

080 - Take Heed, Keep Watch - Acts 20:28-31 - 2013-07-28

Call to Worship: Psalm 79:13

Scripture Reading: Ezekiel 13:1-16

Sermon: Take Heed, Keep Watch Acts 20:28-31

Benediction: 1 Corinthians 16:13

Acts 20:28-31 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. (29) For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. (30) Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. (31) Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

## INTRODUCTION

Recall the basic outline of this address:

- Remember what I have done while I was with you
- I cannot be with you anymore to do it
- Therefore you must do it for yourselves

Paul, who preached the kingdom of God and preached the whole counsel of God, will not be with them anymore. What, then, must the elders and the church do?

## BODY

### I. The elders of the church must take heed

#### A. understand what it means to “take heed”?

1. pay careful attention

#### B. see who it is to whom they must take heed

1. themselves: the elders as a group to every individual elder
2. all the flock

#### C. notice the divine reasons to take heed

1. the Holy Spirit has made these men elders to do this very thing
2. the flock to take heed of has been purchased with God’s own blood
  - a. illus. if you bought something very expensive, you would pay attention to make sure it was kept safe

### II. The elders of the church must take heed because there are threats to the flock

#### A. notice the external threat to the flock that makes it necessary to take heed: wolves

1. they will be savage
2. they will come in among you (in sheep’s clothing)

3. they will not spare the flock
4. the nature of their false teaching
  - a. They say you are fine when you are not.
    - i. they teach you to have confidence in something other than the Lord Jesus Christ
  - b. They say you are not fine when you are.
    - i. they disturb you
    - ii. they unsettle you

B. notice the internal threat to the flock that make it necessary to take heed: men from among yourselves

-note that Paul steps out of the metaphor here: he doesn't say, "some of the very shepherds will lead sheep away," but it might be helpful to think of it that way, also

1. they will rise up
2. they will speak perverse things
  - a. we learned about this Wed nights in Galatians
  - b. they want to make changes or additions to the gospel message that alter the message subtly but fundamentally, making it no gospel at all, but have this altered message accepted as equivalent to the true gospel
3. they will do this to draw away the disciples after themselves

III. Since there are such threats to the flock, the elders of the church must keep watch

A. consider what it means to keep watch

1. by synonymms: be vigilant, be alert, be on your guard
2. by the shepherd and flock metaphor
  - a. the shepherds must not be relaxed and resting, but alert
  - b. they must keep up a watch all the time (if some must sleep, others stay awake)

B. remember how Paul kept watch---he warned people of the danger

1. he warned everyone
2. he warned everyone for three years
2. he warned everyone for three years night and day
3. he warned everyone for three years night and day with tears

IV. APPLICATION: How, on a practical basis, do we do this?

A. we devote ourselves to the apostles' doctrine

1. we study what they themselves taught
2. we interpret the whole bible according to what they taught

B. we maintain a stable standard for how the church interprets the scriptures on key issues, and pay attention to how well the elders and flock are believing and acting according to that standard (1689 Confession)

-the 1689 Second London Confession of Baptist Faith is this church's very constitution

-we are committed to making sure that the doctrines taught in this church stay in

conformity to that confession

C. we keep up a discussion of what wolves have been seen prowling around

This must be done in love!

D. we take care who is admitted to the membership

E. we take care who is admitted as an elder

-anyone who is proposed to become an elder must be examined

-anyone who is an elder must constantly be examined

-illus. an elder in the church where our Tennessee friends were members

-he helped form the church as a Baptist church

-he started using language regarding the New Covenant that sounded somewhat suspicious

-sure enough, he soon declared that he had gone over to infant sprinkling

-the church split in half over it

-illus. an elder in the church where some of you were worshiping

-started getting interested in Old Covenant ceremonies

-eventually the church split in half over it

-this is one place where our confession of faith is so very helpful

Romans 16:17 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.

JRY:

“Over here we are hearing people saying this . . . watch out---this is false!”

All of this is not a comfortable situation. It isn't fun.

How did things go after this for the church in Ephesus?

They labored patiently for the name of the Lord Jesus (2, 3)

They did not put up with those who are evil

They tested false apostles and found them liars

“I have something to say that is by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.”

They hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans

In the course of all of this, they had left their first love

Downs:

Lack of love is rendering you unprofitable (see 1 Cor 13)

-Do you want to repent, see this passage

RWP:

This early love, proof of the new life in Christ (1Jo\_3:13.), had cooled off in spite of their doctrinal purity. They had remained orthodox, but had become unloving partly because of the controversies with the Nicolaitans.

Trapp:

Those first ripe fruits that Christ's soul desireth, Mic\_7:1, that kindness of youth, that spousal love, that God so well remembereth, Jer\_2:2. This Ephesus had left

Poole:

of late thou hast not been so warm in the propagation of my gospel, and maintaining my truth. The love of many in this church, both toward God and their brethren, probably was cooled, though not wholly extinguished.

Clarke:

They did not retain that strong and ardent affection for God and sacred things which they had when first brought to the knowledge of the truth, and justified by faith in Christ.

Gill:

the love of the saints to God, and Christ, and one another, which appeared at the beginning of this church state, when they were all of one heart and one soul, as generally at first conversion love is the warmest; and so it was at the first planting of Gospel churches, and therefore here called first love . . . it abated in its heat and fervour; there was a remissness in the exercise of it; what our Lord had foretold should be before the destruction of Jerusalem was fulfilled in this

period of time, the love of many waxed cold, Mat\_24:12;

Knollys:

She had not left the object of her love, the LORD Jesus, whom she loved, {Re 2:2-3} but she had cooled in her spiritual affections to Christ and to his saints, which she had manifested in the day of her first espousals; which Christ well remembered and here minds of, as God did his Israel of old {Jer 2:2-3} They were not so kind to Christ and his saints formerly. Christ takes it unkindly, when his churches, ministers, or saints cool their spiritual affections towards himself, or any of his.

Hawker:

Not that the Church was totally void of love, but that it was less warm, and fervent, than in the first days of her espousals.

White:

To go through the motions without passion is sin.

Knollys:

see his three ways in which the Lord Christ may remove the candle from this place

Jeremiah 6:14

Jeremiah 8:11

Ezekiel 13:10

Revelation 3:3

1 Corinthians 16:13

1 Thess 5:6

Those who are popular in the larger culture.

Those who are right here among us.

Romans 16:17-18 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. (18) For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

Revelation 2:1-7 "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: (2) "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; (3) and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not

become weary. (4) Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. (5) Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent. (6) But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. (7) "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." '

1 Corinthians 13:1-7 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. (2) And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. (3) And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. (4) Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; (5) does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; (6) does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; (7) bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.