

Why We Need to Weed Out False Teachers—Immediately

“Take heed to yourselves and to the entire flock, over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know that after my departure, dreadful wolves will enter among you, not sparing the flock. Even from among you men will arise speaking perverse things, to draw the disciples away after them” (Acts 20:28-30).

In this particular passage of Scripture, Paul was speaking to the church at Ephesus, issuing a warning to the elders of the church before he went on to Jerusalem, never to see them again. Paul knew that believers would face wolves coming from the outside as well as from within the church itself. It was a warning to keep watch both over themselves and the flock.

I pondered this passage and Matthew 7:15-16a the other day, “Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruit.”

It is a menacing image to think that there are metaphorically wolves in the midst of the body of Christ adorned with sheep’s clothing. Though this speaks of their current time, it also rings true in our time. These passages are wake-up calls to the church even now that it is time to discern the wolves among the sheep.

For the Sake of the Flock

When Paul told the elders of Ephesus this, there had already been false teachers infiltrating the church in Galatia and Corinth. Paul wanted them aware and alert. The gospel of Jesus Christ was not to be polluted or twisted. To do so would bring a gospel that could not save. It would be a gospel of

rapacity. This is the meaning of *ravenous* in Matthew 7:15.

Rapacious means to be aggressively greedy. These wolves would adorn themselves to appear as innocent and true sheep, but their fruit would give them away because a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

Naturally, sheep would be fearful of such a predator. Panic and intimidation would grip the flock, resulting in loss within the flock. Even today, there are wolves in our midst and many of the sheep have been wounded and have become fearful of addressing the “wolf” before them.

There is a culture of fear in areas of our church, and it is a fear of man. It is a fear of being blacklisted in ministry. It is a fear that leads us to teach and preach what is contrary to Scripture so as to please the self-appointed hierarchy. There are ravenous wolves in our midst, and they have not only come from the outside, but they have risen up from within the flock as Paul said would happen.

By defleecing the wolves, we expose what is being taught by the truth of the Word of God. The light of men, who is Christ, shines onto the darkness and exposes it. Scripture helps us to know in these situations what to do and to reverentially fear God, not man.

Paul did not warn of impending wolves so that they could not be marked and identified. To not mark them is to leave the sheep as prey. Pastors are to pay attention and to help guard God’s flock from deception and being spiritually devoured. The Bible is clear in instructing believers regarding this. Those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine taught are to be marked and avoided (Rom. 16:17). Unfruitful works of darkness are to be exposed (Eph. 5:11).

Paul exposed false apostles who were deceiving the Corinthian church. These false apostles were being disguised as “ministers of righteousness” (2 Cor. 11:13-15). Peter warned

fellow believers of false teachers secretly bringing destructive heresies and denying the Master who bought them, greedily exploiting the people with false words (2 Pet.2:1-3).

There are other passages that warn of those who would preach another gospel, initiate slander and quarrels about words, voice evil suspicions of others, display an unhealthy craving for controversy and teach a different doctrine in disagreement with the sound words of Jesus Christ and teachings that accord with godliness (see 1 Tim. 6:3-5, Gal. 1). Real sheep do not “disrobe” in private and bear their fangs to those who threaten their power while declaring they are sheep.

These warnings in Scripture are there for a reason. We must pay attention. We must judge with right judgment as Jesus stated in John 7:24. This is not an eternal judgment, as only God can issue such, but rather a proper discernment after separating the particulars of a case.

Defleecing the wolves is vital for them and for us. It is an urgent call for them to repent and to be reconciled to God. It is a time for us to pray for those who are deceived. It is a clarion call to the body of Christ to stay alert and to follow Christ and to not fall into deception. We must stay in the Word of God so that we are not deceived by doctrines of demons.

We as believers have been given the Helper, the Holy Spirit, to rightly discern what is of God and what is not. Do not follow your goosebumps or a minister’s charisma. Do not follow prophetic words off a cliff. If it does not testify of Jesus Christ; it is rubbish.

Measure corporate messages you hear against Scripture in the proper context so that you are not being taught things for shameful gain. Give as you would purpose in your heart to give, as we are instructed in the Word, and do not be manipulated to give.

Pastors, do not sacrifice godly doctrine for a well-known guest speaker with questionable doctrine. Test everything and hold fast to what is good (1 Thess. 5:21). This is biblical.

When a wolf in sheep's clothing is tested and defleeced, the fangs and claws will come out, but sheep, you need not be afraid. You belong to the Good Shepherd. Hear His voice and follow His lead. His Word is truth. {eoa}

Dawn Hill is a blogger, a disciple of Jesus Christ, a wife, mother and a sinner saved by grace who has been reconciled back to God the Father and a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. Her blog is centered on glorifying Jesus Christ and cultivating a deeper relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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