WISE AS SERPENTS AND INNOCENT AS DOVES

When Jesus summoned the twelve disciples, He sent them out to do several things (Matthew 10:7-8), but He added something interesting several verses later.

Matthew 10:16
> *"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves."*

He didn't say just be wise (shrewd), but wise as serpents! In other words, we are to be aware of the schemes of the devil and his attempts to thwart what God intends for us to do.

2 Corinthians 2:11
> *"in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes."*

These may be personal issues he trips you on or stumbling blocks he may put in your path. He hides and tries to catch you unaware – with prophets that are wolves in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15); with angels of light (2 Corinthians 11:14-15); with schemes of darkness (Ephesians 5:11); with other schemes that even the elect would be deceived.

Matthew 24:24
> *"For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect."*

At the same time we are to be innocent, which does not mean naïve. Being naïve would imply ignorance of what is going on around you, even in a childish fashion. Proverbs warns those who are naïve (Proverbs 1:32; 14:15, 18; 22:3; 27:12).

The Greek word here for innocent means *pure, simple, free from guile, unmixed.* So, we are to be wise and holy, not a carnal Christian and not wise in a worldly way. There is a big difference between being godly and worldly, and between worldly wisdom and the wisdom of God.

1 Corinthians 1:25
> *"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."*

At the same time, we are to be a holy and righteous priesthood (1 Peter 2: 5, 9)

1 Peter 2:9
> *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for {God's} own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;"*