



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

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May 20, 2012

JUMP START #552

Matt. 7:15,16- “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?”

Warnings-without them life would not be safe. Storm warnings call us to seek shelter. Product warnings remind us to be careful and safe with certain things. Here Jesus gives us warnings for our soul. Not everyone that teaches, teaches truth.

This warning was not new for the people of God. Ever since the Garden of Eden, when Satan twisted what God said, false teachers have been busy at work. All through the O.T. we find warnings and stern judgments against those who are teaching false. The N.T. warns of “false Christs” and “antichrists” and false teachers. Satan is busy trying to confuse and create doubt in the minds of God’s people. God’s word is what makes the difference. It is what defeats Satan. Twisting that message, changing words, redefining words is one of his most intense works.

Jesus tells us that false teachers look like sheep. They look like us. From a distance, looking on a hill of sheep, a person wouldn’t recognize the hidden wolf. Everything looks normal. Everything looks peaceful. It’s not. There are wolves hiding, waiting and wanting to destroy the sheep. They won’t get all the sheep, even though they would love that. But one at a time. The wolves are careful, patient and watching. The innocent sheep graze right beside the wolves. They think the wolves are one of them, but they are not, they are a wolf. They have killed other sheep previously, this is how they get the sheep skin on them. The nature of wolves is different than sheep. Jesus’ point is powerful. You can’t tell which is which by looking. The difference comes in listening. The poisonous fruit of false prophets is error. They are not teaching the truth.

The fruit of wolves is not build up, strengthen and continue on in the word of God. Wolves question what you have always heard. They introduce something new, different, and obviously better. They ignore centuries of solid teaching and evidence from God’s people. They cast it off in one broad sweep, declaring what you have heard is “traditional.” They hold what is “non-traditional.” That expression is the new flavor of the month. Folks swarm to that. They don’t want to be known as traditional. The “non” is presented as better, and more spiritual. If you hold on to the traditional, then you are out of touch, you haven’t been enlightened, and you are simply following the masses. It’s the “non-traditional” folks that know. They are closer to Jesus. Their worship is better and their insights are right.

With that kind of beginning, sheep start to flock around the wolves. The wolves have insight that no one else does about Jesus, church, second coming, salvation, and all kinds of things. A verse here, a verse there, logic sprinkled with a few complaints about traditional way of thinking, and before you know it the sheep have left the shepherd and are standing all alone with a wolf who is ready to devour them. It's happened. Jesus knows that. It continues to happen. The wolf isn't some slick TV preacher that wears bright green suits who looks like a phony. No, he appears to be one of us. Most likely, he's been right with us for a while. Just waiting for the right time.

Jesus said, "You'll know them by their fruits." What they offer is sour. It is not right with what the Bible says. In time, wolves are exposed. Their words are crooked and their deeds are selfish. In time, everyone will know. But before that, how many will be hooked in with them? Before that, how many will be killed by the wolves?

Jesus said "Beware!" Watch out. Be alert. The Lord is trying to protect the sheep. His words help us to be safe. He doesn't tell us what to do with the wolves, but it is pretty obvious. You can't raise healthy sheep with a wolf hanging around. The wolf has to be driven off. The shepherd would destroy the wolf. It will never be safe as long as the wolf is near.

These words make sense to us, until that wolf could be our friend, our family member, one of our leaders. All of a sudden we want the shepherd to be easy with the wolf. We want to tame the wolf. Maybe, we think, if we let him hang around us, he'll start to like us and will change. Dumb thinking! It's exactly what Satan wants. That thinking falls right into his trap. Friend, or no friend, if he leads us away from God's word, and the truth about Jesus, he is dangerous. His innocent ways of teaching and presenting new ideas are a ploy to trap us, trick us and get us. It works. He is a wolf. Wolves and sheep do not mix.

What really makes the wolf so successful is sheep who don't know good fruit from sour fruit. When we don't know what the Bible teaches.....when we are not sharp, error prevails. The death to wolves is folks who stand up and defend the word of God. When they understand that they are not "traditional" but rather, "Biblical," wolves can't accomplish what they want. Satan himself could not overcome the message of God's word when presented to him. Jesus did that in the temptations. Satan fled. He always does. He's a coward.

Know God's word. Study it. Become comfortable with it. Be Biblical. The wolf has no chance against such a person.

Borrowing a title from a movie, far too many today are "Dancing with Wolves," rather than standing guard against them. Wolves are out there. They present ideas through books, sermons, casual conversations, websites, and any other method available. Don't become the next lunch for a wolf, beware and be on guard by standing solid on God's word.

Roger Shouse

