

Take Heed You Are Not Deceived

by Derek Prince

Derek Prince's sermon warns against deception in the church, emphasizing the need for vigilance and discernment through the truth found in Jesus, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 1:23:03

Scripture: Philippians 1:9

Topics: "Deception"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker warns against falling into deception and emphasizes the importance of staying grounded in the scriptures. He cautions against relying on subjective impressions, human leaders, supernatural signs, personal ambition, fear of suffering, and ignorance of scripture. He then provides nine recommendations for avoiding deception, including cultivating discernment and love for the truth. The speaker also shares a personal illustration about the dangers of letting one's imagination run wild. Overall, the message emphasizes the need for humility, reliance on God's mercy, and a commitment to seeking and living by the truth.

Transcript

...is a prayer along that line, taken from Philippians, chapter 1, verses 9 through 11. We just changed the words to personalize it. This we pray, that our love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that we may approve the things that are excellent, that we may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Amen. Now, I've already announced what I'm going to be speaking about. Be vigilant.

Be sober, be vigilant is taken from 1 Peter, chapter 5, I think verse 8. This morning I spoke about sobriety in entering into spiritual warfare, being realistic, not having vague or unrealistic attitudes, or using language which is above the level of our experience. Tonight I'm talking on be vigilant, particularly in regard to the many warnings given in the New Testament against being deceived. Almost every passage in the New Testament that relates to the end of the age contains some kind of warning against being deceived.

I'm just going to take two passages from Matthew, chapter 24, from the words of Jesus himself. He was asked, what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? And when he began to answer, the

first thing he did was warn his disciples against being deceived. So he said in Matthew 24, 4 and 5, Take heed that no one deceives you, for many will come in my name, saying, I am the Messiah, and will deceive many.

Now, Jesus is a true prophet, and the Jewish encyclopedia records about 40 false messiahs who have come to the Jewish people since the time of Jesus. Perhaps the most famous was Bar Kokhba, and all of them have succeeded in deceiving some part of the Jewish people. But the warning goes far beyond the Jewish people.

And then in the same chapter, excuse me, in verse 23 and following, Jesus says, Then if anyone says to you, look, here is the Messiah, or there, do not believe him. For false messiahs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders. So as to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

Excuse me, it'll get better after a while. See, I have told you beforehand. So Jesus says, you can't say I didn't warn you.

And he says, there will arise false prophets and false messiahs, and they will show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect or the chosen ones. There are two important lessons from that. First of all, that miraculous signs do not necessarily prove that a message is true.

Because Jesus says, they will show great signs and wonders, but they'll be deceivers. You cannot base your assessment of the truth of a message merely on the fact that there were supernatural signs and supernatural experiences. It is extremely dangerous to have that attitude.

Secondly, Jesus said, God, I'm sorry, Jesus said that even the elect would be deceived, if it were possible. The elect is God's chosen ones. Why is it not possible that the elect would be deceived? The answer is, because God chose them.

Our safety is not in how clever we are, or how spiritual we are, but the fact that God chose us. That's our security. Now, in order to avoid deception, we have to be able to identify the truth.

And in the examination by Pilate of Jesus, Jesus said, for this purpose I was born and for this purpose I came forth, that I might bear witness to the truth. And Pilate replied with a question, what is truth? We can't tell whether he was cynical, what is truth, or whether he was genuinely puzzled. What is truth? There's no way we'll ever know.

But he asked a question, which is, philosophers have never been able to answer satisfactorily. In 2,500 years of Western philosophy, no philosopher has come up with an answer that satisfies to the question, what is truth? We all think we know until we start to define it, and then we find out we don't know. However, the Bible does give us a very clear answer to the question, what is truth? But it's not totally simple, because the Bible presents truth in three aspects.

And in order to be sure we have the truth, we have to check on all three aspects. What I would call three coordinates of truth. And if you're going to be sure that you really have the truth, you have to check all three coordinates to see that they're all in place.

First of all, in John 14, verse 6, Jesus said, I am the truth. So the truth is Jesus. But in John 17, 17, Jesus was praying to the Father, and he said, your word is the truth.

So God's word is the truth, the Bible. But in 1 John 5, verse 6, John says, the Holy Spirit bears witness to Jesus, and the Spirit is truth. So you have truth in three related aspects.

The truth is Jesus, the truth is the Bible, and the truth is the Spirit. In order to know for sure that you really have the truth, you have to check all three coordinates. Jesus, the Bible, and the Spirit.

For instance, somebody may preach a whole lot about Jesus, and it may sound very good. But when you check your Bible, it isn't what the Bible says about Jesus. Or somebody may preach a great deal about the Holy Spirit, and work up an atmosphere of tremendous excitement and exhilaration.

But when you really check it, that person is not teaching the truth about Jesus. Or a person may lay great emphasis on the Bible and the Scripture, but have nothing of the Spirit. It's just dead letter.

So, in order to be sure that you have the Spirit, that you have the truth, you have to have three things in place. Is it true to Jesus? Is it true to the Bible? And does it have the witness of the Holy Spirit? When you can put those three things together, then you may be confident that you have the truth. In 2 Corinthians chapter 11, Paul warns the Corinthian Christians against being deceived.

And I suppose we'd all agree, if anybody was charismatic, they were. So being charismatic doesn't grant you an exemption. Paul says, in verse 3 of 2 Corinthians 11, But I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity and purity that is in Christ.

For if he who comes, another preacher, preaches another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit, which you have not received, that is, which is not the Holy Spirit, or a different gospel, which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it. Isn't it amazing how ready people are to accept the false? And notice, if you have another Jesus, you'll have a different spirit and a different gospel. So any presentation of Jesus that is not scriptural, that is not in line with scripture, will be accompanied by a different spirit, which is not the Holy Spirit.

And the result will be a gospel, which is not the true gospel. There are currently in the Church today various different versions of another Jesus. I'll just mention three.

There's Jesus the Marxist revolutionary, who's going to go out with machine gun and fight on behalf of the poor and liberate the poor from the oppressor. Now that's very popular in South America, but also in other places. But that's not the Jesus of the Bible.

He is not like that. It's very praiseworthy to want to help the poor, but not that way. That's not the believer's way to help the poor.

That is called liberation theology. Very acceptable in many parts of the world. Inside the Church in Latin America, there are many Catholics who've embraced liberation theology and sometimes align themselves with Marxist movements.

Then there's Jesus the Oriental guru. And people proudly trace him back to Buddha and Socrates and all that sort of thing. The kind of movement that does that is what we call today the New Age movement.

They kind of get Jesus lined up with a lot of other gurus. But he's not a guru. He's the Son of God.

He's the Savior. And that is a false gospel. And it is accompanied by another spirit.

And then there's Jesus, the kindly Father Christmas, who wanders around patting everybody on the head and saying, there, there, don't worry. That is what I, how I call the liberal church. It has a Jesus that doesn't speak about sin, never mentions judgment, and says all the religions are different roads to the same God.

Here, there, there, don't worry. There's nothing to be afraid of. So, there's a three examples of contemporary teaching which introduce deception by bringing on another Jesus.

And I would say the number of people currently deceived by one or other of those numbers the millions. So, it's not just a little fringe group somewhere. Now, I would like to give you some thoughts on how deception enters.

And I believe there's only really one door that lets deception in. And that is pride. I believe behind all deception, there is pride.

Pride is what opens us up to deception. The real pattern of that is Lucifer, who was maybe the most beautiful and the wisest of all the angels. But he became proud of his beauty and his wisdom, turned in rebellion and ended in deception.

And if that can happen to an archangel in heaven, as it did, how many of us could say it could never happen to me? One of the lures of many cults is the attraction that if you join them, you're going to join a super group. I mean, the real overcomers, the people who are going to get the job done. The church has messed around and not got the job done, but now here we are, we are going to get the job done.

What does that appeal to? Pride, that's right. I mean, let's take the Manifested Sons teaching, which some of you are probably familiar with. That was exactly their teaching, but they went much further.

Because they taught, they taught ultimately, that you could achieve immortality if you did the right things. It's remarkable how many cults teach that. The Mormons teach it.

It thinks it's taught indirectly through Freemasonry. And it all goes back to what the Bible calls the lie. Which was the first lie, which Satan turned on the human race, which was, you shall be as gods.

And every time really that he wants to deceive people, he uses the same type of motivation. So beware when people tell you there's a super group that have gone further than others. And they're usually rather critical of previous generations of Christians.

But I'd have to say, as far as I've seen, they don't begin to produce the same kind of results that previous generations produced. And I say to people, if you ever join a group who tells you, if you want to be right, you've got to join us. When you've joined them, you'll know one thing, you're wrong.

Proverbs 29 verse 5 says, He who flatters his neighbor with his mouth, spreads a net for his feet. Beware of flattery. I think this applies particularly to preachers.

Preachers are very susceptible to flattery. And we can become embroiled in things because people give us flattering invitations. And suggest that you'll align with us, we'll open doors for you.

If you're not a preacher, you probably don't realize how powerful that temptation is. Because most preachers, in a way, check their effectiveness by the number of invitations they have. I've heard more than one preacher admit that.

That's not a very spiritual attitude, but let's be honest, we're not always very spiritual people. Jesus has a chosen group, but it's not super group. It's a different kind of people.

Only Jesus would have chosen people like that. It's stated in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verses 26 and following. For you see your calling, brethren, or you see the kind of people that you've got yourself up, mixed up with.

Not many wise, according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God has chosen. And you remember, God will protect those whom he has chosen.

Now in order to be one of God's chosen, you have to be in this list. Because God has chosen. He's not going to change his mind.

He's not going to revise. It's settled. So as we go down this, just see if you fit.

But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise. And God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things that are mighty. And the base things of the world, and the things which are despised, God has chosen.

And the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are. That no flesh should glory in his presence. See, God has a motive to eliminate pride.

And so, this is the list. I mean, just ask yourself, do I fit? He's chosen the foolish things. He's chosen the weak things.

He's chosen the base or lowly things. The things that are despised, and the things that are not. And the reason God has chosen that, is that no one will ever be able to boast.

And say, God chose me because I was so clever, or so strong, or so wise. He needed me. When I got saved, by a kind of divine accident.

I was serving in the British Army in World War II. I was a fellow of King's College Cambridge, and had a distinguished academic record behind me, and a future in the academic world. And for a while, I used to have the attitude, God was pretty lucky to get me.

The more I knew about me, the more I revised that opinion. My opinion now is, I can't think why ever God picked on me. The truth was, I'd been removed from my fellowship in Cambridge.

I was no longer wandering around in a gown, in the sanctified courts of King's. I was a local, acting, unpaid lance corporal. And my salary was two shillings a day, old shillings.

And that's when God got me. Thank God he got me. So, just be careful, if anybody tries to convince you, that you can be a special, super kind of Christian, if you join our group.

That's a sure warning to stay away from. All right. Now, I want to deal with some very nitty gritty practical issues.

I hope I'll offend nobody. But if I do, it's not through desiring to do so. I want to say frankly, how error can enter through prophecy.

Prophecy has got a very high sounding title. And a lot of people just think, if I ever refuse a prophecy, I'll be in trouble. But that's not what the New Testament teaches.

In 1 Corinthians 14, 29, Paul says, let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. And in 1 Thessalonians 5, 19-21, Paul says this, do not quench the spirit, do not despise prophecies, test all things, hold fast what is good. So, we're not to despise any manifestation of the Holy Spirit, but we are to test it.

And we're only to hold on to what is good. And Paul says, if people prophesy, others are to judge them. Any prophet who's not willing to be judged, should not prophesy.

Ah, there are prophets around, who will tell you that if you judge my message, God will judge you. I'm not theorizing, I mean I know. My own attitude is, if I don't judge their message, God will judge me, because he told me to judge it.

So, do not be afraid of prophesying. Thank God for it when it's right, but never let it terrorize you, or dictate to you. Prophets are not dictators.

What standard are we to judge by? I'll give you an answer from Isaiah chapter 8, verse 9, 19 through 20. And when they say to you, seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter, should not a people seek their dog? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? That of course is a warning against seances. And then the answer here is, to the law and to the testimony.

If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. So the ultimate testimony, test is, do they speak according to the law and the testimony of God's word? If they do not, there is no light in them. So we judge them by the word of God.

Now I'm going to go on in an area that is practical and perhaps a little delicate. But I'm going to give some examples of misleading prophecies. How people can be misled by prophecy.

The first instance I'll take from Romans chapter 12 and verse 6. Having them gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them. If prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith. In other words, don't go beyond your faith when you prophesy.

It's rather heady to be prophesying. It's a kind of exhilarating feeling and you can get so exhilarated that you depart from what the word of God and the scripture and the Holy Spirit actually give you. For instance, just to take a simple example.

Somebody may get a true prophecy. There is going to be a great revival. That's true.

But he gets so excited that he adds on and it's going to start in our church, you see. Now it might be true, but it's very possible the first half was true, the second half wasn't. Why? Because he went beyond the proportion of faith that God had allotted to him.

I was dealing with that this morning in connection with spiritual warfare. Stay within your allotted proportion of faith. And then in Acts chapter 16, we get an example of what you could call a prophecy or a revelation that was true, but not from God.

I think this is a tremendous temptation. If the thing is true, then it must be from God. Not so.

Acts 16 describes what happened when Paul and Silas arrived in the city of Philippi. Verse 16 and following. Now it happened as we went to prayer that a certain slave girl, possessed with the spirit of divination, met us.

What it says in Greek is the spirit of python, the snake. You know the snake that coils itself around people and crushes the life out of them. And interestingly there is a well-known clairvoyant in Washington DC who wrote a book in which she said that her gift came to her when a snake got in bed with her.

So she rather, I think without realizing it, revealed the source of her gift. So there was a certain slave girl, possessed with the spirit of divination, who brought her master's much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us and cried out saying, these men are the servants of the most high God who proclaim to us the way of salvation.

Now every word she said was true. Furthermore, she was the first person in Philippi to know who they were. But it wasn't the spirit of God.

That was speaking through her. It was a divining fortune-telling spirit. And this is the end.

This she did for many days. But Paul, greatly distressed, turned and said to the spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out that very hour.

And after that she was no longer able to tell fortunes. See, fortune-telling is a reality. And it's amazing how many times fortune-tellers can tell you the truth.

But it's not from God. And ultimately there'll always be a lie mixed in with it. But the truth is the bait that gets you hooked to receive the lie.

I've sometimes commented on that girl in Philippi. Some modern missionaries would have made her a charter member of the church in Philippi. And there she was, bearing testimony to them.

The first, what a wonderful convert. We just were there on the streets and she began to tell the people. You see the snares? How subtle Satan is? I'll give you some examples from my own personal acquaintance.

I have a friend who at that time, some years back, was the pastor of what we'd call an old-line denominational church in the United States. And in order to raise funds for the church, they held what they call a church bazaar, or a church fair, I think we call it in Britain. And somehow the people organizing it said to the pastor, listen it would be good if we did like they do in other faiths.

And we had a fortune-teller. So he didn't really want it. He knew better, but he didn't want to face the pressure.

So he said, all right, you can have a fortune-teller. So there she was, sitting in her little tent. And he went in to have his fortune told.

And the fortune-teller looked him in the eye and said, your wife is going to get cancer. And my friend said, his blood ran cold, but his wife got cancer. Fortunately, with the help of prayer and medicine, she was eventually healed.

You see, she spoke the truth, but it wasn't from God. I had, I was in a situation, I must not reveal where it was, where I heard about a case in which a young married woman, who was, I think, a kind of Christian, went to a fortune-teller. She ought have known better.

And the fortune-teller said, you're soon going to be a widow. Your husband will be killed. And in a very unusual freak accident, less than two years later, her husband was killed.

And you know what happened to that poor woman? She was tormented with guilt. Did I open the way for that to happen to my husband, by going to that fortune-teller? I'll relate a personal experience. Some years back, I was on the pastoral staff of a church in the United States.

And, uh, I was doing a lot of deliverance. And a lady came to me, told me that she'd been a spiritist, but she had repented, and she wanted deliverance. Well, I didn't have any witness that she'd really repented.

So, I said, I'm not convinced, go back, go away and come back when, when you really have repented. So, I think a week or two later, she came back, she said, I've repented. Well, it's very hard to deny that a person's repented, because you don't want to eliminate such a possibility.

I still didn't feel good about her, but I said, okay, let's pray. We were praying up at the front of the church, where there was a platform for the speakers. But we were below the platform.

And I was really struggling, trying to help this woman get her delivered. It was hard work. And after a while, I wanted to take a rest.

So, I just leaned back against the platform. And she said, I see you in a car, and it's wrecked against a tree. And thank God, I was on my guard.

I said, you divining spirit, I'm not going to be in any car that's going to be wrecked against a tree. I don't accept that. But, I'm inclined to believe that if I had accepted it, it would have happened.

It was Satan's destiny for me. And just as you can receive God's destiny by opening up to what he says, you can receive Satan's destiny by opening up to what he says. Well, thank God, years have passed, I've never been in a car wrecked against a tree.

But what a warning to me. I thought, dear Lord, I'm so grateful that I was on the watch. I could have easily said, oh, isn't that terrible, I'm going to be in a car.

You see, I read the testimony of a businessman in Australia, in the Full Gospel Businessman's Voice from Australia. And he described how he'd gone into the occult, and then he went on to tell how God had got him out. But this is how he got into the occult.

He was in his office, phoning long distance, a long way away, to a lady in another city. And she was telling him that she could tell him things that he didn't know. And I feel like that sometimes too.

Particularly when I cough. So, we are all on the same level, that's right, relax. Anyhow, she was persuading him that she knew things by supernatural means.

So he said to her, tell me what's behind me, right now. Right now in my office. And she said, a camel.

Well, camels are hardly heard of in Australia. They hardly know what a camel is. But he had a big picture of a camel, right behind him in his office.

Well, that convinced him, this woman's got the truth. And he became involved in the occult, and only the mercy of God delivered him. See how we may have to be on the watch.

Now, we come to the most difficult, and in a sense painful, of all these situations. And I'm afraid what I, excuse me, I'm afraid what I'm going to say may shock some of you. But the most difficult people to deal with, are people who have two kinds of spirit.

One is the Holy Spirit, and the other is not. Now, people will tell you, but the Holy Spirit wouldn't dwell in an unclean vessel. That's wrong.

The Holy Spirit does dwell in unclean vessels. If he didn't, we'd have no hope. Some people take the attitude, the Holy Spirit will only come in when you're completely pure.

But the Holy Spirit comes in to make us pure. Without him, we cannot be purified. So we need him.

It's like if a professor at a university would say to his class, now when you've passed your exams, I'll teach you. And they'd say, but professor, we need you to teach us to pass our exams. After all, David committed adultery and murder, and prayed, take not thy Holy Spirit from me.

And God didn't. So if anything defiles, adultery and murder do. But the Holy Spirit did not leave David.

That was the grace and mercy of God. Aren't you glad that the Holy Spirit doesn't leave you every time you do something wrong? You know, Jesus in Mark 7 lists 13 things that defile a man. And one of them is pride, and one of them is foolishness.

Dear Lord, how many spirit-filled Christians would there be left if every time we got proud or foolish, the Holy Spirit left us? So the Holy Spirit does dwell in vessels that are not totally pure. And sometimes He's willing to share that vessel with another spirit from another source. I do not appeal to experience, but I've had to say that I've dealt with dozens of cases.

And the hardest thing for a poor pastor is to deal with people like that. The lady who gets interpretation. And sometimes it's right on, and sometimes it's right off.

You've never been in those situations. You haven't lived on, and moved in the circles that I've moved in. I remember when I was pastoring in London years ago, and this happened.

I really was at my wit's end. I didn't know what to do. I remember a man who came to me.

He said, get this demon out of me. I said, you don't have a demon, I've heard you speak in tongues. I was wrong and he was right.

And I never really helped him, because I couldn't acknowledge his problem. He died later, prematurely. An unhappy man.

And I have to say my theology kept me from helping him. Well, I've changed my theology. I've changed it to fit in with reality.

But I think you'll agree, as you go through your spiritual experience. One of the most difficult people to deal with, is the one who sometimes has the right spirit, and sometimes another spirit. And I'm going to say something which in a way is painful.

But I've prayed much about this, I think God wants me to say it. Pentecostals, of whom I am one, have a kind of awe of William Branham. How many of you have heard of William Branham? That's most of you.

William Branham was a man of God, with a most remarkable and dramatic gift from God. But I happen to have been friends with a Bible teacher, whose name I will not give, who worked very closely with William Branham for several years. And he gave us once a personal sharing.

And he said, I had to come to the conclusion, that there were two spirits in William Branham. One was the spirit of God, and one was not. And you see the sad thing is, and I say this with real sadness.

In spite of his marvellous gifts, and the way God used him. His end was either pathetic or tragic, according to how you view it. He was killed as a result of a motor accident, in which his car was struck by a drunk driver.

And he left behind a little group of fanatics, who were worshippers of William Branham. And who are some of the saddest people you'll ever meet in a Christian association. Why did that happen? Because if you mix two spirits, and don't eliminate the wrong one.

Ultimately, it will corrupt the work of the good one. Let me read just a passage which applies, I believe, in Deuteronomy 22. This is one of those passages which are like, you must not muzzle the ox that treads out the grain.

Has an application then, but it has another application now. In Deuteronomy 22, verses 9 and 11. You shall not sow your vineyard with different kinds of seed, lest the yield of the seed which you have sown, and the fruit of your vineyard be defiled.

And then it says, you shall not wear a garment of different sorts, such as wool and linen mixed together. The principle is, serving the Lord, don't mix two different kinds of things. Sow your vineyard with mixed seed, you'll get a crop that God does not accept as holy.

Wearing partly linen and partly wool, you're in two different spiritual worlds. Because linen is a type of spiritual purity, wool is a type of human effort. It generates sweat.

So you, we, you and I, and the church, we have to examine ourselves. Are we sowing with mixed seed? Is there the good and also the false? Am I wearing a mixed garment? Partly the righteousness of Jesus, and partly my own fleshly nature. Because ultimately, the blessing of God will not remain on that which is pure and impure mixed.

Let me just review that, because I think it's important. Different ways in which error can enter. Deception.

People prophesy beyond the proportion of their faith. They start in faith and then go, because they get puffed up, they go beyond their faith. Um, various different kinds of fortune-telling.

See, people pay a lot of money to fortune-tellers. You know that. People don't pay for nothing.

In Germany today, West Germany, which is now the western half of Germany. In West Germany, most German businessmen will consult a fortune-teller before they do a business deal. They never think of going to a church or a minister.

Now, businessmen don't spend money for nothing. It doesn't mean that what they get is right, but part of it is right. And they can probably quote you instances in which they've marvelously helped.

I think perhaps the classic example is that the previous president of the United States, his wife, was in continual contact with a fortune-teller, an astrologist, and much of his official calendar was dictated by that lady. Including the meetings with, um, Gorbachev and so on. This is, this is not something from another age.

It's right in our midst. And then, I want to warn you again, don't accept Satan's destiny for your life. It may be some of you here have been to a fortune-teller.

It'd be very unusual if some of you hadn't. You really need to get clear of every involvement. In this book of mine, which I held up, I speak of a case when I was in a prayer meeting with a young man.

I'd never met him before. And we were just chatting together. And I said, have you received the Holy Spirit? And he said, yes, but.

Well, any time anybody says, yes, but, to that question, you know what the but is. But, I don't speak with tongues. So, I commented, another trunkless elephant.

And I didn't argue with him about that. I simply said, did you, I know I said this by inspiration, did you ever go to a fortune-teller? And he thought, yes, he said once when I was about 15. But I only did it as a joke.

I didn't mean anything by it. But I said, you did go and you did have your fortune told. So, he rather reluctantly said, yes.

So, I said, would you be willing to confess that to God as a sin and ask him to release you from the consequences? So, he said, yes, I think just really to, you know, get me off his back. So, I led him in a little simple prayer. Lord, I confess as a sin that I went to a fortune-teller.

And I had my fortune told. And I repent. And I ask you to release me from all the consequences.

I didn't say anything more. Put my hand on his shoulder, prayed for him. And he immediately began to speak fluently in a tongue.

You see, the invisible barrier had been removed. There was a shadow over his life that had to be lifted. Many, many, many people are being tricked into the occult today.

I have to say there is a type of what I call charismatic fortune-telling. Which I regard with great suspicion. Sometimes it'll be true.

And sometimes it won't. But you see, people who get the desire to get a word from God from a prophet are in dangerous ground. Not that it couldn't happen.

But to have that desire is to expose yourself to a lot of risks. I want to give you now just a list of some people who are candidates for deception. And as I go through this list, I invite you to check with yourself.

It's not a complete list, but at least it gives you some idea. Here they are, candidates for deception. Those who rely only on subjective impressions.

Well, when that brother prophesied over me, I felt so good. I know that must have been from God. You don't know.

And it's very dangerous to assume you do. There are a lot of other tests you have to apply. Second lot, those who look only to human leaders.

If a certain man says it, they believe it. That's very dangerous. There are no infallible human leaders.

And I'm not one. I don't want people believing it because I say it. I think those of you that know me, I'm always careful to direct people to scripture and not to my subjective impressions.

Third category, those who accept supernatural signs as a guarantee of truth. Jesus himself said that false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, but they're false prophets. So the mere fact that something supernatural takes place is not by itself a sufficient guarantee that the person who produces it is a true prophet.

The next category are those who, through personal ambitions, are susceptible to flattery. Because you know what I said about flattery? The one who flatters his neighbor with his mouth spreads a net for his feet. Not being preachers, most of you, you don't know how preachers like to be appreciated.

And that's reasonable, that's perfectly fair. But the problem is that sometimes we look for appreciation in the wrong place. And by desiring to be appreciated, we get ourselves hooked on something we shouldn't be involved in.

The next category is those who are unwilling to face the possibility of suffering or persecution. Sooner or later they are bound to be deceived. Because the Bible warns us so clearly, we must expect to face suffering and persecution.

Peter says in his first epistle, chapter four, verses one and two, because Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same mind. In other words, be prepared for suffering. My comment on that is that a large number of God's people today are being sent out unarmed.

They haven't seen this fact, that suffering happens, it's part of a Christian life. It's part of God's way of dealing with us. And anybody who only promises good, I could say without qualification, is a false prophet.

And then finally, those who are ignorant of scripture. Now, there are people in remote countries or persecuted situations where they don't have a Bible, they just have a word. God will be merciful to them.

But for you and me who have the whole Bible easily available, if we don't study our Bibles, we are candidates for deception. We deserve to be deceived. Let me give you those, that list again without comment.

Number one, those who rely on subjective impressions. Number two, those who look only to human leaders. Number three, those who accept supernatural signs as a guarantee of truth.

Number four, those who through personal ambition are susceptible to flattery. Number five, those who are unwilling to face the possibility of suffering and persecution. And number six, those who are ignorant of

scripture.

Now, we come to what I call the positive part of this message. How to be free from deception. And I have nine recommendations.

I think we're doing all right for time, I hope so. So, this is the positive part. I've given you some of the negatives, some of the warnings, some of the examples of people who didn't escape from deception.

Now, I want to give you what I believe are nine principles. Number one, it's only by God's mercy that we can be faithful. I was impressed years ago by a statement of Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, chapter 7, verse 25.

He said, I give my opinion as one who has obtained mercy of the Lord to be found faithful. And I realized then, and I think I've never forgotten it, that it's only through the mercy of the Lord that we can be found faithful. It's not our cleverness, it's not our spirituality, it's not the number of verses of scripture that we can quote.

We are dependent on the mercy of the Lord. And as long as we live that way, he will not withhold his mercy from us. But when we become arrogant and self-confident, and think we can do without God's mercy, we are in terrible danger.

Second, we need to cultivate humility and the fear of the Lord. And I'll read one of my favorite passages from Psalm 25, Psalm 25, verses 8 and 9. Good and upright is the Lord, therefore he teaches sinners in the way. The humble he guides in justice, and the humble he teaches his way.

What kind of person does God teach? I didn't hear you. That's right. So, if we ever cease to be humble, we are in danger of passing out from under God's protection.

And then it says in verse 12 and 14, Who is the man that fears the Lord? Him shall the Lord teach in the way he chooses. The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him, and he will show them his covenant. So what's the condition there for receiving truth from God? The fear of the Lord.

In other words, humility and the fear of the Lord are our protection. And I quoted this morning, but some of you weren't here. Two passages about wisdom and knowledge.

I was talking with Ruth and we were praying. And I said, I really would like some way to know what is true wisdom and what is true knowledge. And out of my mouth came a prayer, which I realized was God's answer.

And I said, all true wisdom and all true knowledge proceed out of the fear of the Lord. Anything that does not come out of the fear of the Lord is not true wisdom and is not true knowledge. And the scriptures that God gave me were Psalm 110, verse 11.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, the first part, the foundation of wisdom. And Proverbs 1, 7, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. So anything that does not begin in the fear of the Lord is neither true wisdom nor true knowledge.

We had a prophetic utterance that said God was teaching his people to walk in the fear of the Lord. I have to say that he's teaching me. I would be afraid not to be in the fear of the Lord.

If you ever want a blessing, get a concordance and look through all the promises in the Bible attached to the fear of the Lord. And I think you'll find that there is nothing to which God attaches more promises of blessing than the fear of the Lord. By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life.

He who has the fear of the Lord will abide in satisfaction. He will not be visited with evil. What more could you ask on that? All right, number three.

Base everything on the scriptures. First general revelation which is in the scriptures. Then we can seek for personal revelation.

Now the Bible doesn't tell me that I'm to go as a missionary to India. If that is to be true, I have to get a personal revelation. But I'm not entitled to expect personal revelation if I'm not living in the general revelation which is true for all Christians.

See that's laziness. I would say this, a person has no right to go to a prophet for a word from God if he's not living in the revealed truth of scripture. If you live according to the general revelation, then you can expect personal revelation when you need it.

But if you ignore the general, I think you're almost insulting God to say, God give me a special word. God say, why don't you read my Bible. I've written this.

A Christian who ignores his Bible has no right to hear from God. And many times when he thinks he's hearing from God, he isn't. All right, number four.

Very, very important. Focus on Jesus. Revelation 19, verse 10, tells us the essential nature of prophecy.

And it's in a very short, succinct verse. Revelation 19, 10. The revelatory angel said to John, Worship God, for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

All true prophecy, in one way or another, points us to Jesus. That's true of every biblical prophecy in the Old Testament. And it should be true of every kind of prophecy given by the Holy Spirit in the church.

It should point us to Jesus and exalt Jesus. And Jesus said in John 6, verses 13 and 14, However, when he, the spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth. For he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he says, whatever he hears, he will speak.

And he will tell you things to come. That's legitimate. But it goes on.

He will glorify me, Jesus. For he will take of what is mine and declare it to you. The supreme function of the Holy Spirit in the church is to glorify Jesus.

That's what he comes to do. And I'll tell you as a little secret for meetings. If you want the anointing and blessing of the Holy Spirit, concentrate on glorifying Jesus.

And the Holy Spirit will be happy to be there. But anything that diverts people's attention from Jesus and turns them off into secondary issues and does not give glory to Jesus, is not from the Holy Spirit. That's a pretty sure test.

Now, I've been a Pentecostal for 49 years. I've been amongst Pentecostals, God bless them, who made all sorts of strange statements and wild noises and said it was the Holy Spirit. But Jesus got no glory from

it at all.

They were deceived, poor people. But they're not the only ones. We've got now a smarter set of people called charismatics, and they get deceived too.

The next suggestion I have is leave the initiative with God. Don't worry God for revelation. Sit there quietly and let God give it to you as and when he pleases.

Jesus said, My judgment is true, because I do not judge of myself, but as I hear, I judge. Try and follow that pattern. Hear and then judge.

Don't preempt God. Don't worry God with your problems, especially theological problems. There's a beautiful scripture that I love in Psalm 131.

Psalm 131. I'll read just two verses. David, of course.

Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty. Notice what he's guarding himself against in one word. Pride.

Neither do I concern myself with great matters, nor with things too profound for me. Beware of being concerned with things that are too profound for you. There are lots of things you couldn't understand if God told you them.

Let God keep them to himself. Now, this is the scripture. Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with his mother.

Like a weaned child is my soul within me. This became very vivid to me years ago when I used to preach to Africans in Kenya. And if there was a congregation, say, the size of this middle section, the front three rows would probably be taken up by mothers nursing their babies.

And every time a baby squealed, the mother would take out the breast and give it the breast. And I got used to directing my eyes beyond the third row. But you see, that's an unweaned child.

Every time it wants something, it squeals. But a weaned child waits for mother to prepare the appropriate food at the appropriate time. So, don't go to God squealing like an unweaned child.

Be weaned. Accept God's meals when he provides them. Be disciplined.

See that? All right. The next warning I would give is beware of fantasy. There is a spirit of fantasy.

And it's taking millions of people over, mainly through television. And honestly, a lot of young people today don't know whether what they're seeing is real or fantasy. Now, I'm going to give a little personal illustration.

I hope I can make it vivid. Because I've been doing a lot of thinking about this for some time. And I have a very vivid imagination.

I think it's part of my gifting as a writer. And my imagination easily takes over. I can hear something and my imagination goes into high gear.

And I'm off. And I can be miles away in a few seconds. Now, there is a good side to that.

But it's very dangerous. And one day, I was kind of meditating on the greatness of God. And on all that he's done.

And on his calling. And I felt like I was at the top of a very rugged, beautiful mountain peak. And I could look out in different directions and see glorious vistas.

And I was getting carried away with the beauty and the exhilaration. And then I looked one other way and I saw a very steep precipice. Going down sheer, hundreds of feet.

And I wasn't far from it. And I was really gripped with fear. I felt the fear in the pit of my stomach.

And I thought, God, where's the guardrail? And I got this answer. The guardrail is the scriptures. As long as you stay inside them, you're safe.

But if you get outside, you're headed for disaster. So, if you have a vivid imagination, yield it to the Holy Spirit. You see, and this is a terrible thing to say, but if I wanted to be a false prophet, which God forbid, I would be a very successful one.

Can you understand what I'm saying? I know I have the gifts that could fascinate people. You know what the word fascinate, it comes from a Latin word, it means to bewitch. That's exactly what it means.

So anything that's fascinating, in a certain sense, is potentially bewitching. So, use your vivid imagination. Let God give you glorious vistas.

But, my dearly beloved brothers and sisters, stay inside the guardrail. Why should you be another casualty? There are plenty before you. Never go outside the scriptures.

You're safe. The next one is, keep it simple and plain. Don't be super spiritual.

Don't use a lot of high-flown language. Stick with simplicity. I always like the thing that dear Torrie Ten Boom used to say.

I'm sure some of you've heard her. KISS. K-I-S-S.

Keep it simple, skip it. I, believe me, I take that to heart. If I ever get outside the simplicity, I get nervous.

Paul wrote two things to the Corinthians, in 2 Corinthians. Chapter 3. I'm in 1 Corinthians, that's why it confused me. 2 Corinthians chapter 3, verses 12 and 13.

Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech. But the other translation is, we use great plainness of speech. And unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.

So, the Old Testament was veiled. It had truth in signs and types and allegories. It wasn't fully unfolded.

But in the New Testament, that's not the way we present truth. We use great plainness of speech. I tell people when they want in a deliverance meeting, if you want to be delivered, number one, be humble.

Number two, be honest. And you won't be honest unless you're humble. And I say, call your problem by the right name.

If it's lust, call it lust. Don't use some fancy psychoanalytic term. And I believe in plainness.

I believe that's part of the New Testament ministry. We call things by simple terms. We call a spade a spade, and not an agricultural implement.

And then Paul goes on in the same epistle, chapter eleven, part of which I've already read. He says to the church in verse two, For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

That's an astonishing statement when you think what kind of people the Corinthian Christians had been. Homosexuals, prostitutes, drunkards. Every nasty thing that you can think of.

And Paul says, I want to betroth you as a chaste virgin to Christ. That's the miracle of salvation. That the most impure can become the purest.

But you see, he used the word betrothed. Betrothed is not marriage. In the biblical culture, a betrothal was binding, but it was not marriage.

You couldn't consummate the relationship. But it was as authoritative and legal as marriage. Now the church today is betrothed to Jesus.

But the marriage supper of the Lamb hasn't come. And we are being tested. What's the test? It's very simple.

Will we be loyal to Jesus? Or will we abandon our commitment to him? The church that is loyal to Jesus will be the bride. The church that abandons loyalty to Jesus will be the harlot, the prostitute. They're both very clearly formed already in the world.

We're not going to see that emerge. It has already begun to emerge. There is a false church today.

Very important to remember that. And it's a false church because it's betrayed Jesus. And then Paul goes on and comes back to the issue now.

But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity and purity that is in Christ. Stay simple. Don't try to be too clever.

In my opinion, stay away from theology. Well, I'm not a critic of theology, but I think theology has brought much more damage to the church than it has done good. I don't think we're required to make a system out of the Bible.

We're required to find out what it teaches and live that way. You know why we make theology? Because it's too simple. We have to find a way round explaining the simple commandments of the Bible.

Like if anyone slaps you on one cheek, slap it and turn your other cheek. If anybody asks your coat, give him your cloak. Do good to those who hate you.

Bless those who persecute you. That's not difficult to understand, but it's pretty difficult to do. There's no complication in the message.

The complication comes in our crooked human nature. All right, I'm getting near the end. The next thing is exercise your senses for discernment.

Hebrews chapter 5, verse 12, Now, for though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God, and you've come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. We have a lot of overgrown babies in the church today.

But solid food belongs to those who are of full age or mature. That is, those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil. So, in order to have discernment, you have to exercise your senses.

You have to practice. Every time you confront anything, you need to subject it to your discernment. Learn to discern between that which is true and that which is false, between that which is spiritual and that which is soulish, because they are completely different.

What appeals to your emotions may not touch your spirit at all. We have a lot of worship in the church today which is soulish. People worship God in order to have a good time.

Wonderful worship service, they say. But the purpose of worship is not for us to have a good time. It's for us to worship God.

And we have to come to the place where we're sensitive to the difference between the spiritual and the soulish. And that will only come as we practice. Always have your discernment antennae out.

Pick up what's in a meeting. Pick up what's in a message. Then you won't be so easily fooled when the crisis comes.

Finally, and this is the last, cultivate the love of the truth. 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. 2 Thessalonians 2, beginning at verse 9. It's speaking about the Antichrist. 2 Thessalonians 2, 9. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan with all power, signs, and lying wonders.

Notice, Satan can come out with very powerful signs and wonders, but it's still Satan. And with all unrighteous deception among those who perish because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. Why do they perish? Because they didn't receive the love of the truth.

If you refuse the love of the truth, you are bound to perish. The love is a strong word there. It's not a weak word.

It's not tolerating the truth. It's not letting somebody come and present the truth to you. It's finding out the truth for yourself.

It's searching and seeking the truth. Those are the people who will not be deceived. The others will.

Why? Because they didn't receive the love of the truth. I would like to urge you, dear brothers and sisters, cultivate the love of the truth. Give time to finding out what is the truth.

Take time with your Bible in the presence of the Lord. Now, I'm going to read those nine recommendations and I'm going to close. First of all, it's only by God's mercy that we'll be faithful.

Second, we need to cultivate humility and the fear of the Lord. Third, we need to base everything on the Scriptures. First, general revelation before special revelation.

Fourth, we need to focus on Jesus. The testimony of Jesus is the essence of prophecy. Fifth, we need to leave the initiative with God.

Be weaned. Sixth, we need to beware of fantasy. Stay within the guardrail of the Scriptures.

Seventh, keep it simple and plain. Don't become too complicated. Don't become, don't use too long words.

You'll find out most of the important statements in the Bible are made in words of one syllable. Number eight, exercise your senses. Cultivate discernment.

And number nine, cultivate the love of the truth. Now, I would like to pray for all of us to close this message. I think it would be good if we were all to stand.

You've been sitting a long while. And I invite you to join with me in this prayer. It's a prayer for the mercy of God.

That we need. I need it. Brothers and sisters, I need it just as much as anybody else here.

Because with the influence I have, if I went wrong, I'd leave a lot of other people wrong. And I'm always conscious of that. So let's bear in mind we need the mercy of God.

And let's tell God we want the truth. We want to cultivate the love of the truth. Heavenly Father, we come to you tonight in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, our wonderful Savior and our Lord.

And we thank you for this so great salvation which you have purchased for us through the blood of your Son. And Lord, we are reverent, we are appreciative. We do not take it lightly.

We move in the fear of the Lord. We thank you for the guardrail that you've put around us. The scriptures.

We want to stay within that guardrail. We humble ourselves before you and acknowledge our total dependence upon you. That it's only by your faithfulness that we will be preserved.

By your mercy. And so Lord, we commit ourselves to you. We want to renounce any area in which deception may have gained some control over us.

We want to turn against it. Drive it from us. Loosen ourselves from it.

In the name of Jesus. And we want to embrace the truth. That is Jesus.

That is the scripture. And that is the Holy Spirit. We open our hearts and minds tonight to that truth.

And ask you to fill us with the truth of God. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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