

## Wolves in Sheep's Clothing (Part 2)

Jeff Rogers / Lamplighter Bible Study

Matthew 7:15-20

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**Matthew 7:15,** *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”*

Jesus shared with His listeners the narrow way that leads to life and warned them to beware of the broad way that leads to destruction. He now warns those on that narrow path to beware of those who would mislead them.

### **I. The Warning of Jesus (Matthew 7:15) (Part 1)**

### **II. How to Recognize a False Teacher**

- A. There remains a duty to speak the truth and preach true doctrine (Eph 2:19-21; Deut 13:1-5; Titus 2:1)
- B. True teachers will
  - 1. Call us to repent (Matthew 5:3)
  - 2. Live as salt and light (Matt 5:13-16)
  - 3. Recognize our inability to keep God’s law in our power (Matt 5:20)
  - 4. Follow Christ wholeheartedly (Matt 6:19-24)
  - 5. Never knowingly reject Scripture’s clear teaching (Gal 1:8-9; 2 John 9)

### **III. Assessing Teachers and Alertness for Truth.**

#### **A. Fruit Inspection**

- 1. The Inclusio: **Matthew 7:16–20**, *You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. 18 A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.* (The inclusio is a literary device that involves using the same or similar words to emphasize the point of the text. They are bookends to a thought)
  - a) Fruit is reproduced by a tree of its “kind” (Matthew 7:16b)
  - b) The state of the tree is representative of the state of the fruit (Matthew 7:17-18)
    - (1) Healthy trees produce good fruit and cannot produce bad fruit.
    - (2) Diseased trees produce bad fruit and cannot produce good fruit.
  - c) Bad trees are of no value in the vineyard or the orchard (Matthew 7:19)
- 2. The Teacher’s lifestyle matters (**1 Thessalonians 1:5**, *Because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.*) The Fruit Indicates the Health of the Tree.
  - a) Paul’s boldness after persecution (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2)
  - b) Paul’s clarity in words that please God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)
  - c) Paul’s generosity and humility (2 Thessalonians 2:5)
  - d) Paul’s humility (2 Thessalonians 2:6)
  - e) Paul’s gentleness (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8)
  - f) Paul’s work ethic (2 Thessalonians 2:9)
  - g) Paul’s behavior towards others (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12)

#### **B. Discerning Doctrine**

- 1. **1 John 4:1–3**, *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.*
- 2. **1 Timothy 6:3–4**, *If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, 4 he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions,*
- 3. Essential Doctrines

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- a) The Bible is God's Word and His special revelation of Himself to mankind contained in one volume of 66 books, given by the Holy Spirit. It is verbally inspired by God's Spirit, and every word is equally breathed out by God in all parts.
  - b) God – is one in essence (one mind, one will, and one power), eternally existing in three coequal and consubstantial Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
  - c) Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, is the eternal Son of God who was born of a virgin, led a sinless life, died a vicarious death for the sins of all who will believe, was resurrected according to the Scripture and ascended to the Father and is coming again.

**C. Scripture Submission**

- 1. **John 8:47**, *Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.*
- 2. **John 10:16**, *And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.*
- 3. **1 Corinthians 14:37–38**, *If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. 38 If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.*
- 4. 1 John 4:4-6; 1 Cor 2:12; 1 Tim 4:1.

**D. Gospel Test**

- 1. Paul lays out a fourth test based on the Gospel for us.
  - a) **Galatians 1:8–9**, *But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.*
- 2. Paul gives of an overview of Gospel error.
  - a) **Galatians 5:2–3**, *Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. 3 I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.*
- 3. Paul warns about departing from the simplicity of the Gospel.
  - a) **Galatians 5:4**, *You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.*

**IV. The Light for Our Path**

- A. Commit yourself to knowing the Scripture.
  - 1. Daily reading
  - 2. Regular study
  - 3. Standing on the work of past generations
- B. Set high standards for what you listen to, read, and watch.
  - 1. Bible-saturated
  - 2. Spirit dependent
  - 3. By someone who bears authenticity
- C. Ask Four Questions of a Teacher
  - 1. What kind of fruit is he bearing? Good or Bad?
  - 2. What are the underlying doctrines guiding his teaching?
  - 3. Does he demonstrate submission to the authority of Scripture?
  - 4. Does he teach a gospel of grace alone? (Eph 2:8-9)