

Wolf In Sheep's Clothing

Matthew 7:15 "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

The above verse speaks of one who looks one way outwardly but inwardly is very different. We know from scripture that Jesus is the Lamb of God. We also know that the bible speaks of a judgement where God's sheep are divided from the goats. Here, a wolf is seeking to appear as a lamb. They have the appearance of being lamb-like if you judge based only on the outward. However, it is the inward motivation that really makes the Lamb "the Lamb". Outward appearances may fool some of God's people, but they never fool God. He looks on the heart.

It is in its innate nature that we truly find the difference between a lamb and a wolf. A wolf uses its power to get what it wants. A lamb has no teeth or claws in order to force getting what it wants. It must depend on the Good Shepherd. But a wolf not only has tools such as teeth and claws but it has the nature that will go after what it wants. The wolf in sheep's clothing will look lamb-like until it does not get its way, then it will resort to wolf methods.

A wolf does not believe it can get what it needs and find security through a Lamb nature. Such means seem absurd to a wolf. It holds to Darwin's theory more than to God's nature – "survival of the fittest." But at the creation of animals on the sixth day, God created lambs. Since Jesus was a lamb slain before the foundation of the world, then the animals that represented God's nature were probably immediately created. We know by fossil records that dinosaurs also existed at some point on this planet. The most fearsome of all dinosaurs was the Tyrannosaurus Rex, a terrible meat-eater that terrorized all other creatures. But with all its power and ability to lord over all other creatures; it is extinct. However, the lamb that was endowed with no ripping teeth, claws, or means of personal self-defense still lives on and thrives.

Money, power, position, and influence with someone higher are just a few of the claws and teeth that modern day wolves must use to force their point, get back at someone or see to it that they get their way. A wolf has no heart to lay down its own life – it would rather a lamb would lay down its life so that the wolf might survive. The wolf, because of its ravenous appetite, cannot patiently wait on the Lord's provision or deliverance; it must manipulate, influence others in its favor, or rashly lash out on its own behalf.

It is not in the day to day affairs that you spot a wolf in sheep's clothing. In convenient times with smooth sailing it has the appearance of all other sheep. But it is during the crisis that the wolf tendencies begin to surface. It is when things are out of its control that we see its fangs appear. A swift bite, a flash of its claws, and the wounded lamb that opposed the wolf scampers off and then all is peaceful again and the wolf can then continue its charade as a sheep.

A common phrase in Texas is "a lone wolf." The phrase brings up a point. A lamb sticks close to the flock. It also follows the shepherd. Since it has no natural defenses it must depend on a God – given shepherd. The lone wolf needs no shepherd and can just as easily put down or down play the need and influence of a shepherd as it can to follow along with the flock. The wolf's guidelines are not of divine origin. It goes along with what suits it best. It appears one way at one moment, but rages on the flock behind the watchful eye of a God-given shepherd. (Acts 20:29).

Another common trait to the wolf is that it eats flesh. It does so in order to feed its own flesh. This can be a clear identifier for those who desire to discern. Sheep always eat only from the pasture of the Good Shepherd while wolves must feed their flesh from time to time by resorting to fleshly escapes. In order to maintain its appearance as a sheep the wolf may restrain itself from ravenous forays in the consumption of flesh, but that is its desired diet so it must do so from time to time. It makes allowances for putting a certain flesh before its eyes, or another kind of flesh into its body. The wolf may even feel more “sheep-like” because it does not just rip loose and devour everything around it and live free as a wolf would. But the wolf is willing to sacrifice its freedom of an on-going wolf lifestyle for the satisfaction of being accepted by the flock. At this point in time, the wolf in sheep’ clothing finds it more satisfying to be among the flock and hear the shepherd’s voice.

Time is the enemy of a wolf in sheep’s clothing. The wolf can only hold back its nature for so long. Yes, all along there have been little outbreaks of wolf temperament, but the wool covering eventually begins to unravel. The wolf in sheep’s clothing’s greatest nightmare is that what is underneath be brought out into the open and all finally label it for what it is. Then the wolf will receive no more kind treatment as what a lamb would receive. People will narrowly look upon them for what they truly are and no longer based on the grand appearance it had previously displayed.

Since the wolf is not a sheep at all, it does not truly like the ways of a lamb, a shepherd, or a flock. These slow paced ways are tolerated for a while, but with time they move from being an irritation and boil up into a critical spirit froth with bitterness and anti-flock sentiment. When this stage is reached in the life of a wolf in sheep’s clothing only one of two things must happen. The first option is that the wolf must find an amiable way of departing the flock or all will erupt into a terrible break. With an amiable departure the wolf may still be able to be accepted by the flock as a sheep while still getting the “relief valve” it so desperately needed. The wolf has no heart for “flock-life”, but it would like to draw off some of the benefits of “flock fellowship.”

The second option is the worst thing that could happen and that is that the wolf be forced to throw off its wool and openly attack the flock and shepherd. While this may be what is natural to it and could bring great personal satisfaction, the consequences could be monumental. The wolf jeopardizes its relation with other specific sheep that it loves and respects. It also threatens its hope for future “flock fellowship”. More importantly, it may affect its own future and relationship with the Good Shepherd Himself. But probably most importantly it will have to face and live with the reality that deep down it was and is a wolf. It may even have to go so far as to face that the issues between the wolf and the flock were not because of intentional actions on their part or bad flock management on the part of the under-shepherd, but because a wolf trying to live within a lamb environment will never work no matter how many adjustments and concessions are made in order to make the wolf fit in. That wolf would not fit in to any agricultural society and would find fault regardless of the specific personalities of sheep or shepherd. This can easily be discovered by the wolf leaving one flock and going to another. After an extended period of time the wolf in sheep’s clothing will be confronted with the same issues. The differences that lay between wolves and sheep are not personal - it is just the way it is. These are hard realities to come to and it is even harder to face them squarely.

Is there any hope for this sad condition of a wolf in sheep’s clothing? Yes there is! God extends hope to all men, in all conditions, and is no respecter of persons. The remedy is the same for all whether ravening wolf or roaring lion; whether leopard or bear. The following verses identify all of these differing negative conditions.

Isaiah 11: 1 “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.”

Isaiah 11:6-10 “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.”

In these verse we find that the wolf will finally dwell with the lamb. It will not be required to put on an outward covering that appears lamb-like while at the same time fighting the frustrations of an inward wolf nature. No, important changes have come. The wolf is allowed to keep its wolf exterior. There is no requirement to “dress up” like the Lamb. The reason for this is because there has come an inward change. Though the outside looks like wolf, the inside is Lamb.

And with the inward change of nature has come outward changes also. There is no more need to rip other sheep's flesh. The wolf no longer feeds on flesh, but on “Lamb food.” *Isaiah 65:25 “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.”* Because its nature and its diet are different, even so the hurting and destroying that was its nature is now gone.

How does such a transformation take place? We find the answer back in Isaiah 11: 1 and 10, *“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.” “And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.”* In verse on Jesus is described first as the “stem of Jesse and a branch” and then in verse ten is described as the “root of Jesse” who shall stand as a standard for the people. It is to THIS One that the outsiders will seek and find a rest that is glorious.

First lets examine the contents of verse one. Before Jesus is described as the root of Jesse, He is described as the Branch. The Father was His Vine. All of the nature, attitudes, and attributes of the Father flowed through Him as a Branch. This may not seem like such a great thing since His nature was divine and He did not need the divine flow of Another. However, Jesus was preparing the way for a method for all men who had no resource in themselves. When Jesus came to the earth, He was the Lamb of God (*John 1:36*) in nature and we were as ravening wolves who had the nature of our father, the devil (*John 8:44, Eph. 2. 2-3*).

A salvation experience alone will not be enough to transform us. We still need the renewing of the mind (*Rom. 12:2*). The key to not bringing forth the fruit of the nature of a wolf but bringing forth out of His divine nature is to become a partaker of it (*1 Peter 1:4*). The method God has established for this to take place is for us to become a branch just as Jesus once was. *John 15:5* says *“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”*

Isaiah 11:1 and 10 shows that when Jesus walked the earth He did so as the Branch plugged into the Father. But in His risen form He is now the Vine and the Root and we are His branches. Think of the Vine as a Lamb and the branches that have been drained of their wolf nature and are

being filled up of His. This is not a salvation experience. This is for one who may truly be saved from hell and the penalty for their sins, but is not yet “saved by His life” (*Rom. 5:10*). They have not been saved from their own wolf ways.

Thank God a wolf does not simply have to resort to shuffling through outward changes to appear like Jesus in nature. The need is not just for a change of appearance but a change of life. A wolf is doomed to remain a wolf unless the Vine be laid hold of in this way. But there are wolves in sheep’s clothing out there who will no longer continue to try to pull the wool over their own eyes and that of others. They long to lay down with the Lamb and dwell with Him. They will fight through cover ups and self – deceptions. They have no more strength to hold up appearances. They are ready to drop all the pretenses, humble themselves, and break before the Good Shepherd and the flock. They are now willing to appear as they are, and take the lowest seat of learning if that seat will lead to Christ being formed in them (*Gal. 4:19*). The sheepskin covering method was not a start at all. They have not yet started. Insanity is doing the same thing over and over but expecting different results. Starting over doesn’t seem so bad when you consider the alternative and end of what remaining as a wolf in sheep’s clothing leads unto.

The Good Shepherd now wants to relate as the Vine and wants us to relate as His branches. What is the hope for a lone wolf? “Christ in you the hope of glory”. That’s right! Not Christ in heaven or Christ watching over you as a Good Shepherd. The only hope for a lone wolf is Christ **in you**, as your life and nature.