

Bible Reading: Matthew 10:1-31

“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”

The Lord had given His disciples power and elaborate instructions for the work He was sending them to do. Now He addressed them on how to survive in the hostile environment of the work. That is the essence of the message of today: **how do we reach out productively in the world without getting overrun by their hostility?**

SHEEP AMONG WOLVES

“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves...” There are many other lower animals in the food chain, but the Lord uses sheep to describe His followers. Not cows, bulls, rams or even goats but sheep. It means you are already a child of God, a follower of Christ:

- a) **You are sent** (Mat 10:16; **John 20:21**): If you are a believer, you have a mission to fulfil: to save the world, to rescue souls. **You should not live for yourself but for the One who has saved you and is now sending you.** Being sent, you should be confident.
- b) **You are a sheep** (Mat 10:16; **John 10:27-29**): A sheep listens to the Shepherd. Facing a wolf alone, a sheep is defenceless. Ordinarily, one wolf is more than a match for a thousand sheep. But as sheep in Jesus’ fold, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah is your Defence.
- c) **You are among wolves** (**Mat 10:16-23; 1 John 5:19**): **The evangelistic field is not the same as the Church environment. It is hostile out there.** As a sheep, you must be smart among wolves. Wolves are predators to sheep. They can run, they have specialised eyes and they can crush bones with their strong teeth. Sinners have teeth like lions’ teeth. Their tongue can slay. You are not like them; you should not be like them. You must keep close by the Shepherd to avoid the jaws of wolves. How? ...

WISE AS SERPENTS

“... be ye therefore wise as serpents...” Don’t be not confused when you compare this with e.g. the serpent in the garden of Eden or the expression “**ye generation of vipers**”, etc. **He does not ask you to be venomous, dangerous or deceptive as a serpent, to bite and devour, etc. Rather, emulate the wisdom of the serpent, which despite of its bodily constitution, manages to escape being trampled by stronger animals.** The serpent adapts, hides when necessary, is patient, confident and knows when to run. While you go on dutifully with your work, be conscious that the world is evil. **You should not be gullible or a simpleton: 1 Pet 5:8; Neh 6:1-4,10-13; Jer 40:13-41:4 cf. 1 Sam 23:1-3; Pro 14:15; 22:3.** Internet fraud. Phishing. Rapists. Dupes. Harmful people. Lean on the Holy Spirit.

HARMLESS AS DOVES

“...and harmless as doves.” A dove is harmless. This is characteristic of Jesus and should be seen in you (**Heb 7:26; Phi 2:14-16**). Do not be so “wise” as to become a serpent. A servant of Christ does not quarrel or strive, but is gentle unto all (**1 The 5:14,15; 2 Tim 2:23-26; 1 Pet 3:8,9**). Do not render evil for evil or railing for railing. A dove is pure, peaceful and gentle. It is symbolic of peace and harmony, love and devotion, the Holy Spirit and new beginnings. **A dove is never a predator! Let your life reconcile men to God and men to men (Mat 5:6-9).**