

Series: Acts
Title: Word of His Grace
Scripture: Acts 20: 28-32
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The ministry of the apostle Paul was met at every turn by opposition. Paul had served in tears and many trials because of this opposition. He experienced opposition everywhere he preached. He is leaving Ephesus where he had received much opposition. He knew bonds and afflictions awaited him at Jerusalem. So Paul is again warning the elders at Ephesus that will encounter the same opposition. And he reminds them that it is only the word of God's grace that will profit them.

Romans 8:7: Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

The "things of God" which the natural man will not receive is the truth that Christ is the Power and Wisdom of God to save. Yet, by this word of his grace, Christ Jesus saves his people from our sins: from our righteousness, from our wanderings, from our fleshly desires, from our ignorance, from our way, from our unrighteousness. He saves us from us.

The dignity man thinks he possesses is offended when he hears that complete acceptance with God is not because of who we are or works we have done, but by from beginning to end in another Person more righteous and more holy than any man among us, the Righteous Man, Christ Jesus, the Son of God. The Word of his grace is the Word by whom he creates life giving us access into this grace wherein we stand.

Opposition comes because natural men love a form of godliness, but hate the God of this power. Therefore, Satan does his best work from the pulpit and the pew. So Paul could say with all certainty:

Acts 20: 29: For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Paul preached "turn from yourself to God", but he says the wolves do the opposite:

Acts 20: 30: Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31: Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

Their doctrine is like wind, highly esteemed among men, but it is the "sleight of men, cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." Grievous wolves. Ravenous wolves, not sparing the flock.

Illustration: You get the picture of a wolf crouching, lying in wait, ready to pounce, ready to take away the word of grace.

Micah 7: 2: The good *man* is perished out of the earth: and *there is* none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net.

How can a flock of sheep expect to survive in the midst of such dangerous predators? One way, by the power of God through the word of his grace.

Acts 20: 28: Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood...32: And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

The word build up means "edify", "to grow up" Paul reminded them again in his letter:

Ephesians 4: 15: But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

Proverbs 12:6: The words of the wicked *are* to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.

So back in verse 28, Paul says to the elders:

I. TAKE HEED THEREFORE UNTO YOURSELVES

If God's preacher will feed others he must first be a partaker of the soul-strengthening Bread from heaven.

1 Timothy 4:16: Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

Illustration: Athletes are temperate in all things. They submit themselves to the word of their trainers; they heed their coach's instruction.

I Corinthians 9: 25: Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. 26: I therefore so run, not as uncertainly;

Run

We are to run, not as one who does not know the Way, but as one who knows that Christ put you in the Way, by whom we have access unto the throne of God the Father, by whom we have access into this grace wherein we stand, by whom we are made to stand and other shall be also. Christ who orders your steps. Though you fall, you shall not be utterly cast down, for the LORD upholdeth you with his hand. (Psalm 37: 23, 24.)

Fight

We are to fight not as one that beats the air. We are not shadow boxing but we face a real opponent. **“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”**

Put off the carnal weapons and take unto you the whole armor of God.

Having your loins girt about with truth, the breastplate of righteousness, your feet protected and prepared with the gospel of peace. The beautiful feet is the one **that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! (Isaiah 52:7.)**

Take the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. Know your utter insufficiency, praying always in the Spirit, watching with perseverance and supplication for all saints; Keeping your body in subjection to God, to the power of his word of grace, that you may speak as you ought to speak, lest by any means, when you have preached to others you yourselves should become a cast away. **TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES.**

Illustration: Most all of us know--**Jeremiah: 13: 23: Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? *then* may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.**—but do you know the context?

The linen girdle represents the word of truth girt about the loins the of the believer. The LORD commanded Jeremiah to put on a linen girdle, then he commanded him to go hide it by the river Euphrates. Then the Lord commanded Jeremiah to go back and retrieve the linen girdle. This time the girdle was marred and unprofitable for nothing. The LORD gave his word like a linen girdle to the Kings, Judges, Prophets and Priests in Israel and Judah to teach the people. Yet, they hid away the truth from the people and taught men to save themselves. They were drunk in the pride of their own falsehood so the LORD marred them in more drunkenness. The LORD says,

Jeremiah 13: 21: What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee? for thou hast taught them *to be* captains, *and* as chief over thee...25:...*thou* has forgotten me and trusted in falsehood...23: Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? *then* may ye also do good, that are accustomed to [that teach men this] evil. Jeremiah said, 17:...“my soul shall weep in secret places...and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because [by your pride] the LORD’S flock is carried away captive.

Take Heed to Yourselves--Have your loins girt about with truth, the gospel of peace—the word of his grace.

Illustration: Chopping wood.

Ecclesiastes 10:10: If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: but wisdom *is* profitable to direct.

James 3:18: And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

Hebrews 4: 12: For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

II. AND TAKE HEED TO ALL THE FLOCK (V28)

THE CONSTRAINING LOVE OF CHRIST IS IN REMEMBERING WHOSE FLOCK THIS IS and WHY.

This is the church of God. He purchased this flock with his own blood. No man makes himself an overseer but the Holy Ghost makes men overseers. Take heed to ALL the flock—young or old, rich or poor, weak or strong—every believer in this flock is a dying sinner who needs the word of his grace.

The sufficiency is by being upheld by his word of grace. This Word was in the beginning with God, this Word is Christ in whom God blessed his elect with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places before founding the world, according to his purpose.

You who are his sheep, consider how sure this word of his grace is. His covenant is eternal, his blessings spiritual, his love everlasting. Before he made the world

In Christ the Word—he foreloved you. In Christ the Word—he predestinated you to be conformed to the image of his Son, for the sake of his Son, that his Son might have many brethren and be the Firstborn among you. In Christ the Word in eternity—he called you, he named you his name, sons of God. In Christ the Word according to his purpose, the purpose that is unchangeable, that knows no boundaries of time—those things that were not yet so in time were so in the eternal God—he justified you, holy and without blame before him in his Beloved Son. In Christ the Word—according to the good pleasure of his will, having chosen his sheep in Christ, having blessed them with all these spiritual blessing—having everlastingly loved you—before as yet he made a drop of sand he glorified you (Rom 8: 29-30.) He did it by free grace in the Eternal, Everlasting Covenant—in his Son, Christ the Word—the word of his grace.

John 1: 1: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2: The same was in the beginning with God.

Then he made the world in which Christ would accomplish this whole eternal Covenant of Promise.

John 1: 3: All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4: In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

When Adam sinned against God and plunged all the flock into spiritual death—

The Word upheld all things by the word of his power. Heb 1: 3

Mal 3:6: I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

In the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law:

John 1; 14: And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Turn to John 10: This is the **Word of the Word**, the word of his grace:

John 10: 11: I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. 12: But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. 13: The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. 14: I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine. 15: As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep...27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. 29: My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand.

What God did by putting you in Christ in eternity, Christ accomplished in time. The price to purchase the flock was his life—his blood—the wages of sin is death, without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. So when he had fulfilled all that was written of him in the law and the prophets and in the psalms,

God made him to be sin for his flock that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. And when he had by himself purged [all the sins of all his flock he] sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;...He purchased his church with his own blood.

Because he called you in eternity he called you in time, all by his Word of grace. The Word called Paul, “Saul!, Saul why persecutest thou me.” His word of grace built up Paul—it brought him down, made Paul to fear and tremble, and sent him forth with all humility of mind to testify as a witness the Power and Wisdom of the Word.

Paul said to the Ephesians elders, “Now you have seen how I have been with you at all seasons.” Giving no offense in anything that ministry be not blamed, By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, I have held nothing back—with all humility of mind—what is that? **I Corinthians 15: 10: I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me....Galatians 2:20: I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.**

He says to the elders, now as a fellow laborer, I beseech you, see that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. **Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood...with the Word of his grace.**

He told Timothy: **Consider what I say**;...but I am thankful he did not stop there...he said, “**and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.**” (2 Timothy 2: 7) To the Ephsian elders he says in verse 32: **Acts 20: 32: And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up,**

Application

Turn away from this world, from yourself, from your understanding, and cast all your care on Christ. We were begotten in the beginning by the will of God with the word of his grace. We shall be kept by the Word of his grace. Paul says, “God, through the word of his grace is able **to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.**” Watch and wait and remember, dear believer, you have have been **sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.**

AMEN!