

Lip Service

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[0:00] Let's talk about lip service. This is a phrase that's bandied about, a common term, and the Bible speaks about such a thing. In 2 Timothy 3, verse 1, we read the context is of perilous times, desperate times. I put to you that desperate times call for desperate preaching.

In Matthew 15, from verses 7 through 9, our Lord says this, he says, Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. The Lord Jesus pulled no punches. He got stuck into the Pharisees over their lip service. They were all talk, no action.

Pretending, using all the catchy phrases and the glib words, putting on appearances, but living a lie. Worshipping in vain. Now some so-called Christians are guilty of fraud. They are not the real deal. They are fakes and phonies.

Romans 3, verse 4, it says, Let God be true, but every man a liar. By the grace of God, I've been preaching and pastoring for many years now.

[1:22] I've met many people over this time claiming that they are Christians, yet some will scarcely darken the doorstep of a church. Who are they kidding? Are they saved? God knows that.

Sadder still, I've found that even the pews are filled with fakes and frauds. People who are deceived, self-deceived, and have conned and deceived me.

I have found that real Christians are few and far between. In fact, I strongly believe that the vast bulk of people who call themselves Christians, and even attend church, may not in fact be saved at all.

Not saved at all. They're living a lie. They are lost, hell-bound sinners. And I want to look at how some of these problems can creep into a church and issue a strong warning.

We need to be sure we're saved. How can we see saved people? There's some signs, some tests, some indicators that can help us to see whether someone is really a true Christian or a false one.

[2:34] One of the signs is, do they love fiction above the truth? Fiction. 2 Timothy 4 verses 1 through 4. Paul says this, he says, I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word, be instant, in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. But after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Fables. Fiction. People turning their ears from the truth. False teachers. False teachings. False doctrine. It's abundant.

We must separate the fact from the fiction. The fact is that, sadly, most of the TV preachers are false teachers and false prophets.

The whole Pentecostal mess is filled with a confusion of doctrines, of devils. Yet people prefer their fiction instead of the truth.

[3:51] Try as I do to show some people they still refuse to listen. They prefer fiction rather than truth. The vast bulk of so-called Christianity today is filled with an abundance of false teaching and downright error.

God said this would happen, and it is happening. They shall turn their ears from the truth, and they shall be turned to fables.

There are many fakes, frauds, deceivers, liars, con artists. Watch out for them. A man called Victor Lustig was a charming and talented man.

A con man, though. In 1925, he was in Paris and read an article about the problems the city was having maintaining the Eiffel Tower. Even keeping it painted was an expensive chore, and the tower was becoming run down.

And Lustig saw a chance to pull off a remarkable scheme. He would sell the Eiffel Tower. And using fake government stationery, he impersonated a government official. He sent six scrap metal dealers an invitation to attend a confidential meeting at one of the most prestigious of the old Paris hotels.

[5:06] And Lustig told the group that the upkeep on the Eiffel Tower was so outrageous that the city could not maintain it any longer, and wanted to sell it for scrap.

It sounded true because the tower had not been intended to be permanent, and it was then in poor condition. Lustig took the men to the tower in a rented limousine, and he gave them an inspection tour.

He looked and he sounded the part. One of the men made a deal with Lustig, and gave him funds for the Eiffel Tower. Lustig left Paris for Vienna with a suitcase full of cash.

A con man! And just so there are cheats and impersonators in churches today. Counterfeit Christians. Fakes, frauds, liars. And they sit here week after week, and yet they will not obey the word of God.

Fact is, they will go to hell. They are not saved. Isaiah 6, 8 through 10 it says, Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?

[6:14] Then said I, Here am I. Send me. And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not. And see ye indeed, but perceive not.

Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

I've been telling the same people, the same thing for many years now, yet the crying truth is, at times, some still refuse to listen.

They still watch the false teachers, and some will even pay to receive their false doctrine. They still believe the lie, they will not listen. They have turned their ears from the truth.

It's sounding a bit like 1 Corinthians 14, 38, But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. They are willfully ignorant, some people.

[7:16] Completely and utterly deceived. People mess around with these churches that are filled with outright error and deception, and think nothing of it. They are swept along by it.

They applaud their women preachers. And they do not care what the Bible says, that such a thing is wrong, wrong, wrong. It is deception.

Deception. Deception. They think they are hearing the Holy Spirit, but they are deceiving themselves. They will not receive the truth about the many false modern versions of the Bible.

They will not receive counsel. Many folk I know are caught up in this entertainment business, because that is the charismatic movement of today with its fake signs and wonders.

And the money making racket, the gospel music industry. They believing a lie, a complete fiction. And they will not be corrected. And meantime the real church, and the real truth, suffers for funds and support.

[8:18] I want to stand defiant and determined, utterly committed against these hordes of hell, who masquerade as Christian teachers. I want to sternly rebuke every believer, who messes with these false teachers.

Steer well clear. Have nothing to do with them. Burn their tapes and books of these false teachers. These teachings are not of God. They are from the other side. It is sin.

Paul urges Timothy to preach the word. To reprove, rebuke, exhort. To warn, to straighten out error. Even though some will not want sound doctrine, they will prefer instead to have their ears tickled.

The tingly, warm and fuzzy stuff. Friends, we must determine to stand on the side of the truth. Just truth. Uncompromised, unvarnished truth.

Instead of fiction, choose truth. It's been said feelings come and feelings go, and feelings are deceiving. My warrant is the word of God.

[9:21] Nought else is worth believing. God's word is a sharp, two-edged sword. It must cut and convict and penetrate.

It must be as a surgeon's knife to cut the cancer out. We're talking about how do you tell the real from the false.

Fiction is a sign. Another sign is flesh. 2 Timothy 3 verse 1. Paul tells Timothy, This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come.

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with diverse lusts, ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

[10:39] Now as Janus and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these. Also, resist the truth. Men of corrupt minds reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further, for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, what persecutions I endured.

But out of them all the Lord delivered me, yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learnt them. And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Look through this chapter and you'll see an obvious problem of behaviour. People prefer their lusts and sin and pleasures rather than following and obeying God.

[11:59] Some take an approach to life of, eat, drink and be merry. They live for the flesh, for the lusts and pleasures of sin. They do not care about what the Bible says about the sanctity and covenant of marriage, about right and wrong.

They do not care what the Bible says about the fruit of the Spirit and of the need to live a holy life. Some people it says are reprobate concerning the faith. In other words, rejected. In other words, they're not really in the faith.

Let's travel back in time to about 587 BC to a town called Babylon. Daniel 3 verse 1, Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold.

Imagine the scene. It was a huge occasion. Many hundreds of officials were there for this big event. And a herald cried out, announcing the occasion. Verses 4 through 6.

And then the band began to play. And all the people were commanded to bow down and worship the king's image. Or, face being thrown into the burning fiery furnace. And the multitude bowed down. But three did not. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

[13:12] It is an interesting thought how many other so-called believers were there at that time, that day. Many in the crowd probably claimed to follow the true God, yet they bowed their faces to the ground before this idol.

And the king was told, only these three did not bow. Only three heroes stood that day. Three men who refused to budge. Who refused to bend the knee to the idol.

And they would not burn in his fire either. Maybe some in the crowd would have said, it's only a ceremony. God knows what's in your heart.

They were fakes. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were the real deal. The real thing. They knew what it was to have loyalty to God. What that meant.

And only three out of the multitude. They did not follow the flesh, the easy way of sin. They were steadfast and true, obedient to God. And God honoured them for that.

[14:12] As he protected them and shielded them. And he accompanied them in the fire. And through the fire. And they were saved out of the fire. There was a dividing that went on here, on this day. A separation between the false and the true.

It was like that in Noah's day too. Only eight were saved then. And in Lot's day, just four. Only four! Friends, prepare for separation. People, there's a fire coming. A flood coming, if you like.

And it's going to wipe away everything. Everything's going to be wiped out. And all the fakes will be shown for what they are. Judgment day is coming soon. The sheep are going to be separated from the goats. And they will see who is genuine.

Who's truly saved. It's time to rebuke sin. Time to repent. I must in love reject you, if you will not receive the truth. In the hope and prayer that you will repent.

That's church discipline. It says sin is sin. It means choose what side you're going to stand on. It means get right with God. Quite literally, get right with God. Or go to hell.

[15:23] It's a very clear, stark choice, isn't it? Titus 3 verses 10 through 11, it says, A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject.

Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth being condemned of himself. There used to be a game show where you had to work out from three contestants which of the three was telling you the truth.

Which was the one who was really the one they claimed to be. Only one was real. The other two were imposters. And the punch line was, at the end of the show, when the host called out, Well the real, Mr whoever it was, please stand up.

Sometimes it was hard to tell the real from the fake. Well the real Christian, please stand up. It's hard at times to tell who is really a Christian, because there's a mixture of false and genuine Christians in churches.

Another way to see who is really a Christian as well as the sign of fiction and of flesh is fruit. Matthew 7 verse 20, our Lord says, By their fruits you shall know them.

[16:31] Our Lord was talking here about this, also in the context of comparing the world to a field with weeds and tares, or weeds. And the wheat represented the real Christians, the real believers, and the weeds, the tares, represented the unsaved.

They all look the same in many ways. The tares in the church are the people who might look and act and sound saved, but are actually deceived. They've not actually trusted God by faith.

They've not called on Him to save them and to be truly saved. They're just playing games. The tares are those who expect to go to heaven when they die, but will in fact spend eternity in hell.

Some lost people are deceived into thinking that they are saved. Tares may be busy and active in the church. They can sing in the choir. They can serve as workers in so many ways.

And maybe they'll attend even more faithfully than others who are the true, genuine believers. Yet, they are not real. The tares in the church can dress right and talk right and give every appearance of being saved.

[17:37] They may learn lots of scriptures. They may learn lots of right things. Yet, they've never repented and trusted Christ for their salvation. And they will spend eternity in hell.

Tares will lack the fruit of the Spirit. They may be able to counterfeit it for a time, but eventually their true nature will show through. And whenever there is church trouble, usually it's a lost person involved somewhere.

Why? Because unbelievers can only imitate the saved for so long. And then their true nature, like that of the tares, will show through. It'll come out. They'll show by their fruit.

And eventually the day of harvest will come. The reapers are sent into the fields to gather the tares first and then the wheat. How could they tell the difference? It's easy at this stage, because as the wheat matures, the head becomes filled with kernels and the weight of the kernels causes the stalk of the wheat plant to bend towards the ground.

The seeds in the head of the tare are light. And this allows the tare to stand tall. You could reflect that as a genuine believer grows in the Lord as he matures, he becomes more humble before the Lord.

[18:50] The tare, on the other hand, will stand in his pride of false beliefs and foolish behavior. At harvest time, they're both gathered. But they have two different destinies.

Friends, the Bible says, By their fruits, ye shall know them. One day God will reveal who is real, who his real people are, and many will be revealed as just pretenders.

Are you wheat or are you tares? A very important question to consider. Have you put your faith and trust squarely and entirely in the saving work of Christ on your part?

That is how to be saved. Don't trust any other thing. Put your faith in Christ squarely and entirely in Him. Let us pray.