sound of the gospel. I am sure that the apostle Paul, Saul of Tarsus heard the gospel several times before our Lord Jesus Christ met him on the road to Damascus. The other times it caused him to hate it even the more. And so there are some times that we are to just let it go.

The third principle is this. *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”*³

The fourth principle is this. We talked about this last week.

*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*⁴

And, folks, almost everybody is on that road. Just about all without exception are in that “way”.

Well, we come to one today and I tell you. This is, to me, this has got to be the hardest part of being a gospel preacher. But listen. The office that God puts his servants in requires that we handle the Word of God truthfully and honestly. These things are so important. I hope you understand that, you know, we are not just up here for the sake of being up here. You know, for your children's sake and my children's sake and my grandchildren's sake one day and yours and your friends and your family, it is imperative that we get these things right. Now we can't take chances. And so we have to always bow to the Word of God. Put all those old thoughts out. There is a lot of people in your background, in your history that you think fondly of. But just because you like somebody and just because you think fondly of somebody and they have got a good personality and they are good friends, that doesn't necessarily mean they are right. Does it? Now you think about it. We can't make judgments based on those things. Again, it comes back to the scrutiny of the Word of God.

And so our Lord Jesus Christ delivers a powerful message here in Matthew chapter seven verses 15 down through verse 20, a message that like all the rest of the Sermon on the Mount is totally and completely misunderstood and misapplied by people in religion in our generation. Here it is. *“Beware of false prophets.”*⁵

I tell you. One thing is for certain. If the Lord Jesus Christ tells you to beware of something, it is not like Richard telling you to beware of it. I would say if Christ said it,

³ Matthew 7:7.

⁴ Matthew 7:13-14.

⁵ Matthew 7:15.

there is a warning here for all of us to heed. Just like Christ said, “*Judge not, that ye be not judged,*”⁶ we ought to heed this warning, too.

“*Beware*”, in other words, look out. This is the thing. It is your responsibility. It is my responsibility to judge men who come in the name of the God and come claiming to speak for the Lord Jesus Christ. So first of all we need to establish this: **What is a false prophet?** What is a false prophet according to the Word of God? I think that is the thing we need to always come back to. I am not saying what you think it is. What does the Word of God say a false prophet is? A false prophet is any prophet or any preacher, man or woman, who claims to speak God’s Word, but who either openly or subtly directs sinners to the broad road. The reason I say this is because this comes on the heel of Christ’s words concerning the broad road and the narrow way, that which would direct men and women, sinners to the broad road that leads to destruction, would point them to the wrong place.

Most people in our generation, do you know where they have been pointed to? To a church. You were not saved because you come to Grace Baptist Church in Ruston, Louisiana, nor are you saved because you go to 13th Street in Ashland or Grace in Danville or Shreve Grace over there in Shreveport. That doesn’t make you saved. People in our generation point them to a decision, to a profession, to a reformation, or point them to the law.

Look at... hold your place here. Look over at **Matthew chapter 16**. Now how do they do this? Because, see, this is that. They suddenly or else they openly and blatantly point men away from Christ. Now is a man or a woman going to point you away from Christ? They are going to do it by their doctrine, folks. I had a guy tell me this week. He said, “You worry too much about doctrine or purity.” I said, “No, I don’t worry too much about doctrine or purity.” I said, “You worry too much about emotionalism and sentimentalism. You are worried about what people think. I don’t care what you think of me. I really don’t. I don’t care what anybody thinks of me.” If I did, I would get out of this because there are lot of people out there don’t like what I have got to say **and I really don’t care**. I know that sounds kind of crass, but that is just the way it is.

I had a guy tell me this week I need to change my attitude. I am not changing my attitude. There isn’t any man who will convince me differently than what I have come to believe and rest and rely upon, no man. I don’t care who they are. If they can prove it to me from the Word of God, I will bow to it. If you can’t prove it to me from the Word of God, don’t bother me. Now just don’t. Now notice what he says here. **Matthew 16:6**.

“*Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.*”⁷ Now drop down and look at **verse 12**. “*Then understood they...*”⁸

⁶ Matthew 7:1.

⁷ Matthew 16:6.

⁸ Matthew 16:12.

You go back up and read **verses seven through 11**. I don't have time to read all these verses I have got. "*Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread...*"⁹ What is he telling them to beware of? "...*but of the doctrine...*"¹⁰ Do you see that? "... *the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.*"¹¹

Look over at **Luke 6:45** and keep this in mind because we are going to come back to this verse a little later. He says, "*A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart...*"¹² In other words, the doctrine you abide in, what does it cause you to do? I have told you this for years. You want to know what somebody truly believes? **Listen to them.** That is all you have got to do. Let them speak. Let them spill it. They will spill the beans. Now they will. They will tell you exactly what they believe. Look over at Galatians 1. You ought to have this one memorized. People say, "Well, doctrine is not that important." Well, let's think about this for a minute. He says, "*I marvel,*" **Galatians 1:6**, "... *that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.*"¹³ Now listen. You can't have a gospel apart from doctrine, folks. That is just it. And he said, "I can't believe that you have been moved from the gospel, the doctrine that I have delivered unto you to another doctrine, to another gospel which is not another, but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ."

Well now notice here.

*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*¹⁴

Now how are you going to know their gospel? Their words, what they say, what they tell you. Here is another area we have got to make some judgment, folks. Isn't it amazing that he tells us beware of false prophets in the same chapter he tells us how we ought to judge? Judge righteous judgments. Judge based on a right standard. See, this is the thing. We can't judge whether or not somebody I like in my past is a true preacher, a true prophet of God or a false prophet of God by outward appearance, character and conduct. Now you can't. The Lord said the same Pharisees of whom he warned his disciples to beware of their doctrine that they appeared outwardly unto men what? We read it in **Matthew 23**. Outwardly to men they appeared righteous. I tell you what. Men can deceive you folks. They can clean up their act. They can sound right. And if you notice, also the apostle Paul when he was talking about it in Galatians 1:6, exposing false preachers who had crept into the Galatian church, he said that even if an apostle came to

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Luke 6:45.

¹³ Galatians 1:6.

¹⁴ Galatians 1:7-8.

them or if an angel came to them down from heaven we are to judge them first of all by what? By the gospel that they preach, by their doctrine, not by their character and their conduct. He says, what gospel are they delivering? And I tell you what. You always, you mark this down. **Galatians 1:6-9** tells us if they preach another gospel, get yourself away from them. Go back up and read verses 1-5 and he tells you what that gospel is. People say, “Well, you are so subjective.” Go read Galatians 1:1-5. Our Lord Jesus Christ is very clear, is he not? I thought about that a lot this week. Every time our Lord spoke to somebody, do you know what he always did? He told them the truth. Whether they liked it or not, whether it hurt their feelings or not, he told them the truth. He didn’t... he didn’t set them up for a fall by teaching error. I would say that would be the example I would follow, wouldn’t you? I wouldn’t follow the example of man. If Christ did it that way I would say that is the way to do it. Well, here is Christ likeness. He said, “*Ye are of your father the devil,*”¹⁵ that is Christ likeness. He looked at the religious generation in his day and he said, “*You are not my sheep, therefore you hear me not.*”

I tell you what. We have got to get away from being concerned about what men think of our gospel. The gospel that we declare is the power of God unto salvation. I guarantee you the first time Saul of Tarsus heard the gospel it outraged him. But I tell you. God didn’t use error to break him, did he? I challenge anybody anywhere. If anybody on the internet or anywhere else hears this, find me one place in this Bible from Genesis to Revelation, find me one place where God used error to save somebody, just one. I will never hear from you.

He says, clearly, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me,*”¹⁶ **the truth.**

Christ said, “*You will know the truth.*” Do you hear that? And the truth is what sets you free. And that is why so many people go astray on Matthew 7, claiming that we judge such preachers by their outward character and conduct. Christ shows us the example of the false preachers. We will look at it next week or a couple of weeks for now in chapter seven verse 21. Those false preachers that he spoke of down in verses 21 through 23 he says outwardly what do they do? They cast out demons. They preach in his name. They do many wonderful works. Were they saved? You tell me. Or let’s let our Lord tell them. “*Depart from me, you workers of iniquity. I never knew you.*” Which way are you going to judge? What exposed them to be lost? The words that proceeded forth out of their mouth, **their doctrine.**

Now what is it in their doctrine that exposes them? What reveals man to be a false prophet? Now I am very careful about throwing those words “false prophet” around. I use it with great fear.. Be careful. Be very careful. But judge righteous judgment. The issue has to do with the God they preach and the Christ they declare. The issue has to do with the ground or cause or hope which they call to sinners to look to for salvation and forgiveness and call on sinners to commune with God and reveal to sinners how God entitles sinners to salvation. That is what reveals them to be a false prophet.

¹⁵ John 8:44.

¹⁶ John 14:6.

I tell you. If in their doctrine, I don't care how much I like them, if in their doctrine they lead sinners to look anywhere for those blessings of grace and eternal life to anywhere other than to Christ and to his imputed righteousness alone, their doctrine, folks, is not just error, it is deadly. And they are found false prophets. I don't care who they are.

If you will notice here notice what our Lord says here. "*Beware of false prophets,*"¹⁷ because how are they going to come to you? He said, "...*which come to you in sheep's clothing.*"¹⁸ Well, what does that mean? What is so important about this thing that they come to you in sheep's clothing? Well, in other words, outwardly, they appear righteous to men. Outwardly they claim to be sent of God. Outwardly they appear to be sheep. Now what is a sheep? We know there is two groups, do we not? **Only two.** What are they? Sheep and goats. And as I have told you for years there is no such thing as spiritual evolution. If you are a sheep now you have always been a sheep. You were sheep in the everlasting covenant of grace. And on the other hand if you was a goat, you have been a goat forever, folks, and you are not going to become a sheep. It isn't that goats get turned into sheep. It is sheep being called by their master's voice and revealing that they are sheep as they come to the Lord Jesus Christ. So what is a sheep? A sheep is one who has been sought of God. Remember, he had one sheep that was lost and what did he do? He left the ninety and nine and he went out and he searched diligently until he found that one sheep and when he found it, what did he do? He put a rope around its neck and led it back to camp, didn't he? **NO, HE DID NOT.** He reached down. He picked up his sheep and he put it on his shoulders and he carried it back rejoicing all the way. Right? What is that symbolic of? That sheep's safety, who did it depend on? **The strength of the shepherd who had him.** So these false prophets claim that they heard God's voice. And they claim that they believe and preach the gospel. That is what they will say: "I believe the gospel. I believe in sovereign grace. I am reformed. I am Calvinistic." Well, big deal. I was, too. And then God revealed Christ in me. **There is a big deal of difference.** Now the thing that we are seeing here is subtle, deceptiveness. And there is different degrees of deceptiveness. There are some of the, these false prophets they are just blatant outright false prophets. Now one of them that I think about that any of us or if you are 15 years old or older you know about is David Koresh. You remember him? A guy over in Waco, Texas. He was an outright blatant false prophet. There was another one, if you are little older you might remember him. Jim Jones. Right? Both of these men, David Koresh and Jim Jones, they both had a Jesus complex. They thought they were Messiahs. They thought they were deliverers. And they were so blatantly false prophets, So there was 900 people that was duped by that man. And I have forgotten how many got killed over in Waco, Texas, but there were enough folks that was following that fool over there that they followed him to their death. There is no doubt about it. But for the most part, when you saw it, when any other nominal believers or, those considered Christian in our day saw that mess going on, what did they think? Oh, they are lost. Right? They will readily admit, "Oh, yeah, Jim Jones was lost. Yeah, David Koresh was lost and they deceived all those people."

¹⁷ Matthew 7:15.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Well, that doesn't deceive anybody. That is not what our Lord is talking about here. There are still others who come closer. The apostle John talks about and spoke of those who claim to be Christians, but who denied the humanity of Christ. Read it for yourself in 1 John chapter four. Others denied the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he was God truly God of God like the Jehovah Witnesses do. They fool more people than David Koresh did. There's a lot of Jehovah Witnesses out there, folks, a lot of Mormons, right? But there is no danger. Are you fooled? Do you think a Jehovah Witness or a Seventh Day Adventist or a Mormon could deceive you? Do you think you would let them in your house and readily bow down to what they proclaim? Most people in my neighborhood wouldn't have anything to do with them. The greatest majority today who call themselves Christians know nothing of the effectual reconciling work of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only ground, hope and cause of salvation. They believe in universal atonement. They believe that Christ came and he died indiscriminately for every single solitary person without exception. They believe that He shed his blood equally for the thief on the cross as he did for Judas Iscariot who busted hell wide open. That is what these false prophets proclaim and they fool millions.

But they don't fool the true believer. **No, they don't.** Because Christ is warning His sheep to beware. But, see, this is the thing. The only people that are going to heed this warning of our Lord Jesus Christ are those who believe the truth. They are going to beware of them.

I hope every time I stand up here you don't just say, "Ok, we are going to church. We are going to listen to him today." No. You had better be thinking, folks. You should put everything I say under the scrutiny of the Word of God. Now you better. See, here is the thing. I think when our Lord says here, "*Beware of false prophets,*"¹⁹ he is talking about those who come the closest to deceiving believers are those who claim to believe all the great doctrines of the gospel, but who, by their doctrine bring in Legalism and self righteousness when it comes to perseverance and obedience.

Look over at Galatians chapter three. I tell you, there are some subtle and sneaky men out there. Galatians chapter three verse one our Lord Jesus Christ says, "*O foolish Galatians, who hath...*"²⁰ The word "*bewitched*" there, it means to sprinkle. It is bedazzled is what it is. It is just amazing to you. Have you ever seen something that has took your breath away? That is what he is saying. He wrote, who has mesmerized you?

"...*that ye should not obey the truth...*"²¹ Do you see that? What are you supposed to obey? **The truth.** "...*before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth...*"²² How? How is he set forth? **Not by our example?** How? **By our doctrine.**

¹⁹ Matthew 6:15.

²⁰ Galatians 3:1.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

*“...hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law...”*²³ In other words, how did you get it? *“...by the hearing of faith. Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”*²⁴ Look over at chapter five verse one. *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”*²⁵ In other words, don’t go back under the law. *“Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised...”*²⁶ that is submitted to that as the ground, hope or cause of his salvation, *“that he is a debtor to do...”*²⁷ how much of the law?

Folks, if you want to get under the law, you better get under it in its totality. We don’t pick and choose. You better get you a priest if you are going back under the law. Because our Christ, our Redeemer, the one defined in the Scriptures according to the book of Hebrews, he is not like the Aaronic priesthood. The Aaronic priesthood, folks, is gone. That is the law and with it went all of the law in its entirety. They claim that they believe salvation by grace even based on the imputed righteousness of Christ, but they seek to motivate God’s people with Legalism. These are truly wolves in sheep’s clothing. They come so close that if it were possible who would they deceive? The very elect of God.

Now Christ says this. He says, *“You will know them by their fruits.”* I ought to come back here and finish this up next week because I have a lot to say.

What fruits? What fruit? Well, many people ask, “Well, what that is talking about when it says you will know them by their fruits,” I have heard men make this kind of a silly statement. It is talking about their converts. You will know them by their converts. Well, if that were so, then I what would we be forced to say of Noah. We would have to judge that Noah called a preacher of righteousness, that Noah was a false prophet, a false preacher. How many converts did Noah have? Anybody know? He got on that boat with just his family. He didn’t have any converts. He preached for 120 years. How about Jeremiah? Think about what God told Jeremiah. God told Jeremiah, “You are going to preach for 40 years and nobody is going to hear you.” So that can’t be what he is talking about. He gives us an answer here, because, notice, this is what tells us about this fruit. He tells us, he says, *“Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth...”*²⁸ A corrupt tree, what does it bring forth? **Evil fruit.** He gives us two trees, a good tree and a bad tree. And this fruit that he is talking about, do you know what it begins with? It begins with their doctrine. He is talking about the false prophets. And he is saying that whatever this fruit is, it begins with their doctrine which exposes both their state before God and it exposes their works. Those who believe and preach God’s gospel reveal that they are in a state of justification, eternal life based on the unchangeable

²³ Galatians 3:1-2.

²⁴ Galatians 3:2-3.

²⁵ Galatians 5:1.

²⁶ Galatians 5:1-2.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Matthew 7:16-17.

righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And they are bringing forth fruit unto God. They are God's preachers. And it is good fruit and they are good trees. On the other hand, those who merely claim to believe the gospel, but who preach doctrines that deny the gospel and introduce Legalism and self righteousness, reveal that they are in a state of lostness, folks, alienated in their minds by wicked works. They were thinking that what they do or don't do makes a difference between lost and saved. And they bring forth fruit unto death. They are corrupt trees.

I am going to quit right there. I can't do this any justice. You have got to come back. If you don't, you have to listen to the tape, because this is important. I am going to tell you. This thing preaching the gospel, I think about that all the time.

I told somebody this week, preaching the gospel has got to be one of the most humbling experiences any man could ever enter into. And I constantly think about Paul's words that every time we stand up here, every time I stand in front of this Sunday Bible class or I stand up here Sunday morning or Wednesday night, that this message that we preach, folks, it is a savor of life unto life and a savor of death unto death. Every time we preach this truth one of two things is happening. Either it is going to bring God's children to believe the gospel or it is going to push them away from the truth. That is a humbling thing.

Now to think that every time I stand up and any other gospel preacher stands up and preaches clearly Christ and his accomplished death as the only hope of salvation, it either does good for the elect or it drives the reprobate away. Truly... who is sufficient for these things? But thank God our sufficiency is not in ourselves. Our sufficiency is in the Lord Jesus Christ and his accomplished death.

Let's stand together and we will be dismissed. I appreciate your presence this morning. The Lord bless you and keep you until we see you next Lord's Day. Remember to pray for these that are on the prayer list.

David Rogers, would you dismiss us, please?