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You may wonder why we're spending so much time looking at prophets – past and present. Isn't it enough to just focus on Jesus and let the chips fall as they may?

In one sense, that's always enough. If you're securely connected to Jesus, He will lead you through difficult times, helping you see the difference between truth and error.

However, Jesus and the Apostles all spoke about prophets – warning against false ones and pointing out how to recognize them.

The Bible makes it clear that the prophetic gift will last all the way through history until Jesus returns to set things right again. Peter, quoting a passage from [Joel 2](#) said:

“In the last days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants – men and women alike – and they will prophesy.” ([Acts 2:17-18](#), NLT – quoting [Joel 2:28-30](#))

Paul listed Prophet as one of the most important Gifts of the Spirit that God will use to build up His Church here on earth (see [1 Corinthians 12](#) & [14](#)).

In the book of Acts – the story of the early Christian Church – we see numerous people identified as prophets.

But with anything that has great power to do good, imitations have the power to deceive. Talking about end times, Jesus said:

“... False messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God’s chosen ones. See, I have warned you about this ahead of time.”
([Matthew 24:24-25](#), NLT)

Our best defense is a *secure relationship with Jesus* where we have developed the habit of saying “yes” to Him armed with the *knowledge of what a true prophet looks like*.

Our First Study ([Click here](#) to read it, [click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)

Two weeks ago we, as we began this study, we discovered that prophets were people, just like us with similar baggage and tendencies to evil. What set them apart was their willingness to say “yes” to God and faithfully share the message He gave them.

We also discovered these characteristics of a true prophet:

- Their lives, while not perfect, generally support their message.
- Their inspiration comes from God and they faithfully share His message.
- Their predictions regarding the future come true.
- Their messages are generally directed towards God’s people, not the rest of the world.
- They tell the truth about God and Jesus. Their message is not intended to make us comfortable, But designed to shake us up enough so we will change directions and come back to God.
- Because their message is often hard and unpleasant, through the ages they have generally been disliked, ridiculed, persecuted, and many killed.

The Standard of Truth

Scripture makes it clear the first thing to check out regarding someone’s claim to speak for God is where they stand in relationship to the Bible – both in what they teach and how they live.

Someone may say to you, “Let’s ask the mediums and those who consult the spirits of the dead. With their whisperings and mutterings, they will tell us what to do.” But shouldn’t people ask God for guidance? Should the living seek guidance from the dead? ([Isaiah 8:19-20](#), NLT)

Remember what we learned about those who are dead? They are not conscious someplace, but are sleeping in the grave until either the resurrection at Jesus’ Second Coming or the one following the Millennium. So you’re never communicating with the dead, you’re communicating with the devil.

Look to God’s instructions and teachings! People who contradict his word are completely in the dark. ([Isaiah 8:19-20](#), NLT)

The standard of truth is the Bible. A message from God's prophet will always point to the truth of Scripture and be in harmony with its teachings.

Inspiration

Near the end of his life, Paul – who incidentally was identified as a prophet in the book of Acts – wrote these words to Timothy, a young man he had been mentoring in ministry:

You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3:15, NLT)

Paul reminds Timothy where his roots are. It was through his study of the Bible that he was able to connect with Jesus. As we saw a moment ago, it is the standard of truth.

Paul goes on:

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17, NLT)

There is a lot that could be said about this. More than one book has been written on what it means to be inspired by God as Paul wrote here. We'll keep it pretty simple today.

While there are places in the Bible where God's message appears in quotation marks, indicating His exact words were noted; this is not true for the majority of Scripture.

For the most part, God did not dictate the Bible but shared truths and visions with people who had chosen to follow Him – identified as prophets. He then guided them through the Holy Spirit as they faithfully tried to share the message verbally and in written form. Like anyone else, this would have all been filtered through their culture and world view.

Some prophets had a straightforward message – come back to God and thrive or stay away and reap the consequences.

Others were trying to explain things they had never seen before and couldn't understand – strange beasts, wheels inside of wheels filled with eyes, things that looked like grasshoppers with a human face shooting fire from its tail that killed people, along with other crazy looking stuff.

The miracle of inspiration is that in spite of having dozens of human writers stretched over hundreds of years, there's a remarkable unity of purpose and message from beginning to end. While we see many different literary styles and personal quirks, they all point to Jesus in some way from the first verse of [Genesis 1](#) to the last verse of [Revelation 22](#).

Principles of Understanding?

Some prophetic messages are so clear they can hardly be misunderstood.

Take, for instance, [Isaiah 1](#) – this is one of those places where God is directly quoted (there are several in Isaiah).

“What makes you think I want all your sacrifices?” says the LORD. “I am sick of your burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fattened cattle. I get no pleasure from the blood of bulls and lambs and goats ...

... Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows.

“Come now, let’s settle this,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool. If you will only obey me you will have plenty to eat. But if you turn away and refuse to listen, you will be devoured by the sword of your enemies. I, the LORD, have spoken!” ([Isaiah 1:10-20](#), NLT)

This isn’t one of those places where you scratch your head and wonder what in the world is going on. This is very direct.

In essence God says: You do all the right worship stuff but it stinks because you don’t follow through and care for those who need help. Your life doesn’t match up with your worship. So come to Me and let Me make your life right. You’ll be happy if you do and miserable if you don’t.

It’s pretty hard to misunderstand this message.

This passage also helps us understand three characteristics of true prophetic messages.

First, to be able to correctly apply a prophet’s message to our day and time, we need to understand the original message. What was God trying to communicate through His prophet to His people right then.

This won’t always be as clear as it is in this passage. You may need to prayerfully read other passages that use similar imagery or were written about the same time. You may need to do some research on cultural and language issues.

Once you understand the original message, it’s not too hard to apply it’s principles to our lives today

Another characteristic of a true prophet’s message is it generally contains the Gospel. The purpose is not to create hopelessness, but to bring you and me back to God. He said:

“I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so they can live. Turn! Turn from your wickedness, O people of Israel! Why should you die?” ([Ezekiel 33:11](#), NLT)

A third characteristic is that the message of a true prophet is a call to action – it asks you to make a choice between following God or going on your own.

Christianity is not about inaction. It's about allowing God to make your life an example of His love and care. It's not so much about what you know and understand, but it's all about how you put it into practice.

Come Now . . .

Looking again at [Isaiah 1](#):

“Come, let’s settle this,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are crimson red, they will be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land. But if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.” ([Isaiah 1:18-20](#), CSB)

This is the same message we have seen over and over in the Bible.

God says: Come to me and live, stay away and die.

This is not vindictive on His part. God knows He's the only source of life in this Universe. If you stay away from Him you can't receive this life – the natural consequence is eternal death.

Paul put it this way:

The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.
([Romans 6:23](#), NLT)

Don't just glide into death – choose life today.

Choose God!

Notes

Text you find in **this color** is a link to more information. It may take you to the Bible verse in context and/or in several different translations utilizing BibleGateway.com. In some cases, it may take you to a website where there is additional information. And, it may take you to a PDF copy of previous sermons in this series.

Previous Messages in this Series (click on the title to download it)

- May 9, 2020 – *Dead or Alive?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- May 16, 2020 – *Symptom or Disease?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- May 30, 2020 – *Out or In?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- June 6, 2020 – *Starve or Eat?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- June 13, 2020 – *Atrophy or Exercise?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- June 20, 2020 – *Just Love?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- July 4, 2020 – *Am I a Hypocrite?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- July 11, 2020 – *Burn Out or Rest? – Part 1* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- July 18, 2020 – *Burn Out or Rest? – Part 2* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Aug. 1, 2020 – *A Look Back* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Aug. 15, 2020 – *Love Like Jesus!* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Aug. 22, 2020 – *Distracted or Focused?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Aug. 29, 2020 – *Mortal or Immortal?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Sept. 5, 2020 – *Tortured or Destroyed?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Sept. 12, 2020 – *Now or Later?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Sept. 19, 2020 – *No or Yes? Part 1* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)

Scripture References

Genesis 20:1-18 (NLT): Abraham moved south to the Negev and lived for a while between Kadesh and Shur, and then he moved on to Gerar. While living there as a foreigner, ² Abraham introduced his wife, Sarah, by saying, “She is my sister.” So King Abimelech of Gerar sent for Sarah and had her brought to him at his palace.

³ But that night God came to Abimelech in a dream and told him, “You are a dead man, for that woman you have taken is already married!”

⁴ But Abimelech had not slept with her yet, so he said, “Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? ⁵ Didn’t Abraham tell me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘Yes, he is my brother.’ I acted in complete innocence! My hands are clean.”

⁶ In the dream God responded, “Yes, I know you are innocent. That’s why I kept you from sinning against me, and why I did not let you touch her. ⁷ Now return the woman to her husband, and he will pray for you, for he is a prophet. Then you will live. But if you don’t return her to him, you can be sure that you and all your people will die.”

⁸ Abimelech got up early the next morning and quickly called all his servants together. When he told them what had happened, his men were terrified. ⁹ Then Abimelech called for Abraham. “What have you done to us?” he demanded. “What crime have I committed that deserves treatment like this, making me and my kingdom guilty of this great sin? No one should ever do what you have done! ¹⁰ Whatever possessed you to do such a thing?”

¹¹ Abraham replied, “I thought, ‘This is a godless place. They will want my wife and will kill me to get her.’ ¹² And she really is my sister, for we both have the same father, but different mothers. And I married her. ¹³ When God called me to leave my father’s home and to travel from place to place, I told her, ‘Do me a favor. Wherever we go, tell the people that I am your brother.’”

¹⁴ Then Abimelech took some of his sheep and goats, cattle, and male and female servants, and he presented them to Abraham. He also returned his wife, Sarah, to him. ¹⁵ Then Abimelech said, “Look over my land and choose any place where you would like to live.” ¹⁶ And he said to Sarah, “Look, I am giving your ‘brother’ 1,000 pieces of silver in the presence of all these witnesses. This is to compensate you for any wrong I may have done to you. This will settle any claim against me, and your reputation is cleared.”

¹⁷ Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants, so they could have children. ¹⁸ For the LORD had caused all the women to be infertile because of what happened with Abraham’s wife, Sarah. (**Genesis 20:1-18**, NLT)

Numbers 12:1-8 (NLT): While they were at Hazeroth, Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses because he had married a Cushite woman. ² They said, “Has the LORD spoken only through Moses? Hasn’t he spoken through us, too?”

But the LORD heard them. ³ (Now Moses was very humble – more humble than any other person on earth.) ⁴ So immediately the LORD called to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam and said, “Go out to the Tabernacle, all three of you!”

So the three of them went to the Tabernacle.

⁵ Then the LORD descended in the pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the Tabernacle. “Aaron and Miriam!” he called, and they stepped forward. ⁶ And the LORD said to them, “Now listen to what I say:

“If there were prophets among you, I, the LORD, would reveal myself in visions. I would speak to them in dreams. ⁷ But not with my servant Moses. Of all my house, he is the one I trust. ⁸ I speak to him face to face, clearly, and not in riddles! He sees the LORD as he is. So why were you not afraid to criticize my servant Moses?” (Numbers 12:1-8, NLT)

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 (NLT): *“Suppose there are prophets among you or those who dream dreams about the future, and they promise you signs or miracles, ² and the predicted signs or miracles occur. If they then say, ‘Come, let us worship other gods’ – gods you have not known before – ³ do not listen to them. The LORD your God is testing you to see if you truly love him with all your heart and soul. ⁴ Serve only the LORD your God and fear him alone. Obey his commands, listen to his voice, and cling to him. ⁵ The false prophets or visionaries who try to lead you astray must be put to death, for they encourage rebellion against the LORD your God, who redeemed you from slavery and brought you out of the land of Egypt. Since they try to lead you astray from the way the LORD your God commanded you to live, you must put them to death. In this way you will purge the evil from among you.” (Deuteronomy 13:1-5, NLT)*

Deuteronomy 18:17-22 (NLT): *“Then the LORD said to me, ‘What they have said is right. ¹⁸ I will raise up a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites. I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell the people everything I command him. ¹⁹ I will personally deal with anyone who will not listen to the messages the prophet proclaims on my behalf. ²⁰ But any prophet who falsely claims to speak in my name or who speaks in the name of another god must die.’*

²¹ “But you may wonder, ‘How will we know whether or not a prophecy is from the LORD?’ ²² If the prophet speaks in the LORD’s name but his prediction does not happen or come true, you will know that the LORD did not give that message. That prophet has spoken without my authority and need not be feared.” (Deuteronomy 18:17-22, NLT)

1 Samuel 10:1-16 (NLT): *Then Samuel took a flask of olive oil and poured it over Saul’s head. He kissed Saul and said, “I am doing this because the LORD has appointed you to be the ruler over Israel, his special possession. ² When you leave me today, you will see two men beside Rachel’s tomb at Zelzah, on the border of Benjamin. They will tell you that the donkeys have been found and that your father has stopped worrying about them and is now worried about you. He is asking, ‘Have you seen my son?’*

³ “When you get to the oak of Tabor, you will see three men coming toward you who are on their way to worship God at Bethel. One will be bringing three young goats, another will have three loaves of bread, and the third will be carrying a wineskin full of wine. ⁴ They will greet you and offer you two of the loaves, which you are to accept.

⁵ “When you arrive at Gibeah of God, where the garrison of the Philistines is located, you will meet a band of prophets coming down from the place of worship. They will be playing a harp, a tambourine, a flute, and a lyre, and they will be prophesying. ⁶ At that time the Spirit of the LORD will come powerfully upon you, and you will prophesy with them. You will be changed

into a different person. ⁷ After these signs take place, do what must be done, for God is with you. ⁸ Then go down to Gilgal ahead of me. I will join you there to sacrifice burnt offerings and peace offerings. You must wait for seven days until I arrive and give you further instructions.”

⁹ As Saul turned and started to leave, God gave him a new heart, and all Samuel’s signs were fulfilled that day. ¹⁰ When Saul and his servant arrived at Gibeah, they saw a group of prophets coming toward them. Then the Spirit of God came powerfully upon Saul, and he, too, began to prophesy. ¹¹ When those who knew Saul heard about it, they exclaimed, “What? Is even Saul a prophet? How did the son of Kish become a prophet?”

¹² And one of those standing there said, “Can anyone become a prophet, no matter who his father is?” So that is the origin of the saying “Is even Saul a prophet?”

¹³ When Saul had finished prophesying, he went up to the place of worship. ¹⁴ “Where have you been?” Saul’s uncle asked him and his servant.

“We were looking for the donkeys,” Saul replied, “but we couldn’t find them. So we went to Samuel to ask him where they were.”

¹⁵ “Oh? And what did he say?” his uncle asked.

¹⁶ “He told us that the donkeys had already been found,” Saul replied. But Saul didn’t tell his uncle what Samuel said about the kingdom. (**1 Samuel 10:1-16**, NLT)

1 Kings 13:1-30 (NLT): At the LORD’s command, a man of God from Judah went to Bethel, arriving there just as Jeroboam was approaching the altar to burn incense. ² Then at the LORD’s command, he shouted, “O altar, altar! This is what the LORD says: A child named Josiah will be born into the dynasty of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests from the pagan shrines who come here to burn incense, and human bones will be burned on you.” ³ That same day the man of God gave a sign to prove his message. He said, “The LORD has promised to give this sign: This altar will split apart, and its ashes will be poured out on the ground.”

⁴ When King Jeroboam heard the man of God speaking against the altar at Bethel, he pointed at him and shouted, “Seize that man!” But instantly the king’s hand became paralyzed in that position, and he couldn’t pull it back. ⁵ At the same time a wide crack appeared in the altar, and the ashes poured out, just as the man of God had predicted in his message from the LORD.

⁶ The king cried out to the man of God, “Please ask the LORD your God to restore my hand again!” So the man of God prayed to the LORD, and the king’s hand was restored and he could move it again.

⁷ Then the king said to the man of God, “Come to the palace with me and have something to eat, and I will give you a gift.”

⁸ But the man of God said to the king, “Even if you gave me half of everything you own, I would not go with you. I would not eat or drink anything in this place. ⁹ For the LORD gave me this

command: 'You must not eat or drink anything while you are there, and do not return to Judah by the same way you came.'" ¹⁰ So he left Bethel and went home another way.

¹¹ As it happened, there was an old prophet living in Bethel, and his sons came home and told him what the man of God had done in Bethel that day. They also told their father what the man had said to the king. ¹² The old prophet asked them, "Which way did he go?" So they showed their father which road the man of God had taken. ¹³ "Quick, saddle the donkey," the old man said. So they saddled the donkey for him, and he mounted it.

¹⁴ Then he rode after the man of God and found him sitting under a great tree. The old prophet asked him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?"

"Yes, I am," he replied.

¹⁵ Then he said to the man of God, "Come home with me and eat some food."

¹⁶ "No, I cannot," he replied. "I am not allowed to eat or drink anything here in this place. ¹⁷ For the LORD gave me this command: 'You must not eat or drink anything while you are there, and do not return to Judah by the same way you came.'"

¹⁸ But the old prophet answered, "I am a prophet, too, just as you are. And an angel gave me this command from the LORD: 'Bring him home with you so he can have something to eat and drink.'" But the old man was lying to him. ¹⁹ So they went back together, and the man of God ate and drank at the prophet's home.

²⁰ Then while they were sitting at the table, a command from the LORD came to the old prophet. ²¹ He cried out to the man of God from Judah, "This is what the LORD says: You have defied the word of the LORD and have disobeyed the command the LORD your God gave you. ²² You came back to this place and ate and drank where he told you not to eat or drink. Because of this, your body will not be buried in the grave of your ancestors."

²³ After the man of God had finished eating and drinking, the old prophet saddled his own donkey for him, ²⁴ and the man of God started off again. But as he was traveling along, a lion came out and killed him. His body lay there on the road, with the donkey and the lion standing beside it. ²⁵ People who passed by saw the body lying in the road and the lion standing beside it, and they went and reported it in Bethel, where the old prophet lived.

²⁶ When the prophet heard the report, he said, "It is the man of God who disobeyed the LORD's command. The LORD has fulfilled his word by causing the lion to attack and kill him."

²⁷ Then the prophet said to his sons, "Saddle a donkey for me." So they saddled a donkey, ²⁸ and he went out and found the body lying in the road. The donkey and lion were still standing there beside it, for the lion had not eaten the body nor attacked the donkey. ²⁹ So the prophet laid the body of the man of God on the donkey and took it back to the town to mourn over him and bury him. ³⁰ He laid the body in his own grave, crying out in grief, "Oh, my brother!"

(1 Kings 13:1-30, NLT)

1 Kings 22:1-28 (NLT): For three years there was no war between Aram and Israel. ² Then during the third year, King Jehoshaphat of Judah went to visit King Ahab of Israel. ³ During the visit, the king of Israel said to his officials, “Do you realize that the town of Ramoth-gilead belongs to us? And yet we’ve done nothing to recapture it from the king of Aram!”

⁴ Then he turned to Jehoshaphat and asked, “Will you join me in battle to recover Ramoth-gilead?”

Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, “Why, of course! You and I are as one. My troops are your troops, and my horses are your horses.” ⁵ Then Jehoshaphat added, “But first let’s find out what the LORD says.”

⁶ So the king of Israel summoned the prophets, about 400 of them, and asked them, “Should I go to war against Ramoth-gilead, or should I hold back?”

They all replied, “Yes, go right ahead! The Lord will give the king victory.”

⁷ But Jehoshaphat asked, “Is there not also a prophet of the LORD here? We should ask him the same question.”

⁸ The king of Israel replied to Jehoshaphat, “There is one more man who could consult the LORD for us, but I hate him. He never prophesies anything but trouble for me! His name is Micaiah son of Imlah.”

Jehoshaphat replied, “That’s not the way a king should talk! Let’s hear what he has to say.”

⁹ So the king of Israel called one of his officials and said, “Quick! Bring Micaiah son of Imlah.”

¹⁰ King Ahab of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah, dressed in their royal robes, were sitting on thrones at the threshing floor near the gate of Samaria. All of Ahab’s prophets were prophesying there in front of them. ¹¹ One of them, Zedekiah son of Kenaanah, made some iron horns and proclaimed, “This is what the LORD says: With these horns you will gore the Arameans to death!”

¹² All the other prophets agreed. “Yes,” they said, “go up to Ramoth-gilead and be victorious, for the LORD will give the king victory!”

¹³ Meanwhile, the messenger who went to get Micaiah said to him, “Look, all the prophets are promising victory for the king. Be sure that you agree with them and promise success.”

¹⁴ But Micaiah replied, “As surely as the LORD lives, I will say only what the LORD tells me to say.”

¹⁵ When Micaiah arrived before the king, Ahab asked him, “Micaiah, should we go to war against Ramoth-gilead, or should we hold back?”

Micaiah replied sarcastically, “Yes, go up and be victorious, for the LORD will give the king victory!”

¹⁶ But the king replied sharply, “How many times must I demand that you speak only the truth to me when you speak for the LORD?”

¹⁷ Then Micaiah told him, “In a vision I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep without a shepherd. And the LORD said, ‘Their master has been killed. Send them home in peace.’”

¹⁸ “Didn’t I tell you?” the king of Israel exclaimed to Jehoshaphat. “He never prophesies anything but trouble for me.”

¹⁹ Then Micaiah continued, “Listen to what the LORD says! I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the armies of heaven around him, on his right and on his left. ²⁰ And the LORD said, ‘Who can entice Ahab to go into battle against Ramoth-gilead so he can be killed?’

“There were many suggestions, ²¹ and finally a spirit approached the LORD and said, ‘I can do it!’

²² “How will you do this?’ the LORD asked.

“And the spirit replied, ‘I will go out and inspire all of Ahab’s prophets to speak lies.’

“You will succeed,’ said the LORD. ‘Go ahead and do it.’

²³ “So you see, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all your prophets. For the LORD has pronounced your doom.”

²⁴ Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah walked up to Micaiah and slapped him across the face. “Since when did the Spirit of the LORD leave me to speak to you?” he demanded.

²⁵ And Micaiah replied, “You will find out soon enough when you are trying to hide in some secret room!”

²⁶ “Arrest him!” the king of Israel ordered. “Take him back to Amon, the governor of the city, and to my son Joash. ²⁷ Give them this order from the king: ‘Put this man in prison, and feed him nothing but bread and water until I return safely from the battle!’”

²⁸ But Micaiah replied, “If you return safely, it will mean that the LORD has not spoken through me!” Then he added to those standing around, “Everyone mark my words!”

(1 Kings 22:1-28, NLT)

Psalm 119:105 (NLT): *Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.*

(Psalm 119:105, NLT)

Proverbs 3:5-12 (NIV): *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. ⁸ This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

⁹ Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

¹¹ My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, ¹² because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in. (**Proverbs 3:5-12**, NIV)

Isaiah 1:10-20 (NLT): Listen to the LORD, you leaders of "Sodom." Listen to the law of our God, people of "Gomorrhah." ¹¹ "What makes you think I want all your sacrifices?" says the LORD. "I am sick of your burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fattened cattle. I get no pleasure from the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. ¹² When you come to worship me, who asked you to parade through my courts with all your ceremony? ¹³ Stop bringing me your meaningless gifts; the incense of your offerings disgusts me!

As for your celebrations of the new moon and the Sabbath and your special days for fasting—they are all sinful and false. I want no more of your pious meetings. ¹⁴ I hate your new moon celebrations and your annual festivals. They are a burden to me. I cannot stand them! ¹⁵ When you lift up your hands in prayer, I will not look. Though you offer many prayers, I will not listen, for your hands are covered with the blood of innocent victims. ¹⁶ Wash yourselves and be clean! Get your sins out of my sight. Give up your evil ways. ¹⁷ Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows.

¹⁸ "Come now, let's settle this," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool. ¹⁹ If you will only obey me you will have plenty to eat. ²⁰ But if you turn away and refuse to listen, you will be devoured by the sword of your enemies. I, the LORD, have spoken!" (**Isaiah 1:10-20**, NLT)

Isaiah 8:19-20 (CSB): When they say to you, "Inquire of the mediums and the spiritists who chirp and mutter," shouldn't a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? ²⁰ Go to God's instruction and testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, there will be no dawn for them.

²¹ They will wander through the land, dejected and hungry. When they are famished, they will become enraged, and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God. ²² They will look toward the earth and see only distress, darkness, and the gloom of affliction, and they will be driven into thick darkness. (**Isaiah 8:19-20**, CSB)

Jeremiah 14:11-15 (NLT): Then the LORD said to me, "Do not pray for these people anymore. ¹² When they fast, I will pay no attention. When they present their burnt offerings and grain offerings to me, I will not accept them. Instead, I will devour them with war, famine, and disease."

¹³ Then I said, "O Sovereign LORD, their prophets are telling them, 'All is well – no war or famine will come. The LORD will surely send you peace.'"

¹⁴ Then the LORD said, "These prophets are telling lies in my name. I did not send them or tell them to speak. I did not give them any messages. They prophesy of visions and revelations they have never seen or heard. They speak foolishness made up in their own lying hearts. ¹⁵ Therefore, this is what the LORD says: I will punish these lying prophets, for they have spoken in my name

even though I never sent them. They say that no war or famine will come, but they themselves will die by war and famine! (**Jeremiah 14:11-15**, NLT)

Jeremiah 23:1-40 (NLT): “What sorrow awaits the leaders of my people – the shepherds of my sheep – for they have destroyed and scattered the very ones they were expected to care for,” says the LORD.

² Therefore, this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to these shepherds: “Instead of caring for my flock and leading them to safety, you have deserted them and driven them to destruction. Now I will pour out judgment on you for the evil you have done to them. ³ But I will gather together the remnant of my flock from the countries where I have driven them. I will bring them back to their own sheepfold, and they will be fruitful and increase in number. ⁴ Then I will appoint responsible shepherds who will care for them, and they will never be afraid again. Not a single one will be lost or missing. I, the LORD, have spoken!

⁵ “For the time is coming,” says the LORD, “when I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David’s line. He will be a King who rules with wisdom. He will do what is just and right throughout the land. ⁶ And this will be his name: ‘The LORD Is Our Righteousness.’ In that day Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety.

⁷ “In that day,” says the LORD, “when people are taking an oath, they will no longer say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who rescued the people of Israel from the land of Egypt.’ ⁸ Instead, they will say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the people of Israel back to their own land from the land of the north and from all the countries to which he had exiled them.’ Then they will live in their own land.”

⁹ “My heart is broken because of the false prophets, and my bones tremble. I stagger like a drunkard, like someone overcome by wine, because of the holy words the LORD has spoken against them. ¹⁰ For the land is full of adultery, and it lies under a curse. The land itself is in mourning – its wilderness pastures are dried up. For they all do evil and abuse what power they have.

¹¹ “*Even the priests and prophets are ungodly, wicked men. I have seen their despicable acts right here in my own Temple,*” says the LORD. ² “Therefore, the paths they take will become slippery. They will be chased through the dark, and there they will fall. For I will bring disaster upon them at the time fixed for their punishment. I, the LORD, have spoken!

¹³ “*I saw that the prophets of Samaria were terribly evil, for they prophesied in the name of Baal and led my people of Israel into sin. ¹⁴ But now I see that the prophets of Jerusalem are even worse! They commit adultery and love dishonesty. They encourage those who are doing evil so that no one turns away from their sins. These prophets are as wicked as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah once were.*”

¹⁵ Therefore, this is what the LORD of Heaven’s Armies says concerning the prophets:

“I will feed them with bitterness and give them poison to drink. For it is because of Jerusalem’s prophets that wickedness has filled this land.”

¹⁶ *This is what the LORD of Heaven’s Armies says to his people:*

“Do not listen to these prophets when they prophesy to you, filling you with futile hopes. They are making up everything they say. They do not speak for the LORD! ¹⁷ They keep saying to those who despise my word, ‘Don’t worry! The LORD says you will have peace!’ And to those who stubbornly follow their own desires, they say, ‘No harm will come your way!’

¹⁸ *“Have any of these prophets been in the LORD’s presence to hear what he is really saying? Has even one of them cared enough to listen? ¹⁹ Look! The LORD’s anger bursts out like a storm, a whirlwind that swirls down on the heads of the wicked. ²⁰ The anger of the LORD will not diminish until it has finished all he has planned. In the days to come you will understand all this very clearly.*

²¹ *“I have not sent these prophets, yet they run around claiming to speak for me. I have given them no message, yet they go on prophesying. ²² If they had stood before me and listened to me, they would have spoken my words, and they would have turned my people from their evil ways and deeds. ²³ Am I a God who is only close at hand?” says the LORD. “No, I am far away at the same time. ²⁴ Can anyone hide from me in a secret place? Am I not everywhere in all the heavens and earth?” says the LORD.*

²⁵ *“I have heard these prophets say, ‘Listen to the dream I had from God last night.’ And then they proceed to tell lies in my name. ²⁶ How long will this go on? If they are prophets, they are prophets of deceit, inventing everything they say. ²⁷ By telling these false dreams, they are trying to get my people to forget me, just as their ancestors did by worshiping the idols of Baal.*

²⁸ *“Let these false prophets tell their dreams, but let my true messengers faithfully proclaim my every word. There is a difference between straw and grain! ²⁹ Does not my word burn like fire?” says the LORD. “Is it not like a mighty hammer that smashes a rock to pieces?*

³⁰ *“Therefore,” says the LORD, “I am against these prophets who steal messages from each other and claim they are from me. ³¹ I am against these smooth-tongued prophets who say, ‘This prophecy is from the LORD!’ ³² I am against these false prophets. Their imaginary dreams are flagrant lies that lead my people into sin. I did not send or appoint them, and they have no message at all for my people. I, the LORD, have spoken!*

³³ *“Suppose one of the people or one of the prophets or priests asks you, ‘What prophecy has the LORD burdened you with now?’ You must reply, ‘You are the burden!’^[c] The LORD says he will abandon you!’*

³⁴ *“If any prophet, priest, or anyone else says, ‘I have a prophecy from the LORD,’ I will punish that person along with his entire family. ³⁵ You should keep asking each other, ‘What is the LORD’s answer?’ or ‘What is the LORD saying?’ ³⁶ But stop using this phrase, ‘prophecy from the LORD.’*

For people are using it to give authority to their own ideas, turning upside down the words of our God, the living God, the LORD of Heaven's Armies.

³⁷ "This is what you should say to the prophets: 'What is the LORD's answer?' or 'What is the LORD saying?' ³⁸ But suppose they respond, 'This is a prophecy from the LORD!' Then you should say, 'This is what the LORD says: Because you have used this phrase, "prophecy from the LORD," even though I warned you not to use it, ³⁹ I will forget you completely. I will expel you from my presence, along with this city that I gave to you and your ancestors. ⁴⁰ And I will make you an object of ridicule, and your name will be infamous throughout the ages.'"

([Jeremiah 23:1-40](#), NLT)

Jeremiah 28:5-9 (NLT): *Jeremiah responded to Hananiah as they stood in front of all the priests and people at the Temple. ⁶ He said, "Amen! May your prophecies come true! I hope the LORD does everything you say. I hope he does bring back from Babylon the treasures of this Temple and all the captives. ⁷ But listen now to the solemn words I speak to you in the presence of all these people. ⁸ The ancient prophets who preceded you and me spoke against many nations, always warning of war, disaster, and disease. ⁹ So a prophet who predicts peace must show he is right. Only when his predictions come true can we know that he is really from the LORD."*

([Jeremiah 28:5-9](#), NLT – see also [Amos 3](#))

Ezekiel 33:10-20 (NLT): *"Son of man, give the people of Israel this message: You are saying, 'Our sins are heavy upon us; we are wasting away! How can we survive?' ¹¹ As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so they can live. Turn! Turn from your wickedness, O people of Israel! Why should you die?*

¹² "Son of man, give your people this message: The righteous behavior of righteous people will not save them if they turn to sin, nor will the wicked behavior of wicked people destroy them if they repent and turn from their sins. ¹³ When I tell righteous people that they will live, but then they sin, expecting their past righteousness to save them, then none of their righteous acts will be remembered. I will destroy them for their sins. ¹⁴ And suppose I tell some wicked people that they will surely die, but then they turn from their sins and do what is just and right. ¹⁵ For instance, they might give back a debtor's security, return what they have stolen, and obey my life-giving laws, no longer doing what is evil. If they do this, then they will surely live and not die. ¹⁶ None of their past sins will be brought up again, for they have done what is just and right, and they will surely live.

¹⁷ "Your people are saying, 'The Lord isn't doing what's right,' but it is they who are not doing what's right. ¹⁸ For again I say, when righteous people turn away from their righteous behavior and turn to evil, they will die. ¹⁹ But if wicked people turn from their wickedness and do what is just and right, they will live. ²⁰ O people of Israel, you are saying, 'The Lord isn't doing what's right.' But I judge each of you according to your deeds." ([Ezekiel 33:10-20](#), NLT)

Matthew 6:19-34 (NLT): *“Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.*

²² “Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. ²³ But when your eye is unhealthy, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is!

²⁴ “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.

²⁵ “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? ²⁷ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

²⁸ “And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, ²⁹ yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ³⁰ And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

³¹ “So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ ³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. ³³ Seek the Kingdom of God^[a] above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

³⁴ “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today. (Matthew 6:19-34, NLT)

Matthew 7:15-23 (NLT): *“Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. ¹⁶ You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit. ¹⁹ So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.*

²¹ “Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. ²² On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ ²³ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’” (Matthew 7:15-23, NLT)

Matthew 24:4-14 (NLT): Jesus told them, “Don’t let anyone mislead you, ⁵ for many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah.’ They will deceive many. ⁶ And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don’t panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won’t follow immediately. ⁷ Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world. ⁸ But all this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come.

⁹ “Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers. ¹⁰ And many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other. ¹¹ And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people. ¹² Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:4-14, NLT)

Matthew 24:21-28 (NLT): “For there will be greater anguish than at any time since the world began. And it will never be so great again. ²² In fact, unless that time of calamity is shortened, not a single person will survive. But it will be shortened for the sake of God’s chosen ones.

²³ “Then if anyone tells you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah,’ or ‘There he is,’ don’t believe it. ²⁴ For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God’s chosen ones. ²⁵ See, I have warned you about this ahead of time.

²⁶ “So if someone tells you, ‘Look, the Messiah is out in the desert,’ don’t bother to go and look. Or, ‘Look, he is hiding here,’ don’t believe it! ²⁷ For as the lightning flashes in the east and shines to the west, so it will be when the Son of Man comes. ²⁸ Just as the gathering of vultures shows there is a carcass nearby, so these signs indicate that the end is near.”

(Matthew 24:21-28, NLT – see also Mark 13:14-27)

Luke 14:31-35 (NLT): At that time some Pharisees said to him, “Get away from here if you want to live! Herod Antipas wants to kill you!”

³² Jesus replied, “Go tell that fox that I will keep on casting out demons and healing people today and tomorrow; and the third day I will accomplish my purpose. ³³ Yes, today, tomorrow, and the next day I must proceed on my way. For it wouldn’t do for a prophet of God to be killed except in Jerusalem!

³⁴ “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God’s messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn’t let me. ³⁵ And now, look, your house is abandoned. And you will never see me again until you say, ‘Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the LORD!’”

(Luke 14:31-35, NLT)

Acts 2:14-21 (NLT): Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, “Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake

about this. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o'clock in the morning is much too early for that. ¹⁶ No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ 'In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸ In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants – men and women alike – and they will prophesy. ¹⁹ And I will cause wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below – blood and fire and clouds of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will become dark, and the moon will turn blood red before that great and glorious day of the LORD arrives. ²¹ But everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.'" (Acts 2:14-21, NLT – quoting Joel 2:28-30)

Acts 2:29-31 (NLT): "Dear brothers, think about this! You can be sure that the patriarch David wasn't referring to himself, for he died and was buried, and his tomb is still here among us. ³⁰ But he was a prophet, and he knew God had promised with an oath that one of David's own descendants would sit on his throne. ³¹ David was looking into the future and speaking of the Messiah's resurrection. He was saying that God would not leave him among the dead or allow his body to rot in the grave." (Acts 2:29-31, NLT)

Acts 11:27-30 (NLT): During this time some prophets traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ One of them named Agabus stood up in one of the meetings and predicted by the Spirit that a great famine was coming upon the entire Roman world. (This was fulfilled during the reign of Claudius.) ²⁹ So the believers in Antioch decided to send relief to the brothers and sisters in Judea, everyone giving as much as they could. ³⁰ This they did, entrusting their gifts to Barnabas and Saul to take to the elders of the church in Jerusalem. (Acts 11:27-30, NLT)

Acts 13:1-12 (NLT): Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon (called "the black man"), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the childhood companion of King Herod Antipas), and Saul. ² One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them." ³ So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.

⁴ So Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit. They went down to the seaport of Seleucia and then sailed for the island of Cyprus. ⁵ There, in the town of Salamis, they went to the Jewish synagogues and preached the word of God. John Mark went with them as their assistant.

⁶ Afterward they traveled from town to town across the entire island until finally they reached Paphos, where they met a Jewish sorcerer, a false prophet named Bar-Jesus. ⁷ He had attached himself to the governor, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man. The governor invited Barnabas and Saul to visit him, for he wanted to hear the word of God. ⁸ But Elymas, the sorcerer (as his name means in Greek), interfered and urged the governor to pay no attention to what Barnabas and Saul said. He was trying to keep the governor from believing.

⁹ Saul, also known as Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he looked the sorcerer in the eye. ¹⁰ Then he said, “You son of the devil, full of every sort of deceit and fraud, and enemy of all that is good! Will you never stop perverting the true ways of the Lord? ¹¹ Watch now, for the Lord has laid his hand of punishment upon you, and you will be struck blind. You will not see the sunlight for some time.” Instantly mist and darkness came over the man’s eyes, and he began groping around begging for someone to take his hand and lead him.

¹² When the governor saw what had happened, he became a believer, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord. (Acts 13:1-12, NLT)

Acts 15:22-35 (NLT): Then the apostles and elders together with the whole church in Jerusalem chose delegates, and they sent them to Antioch of Syria with Paul and Barnabas to report on this decision. The men chosen were two of the church leaders – Judas (also called Barsabbas) and Silas. ²³ This is the letter they took with them:

“This letter is from the apostles and elders, your brothers in Jerusalem. It is written to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. Greetings!

²⁴ “We understand that some men from here have troubled you and upset you with their teaching, but we did not send them! ²⁵ So we decided, having come to complete agreement, to send you official representatives, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶ who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷ We are sending Judas and Silas to confirm what we have decided concerning your question.

²⁸ “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay no greater burden on you than these few requirements: ²⁹ You must abstain from eating food offered to idols, from consuming blood or the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality. If you do this, you will do well. Farewell.”

³⁰ The messengers went at once to Antioch, where they called a general meeting of the believers and delivered the letter. ³¹ And there was great joy throughout the church that day as they read this encouraging message.

³² Then Judas and Silas, both being prophets, spoke at length to the believers, encouraging and strengthening their faith. ³³ They stayed for a while, and then the believers sent them back to the church in Jerusalem with a blessing of peace. ³⁵ Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch. They and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord there. (Acts 15:22-35, NLT)

Acts 21:10-12 (NLT): Several days later a man named Agabus, who also had the gift of prophecy, arrived from Judea. ¹¹ He came over, took Paul’s belt, and bound his own feet and hands with it. Then he said, “The Holy Spirit declares, ‘So shall the owner of this belt be bound by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and turned over to the Gentiles.’” ¹² When we heard this, we and the local believers all begged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. (Acts 21:10-12, NLT)

Romans 6:20-23 (NLT): *When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right.* ²¹ *And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom.* ²² *But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life.* ²³ *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.*
(Romans 6:20-23, NLT)

Romans 15:1-4 (NLT): *We who are strong must be considerate of those who are sensitive about things like this. We must not just please ourselves.* ² *We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord.* ³ *For even Christ didn't live to please himself. As the Scriptures say, "The insults of those who insult you, O God, have fallen on me."* ⁴ *Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled.* (Romans 15:1-4, NLT)

1 Corinthians 12:27-31 (NLT): *All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.* ²⁸ *Here are some of the parts God has appointed for the church:*

*first are apostles,
second are prophets,
third are teachers,
then those who do miracles,
those who have the gift of healing,
those who can help others,
those who have the gift of leadership,
those who speak in unknown languages.*

²⁹ *Are we all apostles? Are we all prophets? Are we all teachers? Do we all have the power to do miracles?* ³⁰ *Do we all have the gift of healing? Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages? Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages? Of course not!* ³¹ *So you should earnestly desire the most helpful gifts.*

But now let me show you a way of life that is best of all. (1 Corinthians 12:27-31, NLT)

1 Corinthians 13 (NLT): *If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.* ² *If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing.* ³ *If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing.*

⁴ *Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud* ⁵ *or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.* ⁶ *It does not rejoice*

about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. ⁷ Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

⁸ Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever! ⁹ Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete, and even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture! ¹⁰ But when the time of perfection comes, these partial things will become useless.

¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. ¹² Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely.

¹³ Three things will last forever – faith, hope, and love – and the greatest of these is love.

(1 Corinthians 13, NLT)

1 Corinthians 14:1-40 (NLT): *Let love be your highest goal! But you should also desire the special abilities the Spirit gives – especially the ability to prophesy. ² For if you have the ability to speak in tongues, you will be talking only to God, since people won't be able to understand you. You will be speaking by the power of the Spirit, but it will all be mysterious. ³ But one who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them. ⁴ A person who speaks in tongues is strengthened personally, but one who speaks a word of prophecy strengthens the entire church.*

⁵ I wish you could all speak in tongues, but even more I wish you could all prophesy. For prophecy is greater than speaking in tongues, unless someone interprets what you are saying so that the whole church will be strengthened.

⁶ Dear brothers and sisters, if I should come to you speaking in an unknown language, how would that help you? But if I bring you a revelation or some special knowledge or prophecy or teaching, that will be helpful. ⁷ Even lifeless instruments like the flute or the harp must play the notes clearly, or no one will recognize the melody. ⁸ And if the bugler doesn't sound a clear call, how will the soldiers know they are being called to battle?

⁹ It's the same for you. If you speak to people in words they don't understand, how will they know what you are saying? You might as well be talking into empty space.

¹⁰ There are many different languages in the world, and every language has meaning. ¹¹ But if I don't understand a language, I will be a foreigner to someone who speaks it, and the one who speaks it will be a foreigner to me. ¹² And the same is true for you. Since you are so eager to have the special abilities the Spirit gives, seek those that will strengthen the whole church.

¹³ So anyone who speaks in tongues should pray also for the ability to interpret what has been said. ¹⁴ For if I pray in tongues, my spirit is praying, but I don't understand what I am saying.

¹⁵ Well then, what shall I do? I will pray in the spirit, and I will also pray in words I understand. I will sing in the spirit, and I will also sing in words I understand. ¹⁶ For if you praise God only in the

spirit, how can those who don't understand you praise God along with you? How can they join you in giving thanks when they don't understand what you are saying? ¹⁷ You will be giving thanks very well, but it won't strengthen the people who hear you.

¹⁸ I thank God that I speak in tongues more than any of you. ¹⁹ But in a church meeting I would rather speak five understandable words to help others than ten thousand words in an unknown language.

²⁰ Dear brothers and sisters, don't be childish in your understanding of these things. Be innocent as babies when it comes to evil, but be mature in understanding matters of this kind. ²¹ It is written in the Scriptures:

"I will speak to my own people through strange languages and through the lips of foreigners. But even then, they will not listen to me," says the LORD. (Isaiah 28:11-12)

²² So you see that speaking in tongues is a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers. *Prophecy, however, is for the benefit of believers, not unbelievers.* ²³ Even so, if unbelievers or people who don't understand these things come into your church meeting and hear everyone speaking in an unknown language, they will think you are crazy. ²⁴ But if all of you are prophesying, and unbelievers or people who don't understand these things come into your meeting, they will be convicted of sin and judged by what you say. ²⁵ As they listen, their secret thoughts will be exposed, and they will fall to their knees and worship God, declaring, "God is truly here among you."

²⁶ Well, my brothers and sisters, let's summarize. When you meet together, one will sing, another will teach, another will tell some special revelation God has given, one will speak in tongues, and another will interpret what is said. But everything that is done must strengthen all of you.

²⁷ No more than two or three should speak in tongues. They must speak one at a time, and someone must interpret what they say. ²⁸ But if no one is present who can interpret, they must be silent in your church meeting and speak in tongues to God privately.

²⁹ Let two or three people prophesy, and let the others evaluate what is said. ³⁰ But if someone is prophesying and another person receives a revelation from the Lord, the one who is speaking must stop. ³¹ In this way, all who prophesy will have a turn to speak, one after the other, so that everyone will learn and be encouraged. ³² Remember that people who prophesy are in control of their spirit and can take turns. ³³ For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the meetings of God's holy people ...

³⁹ So, my dear brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and don't forbid speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰ But be sure that everything is done properly and in order.

(1 Corinthians 14:1-40, NLT)

Galatians 5:16-26 (NLT): So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. ¹⁷ The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what

the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. ¹⁸ But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.

¹⁹ When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. ²⁵ Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another. ([Galatians 5:16-26](#), NLT)

Ephesians 4:11-16 (NLT): Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: *the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers.* ¹² Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. ¹³ This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. ¹⁵ Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. ¹⁶ He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. ([Ephesians 4:11-16](#), NLT)

2 Timothy 3:14-17 (NLT): But you must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you. ¹⁵ You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷ God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work. ([2 Timothy 3:14-17](#), NLT)

Hebrews 1:1-4 (NLT): Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. ² And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. ³ The Son

radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven. ⁴ This shows that the Son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave him is greater than their names.

(Hebrews 1:1-4, NLT)

1 Peter 1:3-12 (NLT): *All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, ⁴ and we have a priceless inheritance – an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. ⁵ And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.*

⁶ So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. ⁷ These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold – though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

⁸ You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. ⁹ The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.

¹⁰ This salvation was something even the prophets wanted to know more about when they prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you. ¹¹ They wondered what time or situation the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ's suffering and his great glory afterward.

¹² They were told that their messages were not for themselves, but for you. And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen. (1 Peter 1:3-12, NLT)

2 Peter 1:16-21 (NLT): *For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw his majestic splendor with our own eyes ¹⁷ when he received honor and glory from God the Father. The voice from the majestic glory of God said to him, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." ¹⁸ We ourselves heard that voice from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.*

¹⁹ Because of that experience, we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. You must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place – until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines in your hearts. ²⁰ Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's

own understanding,²¹ or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God. (2 Peter 1:16-21, NLT)

2 Peter 2:1-3 (NLT): *But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach destructive heresies and even deny the Master who bought them. In this way, they will bring sudden destruction on themselves.² Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality. And because of these teachers, the way of truth will be slandered.³ In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money. But God condemned them long ago, and their destruction will not be delayed. (2 Peter 2:1-3, NLT)*

2 Peter 3:1-4 (NLT): *This is my second letter to you, dear friends, and in both of them I have tried to stimulate your wholesome thinking and refresh your memory.² I want you to remember what the holy prophets said long ago and what our Lord and Savior commanded through your apostles.*

³ *Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires.⁴ They will say, “What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created.” (2 Peter 3:1-4, NLT)*

1 John 2:18-29 (NLT): *Dear children, the last hour is here. You have heard that the Antichrist is coming, and already many such antichrists have appeared. From this we know that the last hour has come.¹⁹ These people left our churches, but they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left, it proved that they did not belong with us.*

²⁰ *But you are not like that, for the Holy One has given you his Spirit, and all of you know the truth.²¹ So I am writing to you not because you don't know the truth but because you know the difference between truth and lies.²² And who is a liar? Anyone who says that Jesus is not the Christ. Anyone who denies the Father and the Son is an antichrist.²³ Anyone who denies the Son doesn't have the Father, either. But anyone who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.*

²⁴ *So you must remain faithful to what you have been taught from the beginning. If you do, you will remain in fellowship with the Son and with the Father.²⁵ And in this fellowship we enjoy the eternal life he promised us.*

²⁶ *I am writing these things to warn you about those who want to lead you astray.²⁷ But you have received the Holy Spirit, and he lives within you, so you don't need anyone to teach you what is true. For the Spirit teaches you everything you need to know, and what he teaches is true – It is not a lie. So just as he has taught you, remain in fellowship with Christ.*

²⁸ *And now, dear children, remain in fellowship with Christ so that when he returns, you will be full of courage and not shrink back from him in shame.*

²⁹ *Since we know that Christ is righteous, we also know that all who do what is right are God's children. (1 John 2:18-29, NLT)*

1 John 4:1-6 (NLT): *Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world. ² This is how we know if they have the Spirit of God: If a person claiming to be a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in a real body, that person has the Spirit of God. ³ But if someone claims to be a prophet and does not acknowledge the truth about Jesus, that person is not from God. Such a person has the spirit of the Antichrist, which you heard is coming into the world and indeed is already here.*

⁴ But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world. ⁵ Those people belong to this world, so they speak from the world's viewpoint, and the world listens to them. ⁶ But we belong to God, and those who know God listen to us. If they do not belong to God, they do not listen to us. That is how we know if someone has the Spirit of truth or the spirit of deception. (1 John 4:1-6, NLT)

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Steps to Christ, page 35: *Study God's word prayerfully. That word presents before you, in the law of God and the life of Christ, the great principles of holiness, without which "no man shall see the Lord." **Hebrews 12:14**. It convinces of sin; it plainly reveals the way of salvation. Give heed to it as the voice of God speaking to your soul.*

*As you see the enormity of sin, as you see yourself as you really are, do not give up to despair. It was sinners that Christ came to save. We have not to reconcile God to us, but – O wondrous love! – God in Christ is "reconciling the world unto Himself." **2 Corinthians 5:19**. He is wooing by His tender love the hearts of His erring children. No earthly parent could be as patient with the faults and mistakes of his children, as is God with those He seeks to save. No one could plead more tenderly with the transgressor. No human lips ever poured out more tender entreaties to the wanderer than does He. All His promises, His warnings, are but the breathing of unutterable love.*

*When Satan comes to tell you that you are a great sinner, look up to your Redeemer and talk of His merits. That which will help you is to look to His light. Acknowledge your sin, but tell the enemy that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" and that you may be saved by His matchless love. **1 Timothy 1:15**. Jesus asked Simon a question in regard to two debtors. One owed his Lord a small sum, and the other owed him a very large sum; but he forgave them both, and Christ asked Simon which debtor would love his Lord most. Simon answered, "He to whom he forgave most." **Luke 7:43**. We have been great sinners, but Christ died that we might be forgiven. The merits of His sacrifice are sufficient to present to the Father in our behalf. Those to whom He has forgiven most will love Him most, and will stand nearest to His throne to praise Him for His great love and infinite sacrifice. It is when we most fully comprehend the love of God that we best realize the sinfulness of sin. When we see the length of the chain that was let down*

for us, when we understand something of the infinite sacrifice that Christ has made in our behalf, the heart is melted with tenderness and contrition. (Steps to Christ, page 35)

Steps to Christ, pages 62-63: *The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been – just what it was in Paradise before the fall of our first parents – perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness. If eternal life were granted on any condition short of this, then the happiness of the whole universe would be imperiled. The way would be open for sin, with all its train of woe and misery, to be immortalized.*

It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God's law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.

*More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. So you may say, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." **Galatians 2:20**. So Jesus said to His disciples, "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." **Matthew 10:20**. Then with Christ working in you, you will manifest the same spirit and do the same good works – works of righteousness, obedience.*

So we have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us. (Steps to Christ, pages 62-63)