

How to Spot a Counterfeit

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Date Preached: January 8, 1995

Main Scripture Text: 2 Peter 2:1–3

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”

2 PETER 2:1

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Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and open, if you would, please, to 2 Peter chapter 2. I was reading in a news magazine here just recently this month about counterfeiting in America. The title of the article—I have it here—is “High Tech Counterfeiting.” And the article, among other things, says: “The American dollar is potentially the most imperiled, because it is still the leading currency in the global marketplace. U.S. bank notes now account for approximately 80% of all counterfeit money.” And then, it goes on to say: “With sophisticated technology so accessible today, can the dollar’s new design really stop the surge of counterfeiting?” That is, they’re going to redesign the dollar. Your old dollar will be obsolete. Then, the article goes on to say: “Ten years ago, you really had

to be a printer to turn out a quality product.” But he said, “We have seen a dramatic increase in the sophistication of counterfeiting; but, it takes less skill today.” So who knows what you may have in your pocket right now? Maybe you’re not quite as wealthy as you think you are. Maybe, what you have is counterfeit money. That would be bad; but, it wouldn’t be nearly so bad as to have a counterfeit faith—not to have the real thing. So the basis of our message is, “How to Spot a Counterfeit”—not a counterfeit dollar, but a counterfeit prophet, a counterfeit teacher.

Look, if you will, in 2 Peter chapter 2, and beginning in verse 1: *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not”* (2 Peter 2:1–3).

We’re going to look, today, at this matter of counterfeit Christians, and counterfeit preachers, and counterfeit prophets. And the world is full today of dangerous and damnable heresies. The need of these last days is authentic, biblical Christianity.

Now in the Bible, there is no greater crime than being a false prophet. As a matter of fact, a false prophet would be put to death, in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy chapter 18 and verse 20, the Bible says, *“But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die”* (Deuteronomy 18:20). That meant that he should be executed. He should be put to death.

Now it’s bad to tell a lie. It is worse to teach a lie. But it is terribly worse to tell a lie, and to teach a lie about God, because you can cause a soul to be eternally lost. The Bible calls them *damnable heresies*.

Now there are three things I want you to see, as we think about counterfeit prophets, and teachers, and preachers.

I. Realize Their Presence

First of all, you need to be aware of their presence.

A. There Always Have Been False Teachers

Now notice in verse 1: *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you”* (2 Peter 2:1). Now when he talks about the people, he’s talking about Israel of old. That is, in the past, there have been false prophets, so it’s not new. As a matter of fact, a false religion is as old as Eden.

Now there are only two kinds of religion. We subdivide religion into Christianity, and

Buddhism, and Islam, and Confucianism, and *Rheumatism*, and all of these other things. And then, we take Christianity, and we subdivide Christianity into Catholicism and Protestantism. And then, we subdivide Protestantism. We say, there's Methodism, Lutheranism, and Episcopalianism, and so forth. But forget all these divisions and subdivisions. There are only two kinds of religion in the world: the true and the false. That's it. Two categories: that which is true, and that which is false. And there have always been false teachers since the Garden of Eden.

B. There Are False Teachers Among You

There have been, and they still exist today. Look at what he's saying: "*But there were false prophets also among the people,*"—he's talking about the past—"even as there shall be false teachers among you" (2 Peter 2:1). Now the *you* refers to the Church of the Lord Jesus. He's talking now to the Church. And there are false teachers in churches today. As a matter of fact, you can almost—and I'm not exaggerating—think of almost anything you want to believe, no matter how strange and bizarre, or any way that you want to live, and I can find you a church in Shelby County where you can go, and be perfectly at home. It's amazing what people will believe. I used to think it strange what people would *not* believe; now I've come to think it's *more* strange what people *will* believe.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 11 and verses 13 and following, the Apostle Paul talked about some who occupy pulpits, and he says, "*For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works*" (2 Corinthians 11:13). That is, they're going to die and go to Hell, but they're called *Reverend*, or *Doctor*, or something like that. But they do not know the Lord, and they stand in pulpits, as false apostles, and angels of light. *When you look for the devil, never fail to look in the pulpit.* Don't let false teachers take you by surprise. The Word of God here clearly says they will be among you.

Now they're called "*damnable heresies*" (2 Peter 2:1). Do you see that, in verse 1? Look at it: "*damnable heresies.*" The word *heresy* comes from a word that means, "to divide." You see, heresy, when it comes in the church, always causes people to have to make a choice, because, if somebody brings false doctrine into the church, then the pastor—the teacher, the leadership of the church—says, "You can't do that." And they say, "Oh yes, we can." "You can't believe that." "Oh yes, we can." "That is not right." They say, "Oh yes, it is." And so there's a division. And so when you deal with these people, with these heresies, then they will act like they're being persecuted, like they're being put upon, like you are doing something to them, and it's your fault for standing

against what is wrong.

It's like the little boys who were fighting in the bedroom. The mother came in to quiet them down. And Johnny said to the mother, "Well, mother, it all started when Jimmy hit me back!"

And that's the way these folks are. When they come in with their dividing doctrines, and you say, "You can't do that; you can't believe it," they say, "You're causing division." But no, they are the ones who cause division. And yet, sometimes, you have to deal with heresy, whether it is a denomination or a local church, heresy must be dealt with. And I've told you from this pulpit, *it is better to be divided by truth than to be united in error*. The Bible calls them "damnable heresies" (2 Peter 2:1). We don't have to get along with everybody. There comes a time when we must say, "That is wrong! You cannot perpetrate that here."

Martin Luther, the leader of the Protestant Reformation, the reformer, said this—and I want to quote him verbatim: "I do not want to know anything of peace and concord when the Word of God is thereby lost, and the Word, eternal life, and everything else is forfeited. It is not right for me here to draw back, and give way, out of love toward you or toward any other man. But before the Word, every one must give way." That's what he said.

C. There Will Be False Teachers

Now sometimes, people think that the Bible is not true, because there are false teachers. And sometimes, people will say, "Oh, why, Christianity has so many cults, and divisions, and errors in it. It can't possibly be true." To the contrary, if there were no false cults, the Bible would not be true, because the Bible says there will be false cults. This verse right here says, "*But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you*" (2 Peter 2:1). If there were no false teachers, the Bible would not be true, because the Bible says there will be false teachers. As a matter of fact, Paul said, in another place, in 1 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 1: "*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils*" (1 Timothy 4:1).

II. Recognize Their Pretense—How Do You Spot Them?

Now that brings up another question: How do you spot a counterfeit? I mean, this article that I have talks about how to spot counterfeit money; but, how do you spot a false prophet?

A. By Their Message

Well, let me give you some ways. Let me give you five tests. And you can take any preacher, teacher, on the face of the earth, and hold him up with these five tests, and

you'll tell whether or not he's real, or whether he's a counterfeit.

1. The Source Test

First of all, there's the Source Test. What is the basis of his teaching? Does he have revelation other than the Bible? For example, some might come to your door, and say, "Oh, we accept the Bible as the Word of God, but we also accept Joseph Smith as a prophet." Now they want to lay some other source down alongside the Word of God. But the Bible says we're not to add to it; we're not to take from it; we're not to amend it; we're not to adjust it. Is their source the Word of God? Do they have any other revelation but the Bible?

2. The Savior Test

Number two: the Savior Test. Do they believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the virgin-born Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father? I had some Jehovah's Witnesses come to my door the other day. I stood there at the doorstep, and spoke to them very courteously, very kindly, and they began to speak. And I said, "Before you go any further, I want to ask you this question: Do you worship Jesus Christ?" They said, "We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." I said, "I'm glad to hear that. Now the question: Do you worship Jesus Christ?" "Oh," they said, "we give Him praise and honor." I said, "Thank you very much. Now the question: Do you worship Jesus Christ?" They said, "We reverence Him." I said, "One more time, clearly and plainly, answer this question: Do you worship Jesus Christ?" They said, "No." I said, "Well, why not? The Bible is full of the worship of Jesus Christ. And over and over again, in the Bible, and in the Gospels, it tells how they worshiped Him. Now if He's not God, of course, He should not be worshiped. If He is God, He should be worshiped." They said, "Excuse us. We must go!" And they left. I said, "Come back. I want to talk to you." They said, "We've got to go!" And I'm not exaggerating. I wanted them to stay, because I wanted to take the Word of God, and show them from the Word of God over and over and over again that Jesus Christ is worshiped. But if He's not God, He should not be worshiped, for the Bible says, "*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*" (Luke 4:8).

The Source Test: Is the source the Word of God? The *Savior test*: Do they see Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and also God the Son, the Messiah, God in human flesh, co-equal and co-eternal with God Almighty?

3. The Subject Test

Third test: the Subject Test. Is the primary source of their teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ? Paul said, "*For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*" (1 Corinthians 2:2). And everything else comes out of that, or folds into that. That is the basis. That is what the Bible is all about, is the good news of

the gospel of Jesus Christ. And the Old Testament says somebody is coming; the New Testament says somebody has come; the Book of Revelation says somebody is coming again, and that person is the Lord Jesus. He is the hero of the Bible. The Bible has one theme: it is salvation. One hero: it is Jesus. One villain: it is the devil. What is the subject? What is the motivation? Do they want to talk to you about, what they call kingdom truth, or this thing, or that thing? Or, is it the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ? And is the gospel of salvation by grace through faith? The Apostle Paul said, “*If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed*” (Galatians 1:9). Literally, that means, “Let him be damned.” You say that’s harsh. It’s not harsh, if he says to somebody, “You can’t teach something that’s going to lead people to Hell.” You see, we’re not dealing with the preference of the color of the walls, or whether or not you want more salt on the potatoes. We’re talking about the eternal destiny of people.

4. The Salvation Test

The Source Test. The Savior Test. The Subject Test. The Salvation Test: Do they teach salvation by grace, or do they try to mix works, or baptism, or anything else, into it? Friend, anytime you say to anybody that anything else must be done other than trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved, you take the *whosoever* out of the Bible.

If you say, for example, that a person has to be baptized in order to be saved, do you know what you’ve done? Do you know how many people you have eliminated? I mean, in Desert Storm, when our boys were over there fighting, several years ago, suppose a boy got shot, or gassed, and a chaplain comes to him, and says, “Son, are you saved?” He says, “No.” “Son, do you want to be saved?” “Yes, I do.” “Well, son, I’m sorry, but I can’t baptize you. Out here there’s nothing but sand.”

You see how foolish that would be. You see, anytime you put anything else as a requirement for salvation, you take the *whosoever* out. The Bible says, “*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*” (Romans 10:13). You know what that means in the Greek? Whosoever. “*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*” That means anybody—anytime, any place—who calls upon Jesus, in repentance and faith, they will be saved, or I’ll close my Bible, and never preach again. So the Salvation Test: Find out from these people, “Do you believe in salvation by grace through faith that gives glory to God?”

5. The Sanctification Test

The fifth test is the Sanctification Test. Do you teach, and are you endeavoring to live, a holy life? If they’re not living a holy life, if they don’t teach holiness—personal holiness and separation from sin—there’s something rotten in their teaching.

Now folks, you just hold up those five tests, and I’ll tell you, before long, you’ll be able to separate the false from the true, just as an agent has to learn how to look at a

dollar bill, or a \$20 bill, or a \$100 bill, and tell whether it's counterfeit or false. And so first of all, how do you identify them? Well, you identify them by their message.

B. By Their Method

Now here's the second way you identify them: not only by their message, but their method. Look, if you will, in verse 2. Verse 1 speaks of the message; verse 2 speaks of their method: "*And many shall follow their pernicious ways*" (2 Peter 2:2). Now what is their pernicious way? Well, look, if you will, in verse 3: "*And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you*" (2 Peter 2:3). Then look, if you will, in verse 1: They "*privily shall bring in damnable heresies*" (2 Peter 2:1). Now all of these are talking about the way they operate.

Look at the word *privily*. It means, "secretly." It means, "clandestinely." It means, "in a way that's hard to spot." Give the devil credit for being clever. What they do is to lay false teaching alongside good teaching, in order to confuse. Now that everybody knows that's a good thing to do, if you want to fool somebody.

I mean, the beer ads. What are the most beautiful ads on television, the most arresting? What do they associate beer with? Busch—head for the mountains! Beautiful! You see, you all laugh, because you've all seen that. I mean, that's made an impression on you. It's Miller time! Everybody's having a good time. What do they do? They don't show some drunk in a gutter, covered with flies and vomit. They don't show some beered-up man coming home, and hitting his baby girl in the face with his fist. They don't show some man slamming his wife up against the wall. They don't show somebody coming into an emergency room, having his face all sliced up, because he just went through the windshield. They don't show that. Of course not! The Marlboro Man—you've seen the dude: a sun-tanned man with a big hat. Now I want to ask you a question. What do riding a horse and dying of a cancer have to do with one another? Now what is its association? I mean, you read right there: Anybody who could read ought to give up cigarettes. It says, "You smoke this, you'll get in danger of getting cancer." But that's very small print. As a matter of fact, it's so small on those billboards, you're in danger of wrecking, trying to read it. But they only put that on, because the law makes them do that.

Well, the devil does the same thing. He speaks of feigned words. Do you see that—"*with feigned words*" (2 Peter 2:3)? Do you know what the word *feigned* is in the Greek language? *Plastos*. It's the word we get our word *plastic* from—these plastic preachers, with plastic words. That is, what is plastic? It's something that's pliable. It's something that molds itself, just simply to fit, and to imitate. And they're so good at that—feigned words.

I was in a law office one time, and I met a man, and this man was a professor in a

Christian college. And he and I had a conversation together. And I thought, “Boy, I have found a brother.” We began to talk about the things of God, and I thought, “This is wonderful!” We were sitting there in the law office. It was Mr. Spielvogel’s office, Jim, right there in Merritt Island. We were sitting there, and I was talking to this man, and we had a wonderful conversation. Then we got to talking about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and we’re still having a wonderful conversation. But then, he dropped a word, and I smelled a rat, and I said, “Let me ask you one more question.” I said, “Do you believe in the resurrection?” “Oh, yes,” he said, “I believe in the resurrection.” I thought, “Well, there I go—just my suspicious nature.” So we began to talk a little bit more. And then, I said, “Wait—wait a minute. Let me just ask you another question. Do you believe that Jesus Christ walked out of that tomb—the tomb was empty?” “Oh, no,” he said, “I don’t believe that.” Isn’t that strange? I mean, here’s the man saying, “I believe in the resurrection.” Well now, I don’t know what kind of resurrection he believes in, but he doesn’t believe in the Bible resurrection, where they went in, and found an empty tomb. That’s *feigned words*.

Do you know what liberalism will do? Liberalism will use our words and their dictionary. And that’s where it’s so confusing, because, sometimes, when you talk to these people, and you say, “Well, that man is a heretic; he doesn’t believe right,” they say, “You’re a nitpicker. Ask him. He believes in the resurrection.”

J. Vernon McGee—many of you know J. Vernon McGee. He’s in Heaven now—one of the great Bible teachers. He had a lady who was going to a liberal church—a friend of his—and he said to her, “Why do you go over to that church, and listen to that man preach?” She said, “Dr. McGee, he is a fine man. He is a gentleman, and he preaches the same thing you preach. He uses the same words that you use.” Dr. McGee said, “Does he believe in the resurrection?” She said, “Of course he does.” He said, “You go ask him if he believes in an empty tomb—that Jesus Christ came out of that tomb.” She went back to J. Vernon McGee, after having asked that question, with tears in her eyes. She said, “Dr. McGee, I cannot believe it. He does not believe that Jesus came out of that tomb.”

That’s what we’re talking about: “*With feigned words*”—plastic words—will they “*make merchandise of you*” (2 Peter 2:3). And to try to hem these folks up, sometimes, is like trying to hem up a snake in a barrel of oil. It’s difficult.

C. By Their Manner

Now you see them by their method, as well as their message; and then, their manner. Look at their manner, in verse 2: “*And many shall follow their pernicious ways*” (2 Peter 2:2). That’s a word we don’t use much, unless we say someone has *pernicious anemia*, whatever that is. What it literally means is, “unbridled lust.” You’re going to find these

counterfeiters, because they don't love the Lord; and, they can't love the Lord, because they don't know the Lord. The sum, center, and substance of their message is themselves. And this always: Apostasy *and* immorality *are always inextricably* interwoven.

Let me give you a couple of other verses that speak of apostasy and immorality—Jude, verse 4: *“For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Jude 1:4). They turned the grace of God into lasciviousness.

I know of people who spout about grace, and who live in sin. They say, “Well, Calvary covers it all.” That's a heresy. *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid”* (Romans 6:1–2).

Listen to Jeremiah chapter 23 and verse 14: *“I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness; they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah”* (Jeremiah 23:14).

Now they call themselves prophets, but they're living in sin. Their ways are pernicious ways. And many will follow them. As a matter of fact, they love to have a preacher who will drink with them, who'll tell filthy jokes with them, and who will be coarse. Why? Because it makes them feel better. The Bible says, *“And many shall follow their pernicious ways”* (2 Peter 2:2). Look in verse 2.

Therefore, success in the ministry—what people call success—does not necessarily mean that it's God's work. Statistics are no proof that something is of God, because many will follow their pernicious ways. There are people who love the sensual rather than the spiritual. Jesus said, *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 7:21). Many people are living double lives. They are false prophets. That's the test I was talking about: the Holiness Test, the Sanctification Test.

D. By Their Motive

You can spot a counterfeit by his message. You can spot him by his method. You can spot him by his manner. Or, you can spot him by his motive. What is his motive? Look in verse 3: *“And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you”* (2 Peter 2:3). What is their motive? Well, they want to make merchandise of you. They want to use you, manipulate you. Why? Because they themselves are covetous!

Now I'm not saying here that a preacher ought not to be paid. He ought to be paid. The Bible says you're not to muzzle the ox that treads the corn. The Bible says, *“They which preach the gospel should live of the gospel”* (1 Corinthians 9:14). The Bible says

that a workman is worthy of his hire (Luke 10:7), and the elder that rules well is worthy of double honor (1 Timothy 5:17). The Bible says all of that. I'm grateful, as any preacher is grateful, for the love and the sacrifice of God's people, that enable us to preach the gospel. He's not talking about that. But he's talking about people, who for their own motivation, and out of their own wicked heart, make merchandise of the gospel. If you have a television, and you watch long, you've perhaps seen some of these hucksters, those who merchandise the gospel of Jesus Christ. And in my estimation, the hottest part of Hell is reserved for those who, for whatever reason—these plastic preachers, these counterfeit prophets, who—merchandise God's people. Now many times, with great, swelling words they exploit the ignorant. They are prophets, but you spell *prophet*, p-r-o-f-i-t.

III. Remember Their Past

Now what Peter does here, he gets very serious, and he says God will surely judge them. God will not spare them. Look at his argument, beginning in verse 4. He says, *“For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked”* (2 Peter 2:4–7). Then skip to verse 9: *“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished”* (2 Peter 2:9).

Now what's God saying? God is saying, “Here is God's solemn warning to every counterfeiter. When the angels fell, I judged them. When a civilization in Noah's day became polluted, I judged them. When Sodom and Gomorrah became perverted, I judged them. And I'm going to judge these false prophets.” God spared not the angels. He spared not the old world. He spared not Sodom and Gomorrah. And He will not spare a false prophet.

Conclusion

But here's the other side of it. Romans chapter 8 and verse 32 says, *“He”—God—“that spared not his own Son”* (Romans 8:32). When Jesus left Heaven, came to this earth, and became my substitute, my sin and your sin was put upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And Jesus went to Calvary. They stretched Him out on a hellish cross, after having lacerated His back, after having put a crown of thorns on His head, after having snatched His beard from His face, after having hit Him with their fists, battered Him with

clubs, and they hung Him up on a cross. And in torture and pain unimaginable, Jesus suffered, but He did not cry. He suffered. *“And like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth”* (Acts 8:32).

But then, something happened. The heavens became black like midnight, and there was a horrible thing that happened. God the Father who had always been with the Lord Jesus Christ from eternity turned His back on, and forsook God the Son. And Jesus cried from that cross, *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* (Matthew 27:46). And the answer is this: that God is *“of purer eyes than to behold...iniquity”* (Habakkuk 1:13). And Jesus Christ, on that cross, took my sin, and your sin, and the sin of billions—all that have lived and will ever live; the sin of the world was laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And Jesus, who had never sinned, became sin. And Jesus, who had been the object of the Father’s greatest delight, became the object of the Father’s loathing. And God the Father had to look upon God the Son as God the Father would look upon you or me at the final judgment, without our sin atoned for. And God the Father had to turn His back upon God the Son. And God the Son cried out, *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* (Matthew 27:46).

And let me tell you something: If there were ever a time when God would have been tempted to have been lenient on sin, it would have been when that sin was resting upon His darling Son, isn’t that true? But the Bible says that God would not spare Him. Romans chapter 8 and verse 32: *“He”—God—“that spared not his own Son”* (Romans 8:32).

Now listen to me. You’re intelligent people. If God spared not Jesus, when sin was laid upon Jesus, do you think that God will spare you, when your sin is still on you? No, He won’t do it. God spared not the angels that sinned. God spared not the old world. God spared not Sodom and Gomorrah in judgment (2 Peter 2:4–6). God spared not His own Son, in redemption. And God will not spare you. But there’s a blessed truth there. *“He that spared not his own Son...shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”* (Romans 8:32).

What does that mean? I have two sons. Well, I have three. I have a little boy in Heaven. But if you were to say to me, “Adrian, can I have one of your sons? Can I have your firstborn son, Steve?” “Well, what do you want to do with Steve?” “Lie about him and abuse him. We want to beat him. We want to humiliate him. We want to lacerate his back. We want to cut him to ribbons. Then, we want to hang him up on a cross, that he might die in agony and blood. Will you give me your son?” I would say, “No, I wouldn’t give you my son.” I wouldn’t even begin to think about it. But suppose, for some strange reason, there was a need that you would have my son, that my son might die on your behalf. Suppose you could talk me into loving you that much, and I gave you my precious boy, Steve. And then, you said to me, “Now that you’ve given to me Steve, can

I have his football?" I'd say, "Sure." "Can I have his blue jeans?" "Of course!" "Can I have his library?" "Of course!" I mean, if I loved you enough to give you my son, certainly I'd give you anything else.

Now here's what Paul says in Romans 8. I want you to see this: "*He that spared not his own Son...shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*" (Romans 8:32). If God loved us enough to give Jesus, what would He withhold? You see? Now what's he saying? He's saying, "Listen. Don't get caught up in a counterfeit Christianity. God is the unsparing God. He will not spare sin. He will not spare the sinner. But He did not spare His Son, the Lord Jesus, that you and I might be saved, that you and I might have eternal life. The world is full of counterfeits. Make sure you have the real thing.

One last word—are you listening? There are some counterfeit dollar bills out there. So I've got some good advice for you. Get rid of all of your money. You say, "Pastor, that's stupid." You're right! And there are some counterfeit Christians. But don't you let that keep you away from the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean, be reasonable. The counterfeit only proves the worthwhileness and the validity of the real. Every counterfeit piece of currency is a tribute to the worthwhileness of the real. And every counterfeit Christian is but a tribute to what we have, and the value of it. Don't let a counterfeit keep you out of Heaven. I want to tell you that Jesus is real. Salvation is real. And you can be real, if you'll repent of your sin, and trust Him. †