

## Paul's Farewell, Pt. 2: Admonition (Acts 20:28-35)

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### Introduction

1. Paul began his message to the Ephesian elders by reminding them of how he lived among them—his *example* (vv. 18-27).
  - a. The purpose of this rehearsal was to encourage them to replicate his life and ministry in their own.
  - b. He followed Jesus; so must they (Eph. 5:1, 2).
  - c. In view of his uncertain future, Paul's burden was the health and welfare of the church at Ephesus. The elders were *key* to this.
2. The tension between God's sovereignty and human responsibility
  - a. Success in ministry requires hard work and generous giving (v. 35; see also 1 Cor. 15:9, 10).
  - b. Human efforts are the means to the fulfillment of God's sovereign will (1 Cor. 15:11).
  - c. However, God's purpose is not frustrated by human failing, but failure does lead to undesirable consequences.
3. Paramount to all is the welfare of the *church*.
  - a. Western individualism blinds us to the importance of the church in God's plan.
  - b. Jesus' death secured the salvation of the church; individual salvation is not an end in itself (1 Cor. 12:12-14).
  - c. Paul concentrated on warning the leadership of the church to assure its welfare; however, he commends them finally to God and the word of His grace (v. 32).

### I. Pay Attention

1. Pay attention to *yourselves* (v. 28).
  - a. In light of your *calling*—as appointed by the Holy Spirit to oversee His church
  - b. Failure to guard your own souls will lead to failure in overseeing those over whom you have charge.
  - c. Ultimately, everyone is responsible for his own spiritual life; however—
  - d. The elders are accountable for the spiritual welfare of His flock, making it essential that they keep their own hearts before the Lord.
2. Pay attention to the *flock* (v. 28).
  - a. Why is it important?

It is not your flock but God's church, purchased with His own blood (1 Cor. 3:10-16).
  - b. What is required?

Hard work and heart involvement (see v. 35)

Elders are responsible for His church to tend—keep, feed, and protect (John 21:6), shepherd (1 Pet. 5:2), guide (Rev. 7:17), and rule it (Rev. 2:27) as the servants of God.

## II. Be Alert

1. The *certainty* of the danger (vv. 29, 30a)
  - a. “I know” (knowledge that comes from observation, inspection, and discernment).
  - b. “Wolves will come” (Matt. 7:15, 16; 1 John 4:1).
  - c. “They will—”
    - 1) Come from without.
    - 2) Arise from within.
2. The *nature* of the danger (29, 30)
  - a. The wolves are, by nature, “fierce”—violent, cruel, vicious, and unsparing of the sheep.
  - b. They will seek to destroy the church—“Not sparing the flock.”
  - c. They are deceitful, appearing as sheep, seemingly sincere and often self-deceived.
3. The *means* of their destructive work
  - a. They use words—“speaking” (1 Tim. 1:6–7, 19–20; 4:1–7; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:17–18; 3:1–9).
    - 1) They may be formally recognized teachers, or
    - 2) They may be influential voices.
  - b. They speak “*perverse* (twisted) *things*.”
    - 1) Describes *what* characterizes the nature of lost people (Luke 9:41; Phil. 2:15)
    - 2) Describes *how* lost people distort truth (2 Pet. 3:15, 16), cultivating confusion, error, division, and discord.
4. The *method* of their destructive work—*Heresy*
  - a. What is it?
    - 1) Not necessarily false doctrine but whatever draws men to follow the teacher, not Christ—emphasizing something about Christ but not Christ Himself.
    - 2) Paul warned of those who move away from the simplicity of Christ (2 Cor. 11:3).
  - b. It is important that elders be “apt to teach” (1 Tim. 3:1, 2; Titus 1:7-9; Eph. 4:11-13).
5. The *success* of the destructive invasion
  - a. They will draw away the disciples after them.
  - b. They will cripple the church (Rev. 2:1-7).

## Application

What does a healthy flock look like?—Ephesians 4:1-16