

2076 - BE ALERT - Acts 20:29-32

PRELIMS. Paul is addressing Ephn elders at Miletus on his way to Jerusalem. He has told them he will not see them again! He emphasised the importance of looking after **their own souls** before they could *take care for the Church of God* [28]

Again Paul is **prophetic**, he **knows** what is going to happen to **them after** he leaves them! Being an Apostle who had extra-ordinary revelations and experiences and on one occasions being *caught up into paradise!* [2C12:3] he had an **advantage** that not many pastors today have. He was therefore able to say to them *I **know** that after my departure **fierce wolves** will come in among you, **not sparing** the flock* [29] That was must have been very **hard** for **him** to say - as well as for **them** to take!! But Paul was a **realist** and did **not hold back** from his responsibility to **prepare** his flock for the **future!** **Preparing** for something is **believing** it will happen! (Heaven!)

To what was Paul **referring** when he said ‘**fierce wolves** not sparing the flock’? One imagines **physical** abuse – but it **wasn’t!** It was actual **theological heresy!** Which shows the vital **importance** of right doctrine! To be **diverted** from the **truth** is a most serious step. Spiritual injuries are **more** serious than physical injuries – far more serious, because they have **eternal** consequences!

We know it was a spiritual mauling because Paul asked Tim to *remain at Ephesus that you may charge **certain persons** not to teach any **different doctrine**...*Certain person have **wandered away** into vain discussion* [1Tim1:3-6] *The Church continued for at least another 40 yrs after this for in AD90 or so, Jesus spoke to them from heaven and told them to **repent!** And it was the result of **heresy**. Men *speaking twisted things* caused them to turn away from the truth [30]*

It **does** seem that what they were taught and what they **believed** thru those who ‘came in’, **affected** them greatly. It affected how they **lived!** Jesus **had** to tell them in [Rev 2:4] *you have **abandoned** the **love** you had at **first*** [Rev 2:4] **Love** is **big** in the Bible. (Of course we do not mean the ‘Hollywood style’ of love but ‘agape love’). It was love to God, love to Christ that Jesus was referring to – which of course **results**, if genuine, in love to **people** also to the **undeserving!**

Not ‘soppy’ love but **sacrificial self-denying** love! They lost the first, strong, emotional, love that new believers have to Jesus Christ That was why Paul reminded Tim *The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and...sincere faith* [1T1:4]

But there was something else, **much more** difficult for Paul to say. It was that ‘**insiders**’ would do this destructive work as well - *and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things* [30] That can happen – **Carpetbaggers** we used to call them! People joining a group with an **ulterior motive**! Once they ‘get in’, they do their own wicked work! Satan agents who **infiltrate** the church!

You know most **splits** are caused, **not** by ‘outsiders’ coming in, but from a church’s **own members**! Just think of the splits you know about – many started **not** by the outside ‘world’, but from among the church’s members! People become disgruntled. Jealousy/complaints!

Paul told them that the objective of these false teachers was to have **followers!** *to draw away the disciples after them* [30b]. People **love** to be seen as **leaders**. But do you know the main **characteristic** of a **true** leader? It is **not** to have followers it is to spread **truth/goodness!** It is to **love** the ‘Cause’ they preach! They are so **convinced** of its **truthfulness** and **goodness**, they are prepared to **lose/suffer/be rejected/be ridiculed** for it! They **hope** they will get followers – but if they do not, so be it! Loss financial or otherwise, does not matter!

So the fierce wolves, by their heretical teaching achieved what their Master **Satan** planned – to make the Ephs lose their **love!** **Love** is the **main characteristic** of the Xn faith. A **fruit** of the Spirit! Paul **had** to write a whole chapter on love. Paul had to go into the **details** of love! Love is *patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is **not arrogant or rude**. It does not insist on its own way; it is **not irritable or resentful**; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth* [1Cor:13] *the greatest of these is love!*

Paul’s love is further characterised by the **tears** which he shed for them! Paul’s ministry was **not** simply a **declaration of propositional** truth – although it most certainly was that. It was a **heartfelt, emotional appeal!** Eternal destinies were at stake! Thus the **admonish everyone with tears** for 3yrs! Jesus said *As the Father has*

loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love [John 15:9] Paul to Philemon *yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you!*

Why did Paul weep for those in the Church? Because **they** and not the 'world', will have a **far greater damnation** than those who never heard the gospel! Those who hear and **reject**, either immediately or later in life, will have a far sorer punishment than those who never heard the gospel! Listen *How **much worse punishment**, do you think, will be **deserved** by the one who has **spurned** the **Son** of God, and has **profaned** the blood of the **covenant** by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?* [Heb 10:29] **Better for them never** to have **known** the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back [2Pet 2:21 That is why baptised people leaving the church is a very very serious thing! Those **in covenant** with God, who turn away and reject it, will suffer far more!

There is only **one** thing Paul can do apart from pray – that is **warn** them! *Therefore be **alert*** [31] Or **watch**. Jesus said it many times – and to His **disciples**! Be **vigilant**. We are in a **war** and we need to be **aware** of the danger we are in and that we are vulnerable and 'easy prey' for Satan! *what I say unto you I say unto all, **Watch***[Mar 13:37]

Paul now **commends** them to God and to *the word of His grace* [32] Notice, elders are **under** the Word, not over it! The Word **regulates** their lives and **directs** their lives – far less do elders **formulate** the Word. *The **Word** of God is a very **real thing**, but **abstract** thing. That perhaps makes it more **indestructible**. It is '**established** in heaven' *Forever, O Lord, Your Word is firmly **fixed** (settled) in heaven* [Psa 119:89] God's Word can either be **written** or **spoken**. The Bible is God's written Word **canonised**! The Canon is what God has **recorded** to be **forever established** as His **abiding** Word to all mankind in all **ages** and in all **cultures**! God, of course, has **said more** than what is in the Canon! God has **inspired** people to write and speak **accurately** and **powerfully** without it being in the Canon! The Canon is forever/unchangeable! Inspired but not canonical!

What a wonderful description Paul gives the Bible *the Word of His **grace***! That is exactly what the Bible is – it's a marvellous story of **grace** – of **unmerited** favour towards **undeserving** man! *It does

two things: (a) It provides an **inheritance!** People's hearts have taken a **leap** when the lawyer says 'Mr Brown, I am pleased to tell you, you have been left an inheritance'!! An inheritance is having a **right to tangible property/assets!** One can have a **right** to something but **not** take **possession** of it! Esau had a 'right' to his father's inheritance but he sold it! Some people **neglect/despise** their inheritance! Some inheritances, through **delay** - lose their value!

However, God's grace is such that not only have we a right to it, but it is ***kept in heaven for us*** - by God - we are actually **given an inheritance that is *imperishable, undefiled, and unfading*** and the wonderful thing is, it is not kept in the solicitor's files or archives, where it can be lost! Rather it is ***kept in heaven for you who believe*** It is actually **there** – waiting for **you** to arrive in heaven!

Heaven is a far better '**safe**' than any bank or lawyers office, because it is kept *by God's power*. It is **not** kept by **human** power. Despite all the technology of our day, nothing is 100% secure. Remember what they said about the **Titanic** 'This ship will never sink – even God Himself could not sink this ship'! You would have thought your money was safe with **Enron!** But it crashed, so did **Northern Rock!**

But **not only** is your inheritance safe – you **personally** are safe also! If you are one of God's chosen people **you are being guarded**, you might not '**feel**' it, but you are, so that you **will persevere** and **possess** your possessions *through **faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*** [1 Pet 1:4,5]

ready to be revealed - You know some people are **disappointed** and **shocked** when they gather round the solicitor's office and hear the will read out! They are all 'ready to have it revealed' but get a **shock!** They are shocked because they have been left out or only get a 'pittance' compared to what they expected!

Will the Xn be **disappointed?** He might be, but if they are, it will be that **he/she did not do more** for Jesus Christ! The shock he will get is how **large the inheritance he will get, actually is!** Listen: *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is **working for us a far more exceeding and eternal** weight of glory* [2C4:17 NKJV]. Its value/worth has **infinite dimensions!**