



WOLVES

in

SHEEP'S CLOTHING

**How to Recognize and
Avoid False Prophets**

BY JOEL HORST

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
The Most Dangerous Wolves	4
Recognizing the Wolves	9
Characteristics of a False Teacher.....	15
Beware of the Zombies	24
Exercising Spiritual Discernment	28
Don't Be Afraid of Wolves.....	30
Beware	32

Introduction

Jesus warned His apostles:

Behold, I send you out as sheep among wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. (Matthew 10:16)

A sheep is a rather helpless creature. It can't kill a wolf, or fight it off singlehandedly. Its primary defenses are to gather into a flock with other sheep or to flee from the predator.

Wolves are dangerous. A wolf can kill a healthy sheep; tear it to pieces. We have to be alert, as Jesus warned us, not complacent and ignorant.

Few people, however, really address the problem of wolves. When they do, it's usually Protestant fingers pointed at Catholics. Or Jehovah's Witnesses. Or Wiccans. Or rock stars.

And if they address wolves within the church, it turns into a partisan attack, or name-calling, or blowing a minor problem far out of proportion. Too often, people are labeled wolves when they aren't. Meanwhile, true wolves are ignored and allowed to continue their dirty work.

Is that what it means to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves? I don't think so. We *have* to take the problem seriously, and recognize wolves when they appear. At the same time, we must not demonize brothers and sisters in Christ who are *not* wolves.

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

We also have to remember that we are supposed to be on the offense, fighting the battles of our King, Jesus Christ. There are a lot of people who need to be saved, and we have to reach them, not label them all as wolves and ignore them.

The purpose of this book is to help you learn what sort of wolves to look for, the dangers of these wolves, and how to identify them so you can avoid them.

You will notice that I tend to focus on wolves within the more conservative spectrum of the church. That is where my background and experience are. (I no longer, however, identify as conservative.) To be honest, there are wolves throughout the church—liberal, conservative, and everything in between. Please take what I say as general principles, not as hard-and-fast rules, and see how they apply to your own situation.

Let's get started.

The Most Dangerous Wolves

I was homeschooled for my entire school life. Throughout the homeschool movement, there seemed to be many people teaching us to be very careful about “wolves”. Not that the word “wolves” came up very often, but the teaching was still there: *Beware of anyone who doesn't have our standards. Beware of the world. Don't let your children become defiled. Hunker in the bunker.*

Who *should* we be concerned about? What kind of wolves are most dangerous? Who is most likely to destroy us spiritually?

Jesus told us what kind of wolves to look out for:

*Beware of **false prophets**, who come to you in **sheep's clothing**, but inwardly are ravening **wolves**. (Matthew 7:15)*

When a wolf shows up with no disguise, the sheep immediately recognize it as a wolf and run. It can't trick them into thinking that it's there peaceably, or that it's a friend.

But when the wolf is disguised and looks like a sheep, it can sneak into the midst of the flock, become a trusted friend, and slyly attack when it works best.

Ignoring Wolves

Unfortunately, today, many people tell us not to identify wolves. People who call out someone as a wolf are told not to judge the

other person—he or she is born again, washed in the blood of Jesus, and a brother or sister in Christ. We must overlook the signs that they are not true believers.

Granted, it's not a good idea to call everybody who disagrees with you a wolf. But when you see someone who claims to be Christian (follower of Jesus) but doesn't walk like a Christian, it's time to beware.

As sheep, we are not big, fearsome animals like bears or lions. In and of ourselves, we do not have the ability to overcome a wolf. Therefore, we must be wise, realize that there *will* be wolves among us, and look out for them.

Who Are These Wolves?

As I mentioned earlier, when Jesus sent His apostles out to preach, He warned them:

Behold, I send you out as sheep among wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. (Matthew 10:16)

It's significant to look at *who* these wolves were:

*Jesus sent these twelve out, and commanded them, saying, "**Don't go among the Gentiles, and don't enter into any city of the Samaritans. Rather, go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**" (Matthew 10:5-6)*

These wolves that Jesus was warning his apostles about were not among the Gentiles. They were among the Jews! They were people such as the Pharisees who claimed to be following God but were, in reality, children of the devil.

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

God warns us that Satan's workers may appear to be righteous, and teachers of righteousness:

*For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an **angel of light**. Therefore it is no great thing if **his ministers** also be transformed as the **ministers of righteousness**; whose end shall be according to their **works**. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)*

This is very important to realize. Satan's workers do not necessarily appear evil. On the contrary, at least some of Satan's workers will appear to be ministers of righteousness. This "righteousness" is part of their sheep disguise.

Do not think that somehow a wolf will overcome you and kill you, and there will be nothing you or God can do about it. Jesus has promised us that **no one** can pluck us out of His Father's hand (John 10:28-29). Jesus is the Good Shepherd Who gives His life for the sheep.

However, the Good Shepherd has warned us to beware of hidden wolves, and the consequences of being overcome by a wolf are severe. And it is something that we must take personal responsibility to look out for. Otherwise, if Jesus automatically kept all wolves from attacking us, He would not have needed to warn us to beware of wolves.

To ignore the signs of a wolf is a perilous choice.

False teaching ALWAYS has detrimental consequences

I used to think that it was better to “over-obey” than “under-obey”. In other words, I thought that ignoring and disobeying God’s commands would result in negative effects and punishment from God, but that requiring more than God commanded would only result in reduced pleasure or missing out on something that God would have allowed us to enjoy.

The truth, though, is that God’s words are truth, and anything else is more or less false. God warned the Israelites:

*You shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God has commanded you. You shall not turn away to the **right** hand or to the **left**. (Deuteronomy 5:32)*

“Over-obedience” can easily be disobedience, especially when we hold others to our standards. It causes people to follow man instead of following God.

We see this in the lives of the Pharisees. They were hard-hearted, uncompassionate haters of God. Yet, they were also very zealous for the Law of Moses. They wanted to make sure that everyone obeyed the Law, so they instituted extra commands to ensure that no one transgressed God’s commandments.

And it was because of those extra commands that they condemned Jesus and rejected their Messiah, because Jesus refused to obey their man-made rules. So because He didn’t obey their rules, they said He was a sinful person.

I have seen the same sort of things play out in my own life:

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

- Courtship rules that ruin healthy guy-girl relationships
- Modesty rules that shame women's bodies and load them down with guilt
- "Moral purity" rules that result in people committing the very sins that these rules were supposed to prevent
- Parenting rules that result in adult bodies with childish minds

In many cases, no one would have seen the consequences ahead of time. The rules looked like good ideas, but they were very detrimental.

The consequences of a particular false teaching will vary, based on the teaching. Some false teachings will not cause much damage. Some will cause great damage. And the worst ones may look the most innocent. Remember the sheep's clothing on the wolf?

To summarize, all false teachings, because they are false, have consequences. We need to follow the truth, not something that looks like truth but isn't.

Jesus is **the** truth, and when we turn from the truth, we turn from Jesus.

Recognizing the Wolves

Jesus said:

*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but **inwardly** they are ravening wolves.*

(Matthew 7:15)

Many times, our impression of a “wolf in sheep’s clothing” is something like the picture on the right. We expect to be able to identify the wolf by something that “just doesn’t quite line



up” or “just doesn’t look right”. But it doesn’t work that way. Jesus said, “...**inwardly** they are ravening wolves”. In other words, the false prophet is a wolf on the inside, not the outside.

What should we look for?

Jesus told us how to identify false teachers in the very next verses:

By their fruits you will know them. Do you gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree produces good fruit; but the corrupt tree produces evil fruit. A good tree

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

can't produce evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree produce good fruit. Every tree that doesn't grow good fruit is cut down, and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. (Matthew 7:16-20)

Jesus tells us to look, not at the tree, but what it produces. In other words, look at the results of the teacher's teaching, and look at their own life. Are they Godly people who are truly following Jesus, or are they ministers of Satan who are pretending to be ministers of righteousness?

Jesus is using two analogies in this passage: wolves in sheep's clothing, and fruit trees. It's important to remember that we need to find the point that He is making and not merely make extrapolations from the analogies. Those extrapolations may or may not be accurate.

So here are Jesus' points:

1. Beware of false prophets.
2. False prophets conceal their true nature. They appear to be true Christians, but on the inside, they are the Devil's agents.
3. We need to look at their fruits. Are they acting in the way that God has said that His children will behave?
4. A false prophet cannot follow God and fully obey Him. He will not bring forth truly good fruit in his life.
5. A Godly person will not live in sin.
6. Therefore, when we find a teacher who appears to be Godly, yet is disobedient to God and/or exhibits signs of hypocrisy, we need to beware. He could simply be de-

ceived and ignorant of the truth, but there is a good possibility that he is a false prophet.

A false prophet is rotten to the core

Here is an extremely important point to remember: *a false prophet's problems are internal, not external.* As Jesus said:

*"Either make the **tree good**, and its **fruit good**, or make the **tree corrupt**, and its **fruit corrupt**; for **the tree is known by its fruit**. You offspring of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. The **good man** out of his good treasure brings out **good things**, and the **evil man** out of his evil treasure brings out **evil things**." (Matthew 12:33-35)*

The bad fruit of a false prophet only reveals that he is a false prophet; it does not *make* him a false prophet. This may seem like splitting hairs, but it makes all the difference in the world when we go to correct the problem. It's not a matter of getting the false prophet to "clean up his act" and do the right thing. He needs to be changed on the inside so that he brings forth good fruit.

If we try to help the false prophet "do better" and stop sinning without correcting the internal problem, we are actually helping him to be a better "wolf in sheep's clothing". His sin is not the biggest problem. The sin is only revealing that this person is not a Godly person. The real problem is that he is following Satan instead of God. The real problem is that he needs to be changed on the inside.

But he has good fruit!

One thing to remember is that *good works do not validate a teacher*. Immediately after warning us about wolves in sheep's clothing, and telling us that we will know them by their fruits, Jesus added:

*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will tell me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we **prophecy** in your name, in your name **cast out demons**, and in your name do **many mighty works**?' Then I will tell them, '**I never knew you**. Depart from me, you who work iniquity.'* (Matthew 7:21-23)

I believe that this passage helps us to understand how to evaluate fruit. These people prophesied, cast out demons, and did **many** mighty works—all in the name of Jesus! They even called Him Lord. They looked so good that *they even fooled themselves*.

But Jesus says that He *never* knew them. *Never*. They were never filled with the Holy Spirit and given the power of Jesus. And yet they performed many wonderful deeds.

So what is good fruit? Jesus gives us some indicators. The righteous people do the will of God (Matt. 7:21). They hear what Jesus says and **do it**:

*"Everyone therefore who **hears** these words of mine, and **does** them, I will liken him to a wise man, who built his house on a rock. The rain came down, the floods came, and the winds blew, and*

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

beat on that house; and it didn't fall, for it was founded on the rock.

*"Everyone who **hears** these words of mine, and **doesn't do** them will be like a foolish man, who built his house on the sand. The rain came down, the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat on that house; and it fell—and great was its fall." (Matthew 7:24-27)*

Faith, if it doesn't have works, is dead (James 2:17, 26). I want to emphasize something here: a true believer does the right thing *because he or she is a true believer*. I used to believe that doing God's will and obeying Jesus made you a true believer. But we cannot make ourselves righteous in our own strength. Salvation can only come by the power of God. If we have been born again, the Holy Spirit works within us to empower us to do what is right. This results in us *producing good fruit*—the fruit of the Spirit.

And that's exactly what Jesus teaches in Matthew 7. A good tree makes good fruit because it's a good tree. An evil tree makes evil fruit because it's an evil tree.

Notice that Jesus didn't say, "I knew you, but you disobeyed me." No, He said, "I *never* knew you." They were never God's children, so they didn't produce the Godly fruit of obedience because they didn't have God's grace to do so.

It's important to remember that the "sheep's clothing" that the wolf disguises himself with *is* "good works" or at least what appear to be good works. If he didn't do anything good, everybody would recognize him as a wolf.

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

However, a wolf's "good fruit" may not be as good as it looks. Did you ever bite into a beautiful apple, only to find that it tasted bitter? In the same way, there are many teachings that sound very good, very spiritual, and very Godly on the surface. They may even produce good results in the short term. But over the long term, these teachings can cause untold pain in the lives of those who follow them.

Characteristics of a False Teacher

I would like to share with you what God has taught me about the signs of a false teacher. I have learned these things both through studying the Bible and by seeing them through experience.

This is not an exhaustive list, and there are more things that could be added. If you have more to contribute, please share them with me!

1. Godly-sounding teachings that make the teacher look good

For example, saying things like:

- “If you think about something other than God, more than you think about God, that thing has become your idol.”
- “Never miss an opportunity to witness.”
- “When the world sees you, it should immediately know that you are a Christian.”

Many of these things sound very spiritual, but they're not taught by God. They can simply be guilt trips. You may have no way of knowing whether the teacher actually implements them in his or her own life, but it sure makes the teacher look spiritual.

2. Emphasizing external “spiritual disciplines” instead of internal spirituality

This can go along with the previous point. Some examples:

- Lots of prayer (may include recommendations for spending an hour per day in prayer, for example)
- Fasting
- Bible reading
- Scripture memorization
- Bible study
- Giving/tithing

All these things sound really spiritual and look like ways to get closer to God. And, in fact, if the Holy Spirit is within you and working through these things, they *can* help to draw you closer to God.

However, they can also be nothing more than a façade that makes a person appear to be spiritual when he or she is not. Spiritual disciplines are not magic formulas that automatically make people spiritual. As Jesus said, true spiritual fruit comes from a Godly life within, not by hanging “Godly fruit” on a tree.

In fact, anyone, including false teachers, can do the things on the list above. They do not require the Holy Spirit’s power in order to perform them. After all, there are some atheists who know the Bible better than some Christians. And you can fast without the power of the Holy Spirit—it’s called a hunger strike.

3. Telling you about their spiritual disciplines

Jesus tells us:

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

“Be careful that you don’t do your charitable giving before men, to be seen by them, or else you have no reward from your Father who is in heaven...

“When you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men...

“Moreover when you fast, don’t be like the hypocrites, with sad faces. For they disfigure their faces, that they may be seen by men to be fasting. Most certainly I tell you, they have received their reward.”

(Matthew 6:1-17)

Jesus has told us that we should not advertise our spiritual disciplines and charitable deeds to others. Yet, many people do just that: they tell everybody that they are (or have been) fasting or praying, or tell others how much money they have given to worthy causes. Interestingly enough, many people will regard this as a sign of spirituality and Godliness.

The false teacher who caused the most damage in my life was a man named Bill Gothard. He led the homeschooling organization that I grew up in, and he had a great deal of influence on my parents. Years later, we found out that he was a hypocrite and a fraud who had been promising results from his homeschool program that he was not able to fulfill, while engaging in inappropriate sexual behaviors with young women on his staff. His teachings have caused great harm and damage to many individuals and many family relationships.

One of the early warning signs was that he behaved as a hypocrite. Every January, he would spend a month at his retreat center in Minnesota, fasting and praying. We all knew about this because he told us. He also told us about how he got up at 4:00 AM each day and “spent time with God”. (We now know that he also was spending time with teenage girls in the very early morning, but that’s another matter.) Unfortunately, we took this as a sign of his spirituality, instead of a warning sign that he could be a hypocrite.

4. Teaching rules and standards that sound “spiritual” but are really just self-improvement

This can also go along with the last two points, but I want to bring out a specific aspect. False teachers will make up rules of men that sound very spiritual, but are not commanded by God. As God says:

*If you died with Christ from the elements of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to ordinances, “Don’t handle, nor taste, nor touch” (all of which perish with use), according to the **precepts and doctrines of men**? Which things indeed appear like **wisdom** in self-imposed worship, and humility, and severity to the body; **but aren’t of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.** (Colossians 2:20-23)*

Note that last verse. These rules and standards appear to be wise, humble, and self-denying, but they don’t actually help us to be more Godly.

For example, Billy Graham made a rule for himself that he would not be alone in a room with a woman other than his wife. Some people have held up this rule as a model for other men. However, it does not actually prevent a man from lusting after women. Nor does it prevent adultery.

In fact, an adulterous man can use the “Billy Graham Rule” as a means to hide adulterous behavior. He can tell everyone that he will not be in a room alone with a woman other than his wife, while secretly engaging in adultery. Because he publicly holds a “high standard” for himself, people think he is a pure-hearted man who would not commit adultery.

The tricky part is that these rules can look like they are from God. Or, like the “Billy Graham Rule”, they may sound so good that no one wants to speak against them, lest others think they are defending ungodly behavior. These rules may be based on God’s commands (Old or New Testament), but upon closer examination, they turn out to be man-made.

5. Requiring obedience to the Old Testament Law

The Law of Moses is, on one hand, a spiritual law.

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am fleshly, sold under sin. (Romans 7:14)

However, God tells us that when we try to keep it *after* we become Christians, we are attempting to gain perfection through the flesh.

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

I just want to learn this from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now completed in the flesh? (Galatians 3:2-3)

A false prophet is not walking in the Spirit. If he was, he wouldn't be a false prophet, but a follower of Christ. Therefore, he will cherry-pick commands from the Old Testament and tell you that you should follow them. This is very wrong. It indicates that he is walking in the flesh instead of in the Spirit.

In Galatians 4, God shows us that the Law brings bondage to those who are under it. Then He tells us:

Stand firm therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and don't be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. (Galatians 5:1)

In addition, Paul tells us:

*Therefore, my brothers, you also were made **dead to the law** through the body of Christ, **that you would be joined to another**, to him who was raised from the dead, that we might produce fruit to God. (Romans 7:4)*

Just as a wife is free to marry someone else after her husband dies, so we too are dead to the Law of Moses through the death of Jesus. The Law has no more hold, no more control, no more reign over us.

There is much more that I could write about this subject, but it is beyond the scope of this book. For more on the Law of Moses, see

my video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n86_yXolhGM. You can also check out my writings on my blog at <http://www.aradicalforjesus.com/category/law-of-moses/>.

6. Living in sin

When we see bad fruit, it means that the tree is bad. When we see a supposedly Godly person who is living in outright sin, it means that they are not Godly. Period. God tells us:

*Little children, let no one lead you astray. **He who does righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. To this end the Son of God was revealed: that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever is born of God doesn't commit sin, because his seed remains in him; and he can't sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are revealed, and the children of the devil. Whoever doesn't do righteousness is not of God, neither is he who doesn't love his brother. (1 John 3:7-10)***

Both the Greek and the context would indicate that God is saying that those who are born again do not live in sin (not that true Christians will never commit one sin). Jesus came to set us free from sin. Those who are truly born again will hate sin and have no desire to live in it.

This Scripture tells us that those who live in sin are not children of God. Unfortunately, many people believe that you can lie, commit adultery, be a drunkard, etc., and still go to Heaven.

Sorry.

Whether you want to say that the person became a Christian and backslid, or whether you want to say that they never truly became a Christian at all, the bottom line is this: when someone is living in sin, and knows they are living in sin, they are not children of God. They are children of the Devil.

This is a key to detecting wolves. Do not give people a pass because you can't bear to call them unbelievers. It doesn't matter if they're doing "many wonderful works in Jesus' name" (Matthew 7:22). If they are living in sin, they are not the children of God and will not go to Heaven unless they repent.

7. Bad results from their teachings

When you see that the fruit of a teacher's teaching is not good, you know that they are a false teacher. If they try to "disciple" people, and those "disciples" end up living for the Devil, they did not make true disciples of Christ. Something is wrong with their teaching.

It's important to evaluate the overall picture. Don't pick out one or two good results and use them to ignore a whole bunch of bad results. At the same time, don't use one or two cases of bad results to disqualify a whole bunch of good results.

For example, if one teacher's teaching on parenting results in a bunch of wayward young people, don't pick out a few examples of Godly young people whose parents followed that teaching and say that everyone else is an exception. Conversely, if most of the young people are turning out to be Godly, zealous adults, but a few families end up with wayward children, it may be a problem

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

with those specific parents or children, and not a result of following that teaching.



A “wolf in sheep’s clothing” is a wolf on the inside, not the outside. Therefore, it looks like an innocent sheep.

Also, not all that looks good *is* good. I speak from personal experience. I looked, to some people, like a very Godly, wise, committed Christian at age 20. I know because they told me so. Under the surface, though, I was not as good as they thought I was. I had a lot of problems, and I wasn’t nearly as wise as they thought. Had it not been for the grace of God, I don’t know where I might be today.

To put it more bluntly, if it wasn’t for God’s work in my life, I would be an atheist.

Beware of the Zombies

One Sunday, I visited a church. As the pastor preached his sermon, I felt as though something was wrong. But I couldn't pinpoint it. For the most part, everything he said was accurate—nothing that I could say was heresy or falsehood. And yet, the pastor seemed to be going on and on without really saying anything.

And then God showed me the answer: the pastor understood the Bible academically, and was preaching a message that was, arguably, Biblically sound, yet he was not guided by God. To put it simply, the pastor knew *about* Jesus, but he didn't *know* Jesus. He had years of Bible knowledge and could put one verse with another to form a sound message. But he didn't really understand the truth that he was preaching about. He was a “zombie preacher”.

As I drove home, I realized that America is filled with zombie Christians and zombie churches, who preach empty messages and sing empty songs, and grieve the heart of the One who they think that they know.

Zombie Christians don't realize that they're dead. Like Lazarus, they have been unwrapped and set free. Unlike Lazarus, they have not been raised to life. Or maybe they have died again, yet haven't been buried. They are walking around, going to church, playing Christian music on the radio, slapping Christian fish symbols on the back of their cars, even going to seminary and getting Doctor of Divinity degrees, but they do not have the life of Christ living within them.

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

Their sermons are more or less Biblically accurate, yet an atheist could preach them, with about the same impact—because the sermon does not require a personal relationship with Christ. It is not the result of walking with Christ and learning from Him, but the result of academic study of the Word. They take the living words of Jesus and turn them into a dead sermon.

Paul explained that, because we are spiritual people, our teaching should come from the Holy Spirit:

*But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that were freely given to us by God. **Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual things.** (1 Corinthians 2:12-13)*

God wants us to teach by His Spirit, in the words that He teaches us to say. He does not want us to use human wisdom to teach others. That is fleshly and does not profit. As Jesus said:

*It is the spirit who gives life. **The flesh profits nothing.** The words that I speak to you are spirit, and are life. (John 6:63)*

An academic sermon is a fleshly, carnal sermon. It comes not from the spirit, but from the flesh. It is based on the fleshly wisdom of men instead of the spiritual wisdom of God. The words of the flesh do not profit us. The spiritual words of Jesus give life. Therefore, if we want to speak life-giving words to others, they must be the words of Jesus, not our own.

Now the natural man doesn't receive the things of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to him, and he can't know them, because they

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual discerns all things, and he himself is judged by no one. (1 Corinthians 2:14-15)

Zombie preachers and teachers have told us that the only way to judge a message is academically. Don't go by feelings or impressions. If you can't find anything wrong with the message academically, then there's nothing wrong with it.

However, God says that the things of His Spirit are spiritually discerned. We have to be guided by the Holy Spirit in our judgment of a message. A spiritual man discerns spiritually whether or not a message is coming from God.

This next passage further explains why a zombie sermon is not only problematic, but disobedience to God:

Let no one deceive himself. If anyone thinks that he is wise among you in this world, let him become a fool, that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He has taken the wise in their craftiness." And again, "The Lord knows the reasoning of the wise, that it is worthless."

Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come. All are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. (1 Corinthians 3:18-23)

God tells us that this world's wisdom is foolishness with Him, and that a worldly-wise person needs to become a fool so that he may become wise before God. A person can be highly educated, but lack God's wisdom.

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

Is a zombie the same thing as a wolf? Not necessarily. However, both are spiritually dangerous. If your pastor is not filled with the life of Jesus, he is not going to be able to help *you* be filled with Jesus' life.

Exercising Spiritual Discernment

As we just saw in the previous chapter, the Christian life is a spiritual life.

God is a spirit, and the ones worshiping Him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24, Literal Version)

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit and are directed by Him, He will give us warnings in our spirit. Because it is a spiritual warning, we may not be able to vocalize or explain our concerns. We may not even be able to say *what* we are concerned about, just that something seems to be wrong.

Don't ignore these warnings. It could be God warning you about a wolf in sheep's clothing. You may not know enough to recognize the error that the person is teaching, or he or she may not have really taught any error yet.

However, when God says to you, "Be careful", then listen to Him. It doesn't mean that you should immediately write the person off as a wolf in sheep's clothing. But be wary about what you accept of that person's teaching.

At the same time, I want to add a qualifier: in order to exercise good spiritual discernment, you need to be filled with the Holy Spirit, spiritually mature, and able to correctly discern between truth and error. Satan loves to give people guilt trips and false conviction in order to bring them into bondage.

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

I don't want you to become a "squirrel in the middle of the road" who is always unsure of their spiritual judgment. I've been there, I've seen others in that place, and it's no fun. However, I added this qualifier because I have seen too many people who actually felt guilty about doing what was right.

Don't Be Afraid of Wolves

After all that you've read, you may be afraid to hear any more teaching from anyone, for fear that it will come from a wolf. You may be subconsciously looking for wolves behind every bush, so to speak.

Let's be absolutely clear about something: while you need to exercise discernment and beware lest you are deceived, you do *not* need to *fear* false prophets.

The "hunker-in-the-bunker" mentality that I mentioned at the beginning will not help you spiritually. On the contrary, a spirit of fear and suspicion will isolate you and prevent you from learning good things that God wants to teach you, and it will prevent you from reaching those whom God wants to touch through you.

Many people talk and act as though Satan is stronger than God. They see evil spreading, getting worse and worse. They wring their hands and lament. They do their best to separate themselves from those who practice evil. They run to the ballot box and try to vote in leaders who will uphold "moral values", only to be disappointed when those "moral" leaders fall into sin or fail to pass the legislation their supporters wanted.

However, God is stronger than Satan. Satan cannot, for one moment, overrule God. This doesn't mean that nothing bad will happen to you. But God promises:

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose. For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Romans 8:28-29)

I have seen this work out in my own life. I have suffered many consequences from the doctrines of false teachers, doctrines that I imbibed when I was too young to know any better or have enough maturity to see through the lies.

Yet, I also see God's protection and purpose in what I have gone through. I believe that I am actually a better person because of what I have suffered, and I know that God will use it for His glory.

I share the same message with you. *All things work together for good to those who love God.*

In addition, you are not a lone sheep in the wilderness. If you are a child of God, you have a strong Protector and Shepherd looking out for you.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (Psalms 23:4)

Beware of wolves. But don't be afraid of them.

*For God didn't give us a spirit of **fear**, but of **power, love, and self-control**. (2 Timothy 1:7)*

Beware

It's not popular to look for wolves in sheep's clothing, let alone to actually call them out and expose them for who they are. However, God calls us to be bold and strong, to stand firm and to fight. We owe it to our families, our churches, and unbelievers to identify, expose, and separate ourselves from those who will do us harm.

Jesus has told us to beware of false prophets. Don't listen to the people that tell you that you should give others the benefit of the doubt, when there are clear indications that things are not right.

Because the consequences of ignoring a wolf can be deadly.



A dead sheep

Copyright © 2017 by Joel Horst. All Rights Reserved.

You are not only free to re-share this book, you are encouraged to do so. Please share this truth with others so they can also learn from it.

For free copies of this book, please visit
<http://www.aradicalforjesus.com>