

## 2 Timothy 3:5-9 — How Can I Avoid Getting Spiritually Scammed?

**April 11, 2021**

Good morning! I want to begin with a quick survey. How many times a week do you have people trying to scam you either through robo-calls or calling you in person? Include the scam email in that number too. If the scammers hit you once a week, raise your hand? How about three times a week? Keep your hand up if they try to scam you more than five times a week. How about seven times a week? As you can see by looking at the raised hands around you, scammers are hard at work trying to take our money or steal our identities.

In our house, the most common scam call I receive is the caller that is urging me to purchase an extended warranty for my vehicle. I know that is a scam because no one in their right mind wants to warranty a vehicle from 2003!

The Internet enables scammers to span countries and reach across continents, and they work hard to steal and deceive. You need to know that scammers are not just trying to steal your identity and money. There are also spiritual scammers out there. If they could, they would steal your very soul out of the hands of God. This morning, we will learn how spiritual scammers work.

Just as it is an important life skill to learn how to avoid financial and identity scammers, it is an important life skill to learn how to avoid the spiritual scammers that want to take your joy and ruin your soul.

Where will we learn about spiritual scammers? Today, we return to our studies in 2 Timothy. For the last two weeks, we celebrated Easter and the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. The week before that, we had Pastor Paul Bauman from the Central District filling the pulpit. The last time we were in 2

Timothy was almost a month ago. This means I will need to take a few minutes to get us up to speed in 2 Timothy before we study the verses this morning.

When we were last in 2 Timothy, we had just began 2 Timothy 3. Paul was teaching us about spiritual scammers. This morning, we are going to study 2 Timothy 3:5-9, but to get us up to speed, we are going to read 2 Timothy 3:1-9. Turn to those verses in your Bible, and follow along with your eyes in your copy of God's Word as I read those verses.

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men. 2 Timothy 3:1–9 (ESV)

These verses break into three parts. The first part is verse one. That verse tells us that we should expect spiritual scammers, and they will only get worse over time. The second part is verses two to four. They tell us how we can recognize a spiritual scammer by what we see in his or her character. The third part is verses five to nine. They tell us how a spiritual scammer goes about his or her work. Just as we need to learn the tactics and techniques of financial scammers in order to avoid them, we need to learn the tactics and techniques of spiritual scammers so we can avoid getting caught in their traps. Let's begin with the first point. It is a review of what we learned a month ago when we were last in this book.

**I should expect spiritual scammers will increase over time.**

**But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. 2 Timothy 3:1 (ESV)**

To understand this verse, we need to understand some of the key terms in this verse. The first key phrase we need to understand is the phrase, the last days. When we hear that phrase, we typically think of the last days as a time in the distant future right before the end of the world when things will get really bad. We think of the last days as something far away from us. Biblically, that is not true. The last days is the entire time period between the first and second coming of Jesus. That means we are living in the last days right now. When Jesus came the first time, the last days kicked off. That may be hard to believe so let me show you this biblically.

In the book of Acts, we read about the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. We read about the Holy Spirit enabling people to speak different languages. The apostle Peter got up and told everyone that they saw a fulfillment of a prophecy from the book of Joel. In Acts 2, he quoted that prophecy. Let me read it to you.

**“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams...” Acts 2:17 (ESV)**

Peter referred to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as a sign that they were now living in the last days.

The book of Hebrews tells us something similar. Let's read it together.

**Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son... Hebrews 1:1–2 (ESV)**

The book of Hebrews tells us that when God stopped speaking to us through prophets and started to speaking to us through his own son, the period of the last days began. So we are in the last days right now.

The next important term in this verse is the word difficulty. It means dangerous. It means hard. It means difficult to bear. For Christians, between the first and second coming of Christ, there will be hard times and difficult times. Expect there will be hard times to endure.

There is a third term in this verse that is also very important. It is the word time. In the Greek, there are two words for time. One is the Greek word *chronos*. From it we get the English word chronological. It means the simple passing of time. One second is no different from all the others. Time is simply passing. It is like watching the hands of a clock turn. Time is passing but nothing special is happening. The other word for time in Greek is *kairos*. *Kairos* means significant time or notably different time. We might use the word seasons to convey the same idea when talking about this kind of time in English. We just came out of a very difficult season of time called winter. We are heading into a very pleasant season of time called summer.

When Paul talked about time in this verse, he used the Greek word *kairos*. He said that between now and the return of Christ, Christians should expect difficult seasons of time for themselves and the church. Sometimes there will be great opposition. Sometimes there will be less opposition. That is what we are to expect.

To illustrate this, while we live in a country that guarantees freedom of religion, who would have guessed two years ago that there are thousands of large and successful churches in California that are still not allowed to gather for worship? Who would have guessed that the Supreme Court in our land would need to rule on a case in California to determine if three families are allowed to gather in a home for home worship. Nobody expected there would be that much opposition to Christians gathering for worship only two years ago.

Paul told us the entire period of time between the first and second coming of Jesus is an up-and-down graph. Sometimes Christians will experience great opposition. Other times we will experience less opposition. That is what we should expect until Jesus returns.

Before we leave this topic, it is worth skipping a few verses ahead --- even though we haven't come to them --- to see what else Paul said about spiritual scammers and scoundrels.

...while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 2 Timothy 3:13 (ESV)

Here we see that the zig-zag graph of spiritual opposition is not flat. It is always a climbing graph. Over time, evil people, imposters, and spiritual scammers will keep getting worse. They will also multiply like rabbits. They will become more crafty, believable, and deceptive as time passes. This was written 2,000 years ago. Spiritual tricksters and rip-off artists are much more cunning and numerous today than they were when Paul wrote this letter. We should expect some seasons for Christians will be harder than others but the opposition

to Jesus and the church will not go away. It will constantly get worse. That is what we should expect. Don't be surprised.

### **I can recognize spiritual scammers by their love for themselves.**

This brings us to the verses we spent time on two weeks ago. In these verses, Paul gave us a list of qualities that we can see in a person's character to help us recognize a spiritual conman, a spiritual scammer. The list has 18 character qualities in it, but heading the list, and really defining the list, was the quality of being in love with themselves.

#### **For people will be lovers of self... 2 Timothy 3:2 (ESV)**

The rest of the list flows like a sewage pipe out of the hearts of people who are in love with themselves. A spiritual con man's most defining quality is his in love with himself and everything he does is focused on himself. His interest is not in loving his neighbor. It is not in serving his neighbor. The focus of his actions is on loving and serving himself.

Let's skim our way through some qualities in this list, and you will see what I mean. Those in love with themselves are known for loving and worshipping their money instead of God. They are boastful and arrogant instead of humble. They are abusive toward others instead of patient and loving. They are disobedient to their parents instead of desiring to honor their parents. They are ungrateful toward those who show them kindness. They never send a thank-you note. They are heartless. In conflicts, they are unappeasable. They will not compromise. They are gossips, cutting down the reputation of others. They are brutal in their treatment of others instead of gentle. All of these qualities flow like sewage out of

the heart of people that are in love with themselves. They can't help but act this way. It is the self-love nature.

That is our review from four weeks ago. The first thing we learned is we are in the last days. We should expect spiritual scammers and spiritual opposition, and sometimes it will be worse than others. The second thing we learned is how to recognize spiritual scammers. They are people that are in love with themselves, and all kinds of putrid character qualities flow like sewage out of their hearts because they are the center of their universe.

That brings us to the third point which are the verses we will study this morning. How do spiritual scammers do their work? What are the tactics and techniques they use to lead people astray? Let's learn them so we can avoid being tripped up by them.

### **How do spiritual scammers work?**

#### **They pedal hollow religion.**

...having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.  
2 Timothy 3:5 (ESV)

They have the appearance of godliness. Some translations say they hold to a form of godliness. The word appearance or form is the Greek word *morphosis*. We get our English word metamorphosis from this word. Metamorphosis means to change shape or form. These folks have the shape of godliness. They have the appearance of godliness in their lives but they are like hollow shells. They are missing the core. They have denied and ignored Jesus. Jesus is the only one that has the power to change a life. External religious

rituals can do nothing for you. You may feel religious, but there is not power to change a person when it comes to just a religious shell.

It is being born again that changes people. It is only encountering Jesus that changes people. It is confessing our sin to Jesus and trusting in Jesus alone to save us from our sin that bring us the experience of being born again. When we come to Jesus and give all of the brokenness of our lives to Jesus, 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us Jesus literally makes us into new creations. He makes us into new people, different people. That is what it means to be born again.

This is what happened to Paul on the Damascus road when he met the risen Jesus. He didn't change himself. It wasn't a religious ritual or ceremony that changed Paul. It was an encounter with Jesus that changed him. Paul went from arresting and assisting in the deaths of Christians to being the most outspoken evangelist the world has ever seen, even being willing to be tormented for Jesus and to ultimately have his head chopped off for Jesus. Going to church or performing some kind of religious ritual doesn't change a life like Paul's. It is only an encounter with the living Jesus that changes a life.

Spiritual scammers are spiritual fakes. They are phonies. They are pedaling a false religion, a hollow religion. It looks spiritual, but it is absent of power because it is absent of Jesus.

What have they replaced Jesus with in their hollow religion? Since these people are in love with themselves, there are only two options. Either they have replaced Jesus with a self-help religion in which they tell you that you can change yourself if you just try harder or they tell you that if you follow them, they can

change you. Of course, that is bologna. Nobody can save themselves by trying harder. Two thousand years of Old Testament history show us nobody saved themselves by trying harder to obey the law. The point is Jesus needs to be at the center. We cannot save ourselves. Only Jesus can save our lives and change our lives. What do these spiritual scammers look like in action today? Pastor Shane sent me a great illustration of this he found on his Twitter feed last week.

It is a post from the Reverend Adrian Warnock. You may have heard of him. He is the pastor that ran for, and was able to fill, a vacant Senate seat in Georgia. Look what he posted last week



about Easter and the resurrection. He claims that through a commitment to helping others, we are able to save ourselves. That is the textbook definition of false religion. That is what a spiritual scammer looks like in action. He calls himself a pastor but is only a hollow shell of religiosity. The point of Jesus coming, dying on the cross, and rising from the grave is we can't save ourselves. We need Jesus to save us from our sin. We need Jesus to make us into new people. We can't save ourselves. Only Jesus can save us. Anybody who tells you anything different and promotes a self-help religion is a spiritual scammer. Stay away from these people. Run away from them!

Paul also talked about these kind of people in the book of Titus.

They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. Titus 1:16 (ESV)

Satan is subtle. He doesn't like to attack the church from outside. That is not effective. He sends spiritual counterfeits inside the church to lead people astray. They may have clerical collars, but if they aren't pointing you to Jesus, if they are telling you to just try harder, they are scammers pedaling hollow, empty religion. They may wear priestly robes, but if they aren't pointing you to Jesus as your only hope in this world, they are spiritual scammers. They may have more academic degrees than Fahrenheit, but if they aren't saying your only hope is Jesus, stay away.

Paul had some clear instruction on how we are to handle men and women like this. We are to avoid these kinds of people. The Greek for the word avoid is a very strong verb. It means to fear them. It means to have terror of them. It means to avoid them as if they were a horror. Don't have anything to do with these kinds of people. They will try to worm their way into your life. They will try to be very approachable and congenial to get you to trust them. Paul said we are not to do that. We are to avoid them at all costs. Jesus is the core of what it means to be a Christian. He is the guts of our faith. He is the hope we have in the face of death. He is the one who changes us. A body with all the guts gone is as good as dead. Stay away from people who intend to gut Jesus out of your faith.

In the letters of John, John wrote about the same ideas but he talked about this in terms of hospitality.

[If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works. 2 John 10–11 \(ESV\)](#)

Don't have these people over for dinner. They will try and capture you.

## How can I recognize false teachers?

How do you recognize people that want to lead you astray? Here are three quick checks to help you recognize a spiritual scammer.

1. **Check their character.** Truth and godliness are two sides of the same coin. You cannot have truth in your life without godliness in your character. If you do not have Jesus in your life, your character will not be godly. If you see a person in love with himself or herself and there is an abusive attitude, a lack of humility, or a lack of compassion, these are warning signs. Stay away from that kind of teacher.
2. **Check their teaching.** Check what they teach. Does it square with the Word of God? Are they saturated with Scripture? Are they keeping their fingers in the text? Are they faithfully teaching the Word of God in context or are they twisting God's Word to make it say what they want it to say?
3. **Check their followers.** What are the people who follow them like? Are they justifying their sin? Are they focusing on materialism and financial success or do they love God's grace and God's Word above other things in their lives?

Watch out for these spiritual conmen who are pedaling a false, hollow religion that teaches you to try harder and focus on someone or something besides Jesus to save you and change you.

### They prey on the weak.

For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. 2 Timothy 3:6–7 (ESV)

Spiritual scammers want converts. Here is their strategy to get them. They creep into households. The word for creep in Greek means to worm or wiggle. In other words, these people try to worm or wiggle their way into homes and into people's lives, and when they do, they are not honest about their intentions. They present false motives. They sneak into people's lives under false pretenses and once they know you trust them and admire them, they use that trust to lead you away.

Isn't this the way Satan always works? He doesn't come at us with a frontal assault. He comes at us subtly. He is a wolf in sheep's clothing. He doesn't disclose his true intentions to destroy us.

Then next thing we learn about what spiritual scammers do is they try to capture their victims. In Greek, this word for capture means to take someone and make him or her a prisoner of war. These scammers worm and wiggle their ways into homes and lives, then they capture people and drag them away to torment them.

These are the tactics of self-loving religious phonies.

Paul drilled down further by telling us who their primary target is. They love to go after weak women. In the Greek this literally means little women. This is not a description of the stature of their bodies but of the vulnerability of their character.

Before we get too far into this, let me clarify something. We live in a hyper-feminist culture that can easily misunderstand what Paul said in this verse. Paul was not saying all women are weak. Very clearly many women are strong and

capable. Let's be honest, not all women are strong. Some women are vulnerable. They are gullible. People can take advantage of them. Those are the kind of women Paul was talking about. These kinds of women are the primary target of spiritual scammers.

One of the reasons spiritual conmen go after these types of vulnerable women is because they have devised ways to access them. In this culture, the men were usually at work during the day. The women, who were usually uneducated, stayed home during the day. There was no Internet. There was no radio. Television wasn't available, so you couldn't watch a soap opera. Many women were lonely. These false teachers would visit homes during the day when the men were at work. Lonely and vulnerable women were eager to have someone in their homes that wanted to talk. Of course, the false teachers didn't initially trumpet their false teaching. They tried to wiggle their way into the home under a false pretense then gain the trust of a lonely and vulnerable woman so they could draw her away and gain her as a convert like Indians collected the scalps of their victims.

Paul further described the particular types of weak women these scammers liked to trap.

**They go after women that are morally weak.** These women are described as burdened with sins and led astray by various passions. False teachers love to prey on women loaded down with guilt and shame from the sins of their past. They are women filled with shame and regret. They are the walking

wounded. They are desperate for someone to tell them how to be free of their sin and shame.

What these women need to hear is the gospel. They need to hear about Jesus. When we come to Jesus, confess our sins to Jesus and trust in Jesus to save us, he takes away all the sin of our past. He removes our guilt and shame. He makes us into a new person. He separates our sin from us as far as the east is from the west. That is what these women need to hear but that is not what these spiritual conmen tell them. Instead of giving them the gospel, they rope these shame-filled women into a dead-end, self-help strategy claiming that they hold the answer.

Paul also said spiritual scammers love to prey on women that are led astray by various passions. They prey on women who are controlled by their feelings. They do not think things through and make decisions with their brains. They are guided by their emotions.

Paul didn't develop this point, but the Greek word used for passions in this verse hints that there may have been some sexual undertones used by these false teacher to capture the hearts of these guilt-ridden women who had no ability to resist their passions. Paul didn't develop that point, but the word for passions hints at that possibility.

What Paul did clearly tell us is spiritual scammers love to prey on women who are controlled by the passions of their hearts, rather than thinking things through and understanding the ramifications of their choices.

**They go after women that are intellectually weak.** Paul described these types of women as always learning but never able to arrive at knowledge of the truth. These are the types of women who have to attend the latest conference. They follow the latest religious fad. Instead of loving the truth, they love novelty. They want to follow the latest religious fashion trend. This is what makes them easy prey for the door-to-door religious scam artists who visit homes during the day. These are women who are exposed to the truth but never arrive at knowledge of the truth.

I am not saying it is wrong to attend a conference or read some of the latest popular books. Eventually people need to graduate from needing a conference for a spiritual high to needing Jesus and their Bible every day. That is the backbone of spiritual life. A conference is like whipped cream on the top of coffee. It is fun. It is tasty, but it is a lot of air. Jesus and the Word of God is what sustains our spiritual lives.

This method of preying on women who are in vulnerable position is nothing new. This is as old as the fall of man when Satan sought to wiggle his way into Eve's heart, gain Eve's trust, and lead her astray. Through that technique, Satan led the first family astray.

I am going to get a little risky and talk about vulnerability. Look how Peter described women.

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. 1 Peter 3:7 (ESV)

Peter called women the weaker vessel. That does not mean women are inferior vessels, just weaker vessels. This was apparent to me this past week when we went to see my daughter at her track meet. I am proud of her. She told me she was much faster than two years ago, and she is right. She is doing a great job in the 200-meter dash and the 4x400. While Deanna had some great times in her events, her times were not even close to the times of the men. It is simply that the men are much stronger. Since women are in a naturally more vulnerable position, Peter said a husband must honor and protect his wife. This same theme is followed in Ephesians 5 when it says a husband is to love and cherish his wife. The point is simply that scammers love to prey on those who are in weak and vulnerable positions, especially women who are lonely and burdened with sin and who follow their emotions. People in those vulnerable positions need protection from the scammers and rip-off artists in this world.

I don't think I have told you about my grandmother on my mother's side. She became a widow early in life. I never met my grandfather on my mother's side. My grandmother never remarried. She was a very strong and competent woman. She served as a secretary to the president of a local college. Sometimes in the summer I would stay at her house for a week. It was always an exciting week at my grandmother's house.

One morning I woke up to something I didn't expect. My gentle elderly grandmother was screaming at someone on the other end of the phone. I can remember her words that woke me out of a lazy sleep. "You are taking advantage of an elderly old woman! How dare you take advantage of me?"

What made her boil? My grandmother's furnace was not working. She paid a lot of money to have it repaired. A few weeks later, the problem returned. She paid a lot of money again for more furnace repairs, but the problem didn't go away. Now we're on a third go-round with the same furnace company. She knew they were taking advantage of her. They were scamming her because she had no idea how a furnace worked or what was wrong with it. She was in that vulnerable position. She needed someone who was her advocate. She needed someone who would protect her from the furnace scammer.

Nothing has changed. Husbands, you need to protect your wives. There are plenty of scammers out there who want to take advantage of her and take advantage of you by gaining her trust. Fathers, you need to protect your daughters. There are plenty of people out there who love to take advantage of young, naive, vulnerable girls. Families, you need to protect your elderly relatives. Scammers love to go after the vulnerable. My 87-year-old father lives in my house. He gets hit by scammers on his phone and in his e-mail inbox every day. I am constant protecting him from the scammers and telling him a person with an Indian accent that tells him there is a serious problem with his taxes is a person that cannot be trusted.

We see the way spiritual scammers work. They love to prey on the weak and vulnerable, especially vulnerable women. The response we need to have is we need to protect those who are vulnerable among us --- our wives, our daughters, our relatives.

## They actively oppose the truth.

Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. 2 Timothy 3:8 (ESV)

We can recognize spiritual scammers by their love for themselves. They pedal a hollow religion that is powerless because it is missing Jesus. They try to capture the weak and vulnerable. Here, we find we can recognize them because they actively oppose the truth.

In order to make his point, Paul used an illustration from the Old Testament. It is the illustration of Jannes and Jambres. These are two interesting names that do not appear in the Old Testament. They do not appear anywhere but here. Who are these guys? Jewish tradition identifies them as two of Pharaoh's magicians, probably his two leading magicians. A Jewish Targum on Exodus 7:11 claims they were some of the magicians in Egypt that performed counterfeit miracles in front of Pharaoh to mimic the supernatural displays of power performed by Moses. Remember that Moses was given the ability to put down his staff and turn it into a snake. The Egyptian magicians did the same miraculous transformation of their staffs into snakes by their magical arts. Thankfully, Moses' snake ate the snakes of the Egyptian magicians, definitively showing who had the greater power and authority. The Egyptian magicians continued to mimic the supernatural displays of Moses for a while until the supernatural works of God rose to a level where they could not compete. Jannes and Jambres were known for publicly and supernaturally opposing the truth of God through Moses, who was God's spokesman.

There is a little more to the story of Jannes and Jambres according to the Hebrew Targums. The name Jannes eventually came to mean “one who seduces.” The name Jambres came to mean “one who makes rebellion.” How did their names become synonymous with seduction and rebellion?

Jewish tradition claims these magicians pretended to be converts to Judaism after God’s plagues on Egypt and they left Egypt with the people of Israel. They looked like sincere Israelites until Moses went up Mt. Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments. It was then when Jannes and Jambres sprung into action and seduced the Israelites away from God and helped lead them into rebellion and making a golden calf. As a result, they were eventually destroyed along with the golden calf.

I don’t know if the second part of the tradition about them is true. We do know when the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write this verse in the Bible the Holy Spirit confirmed the first part of the tradition about them. They were two of Pharaoh’s magicians who openly and supernaturally opposed God’s truth through Moses.

Paul said we should expect spiritual scam artists that will actively oppose the truth of God spoken through our mouths, just like Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses. They may even have counterfeit supernatural displays of power to deceive people away from the truth, just like the Jannes and Jambres did.

This should not surprise us. Just because someone has a supernatural display of power, that does not mean someone is necessarily speaking for God and pointing people to Jesus. The opponents of Christ will try to produce

counterfeit miracles to lead people away from Christ, just like Jannes and Jambres. Paul also warned us about this in 2 Thessalonians.

The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 2 Thessalonians 2:9–10 (ESV)

Satan will use counterfeit preachers who will perform counterfeit miracles to try and lead people away from Jesus and disqualify them for the faith.

We recognize false teachers because they are in love with themselves. They are purveyors of hollow religion. They target the weak for converts. They actively oppose the truth and even display counterfeit miracles to deceive people away from the truth.

**The progress of false teachers is always more apparent than real.**

But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men. 2 Timothy 3:9 (ESV)

This is a great promise from God. It is a very encouraging ending to what would otherwise be a very discouraging message. At times, it will seem like false teachers are making great progress. It will seem like they are wiping out the church. Though times are tough, don't forget that God will preserve his church. He will protect his church from being destroyed.

Let me read you some encouraging verses on this from the Gospel of John.

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. John 6:37 (ESV)

All the Father gives to the son will come to Jesus, and Jesus will never cast them out. They will persevere to the end.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. John 10:27–29 (ESV)

No one will be able to snatch God's elect out of the hand of the Father or the hand of the Son. The Jesus who saves us will preserve us and protect us from false teachers. Will false teachers cause us trouble? Definitely. Will they rough up the church? Of course. They will not be able to take those God has chosen for himself out of his hand. The false teacher will not be able to successfully deceive them. They will ultimately not be led astray.

We are also reminded of this in the Gospel of Mark.

For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. Mark 13:22 (ESV)

False teachers will not be able to lead the elect astray. They will perform all kinds of false signs and miracles. Many people will follow them but God will give his elect the spiritual insight to see through the charades of spiritual scammers and deceivers. The folly of spiritual scammers will eventually become obvious for all to see, just as the folly of Jannes and Jambres eventually came out in the open. In this we can take comfort. When we are harassed by false teachers and spiritual scammers, we take comfort in knowing that the same God who saved us and birthed our faith is the God that will sustain and preserve our faith. He will protect us from ultimately being deceived. We are not holding on to God. He is ultimately holding on to us!

## How does this apply to us today?

1. **Remember that we are in a spiritual war.** Expect false teachers will surface in the church that will undermine confidence in the Bible and the transforming power of Jesus. They will want us to worship them instead of Jesus.
2. **Be discerning of the pastors and teachers we follow.** Many false teachers are gifted public speakers. They are good at drawing a crowd. They may even have supernatural manifestations that accompany their teaching. If they are not pointing people to Jesus and faithfully teaching the Word of God, don't get sucked in.
3. **Holiness helps us discern truth from error.** False teachers' favorite targets are people burdened down with sin. The more we tolerate sin in our lives, the less ability we have to discern between truth and error in our lives.
4. **Remember that Jesus wins in the end.** The progress of a false teacher is always more apparent than real. Just as the true character of Jannes and Jambres was eventually revealed, God promises that false teachers will eventually be revealed. God will preserve his church and protect his elect.



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