

Matthew 10:16-18 The Sheep Sent Among Wolves

Introduction: Jesus at this time was very popular. He did not want His apostles to think that they would always enjoy such popularity. Therefore He gave this warning.

I. The warning.

- A. They were sent out as sheep among wolves. Verse 16
(The apostles were the sheep; the people to whom they were sent were the wolves.)
- B. Sheep are peaceable animals.
(They may butt one another but they do not attack with the intent to draw blood.)
- C. Wolves are vicious animals and rip their victims apart.
- D. The apostles were sent on a peaceable mission (to preach the gospel to Israel), but the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees would soon turn upon them as wolves.

II. The oddity of the situation.

- A. Sheep ordinarily do not go among wolves.
 - 1. They try to stay away from wolves.
 - 2. One wolf in a herd of sheep can do much damage.
- B. But the Lord sent these sheep among a whole pack of wolves.
- C. This indicates that the Lord had a special reason for sending them.
(He loved lost souls and wanted them to hear the gospel.)
- D. It indicates that the Lord intended to help them in a special way while they were among the wolves. (Otherwise, they would all soon be killed by the wolves.)
- E. The Lord did not prevent His sheep from being martyred; but the more the wolves killed the sheep, the greater the number of sheep became.

III. A special word of instruction.

- A. Jesus instructed “Be as wise as serpents.”
 - 1. The serpent in scripture is noted for worldly wisdom. Genesis 3:1
 - 2. He is wise enough not to provoke a fight.
(So the sheep should be wise enough not to attack wolves.)
 - 3. He is wise enough to flee when attacked. (So should the Christians.)
 - 4. He is wise enough to stalk his victim. (So should the Christian get close to his prospect.)
- B. Jesus instructed, “Be harmless as doves.”
 - 1. The word translated “harmless” means “simple.”
 - 2. The idea of simplicity here is to use no trickery, no deceit, be honest in all our dealings, no double dealing.
- C. Jesus said, “Beware of men.” Verses 17-18
 - 1. The Jews would bring them before their councils and scourge them in the synagogues.
(Religious persecution.)
 - 2. The Gentiles would bring them before governors and kings.
(Civil and governmental persecution.)
 - 3. The persecution would not begin until after the crucifixion of Jesus; the Jews would persecute until 70 A.D.; the Gentiles thereafter.
(The Dark Ages abound in Gentile persecution of the Christians.)

IV. Some valuable lessons.

- A. God really loves lost souls and wants them to be saved.
 - 1. He loved them enough to send Jesus to the cross. (Certain death.)
 - 2. He loved them enough to send the apostles to preach to them. (Possible death.)
- B. Living for Jesus in this wicked world is not going to be a picnic.
 - 1. The world will not love you because you are a Christian.
 - 2. If anything the world will despise you because you are a Christian.
- C. If you would be true to Christ you will present the gospel and Bible truth without compromise, in spite of persecution.
- D. If you are wise you will present the gospel and Bible truth in the least offensive way.
(Do not attack.)

Conclusion:

- 1. God loves you and wants you who are lost to be saved.
- 2. God wants every saved person to serve him.

Preached at Pleasant Hill