

## Wise as Serpents!

By Richard Crisco

*Prov 2:1 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, 2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, 3 and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, 4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, 5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. 6 For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.*

*Mt. 10:16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.*

*(NKJV) Mt 10:1 And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. ... 7 "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' 8 "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. ...16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.*

*(NIV) Mt 10:16 I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.*

1. Jesus sends them on a mission to proclaim the Gospel.
2. Warns them of the Danger that will accompany their assignment.
3. Gives them counsel on how to protect themselves from that danger.

Abundantly

Two strange metaphors to combine:

Serpent – represents satan, (our enemy).

We must be aware of the tactics, traps, and tendencies of the enemy – thus gaining an advantage.

*2Co 2:11 lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.*

However, though we become wise to his devices, we must never adopt his ways. We must guard our hearts and maintain a pure motive – the heart of a dove!

Dove – represents the Holy Spirit.

Serpents will guard their head:

*Gen 3:14 So the LORD God said to the serpent: ... 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."*

*Take shelter in the clefts of the rocks. We must be wise, not to pull trouble upon our own heads; wise to keep silence in an evil time, and not to give offence.*

The Serpent will close his ears to the charmer:

*Psa 58:4 Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the deaf cobra that stops its ear, 5 Which will not heed the voice of charmers, Charming ever so skillfully.*

They are sent forth among wolves, therefore must be as wise as serpents, but they are sent forth as sheep, therefore must be harmless as doves.

Divine wisdom is a wisdom mixed with innocence, "harmless as doves."

This union of the dove and the serpent is hard to find.

*Matthew 24:45, "Who then is a wise and faithful servant?"*

Faithful, there is the dove; wise, there is the serpent. It is hard to find both. If one would seek for a faithful man, no doubt, he may find many. If one would seek for a wise man, he may find many. But, if he seeks for one both wise and faithful—it is hard to find. It is possible, though not common.

*Jas 3:13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.*

The Scripture joins these two together, meekness and wisdom, James 3:13. Wisdom, there is the serpent; meekness, there is the dove.

We must have *innocence* with our *wisdom*—else our wisdom is but craftiness.

And we must have *wisdom* with our *innocence*—else our innocence is but weakness.

We must have the innocence of the dove—that we may not harm others; and we must have the wisdom of the serpent—that others may not harm us.

In short, innocence without wisdom is too weak to be safe. Wisdom without innocence is too crafty to be good. When wisdom and innocence appear together, We become more like Jesus.

Jeremiah warns us of the danger of not maintaining a balance between the wisdom of the serpent and the innocence of the dove!

*Jer 4:22 "For My people are foolish, they have not known Me. They are silly children, and they have no understanding. They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge."*

They gained the wisdom of serpents, but lost their innocence of the Dove!

Paul warns us, that as we grow in the wisdom of the Word it requires that we grow in the Spirit of Christ as well!

*2Cor 3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, 6 who also made us sufficient as ministers*

*of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

So it is clear that when Jesus says he is sending us as sheep in the midst of wolves, he means that we will be treated the way wolves treat sheep.

Be vulnerability but not stupidity, is the point of calling us sheep going among wolves. Be like snakes, not sheep, when it comes to being smart. Snakes are quick to get out of the way. They go under rock.

*James 3:13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.*

True wisdom consists of these several things: -

1. It is pure, without mixture: it is free from iniquity and defilements, but diligent of holiness both in heart and life.

2. It is peaceable. Peace follows purity, and depends upon it. Those who are truly wise do what they can to preserve peace.

3. It is gentle; not being rude and overbearing in conversation, nor harsh and cruel in temper.

4. It is willing to yield either to what is good or from what is evil. There is an easiness to yield ourselves to the persuasions of God's word.

5. Heavenly wisdom is full of mercy and good fruits, inwardly inclined to everything that is kind and good.

6. Heavenly wisdom is without partiality. Free from judging.

7. That wisdom which is from above is without hypocrisy. It has no disguises nor deceits, but it is sincere and open, steady and uniform, and consistent with itself.

**Message Bible:**

*James 3:13 Do you want to be counted wise, to build a reputation for wisdom? Here's what you do: Live well, live wisely, live humbly. It's the way you live, not the way you talk, that counts. 14 Mean-spirited ambition isn't wisdom. Boasting that you are wise isn't wisdom. Twisting the truth to make yourselves sound wise isn't wisdom. 15 It's the furthest thing from wisdom--it's animal cunning, devilish conniving. 16 Whenever you're trying to look better than others or get the better of others, things fall apart and everyone ends up at the others' throats. 17 Real wisdom, God's wisdom, begins with a holy life and is characterized by getting along with others. It is gentle and reasonable, overflowing with mercy and blessings, not hot one day and cold the next, not two-faced. 18 You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results only if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor.*

*Rom 16:19 Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.*

## *Offering:*

***Prov 25:14 Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of gifts he does not give.***

A very wealthy man in the community was not known for his generosity to the church. The church was involved in a big financial program so the fundraising committee decided they had to pay him a visit. As they met with him, they said that in view of his considerable resources they were sure that he would like to make a substantial contribution to this program.

"I see," he said. "So you have it all figured out, have you? In the course of your investigation did you discover that I have a widowed mother who has no other means of support but me?"

No, they responded, they did not know that.

"Did you know that I have a sister who was left by a drunken husband with five children and no means to provide for them?"

No, they said, they did not know that either.

"Well, did you know also that I have a brother who is crippled due to an automobile accident and can never work another day to support his wife and family?"

Embarrassingly, they responded, no, they did not know that either.

"Well," he thundered triumphantly, "I've never given any of them a cent, so why should I give anything to you?"

Jesus had another important word to say about wisdom: Wisdom is hearing *and* doing the word of God. Not just hearing.

***Mt 7:24 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 "and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. 26 "Now everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 "and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."***

**Paul Prayed for Wisdom:**

***Eph 1:15 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,***