

## Wise as Serpents

By Ron Graham

*“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves,”* Matthew 10:16. So often today, we only see a section of this verse being adhered to, and that’s to be harmless as doves. Many Christians seemingly dismiss the part about being wise as serpents. Jesus was sending His disciples out into the world, a world full of evil. His commandment still stands, He sends every Christian out into the midst of that same evil world overwhelmingly inhabited by evil, devouring, satanic wolves.

*I send you forth as sheep.* Don’t misunderstand the meaning here. The sheep in this case are those of us who are called by His name, those belonging to the Lord. Jesus is our good shepherd. We are His Church, His flock, and as such He sends all Christians out into the world to be the light of the world. We’re not to hide from the wolves, but we are to witness to them and to spread the good news of Christ to all those who are perishing. Even the most fearsome of wolves need to hear the Gospel.

Many Christians are content with remaining as sheep no matter who becomes their shepherd. On November 4th of this year, many professing Christians exchanged their true Shepherd, who calls them by their name, for a false shepherd, who will only lead them astray. Sheepish Christians will be led to the slaughter as they continue in the mindset of this false shepherd being their new deliverer. If this false shepherd has his way, the Christians in this country will become the apostate Church spoken of in the Book of Revelation.

*In the midst of wolves.* Jesus used wolves as a metaphor referring to cruel, greedy, rapacious, destructive men. Jesus said *“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad,”* Matthew 12:30. Basically those who are the followers of Satan are the wolves in this case. Everyone – that’s everyone—who doesn’t follow Jesus Christ is a follower of Satan. Consider carefully Jesus’ statement above, Satan is utterly and emphatically against Jesus Christ. Satan spreads lies, because he is the father of all lies, and scatters people abroad. Jesus’ statement places everyone who is not with Him in the same category as Satan; Satan is already condemned and so are all who follow him. The difference being Satan can’t change his eternal destiny, but those deceived individuals who follow him can.

Many Christians today are so full of fear that they allow this evil world to dictate to them what they can do for Christ and what they can’t. My brothers and sisters, this should not be so. We are to be the example in a world of evil and we can only be an example if we are actually out in the world proclaiming the message of the Gospel of Christ. We have nothing to fear for *“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world,”* 1John 4:4.

*“Alas, how many are influenced by fear of men! Oh, you cowards, will you be damned out of fear? Will you sooner let your souls perish than show your manhood by telling a poor mortal that you defy his scorn? Dare you not follow the right though all men in the world should call you to do the wrong? Oh, you cowards! You cowards! How you deserve to perish who have not enough soul to call your souls your own, but cower down before the sneers of fools!”*

Charles Spurgeon

Spurgeon certainly pulls no punches. As Luke, a friend my mine from Australia ,so aptly puts it, “Straight down the line, no mucking about”. That was Spurgeon’s way, and why was that? Because that was our Lord’s way also. Jesus did not mince words and it’s not difficult to understand what He means by “Wise as serpents”.

*Wise as serpents.* The serpent was a symbol of cunning and wisdom. Jesus doesn’t want us to be complacent in our walk with Him but to be ever vigilant, prudent, and sensible as we confront this world and all its evils. The world is full of temptations that we Christians must, at all cost, avoid. The serpent was wise and cunning and Jesus expects His sheep to display at the very least those two characteristics, but to use them in a very different way than the serpents and the wolves of this world. We who are filled with His Holy Spirit use those characteristics with love and compassion as we confront the lost souls of this world.

*“O that men were wise enough to see that suffering for Christ is honour, that loss for truth is gain, that the truest dignity rests in wearing the chain upon the arm rather than endure the chain upon the soul.”*

Charles Spurgeon

*Harmless as doves.* The English word harmless is translated from the Greek word “akeraios” and refers to being of a pure mind, without a mixture of evil, free from guile, innocent, as in the case of a dove. Jesus isn’t saying we should be fearful but that we should be innocent as doves as we trust Him and step out in faith because it’s through His name, and through His power we do so.

Many of today’s prominent Christian leaders are admonishing their flocks, not to concern themselves with politics. They say spreading the Gospel is our concern and we can’t be harmless as doves if we are involved in politics. Yes, spreading the Gospel of Christ is number one on our list of priorities, and yet, every Christian in this country should know that if it hadn’t been for the overwhelming intervention of Christians when this nation was first established, there would be no United States of American as we know it today.

Many Christians today aren’t really following Christ’s commandment to preach the Gospel to all creatures and in that sense there’s no need to be wise as serpents, just harmless as doves, or a better description would be worthless as salt that has lost its saltiness.

*Behold I send you forth.* Simply put, God Almighty sends us forth to spread the Gospel of Christ to all who will give an ear. Sadly, many Christians today aren’t willing to spread the Gospel. As a matter of fact, many professing to have the love of Christ in them have no heart for the lost whatsoever. Spurgeon states that suffering for Christ is an honor. Is that our attitude today? Or are we merely going about our business unconcerned with the salvation of those who are so deceived that they follow Satan instead of Christ? What of *their* eternal destination?

*“Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” John 9:12.* You and I once walked as those worldly wolves of today, which is after the lust of the flesh. No longer are we tied to this world in such a way as to follow those who are under Satan’s power. We should not be lusting after personal gain to obtain self-reliance. Being indwelt by the Holy Spirit means

we aren't motivated by the flesh as is the world. "*The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations...*" 2 Peter 2:9. Jesus will supply all the power we need to escape temptation if we will only trust Him.

As Christians we have been called by a Holy calling, and as such we are to be wise as serpents, cunning, and full of the wisdom that comes from God alone. As believers we are to approach each day as a child of the light, confronting evil and calling on the power of the Holy Spirit to bind evil from our midst as we spread the Gospel of Christ to a lost and perishing Christ rejecting world.

Be pure minded, innocent as doves, without a yearning to pursue evil desires, but still as wise as serpents. We're in the world but not of the world, we are different, and that difference is what galls the world, they just can't understand Christian behavior. They're out there, those wolves, just around the next corner waiting to devour us. Thanks be to God we have nothing to fear from them.

Fear not is mentioned hundreds of times in the Bible. Clearly God's wish for our lives is that we shouldn't fear because we've placed our trust and faith in Him. True faith does not fear what we don't know or can't see, true faith and trust is allowing God to take care of all those little things. There's an old adage that was passed around a few years ago and perhaps this is a good time to bring it back. It went something like this, "Don't sweat the little things, and all things are little things to God".

We have entered the last of the last days and Jesus will extract His Church very soon now, of that I'm sure. In the meantime, Christians are to be that light Jesus speaks about set on a hill, and most certainly we're to be active in the governmental processes of our land. "*No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light,*" Luke 11:33.

Jesus promised us that if we be "wise as serpents" we would not be deceived, especially in these end times when He told us there would be so much deception being promoted as truth. Even those individuals you'd love to follow can be deceived. Be careful, be diligent, and be wise as a serpent.

God bless you all,

Ron Graham