

## John 10:12

**"He who is a hireling, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, beholds the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees, and the wolf snatches them, and scatters *them*.**

I recently received a transcript of a lecture that William J. Bennett gave at the United States Naval Academy in November of 1997. In the lecture Mr. Bennett quoted a Vietnam Veteran, who was a retired colonel. The colonel told Mr. Bennett, "Most of the people in our society are sheep. They are kind, gentle, productive creatures who can only hurt one another by accident." I mean nothing negative by calling them sheep. To me, it is like the pretty, blue robin's egg. Inside it is soft and gooey but someday it will grow into something wonderful. But the egg cannot survive without its hard blue shell. Police officers, soldiers, and other warriors are like that shell, and someday the civilization they protect will grow into something wonderful. For now, though, they need warriors to protect them from the predators. "Then there are the wolves," the old war veteran said, "and the wolves feed on the sheep without mercy." Do you believe there are wolves out there who will feed on the flock without mercy? You better believe it. There are evil men in this world and they are capable of evil deeds. The moment you forget that or pretend it is not so, you become a sheep. There is no safety in denial. "Then there are sheepdogs," he went on, "and I'm a sheepdog. I live to protect the flock and confront the wolf."

To me, there are two types' of leaders in America today, hirelings and sheepdogs! Our government is full of hirelings who are more concerned with 'political correctness' than they are in doing what's best for our nation. The church in America has many leaders who are more concerned with numbers or being popular, than they are with proclaiming the unchanging truth of God's Word! They would never consider taking a stand or being vulnerable, because it might cost them. Clearly the problem far too often is that we have sheep who are leaders. I believe that one of the primary responsibilities that we as leaders are called upon is to help protect the sheep from the wolves. Sheep don't always know that they need the sheepdog, and often they find him a nuisance and a pain in the neck. Yet when those sheep come into a dangerous situation, their eyes are looking everywhere for that old sheepdog to rescue them from certain danger and imminent doom. But if that leader is a hireling, he will run for cover to protect himself, or he will try and find a way to disqualify himself from having to face the responsibility and deal with the danger. One thing I am certain of, sheepdogs are more than willing to lay their lives down for their sheep! They aren't looking to be honored as heroes, or seeking out accolades. They are simply wired to lay their life down to protect the very sheep that perhaps have been their greatest nuisance or pain in their own necks. As long as everything around you is peaceful and quiet, it is very easy to try and even eliminate the role of the sheepdog. Today we have men and women who are sheepdogs in our military, in our police and fire departments, in our government and in our churches. We need to be mindful to daily lift them up in prayer for protection, strength and courage; because you never know when you might need that old sheepdog to help protect, rescue or defend you or your family.