

Elder Bobby Willis



### **Wise as Serpents - Harmless as Doves**

There have been times in the history of the church when God's ministers were to be as the Apostles were instructed to be in Matthew 10:16, **“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”** Please notice that the Apostles were not instructed to take on every characteristic of serpents, nor were they to take on every aspect of doves. The two characteristics mentioned were **“wise”** and **“harmless.”** A serpent knows when to choose its battles and when not to.

There are times when the Apostles were to stand (be bold) and defend the truth with all the wisdom that God had given them, and yet there are those times when it will not profit the cause of Christ to badger with those who are filled with **“profane and vain babblings”**, but rather we are instructed to **“shun”** them (II Timothy 2:16).

To be **“harmless as doves”** is to make sure that our actions and words do not harm or bring reproach on the cause of Christ. In Acts 4:13 it speaks of two of the apostles being bold, **“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”** The secret here is that **“they had been with Jesus.”** If the apostles, or even today's ministers and defenders of the faith, are to be bold as Peter and John, then they must be **“wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”** There are certainly battles which must be fought against untruths, and yet we must have the wisdom to know when it is a battle that needs to be left in the Lord's hands. There was a time when Paul and Barnabas **“waxed bold”** and then said, **“It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles”** (Acts 13:46).

The Apostle Paul spoke of the combination of wisdom and harmlessness when he wrote unto the Church at Corinth, **“Now I Paul myself beseech you by the**

**meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:...**" (II Corinthians 10:1). To be bold is to be **"wise as serpents"** and to speak with meekness and with gentleness as Christ did is to be **"harmless as doves."**

Realizing that Christ was sending the Apostles out into the world of the Jews at the time, is to understand what they were to encounter as they went forth preaching the gospel. They would be ridiculed, beaten, falsely accused, stoned, and slain. Notice the words of Jesus as He spoke to the very ones who rejected the Apostles and their message of the gospel of Jesus Christ, **"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"** (Matthew 23:37-Luke 13:34).

We pray earnestly that the Children of God who have been born again of the Spirit, and hear the gospel preached or read the written word, will walk with boldness in their pursuit of following Christ, and be **"wise as serpents"** and **"harmless as doves"** rather than being included in the words that Christ spoke of **"ye would not!"** Think About IT!