

The False Prophet is a Fowler's Snare

Let us turn into our Bibles to Hosea chapter 9, verses 7-9, mostly verse 8 as we will see, that's the title of the sermon. Let us listen attentively to the word of God as we drill into these verses, I covered most of the verses around it, I'm drilling into these. The days of punishment have come, the days of recompense have come, Israel knows.

The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is insane, because of the greatness of your iniquity and great enmity. The watchman of Ephraim is with my God, but the prophet is a fowler's snare in all his ways. Enmity in the house of his God, they are deeply corrupted, as in the days of Giba, he will remember their iniquity, he will punish their sins, let us pray.

As we are gathered here this evening, God going through the book of Hosea, one of the larger of the minor prophets, God we see over and over again of the wickedness of your people, especially of the northern tribes in which they had broken off with Jeroboam and created a parallel religion with their own priests and holy days. We see the fruits of it here, several generations later, gracious God, may we learn these lessons, may it stick into our hearts how serious worship of you is, Lord God Almighty, and the following of your will and submission to you, and here in particular God, the dangers of those who would draw us further away from the purity of who you are, of your word, of your worship and of your church. Gracious God, equip us, give us the strength, encourage us, Lord, to stand firm upon your truth and to flee any and all who would pretend to be more than they really are, God, and draw us into this world of sin, to the world of flesh and the devil instead of to your holiness, we pray by our Lord and Savior, amen.

Although it is hard to say that we live in a great age of apostasy and false teaching, that is, we can say it, but we can think of other times in history like during the Reformation which the same thing could be said. We certainly have the greatest means to promote lies in any other age, the technology that we have, the globalization that we are a part of with the internet, TV, radio, smart phones, even fridges with screens and commercials on them. Dangerous preachers have unparalleled access to people than ever before.

This coupled with the rise of religious sects in America during her history such as Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses, that was in the 1800s, the Mormons, the early 1800s in the burned out district and the late 1800s in the Jehovah Witnesses. The current globalization that brings in Eastern European religions into America like the Eastern or Greek Orthodox Church which was not on the radar in 1936 when we picked our name as a domination, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. And now we get phone calls and emails, why do you call yourself Orthodox when you're not Orthodox? We've been here since 36.

But you are new. These are new things, new changes. Men and women now claim the mantle of God's servants and speak proudly of their false religions around us with smooth words and quick smiles, taking Christian language and wrapping them around their lies.

It is the false teacher's buttery words and congenial presentation that are the snare for many a soul. Like birds looking for food, they too readily alight upon the fowler's snare, trapped and harmed by the evil one. So let us learn more about them that we may better avoid them.

The Dangerous Snare of False teachers

That's the point. The dangerous snares of false teachers. Textually here, what's going on in verse 7 and following, Hosea is reminding them the days of punishment have come, the days of recompense have come, that they are at hand, they're already under a form of judgment.

The fullness hasn't come until the fall of Samaria, of course. There are degrees of judgment of God's punishment upon His people. Among all their other problems, the false worship, false priests, made-up worship days, we ran across those in earlier parts of Hosea, reliance upon foreign allegiances instead of upon God as they were called to do, and even murder, the constant theme of unfaithfulness is always there.

These sins are further reinforced by the false prophets, the false teachers, because the prophets, of course, also taught. They taught lies. And he reminds them, Israel knows.

Israel knows of this judgment. They have been instructed and warned before, not only by Hosea, but by others. They have a culpable ignorance, as we may say.

And it continues on here to describe what some think is Hosea, but I think it's the prophets themselves, the false prophets, because it's picked up again. It continues on in verse eight without missing a hitch. The watchman Ephraim is with my God, that's a prophet.

But the prophet is a fowler's snare. And so these prophets are described as fools or insane. The word fool here, there are three Hebrew words.

You'll see them especially in the book of Proverbs. This one is the worst. It's the stubborn despiser of wisdom.

That's the kind of fool. Not a child who may be foolish or ignorant, adults who may be foolish in that sense, naive perhaps. Here it's a simple stubborn despiser of wisdom, of God's truth.

They persistently want to do these things and go the opposite direction. The word insane here only used seven times in the Old Testament. It's kind of interesting.

You might have a different translation. Mad, I think, is used elsewhere. The prophet is insane or mad.

It's used in 2 Kings 9.11. You may recall that on Wednesday night when the servant of Elisha was sent to ordain the new king of Israel. And his servants asked him, who was that servant? What's going on here? Oh, he's just a madman, he said. He's just a crazy guy.

Same word. So the descriptions here, fool and insane, of course not literally, but metaphorically, that as the lies they spew are so bad, they may as well be insane madmen. Talk of Baal, the false god Baal being a deliverer, being Jehovah, even, is crazy talk.

It's insane. It's wicked. They think he's worthy of honor and worship.

That is truly foolish teaching because of this greatness of your iniquity, the iniquity of the prophets even themselves, and of their great enmity, their great hate towards all things of God. This great iniquity and great enmity or hatred, verse 7 through 8 now, the great sins of unfaithfulness, of course, is the major theme of Hosea. The opening chapter is right, using his own life and marriage to show they are like an unfaithful wife.

They have broken the covenant over and over again. That surely is a great iniquity, a great transgression, a great sin. But he also describes it as what? A great enmity.

That's a word we don't use often today, but use often in these translations, which simply means animosity or hatred. It's first used in this verse and then mentioned again in verse 8, where we have description of a prophet as a fowler's snare. Enmity is in the house of his God.

Hatred is there in God's house. That's a terrible thing to say. So he's describing a terrible situation, a condition in the churches there of northern Israel.

Part of Israel's unfaithfulness comes from their hatred. Hatred of God's institution, his worship, and even himself. And it's not necessarily a subjective thing of raw emotion.

When we think of typically the word hate, at least I do, I think of someone just angry and just full of bitter and vile. It doesn't have to be the case at all. I think objectively there is hate there, and that's what's important.

To hate a small thing like ants is only a small kind of hate. But to hate the things of God, no matter how subjectively you may not hate it, it's still a real objective hate because God is objectively true, and you going against his institution, ignoring his institution, doing your own thing, as the northern tribes did. Don't forget Jeroboam and they have the split.

He's like, I'm gonna make my own priests. I'm gonna have my own center of worship. I'm gonna have my own holy days even.

Is that an expression of love for God? Clearly not. So whatever they felt subjectively is irrelevant. Objectively it is hateful.

It is still a great hate against a great God and his great institutions that he gave for his people. Now we continue on here in verse 8 as we get to the topic of the sermon. The watchman of Ephraim is with my God, but the prophet is a fouler snare in all his ways.

So the watchman of Ephraim is an ironic statement, meaning the opposite of the words. He's not a real watchman. A watchman here is another word for prophet.

It's clearly a parallel here. I'll remind you again, often the prophet spoke almost like Hebraic poem, which is parallelisms. And here the watchman is, as we know elsewhere in the Bible, used to describe what a prophet's supposed to do, warn the people.

Of course Ephraim was the main hub and the main tribe of the northern ten tribes there. So it's talking about the center of their false worship and their false way of life. And these are therefore what we would say so-called, right, air quotes, so-called watchmen of God over the northern tribes.

But they diverged from the true religion generations ago. And any prophet or priest that they have in the name of their so-called God, who they would sometimes call Jehovah, other times Baal, and mix the names up, you recall, it's false. It's a false religion.

It's a false God. And therefore they are false watchmen, false prophets. And thus he describes them here in the latter part of verse 8, the prophet is a fowler's snare in all his ways, an apt metaphor, right, description here.

A fowler is one who deals with birds, here particularly catching the birds, and that deliberately and carefully, of course, not just haphazardly, it's what he does for a living. And a snare, it's just another word for trap. And then again, I trap set up carefully and enticingly.

Now I'm not a fowler. I guess you'd call me a rabbit trapper. I don't know, what do you call that today? I have rabbits in my yard.

I have deer, but I can't touch the deer. The law won't let me do that. But the rabbits, they destroy my yard.

And I have to be very careful in setting up the cage so it doesn't disturb them and scare them off and put the right kind of enticements inside the cage and put aside all distractions around the cage. That's what's implied in this picture here. In very simple words, fowler's snares, a fowler's snare.

It's not something that's haphazard, like they just throw it out there and oh, whatever. There's thought behind it. There's effort behind this.

And this is true for the prophets of old. They are not going to highlight the trap and tell you it's a trap. They come as Satan comes as an angel of light, right? That New Testament reference there.

He comes subtly. He comes sneakily. He does not come with a pointed tail and a forked head.

That's a popular depiction, of course, as a demon or a devil. We do. Satan, his visage, I'm sure, is much more horrifying than that if we ever saw him in person.

Wouldn't want to do that. But he doesn't want to come that way. He wants to come to deceive us.

That's the idea here, to trap us unto sin and away from God's righteousness and holiness. The false prophets here means, of course, that there is hatred in the house of God. That's why it's there at the end of this verse 8. But the prophet is a fowler's snare in all his ways.

Enmity is in the house of God. It's a sudden statement. It's just there.

Hatred is in the house of God. The house of his God, the house of the false prophet, the false religion where they claim God as their God, but it really isn't their God that is Jehovah, but really Baal. The teachers of lies, in other words, these false teachers cannot make a house of love.

You just simply can't have it. The deep corruption then is therefore illustrated with the word hate and is deeply corrupted. Indeed, they are deeply corrupted, verse 9, as in the days of Gibba.

I'm sure you all ran home last week when I said, I'm not going to tell you what happened in the days of Gibba because it was horrifying. They're in the book of Judges. I'll tell you again, it's horrifying, so I don't want to go into details.

The deep corruption, I think, besides what's pictured there, which is a physical assault and the like, is twofold, doctrine and practice. That is, he's speaking in terms of metaphors here in the days of Gibba. Doctrinally, of course, they had Baal worship.

They claimed it was Jehovah worship, that they were really praying to Jehovah. We saw that even in Hosea, they used the word Jehovah. This is Jehovah's sacrifice and God's like, no, it ain't.

It's not mine at all. This is not the case at all. And the practice, of course, divination, false divination, and false miracles.

Since these are fake prophets, that means the prophets are claiming divine revelation of some sort, probably miracles and the like. And that means what? They were faking it the entire time. They were faking it.

They're con artists. They're con men. And their mark was the entire church.

It's important to realize this. It was a scam, deeply corrupt, for ease of money, perhaps, for ease of life or fame or whatever. We don't know.

We know Paul emphasizes filthy lucre in the New Testament. We went over that in 1 Timothy 6 last month or so. There's all kinds of reasons.

What's one of the bigger reasons is easy money. I don't have to do a lot of work. I can just make things up.

God said this. God did that. I saw amazing things in my vision, in my dream last night.

And this is true today. False teachers are indeed a picture of great iniquity, even hatred and corruption in the churches, snares and traps everywhere that people fall into, unfortunately. So I want to give a little bit of an unofficial taxonomy, the way I'm looking at it here.

I'm not aware of anybody who went through and organized all this as in all the different ways one could be a false teacher. Because all the ways you can lie, it seems like it's almost infinite. The truth is clear and to the point.

And the way we try to squirm our way around it seems to be as imaginative as any person can ever be. So I don't think we're ever going to put our hands completely around false teachers and lies. So here I describe it as overt versus covert.

Overt being obvious and covert being less obvious. Now these are relative categories. I don't mean it's absolutely overt and absolutely covert, but relatively compared to each other and the audience involved.

And I think you're going to see what I mean when I give you some illustrations here. And so in the case of overt, especially with respect to those who are well trained and blessed by God's Spirit, it's obvious things like the health of wealth preachers. You're just like, how can anybody believe this stuff? Now you may be that way.

I was close through those circles. I grew up charismatic, as you know, and that's almost their bread and butter in some cases. Promising God's blessing while living in multimillion dollar homes.

It's kind of a giveaway. Bilking old folks on TV. Wildly known.

This is so wildly known that they had a couple documentaries about it. One, my wife, I remember, was watching probably in the 80s or 90s, you know, 60 Minutes or something. And they caught them.

They bring the camera in and they go into the trashcan in the back and they find all the letters sent by all the old people or young people or sick people or whoever, you know, killing their lives, asking for their prayers. They didn't even bother reading. They weren't even taken out.

It was taken out of the envelopes with the checks. It's a scam. It's literally a scam.

And I think that's what was going on here in Israel's time. It has to be. There's no way there are real miracles.

We saw all the fake, what was it, 900 prophets of Baal with Elijah? It was crazy. And they're just pretending to be something they aren't. Covert, a little harder to identify, not as obvious even to the most trained person.

Sometimes we may be caught off a little bit off guard. It's often, I think, someone like us that is in our circles close to us or at least doctrinally close to us, even if they aren't personally close to us. You know, they're on our same denomination.

They're on our same tradition or something along those lines. But they're hiding what they really believe. They're hiding what they really believe.

This often comes up during times of social stress and circumstances. It came up during 2020 and the riots. And you see people virtue signaling for BLM, for rioters and destroying things.

They're like, oh no, don't come after me. I'm okay with these people because they're showing the true colors is what's going on here. A lot of social pressure upon them.

And they turn around, I found out, and deleted their posts later. Whoops. Don't want you seeing that.

I thought you were one of us. What's going on here? Pressure comes along. It really comes out.

What you really believe comes out. Gay unions is another one of those. These are people in confessional churches.

And this was a long time ago before it was even on the radar of America in the early 2000s. And I went to the trial of one of the men and his pastors dealing with the law of God. And his wife was the one that got him in trouble because she was arguing for being nice to the gays and having gay unions.

She was okay with gay unions. It was in a Napark church. So you can see we're not immune either.

We're not the only perfect church. Now, one thing I want to note is the effect of false teaching. Whether covert or overt, whether doctrinal or practical, we could add those categories as well, right? They often sow division and conflict in the people of God.

In Timothy's letter, we read of fables, of myths, and of genealogies. He warns them against. That seems silly on the surface.

Like, why is this a problem? Fables, they believe some silly thing or maybe a conspiracy, we may say today. Or genealogies or something like that. But his concern was they ended up being fighting over words.

That's his description. Godless chatter. It caused division in the body of Christ.

You especially see that, of course, in the church of Corinth. Over and over again, he keeps hammering them. We don't want to have this kind of fighting going on over these kind of, what kind of issue is this? Who baptized? Who cares who baptized you? You're all Christians.

Isn't this great? Isn't this wonderful? Somebody baptized you? Yeah. And so it can be a small matter in one sense, but if it causes great upheaval in the body of Christ, it is a problem. And this is one of the evidences of false teaching, false practices, is what are the fruits? Right? What are the fruits of it? And I want to also make a note about sincerity.

The people, and I believe that's most all of us here and most of us in our own lives, have a hard time getting our heads wrapped around scam artists. Like, how can someone literally

be that deceptive? Did they really believe what they're saying? It's like, the answer is no, they don't. They literally don't.

Every word that come out of their mouth is a lie probably. And we have to accept that so that we can get beyond the outward personality of how they present themselves. They can be very nice.

They can even give things to people. I mean, I was told recently Al Capone liked to give to charity so people thought he was kind of a Robin Hood. It's all a show.

It's clearly all a show. He was not a Robin Hood. He was a despicable man.

They finally caught him when he was on a tax evasion. All the wicked stuff he did. But this is true.

They're out there. There are people like that. And we have been blessed in so many regards that we don't really know them, but maybe we've run across them, didn't realize it because they put on a face.

They literally put on a face. And it looks good. It looks very enticing sometimes.

And so what comes up is the question of sincerity. You may know somebody in your life, a church officer, a Christian for a long time, and all of a sudden they go south. Like, what happened to them? What are they doing now? What's going on? Why are they talking this way? Why are they acting this way? I didn't see this before.

Maybe they don't really mean it. Maybe they're sincere in their confusion and in their false teaching. Sincerity is irrelevant in the case of public teaching.

There are certainly those who are sincerely wrong. I would put parishioners in this category. I would just probably assume they're sincerely wrong, but they're just that.

They're still wrong. And the good thing they're not teaching their parishioners. That's fine.

But pastors, no. Their sincerity is irrelevant in that sense, because the effect is what the danger is. They're teaching lies, whether subtle, covert, or overt, over the top, whether doctrine or practice.

It ought to stop. It ought to stop immediately. And they should stop from leading.

They should step down and leave the ministry and stop pretending or whatever the case is. That's it. So sincerity in that sense, especially public offices, really isn't relevant.

What they're teaching is wrong. Now, I want them to be sincere, obviously, but if they're teaching error, being sincere in your error is no excuse or defense, is the point. It's not a defense.

It should never be a defense in the sense of, I can still stay in the ministry, right? No, you're out. Sorry. New Testament examples here.

The danger of false teachers is seen in the importance, by contrast, of true teachers. And we see this in Ephesians 4. It's quite interesting. Paul, there in Ephesians 4, the opening of that chapter where we get the idea of being united as one baptism, one Lord, one faith, right? And then he continues on saying, Christ has gifted the church, and he himself, verse 11, gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, right? So this is good things.

These are obviously good apostles and true pastors and true teachers. For what end? Verse 12. For the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

And he continues on in verse 13 and unpacks a little bit about these. And this is one clause after another, piled on to describe the usefulness of true teachers and pastors and evangelists in the body of Christ, that we need them. But then he stops at verse 14.

In order that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men and the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting. That's quite a description there, isn't it? Paul just says it outright. Deceitful plotting is what's going on here.

It's all planned out to lie and to cover their tracks so they can stay in the ministry and make money, as he mentions in 1 Timothy 6, for example, or just to keep their job because they like the prestige or whatever the case is. And Paul describes these officers that they're there to equip the saints, to help us to edify the body of Christ, to what end? In order that we should no longer be children. No longer deceived, no longer caught off guard.

Jesus gave pastors to build up the body of Christ as a positive, yes, but also to protect them from lies from the evil one, from fake pastors. And then we have the perennial warning against such things in 2 Timothy 3.4, so we're not there yet in the morning. We'll get there eventually.

We're still in chapter 1. 2 Timothy 3.4, we read, there will be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away. For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women, loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Now as Jonas and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth, men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith. That's Paul's description of these deceitful people, people he says. So it's not just church officers, although especially church officers, that is false ones, fake ones, we ought to flee from them, turn away because they are dangerous.

They are there to draw people by their guilt to embrace more lies. They are even intellectual false teachers. It's quite interesting here, he says in verse 7, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

It's an interesting way I look at that as intellectual false teacher. They seem really smart, all this talk and knowledge, but they really don't believe any of it. They haven't gone anywhere with it in their lives.

Now I have some modern examples here of false prophets slash teachers, and then the equivalent today would be teachers. There's a gentleman named Marjo Gortner, probably butchering it, but that's how it's spelled, M-A-R, Mar or Mary, Joe, J-O-E, one word, Gortner. This is an older generation, but a documentary came out in 1972, I have it, I watched some of it, I just stopped it, I can't watch the rest of it, this is just driving me nuts.

So I'll give you the Wikipedia summary of his life. He first gained public attention during the late 40s when his parents arranged for him to be ordained as a preacher at the age of four, and due to his extraordinary speaking ability, and I saw the videos, he was good at imitating whatever their parents taught them, taught him, making him the youngest known in that position to this day. As a young man, he preached on the revival circuits, he did the tent revival circuits, literal tents back then in the 40s and 50s and 60s, and brought celebrity to the revival movement.

You hadn't heard of him, that's fine, but he admitted to lies and fake healings later on in life, it was all just a sham. It's kind of like the old joke, well you know when the cat's eating lettuce, it's not really the cat's eating the lettuce, it's the mom feeding the cat lettuce, but the cat wants meat. And the same with this kid, he wasn't doing this on his own, his parents were making money hand over fist with this kid, with fake miracles and fake revelations and the like at age four until he's an adult.

And he thinks, you can see in the interview in the documentary, 1972 when I was born, in the documentary, he's just talking like this is normal, this is what Christians do, this is what pastors do, they just say things and make money. It's astounding, and I think that's like, part of that was probably going on back then, so in one sense you could say he was sincerely wrong, what did he know, he's a four-year-old, but he's still wrong, and dangerously wrong in this case, pretending to be a preacher and a pastor with lies and false miracles. So they were manipulating the masses.

So this snare to us seems more of an overt kind, right, a four-year-old, really, speaking in tongues, come on, but it works for those who are what, uninformed, and who are ignorant. So the covert and the overt categories are relevant to their audience, who the snare is for, isn't it. You're going to use a more sophisticated snare for more sophisticated people, and they can still fall for it, don't forget that.

So those given to emotionalism and naive trusting of anyone who says the right things would fall for it in this case, and I think that's the case even for the more intellectual approaches sometimes as well. Then I have another story here, I always remember this one, Reverend Terry Tolley was a minister here, his son was a minister down the street, so he's a minister at Winter, South Dakota, his son is a Hamill, 30 minutes away, a town of about five buildings, and so Terry Tolley, the OPC minister, I've known and worked alongside him for a little bit in the mid-2000s, he came early to an interchurch prayer time for pastors, they would meet I guess once a month or something, and he got to the pastor's house, it was a

charismatic pastor's church building, it was charismatic in the basement, he's in his office, he gets there early, I guess you shouldn't get, no, you should get there early, because he overheard the pastor practicing speaking in tongues, that's not how it works brothers and sisters, of course there are no speaking in tongues, but that's not what we were taught in those circles, we were taught it's a movement of the Holy Spirit and you can't resist it, and it should just come spontaneously, that really shows the genuineness of it, and here he is practicing it, that man's a false teacher. And I already mentioned a little bit of the intellectual snares as I would describe it, where ministers of confessional background, sound like the rest of us, but end up showing the true colors under certain conditions, and I already gave you his story of his wife, and in fact she spoke at one of the ReVoice conferences, 2018, I want to say 2019, I didn't know that, ReVoice was that gay conference in case you forgot, so yeah, that's in our May Park circles.

He hid his stuff by technical jargon, that's the way he would hide his stuff, you're like, why are you talking this way, where'd this language come from.

Avoiding Dangerous Snares of False Teachers

And that's why as we get to the second point, avoiding dangerous snares of false teachers, knowing the truth and the language of the truth as well is important, isn't it, when you hear something a little off, ask questions, sometimes it's helpful to have a new word, that's true, but often I think you'll find that they're probably trying to hide something.

Know the truth, stand upon the well-attested and clear revelations of the word of God, that have stood the test of time, that we know these doctrines, the Trinity, Christ's deity, the Holy Spirit, salvation, repentance, faith, the law of God, the church, the means of grace, preaching, all these things, there's a lot, in fact we have 32 chapters in our confession on it, because there's so much stuff in the Bible, that has been there in the church, the church can see it, it's public, even unbelievers say, yeah, that's what they, that's what the Bible teaches, I just don't believe it, because it's not, these are not obscure things, obscure teachings, hidden in a dark corner somewhere, and stand upon the tried and true practices as well, of the Ten Commandments, of honesty, right, and godly life, and simple worship, and this therefore means you must read the Bible, you have to know what you know, listen to the sermons, ask questions, take notes, so that you can be prepared and protected from both overt and covert snares of the evil one, know the confessions and catechisms, they use a different arrangement of words, although they're often the same words, like oh, there's the word justification, oh, there's the word sanctification, but they put it in a different way to explain it, because again, it's a systematic theology, as opposed to a history or letters, which assume the theology, as the Bible has given to us, and of course, pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance, always need to depend upon Him.

Examples, and one example in history, and some examples today, of lies, of snares, that caught people, the classic one, I guess, in my mind, the illustration is Arius and his lies against Jesus, right, he would quote Bible verses, he was always arguing with them, and he's like, no, no, Jesus is this, and he would just quote Bible verses, and they had a hard time pinning his error of denying divinity of Jesus, until they gathered all together, wrote it down

in their own words, what we call what, a creed, what we call what, 325, the Nicene Creed, which we had read the other week, two weeks ago now, to stop his mouth, because all he would do is quote the Bible, we can all quote the Bible, we all understand, you mean something different in that quote, than what I mean in that quote, give it to me in your own words, it's not complicated, but it was, because what, he was hiding what he really believed, it was a game, a shell game, and they finally nailed him with the confession, will you sign this confession, I will not, well, there you go, you can quote all the Bible verses you want,

But if you can't affirm that Jesus is God in the flesh, we don't want to have a little conversation with you anymore, we're done, and I think he came out at 318 as I recall, and so that's seven years the church was in turmoil, and in fact his influence was growing, and so they nipped it in the bud in 325 with the Nicene Creed, the first council of Nicaea.

Now today, and possibly even during the time of Paul, this was interesting, one of the commentaries I was reading, they said it could be the case that Paul was dealing with this in 1st Timothy, and that would make sense insofar as Paul is not just writing things because he's bored, he's writing about issues typically, and so he's writing about, oh, 1st Timothy 2 11 and 12, let a woman learn in silence with all submission, and I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man, but to be in silence, what does that probably imply, but they had a problem about that, didn't they?

Women were not doing these things, women were running around pretending they're pastors or something like that was going on, and so what you had then perhaps, and what certainly have even now, we know this for a fact today, is an attack upon God's natural law, that is the natural distinctions that even unbelievers know between men and women, and playing off with Christian lingo saying we're all one in Christ, okay, if we're all one in Christ, why is there even a male or female to begin with?

Because it doesn't eradicate the distinction, that's not what the point, the point is we are all saved the same, that's what that means, you're not more saved than I am because you're a man or a woman, that's all he means there in But we have people, again, even with our confessional churches who want to use more technical subtlety and the like, but they end up promoting female deacons or de facto female pastors, or even calls almost the same name sometimes as some churches, and they got caught and they changed their name in the last six months in one of our sister denominations, oops, we want to call them that, I don't care what you call them, we know what they are by fact, de facto is what that means, by fact, you're actually using them as a church officer, and so today that's one of the attacks that Satan has and the subtle false teachers have is attack upon natural distinctions like that.

And so lastly here, we are called therefore, one way to fight this of course is to know the truth, but know the truth with zeal and love and desire to do the right thing, find a good and faithful teacher, yes, a good church, but you still have a responsibility to protect yourself and your family, brothers and sisters, and one of the best ways to avoid a foul or snare is to not only know the truth, but to embrace it with gusto. It's not just, oh, that's kind of interesting, well, that's kind of sad, they're lying, it's like, no, I don't want this, I reject it, I want nothing to do with it, use our emotions, hate lies and blasphemies against God and His

truth, say no to false teachers, I used an illustration last week or a couple weeks ago and I'll use it again, when we hear lies of our Lord and Savior, blasphemies of His name, it should be like nails on a chalkboard or something like that, whatever works in your life, you're just like, this is terrible stuff, I don't want to hear this, you don't have to have that kind of emotional reaction to be sure, but at the very least, we're like, I don't want this, I want to fight against it, I don't want to just be resting on my laurels, if I'm involved, that is, if it comes to me, I'm going to push back and say, I don't want to hear that kind of talk around me, I'm sure you've all done at least once in your life around unbelievers, I don't want to hear that kind of talk around me, please, no more blasphemy, you know, they often, by God's grace, in my experience, respect us, things you hear on the radio, things you read in the book, we should recoil from it if they are lies, brothers and sisters, stand firm in Christ's gospel and the truth of the word, watch for traps and snares by being immersed in the truth of God's word, that you may keep your souls from danger and in all this, keep your eyes upon our Lord and Savior, amen, let us pray.

Indeed, we pray for your spirit, God, that you give us the fortitude and courage even, not just the zeal to do the right thing, even if it means saying no to our friends sometimes, or co-workers and the like, whatever the case is, God, preserve us from our own foolishness and help our church as we pray to be more faithful to you and to flush out the false teachers that they would be exposed, we certainly pray for their repentance, pray for their salvation, God, but if they do nothing of the kind, God, may they be again cast out of the church for the protection of your people, we pray by the blood of Christ our Lord and Savior, amen.