

I. Introduction and review: An abrupt warning.

II. Beware of the wolves! v. 17-18

A. They are destructive. v. 17a Acts 20:29

1. They cause divisions. Jude 1:19 II Ti. 2:23 Ti. 3:9 Ga. 5:20 Acts 15:1-2 I Ti. 6:4-5
2. They lay stumbling blocks. 14:3 Mt. 16:23 23:4-5,13 Luke 17:1-2 Rev. 2:14
3. Sometimes the truth causes division and stumbling. 9:32b-33 Acts 24:5 Ga. 5:11 Mt. 10:35 I Co. 1:23

B. They are false teachers. v. 17b Dt. 13:1f I Tim. 6:3-5

1. While there are issues over which true believers may differ (Romans 14), we must agree on the fundamentals. Gal. 1:6-9 II Ti. 3:16-17
2. False teachers often add to biblical doctrine.
3. Sometimes it is what the false teachers do *not* say which is most destructive.
4. Typically they have an axe to grind: “A harp of one string”. Col. 2:8

C. They are self-indulgent. v. 18a Phil. 3:18-19 Jude 1:12-13,19 II Ti. 3:1-9 II Pe. 2:14 Ezekiel 34

1. They are not servants of Christ, but self-serving slaves to sin. 8:4-5
2. Bad doctrine leads to bad living. Mt. 7:20
3. This could refer to false teachers who practice a libertine lifestyle. Phil. 3:18-19 Mt. 6:24 23:14 II Co. 2:17 I Tim. 6:5 II Ti. 3:6 Jer. 6:13
4. Paul could also be referring to their self-centeredness. III Jo. 1:9 Mt. 23:6-7

D. They are deceptive. v. 18b II Co. 4:2 11:3,13-15 Mt. 7:15

1. They operate like the serpent in the garden of Eden. Gen. 3:1-6 John 8:44
2. Wolves usually appear in sheep’s (or shepherd’s) clothing. Acts 20:25-30
3. They are smooth talkers. Mt. 4:5f II Ti. 3:7
4. They flatter (seduce) their hearers. Jude 16 II Sam. 15:2-6
5. They prey on the vulnerable. Pr. 14:15

III. Fight the wolves v. 17a,c 19

A. Be vigilant. v. 17a Eph. 4:14 5:6 Acts 20:28-31 Titus 1:9

B. Turn away from them. v. 17c Titus 3:9-10

1. The church is not to welcome everyone. II John 1:7-11 Gal. 1:8-9
2. A point comes at which dialogue is no longer profitable. Mt. 7:6 II Jo. 1:7-11
3. False teachers must be disciplined. Titus 3:9-11 I Co. 5:5,9 Jude 1:19 Pr. 26:21
4. Entire churches and denominations have been destroyed, because the cancer of false teachers has been tolerated for the sake of unity.

C. Continue to obey the truth you have received. v. 19a 15:14 1:5 6:16

D. Be discerning. v. 19b 12:9 Mt. 10:16 Pr. 14:15 Eph. 4:14 5:6 I Co. 14:20 I Th. 5:21-22 Jer. 4:22

1. Become experts in wisdom. v. 19b Phil. 4:8-9 Js. 3:13 Col. 3:16
2. You don’t need to study or experience evil to know it is wrong. Phi. 2:15 I Th. 5:22
3. Test everything. Mt. 7:16,20 Acts 17:11 Pr. 14:15

IV. Who are the wolves?

- A. What kinds of wolves preyed on the early church? Rev. 2-3 Col. 2:20f Acts 15:1f Gal. 1:8-9
- B. Many wolves have appeared throughout the history of the church. 3:28 Mark 7:8
- C. Beware of modern-day wolves.
 - 1. The *new perspective* which makes sanctification is part of justification. 5:1 3:28
 - 2. Preterism which claims Christ has already returned. 8:18 II Ti. 2:16-18 Phil. 3:20-21 I Cor. 15:20-33
 - 3. Harold Camping who claims the church age has ended. Mt. 16:18 I Co. 11:26 Eph. 3:20-21
 - 4. So-called evangelicals who deny Christ is the only way to God. 10:17 John 14:6
 - 5. Celebrity “evangelists” who elevate man and dethrone God.
 - 6. False prophets. Jer. 23:16,21-22 14:14 Ezek. 13:2-7 Dt. 13:1-5 18:20-22 I Jo. 4:1-3
 - 7. Deceivers who seek your money with false claims of miraculous power.
 - 8. Have nothing to do with these people!

V. Victory is assured. v. 20a

- A. Our God of peace wages war against Satan and his followers. v. 20a
 - 1. Satan is behind all error and division. Genesis 3
 - 2. God will crush Satan, in fulfillment of His promise. Gen. 3:15 I Co. 15:25 Eph. 1:22 Heb. 2:8
- B. *You* are instruments by which Satan is being conquered. 8:37 Rev. 12:10-11 I Jo. 2:14
- C. Satan (and his followers) will *soon* be crushed. John 12:31 Luke 10:18 Mt. 7:19 I Co. 15:22f,54f II Co. 2:14 Ps. 110:1 Deut. 18:20
 - 1. Satan is already defeated. Col. 2:15 Eph. 1:22 I Jo. 3:8
 - 2. Satan is now being defeated. Mt. 12:29 I Jo. 2:14
 - 3. Satan will suffer final defeat when Jesus returns. Rev. 20:10 II Th. 2:8
 - 4. In what sense is it soon? 13:12 II Pe. 3:8-9 Rev. 1:1 22:6-7,12,20 Luke 18:8

VI. Concluding applications. v. 20b

- A. We are engaged in spiritual warfare. Eph. 6:12
- B. Jesus is the true Teacher, Prophet, Shepherd and King. Dt. 18:15 Jo. 10:15 Eze. 34:23f
- C. The Grace of our Lord Jesus is with us. v. 20b

Discussion Questions

1. What harm is caused by false teachers?
2. What is the character of false teachers?
3. What are the methods of false teachers?
4. What should be done to protect the church from false teachers?
5. What kinds of wolves preyed on the early church?
6. What happened to the church in Rome?
7. What wolves are attacking the church today?
8. What role do we play in the victory over Satan?
9. In what sense is the final victory soon?
10. What allusions to Genesis 3 occur in this passage?