

"Wise as Serpents and Harmless as Doves" Mat. 10:16
December 11, 1986

I call your attention this morning to Matthew the 10th chapter and the 16th verse. There we have a very interesting verse, Mat. 10:16. "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves." Which are we to be like--serpents or doves? Isn't it good that it was not given the opposite way? "Be wise as doves and harmless as serpents." The dove while it is taken as a symbol of peacefulness, of ~~ps~~ harmless and fine gentle qualities is also taken ~~x~~ in Scripture as that which has little sense. In Hosea Israel is spoken of as a "silly dove." On the other hand the serpent is a figure in Scripture for that which is harmful, and destructive. Yet here our Lord tells them to be wise as serpents and yet harmless as doves.

This comparison is, I think, duplicated under a different figure in Mat. 5 in the Sermon on the Mount where the Lord said (v.13), "Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its savor wherewithall shall it be salted? It is thendeforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men." This would compare with the dove. Then he said, "Ye are the light of the world, a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid, neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel but on a candlestick and it gives light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father which is in heaven."

These exhortations by our Lord were given to the disciples. In the first one about the serpents and the doves, he was speaking to the group that he was about to send out to represent him. In the beginning of the sermon on the mount it says that he took the disciples apart and spoke ~~to~~ these messages to them. The comparisons are not meant for those who do not belong to Christ. It is very important if we are to get the true ~~comparrisen~~ blessing from these comparisons that we realize and think whether they are for us or not. They are not meant for the world. It is very important if we are to get much out of these comparisons to make sure that we truly belong to Christ. That we have turned from our sins and realized that we are sinners before Him. That we have turned from it and received Christ into our hearts and become His.

It is possible for a person to go to a Christian school, possible for a person to go to a Christian seminary, possible for a person to live with Christians for years and yet never to have received Christ into his heart. So even in a group like this it is very important that we think on that matter. Are you absolutely sure that you belong to Christ? Are you sure that you have recognized your sin? That you have recognized yourself as a guilty sinner deserving nothing good at God's hand and that you have turned to Christ and looked to him for salvation. Anyone can do it, but how easy it is to neglect it. How easy to put it off. This is the first thing if we are to get a blessing from these comparisons, that we make sure we are among them to whom they are given, to whom they are meant, and that we are ~~truly~~ truly turned to Christ and been forgiven of our sins and received him into our lives.

Then, of course, these are not given just to all Christians. These are given to the disciples. They are given to what all Christians should be, but not all are. I trust that everyone, I hope that everyone ~~am~~ here has truly believed in Christ as his Saviour, and been born again into his kingdom. But then I also hope that you have all seen the call of Christ to represent him. That does not necessarily mean that you are going to be a pastor in a church. He calls some to be pastors. Others he calls simply by their lives and by their testimonies to do a work for Christ. We do not know what God's will is for someone else. Peter said to Jesus, What shall this man do? pointing to John. Jesus practically told him it was none of his business. He said, You follow me.. We cannot prescribe