

Morning Sermon September 8, 2019

“Take Heed” Acts 20:28-32

Orders to Elders ...

The Greek word translated elder in the New Testament is **πρεσβύτερος**, Presbuteros, from which we get the word Presbyterian which means rule by elders...

I. Take heed to yourselves –

²⁸ Therefore take heed to yourselves ... Acts 20:28 A

Προσέχειν Prosexein – Take heed, give careful, constant concerned thought to ...

1. We as elders are to give thought to ourselves because of the important position we have been given, we are described here as:

A. Holy Spirit made overseers

B. Shepherds

C. Protectors of something extremely valuable –

²⁸ 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. Acts 20:28

2. We are part of what is purchased, so valuable too!

3. But we are to be examples, all Christians should take heed to themselves –

4. We also must be sober, ready as shepherds of a vulnerable flock, in a dangerous place –

²⁹ For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Acts 20:29

David fought and defeat the lion and the bear, imagine what would have happened if he were silly or sleeping drunk?

³⁴ But David said to Saul, “Your servant used to keep his father’s sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, ³⁵ I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard, and struck and

killed it. ³⁶ Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.” 1 Samuel 17:34-36

5. What are the wolves?

A. False teachers, teaching incorrect doctrine –

One of the great false teachings we read about in Scripture and have all around us today is the EASY SALVATION, there is NO DANGER in indulging in sin teaching –

¹⁴ They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, Saying, Peace, peace!’ When there is no peace. Jeremiah 6:14

• Where sin abounds grace abounds, TRUE –

²⁰ Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, Romans 5:20

• But this does not mean sin is okay, or will be without consequence –

6 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? ² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Romans 6:1-2

6. Yet, taking heed to yourselves means more than guarding against sins of commission, it means also keeping the fire going in the heart –

These same Ephesians were true to Paul’s warnings, yet they fall in another way –

2 “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. Revelation 2:1-6

“You don’t send me flowers anymore” Alan Bergman, Marilyn Bergman, Neil Diamond

What happens when elders lose their first love for Christ? Their zeal?

²³ Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it *spring* the issues of life. Proverbs 4:23

Keep your heart like a hearth!

II. Take heed to all the flock –

²⁸ Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock... Acts 20:28 B

1. *Jesus the Good Shepherd is our teacher and example –*

¹⁰ The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.

¹¹ “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. ¹² But a hireling, *he who is* not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. John 10:10-12

Jesus presents in these verses three characters –

A. *Thief – Satan, false teachers, wolves*

B. *The Good Shepherd (s) – Jesus, willing to die for the sheep, good elders are followers of Jesus -*

to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. Acts 20:28

If He, Jesus, our Lord, sacrificed Himself, our lives should be characterized by self-sacrifice. In fact, Paul calls all Christians to this and so elders must be leaders in it –

² Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. ³ Let nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that* every

tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:1-11

C. *Hireling – Demas was once a fellow-laborer with Paul –*
²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, ²⁴ as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers. Philemon 1:23-24

Yet in the end he proved to be a hireling –

⁹ Be diligent to come to me quickly; ¹⁰ for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—... ² Timothy 4:9-10

2. *Being a shepherd of Christ’s sheep means leading them beyond the temptations of this world –*

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. ¹ John 2:15-17

3. *It means resisting, overcoming the arguments of false teachers / wolves, maybe even among us –*

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.

³² “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified Acts 20:29-32

Notice while this is a high calling and battle, we have a great Ally and an unbeatable asset –

A. *Our Ally - I commend you to God – Acts 20:32*

What is God?

God is a Spirit, (John 4:24) infinite, (Job 11:7–9) eternal, (Psalm 90:2) and unchangeable, (James 1:17) in his being, (Exodus 3:14) wisdom, (Psalm 147:5) power, (Revelation 4:8) holiness, (Revelation 15:4) justice, goodness, and truth. (Exodus 34:6–7) W.S.C. Question 4

- *We are dependent on His strength -*

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Ephesians 6:10

- Which means we must wait on, pray to the Lord –

Meaning we have to be humble -

³¹ But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew *their* strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:31

- Ultimately God gets the glory -

⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 2 Corinthians 4:7

B. Our asset, God's Holy Word, the Bible - and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified Acts 20:32

This is a reference to the Bible, as a tool, the chief and most excellent tool for elders in Christ's church. It is described wonderfully here:

- As the word of His grace –

This is the way of salvation, by grace, through God's Word -

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:8-10

As elders we need to be gracious –

⁸ And above all things have fervent love for one another, for *“love will cover a multitude of sins.”* 1 Peter 4:8

Note, in First and Second Corinthians Paul confronts many sins, but only against one most scandalous of sins does he call for judicial action.

- It is a building up word - which is able to build you up....

Note the “you” here is addressed to elders, meaning we are still growing, being built up ourselves ...

It is a tool for building every Christian, once elders should be skilled using -

BCO 8-9. Elders being of one class of office, ruling elders possess the same authority and eligibility to office in the courts of the Church as teaching elders. They should, moreover, cultivate zealously their own aptness to teach the Bible and should improve every opportunity of doing so.

- It is a get you to Heaven, sanctifying word – and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. Acts 20:32

¹² I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 12:1-2

Craig Coleman –

1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any of the fundamentals of this system of doctrine, you will, on your own initiative, make known to your Session the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?
3. Do you approve of the form of government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in America, in conformity with the general principles of biblical polity?

4. *Do you accept the office of ruling elder (or deacon, as the case may be) in this church, and promise faithfully to perform all the duties thereof, and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your life, and to set a worthy example before the Church of which God has made you an officer?*
5. *Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?*
6. *Do you promise to strive for the purity, peace, unity and edification of the Church?*

First Presbyterian Members –

Do you, the members of this church, acknowledge and receive this brother as a ruling elder, and do you promise to yield him all that honor, encouragement and obedience in the Lord to which his office, according to the Word of God and the Constitution of this Church, entitles him?

- *Members please affirm this by raising your right hands.*

Elders –

We give you the right hand of fellowship, to take part in this office with us.

Pastor -

I now pronounce and declare that Craig Coleman has been regularly elected, ordained and installed a ruling elder in this church, agreeable to the Word of God, and according to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America; and that as such he is entitled to all encouragement, honor and obedience in the Lord: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

The following commentary from John Calvin on Acts 20:32 is for reading only and is not meant to be part of the sermon or our service -

32. “I commend you to God” ... “And to the word of his grace.” This is all one commendation, but Paul wanted to express the means by which the Lord defends his people’s salvation, which is shielded by faith (1 Peter 1:5). This protection depends on the Word, so that it might not be endangered among so many hazards. It is very important for us to know how God wishes to protect us, for we look around in uncertainty and His majesty is hidden from us until we come to Him in his Word. As soon as he begins to save us, He makes His Word the instrument of our salvation. (This is what he means by **of grace**, since the genitive in the Hebrew idiom indicates an effect.) Believers can therefore rest all the more securely on His Word, by which God reveals His favor. This explanation is plain and apt; it is too forced to interpret it to mean Christ, as some people do.

“Which can build you up.” He added this so that they would not despair because they were so conscious of their weaknesses. We are like an unfinished building; all believers must be founded on Christ, but their faith is far from being complete. The foundation remains stable, but parts of the building sometimes totter and fall; so building needs to go on continually, and now and then new supports are necessary. Nevertheless, Paul said that they must not lose hope because the Lord would not leave his work unfinished (see also Philippians 1:6 and the similar thought in Psalm 138:8).

“And give you an inheritance.” This refers to the actual enjoyment of life. As soon as Christ has dawned upon us, we indeed pass from death to life. Faith is our entry into the kingdom of heaven; and the Spirit of adoption is not given to us in vain. But here Paul promises believers a continual increase of grace until they see and possess the inheritance they have been promised, which is stored up for them in heaven.

John Calvin

Arnold Brevick