
WOLVES
While in the Wilderness

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When Yeshua warned us about wolves in sheep’s clothing, He wasn't describing some imaginary threat or warning us about a danger that would only exist outside the fellowship. He was warning us about people who would come among His own sheep!

And Paul took that warning even further when he told the elders in Ephesus that savage wolves would enter the flock, and that even from among themselves men would arise, speaking perverse things to draw disciples after themselves. (Acts 20:29–30)

Think about what that means. The danger isn't always coming from outside the body. Sometimes it's already sitting among us, fellowshipping with us, teaching among us, and presenting itself as one of us.

And that's exactly why we need to have this discussion

Who are these wolves? What makes someone a wolf? How do they operate? What does Scripture tell us to look for? And perhaps most importantly, is it possible for someone to be functioning as a wolf without even recognizing what they've become?

WOLVES

First, we need to understand that the warning about wolves did not originate with Yeshua or Paul in the New Testament. The foundation for their warnings was already established in the Law and the Prophets, particularly in Ezekiel, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah.

In the Old Testament, wolves were not simply a picture of enemies attacking Israel from the outside. The image was also applied to corrupt leaders already operating among God's own people.

Ezekiel 22:27

"The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured people; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst. Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, nor have they made known the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood, to destroy people, and to get dishonest gain."

Zephaniah 3:3

"Her princes in her midst are roaring lions; Her judges are evening wolves That leave not a bone till morning."

Here the wolves are specifically identified as judges. These were people entrusted with administering justice, yet they were exploiting those they were supposed to protect.

WOLVES for testing

Deuteronomy 13:1-4

*"**If there arises among you** a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'—which you have not known—'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for Yehovah your **Elohim is testing you** to know whether you love Yehovah your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after Yehovah your Elohim and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him."*

arises among you

There is something very curious about these verses. It appears that Yah actually allows false prophets to arise among His people for the purpose of testing them. Think about that. He doesn't prevent the deceiver from entering the congregation, He allows them to be confronted with deception **to see** whether they will remain faithful to Him.

Here's the curious thing….

It says the prophet arises from among them. One of the flock. One of the guys. Perhaps a trusted brother.

Do you think he knew that he was a wolf?

The WOLF Unaware

Does a wolf know he's a wolf? Or is it possible that a man who once walked faithfully with Yehovah gradually becomes a wolf without ever recognizing what he's become?

How does someone get to that point?

I don't believe we should assume that everyone who eventually becomes a wolf began with the intention of deceiving Yah’s people. Consider a possible progression.

A man begins his walk genuinely seeking Yehovah. He studies Scripture, obeys what he understands, and fellowships with other believers. Over time, he encounters a teaching that sounds reasonable but doesn't quite agree with Scripture. Instead of rejecting it, he entertains it. Eventually, he begins interpreting other passages through the lens of that teaching. What began as a questionable interpretation becomes something he is personally convinced is true. Years pass. He teaches these ideas to others. People begin looking to him for answers. And because he has taught these things for so long, questioning them becomes increasingly difficult.

At what point did this man stop allowing Scripture to correct his beliefs and begin using Scripture to defend them?

Proverbs 14:12
There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

His confidence in the matter doesn't change where the path leads.

2 Timothy 4:3–4
For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

The **WOLF** Desires an audience

Acts 20:29–30

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”

perverse - διαστρέφω (diastrephó) “perverted, make crooked, distort"

The wolf is not someone that will teach something completely false. He’s someone who will take what is true and distort it.

Paul doesn’t say these men will speak lies. He says they will speak things that have been twisted away from what is right.

The distorted ruler still looks like a ruler. It has the same metal, the same markings, and the same intended purpose. But something has happened to it. It is no longer straight. And here is the problem: If you use the distorted ruler as your standard, everything you measure with it is affected.

What does this look like?

Matthew 4:6

“And said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of Yah, throw Yourself down. For it is written: “He shall give His angels charge over you,” and, “In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.”

Satan quoted Scripture. He took Scripture and attempted to use it to persuade Yeshua to act contrary to His Father's will.

A teacher can quote Scripture accurately and still use it to teach something Scripture does not support. Unlike Satan, someone within the body can gradually move away from sound doctrine, begin speaking distorted things, and eventually become one of the wolves Paul warned about in Acts 20

Resisting the WOLF

Acts 20:29
“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock”

Don’t confuse your conclusions with Yah’s words

We read a passage, develop an interpretation, and eventually become so convinced of that interpretation that we no longer recognize the difference between Yah’s statement and our explanation of it.

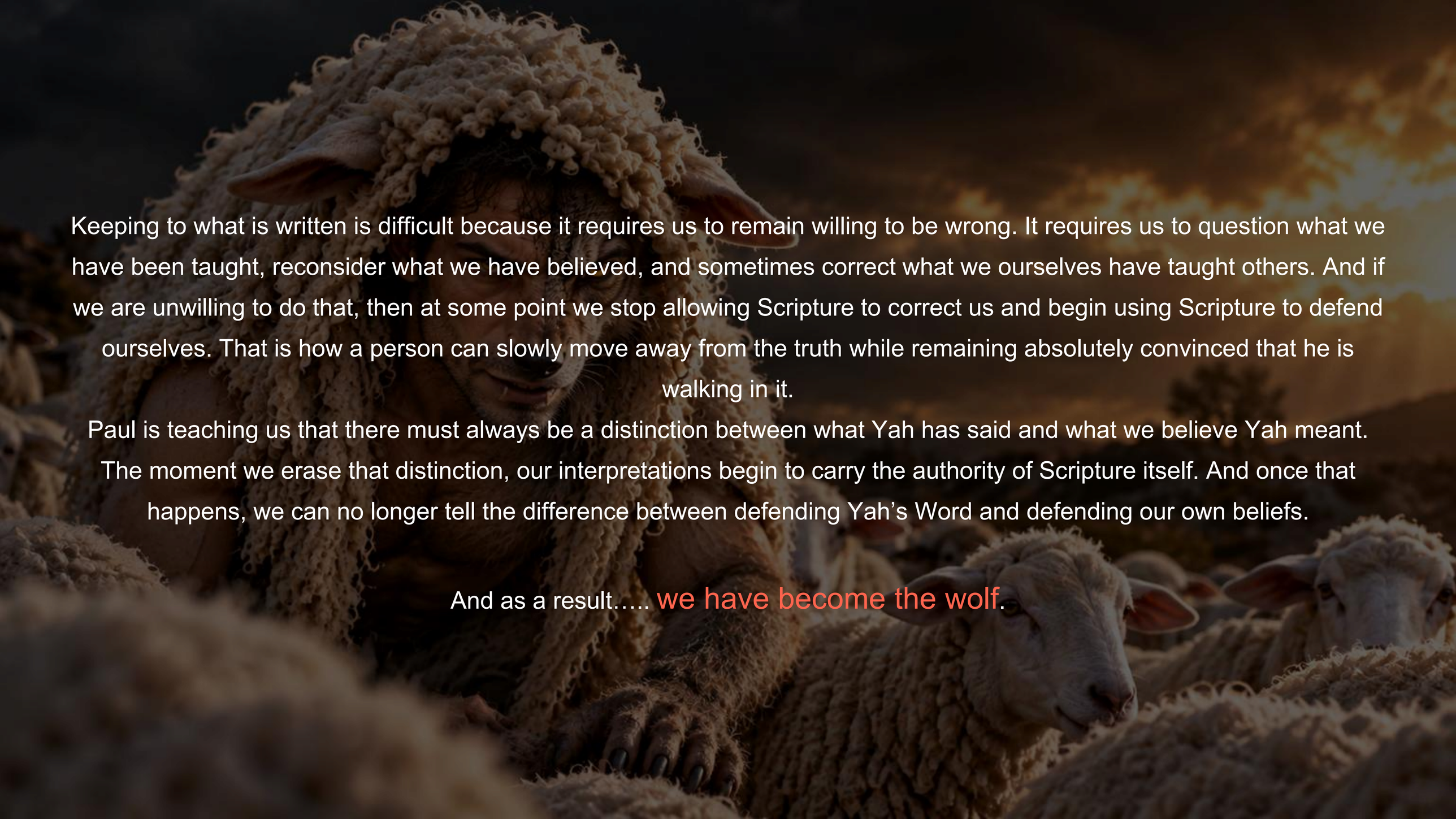
1 Corinthians 4:6:
“Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.”

In context, Paul is addressing pride, divisions, and the tendency to exalt one teacher over another. How should we understand this? Our judgments must be governed by what Yah has revealed, rather than by our own inflated opinions.

This doesn’t mean Scripture prohibits reasoning or drawing conclusions. Yeshua and the apostles regularly reasoned from Scripture.

But there is a difference between drawing a conclusion from what is written and treating that conclusion as though it were itself written.

And, do not allow your opinions about teachers, their authority, or their importance to exceed what Scripture actually establishes. Neither Paul nor Apollos is the standard by which truth should be measured.



Keeping to what is written is difficult because it requires us to remain willing to be wrong. It requires us to question what we have been taught, reconsider what we have believed, and sometimes correct what we ourselves have taught others. And if we are unwilling to do that, then at some point we stop allowing Scripture to correct us and begin using Scripture to defend ourselves. That is how a person can slowly move away from the truth while remaining absolutely convinced that he is walking in it.

Paul is teaching us that there must always be a distinction between what Yah has said and what we believe Yah meant. The moment we erase that distinction, our interpretations begin to carry the authority of Scripture itself. And once that happens, we can no longer tell the difference between defending Yah’s Word and defending our own beliefs.

And as a result….. we have become the wolf.