



August 27, 2023

“Advice and Warnings to the Church”

Acts 20:25-31

Pastor Gary Hamrick

In his farewell words to the elders of the church in Ephesus, Paul shared some important advice and warnings about how to keep the Church healthy and protect it from attacks both without and within. Even though his words are from the first century, this passage provides timeless principles for the Church today.

1. **Acts 20:25-31** - *“And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. 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. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.”*
2. Paul’s farewell speech to the elders of the church in Ephesus
  - a. Paul knew that his death was near as persecution against Christians was rampant
    - i. He would soon be martyred by Nero the emperor
  - b. In the first part of the speech (v. 17-24), Paul summarized his time in Ephesus and likened the individual Christian journey to running a race
  - c. In the second part of the speech (v. 25-31), he provided advice for keeping the Church healthy and gave warnings regarding threats against the Church
3. Advice to keep the Church healthy
  - a. Teach the whole counsel of God’s Word
    - i. **Acts 20:27** - *“For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.”*

- ii. Studying all of Scripture enables Believers to be well-equipped
- iii. **Ephesians 4:11-13** - *“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”*
  - 1. Pastors should seek to be “innocent of the blood of all men”
    - a. **James 3:1** - *“Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.”* (1984 NIV)
- iv. Some parts of the Bible are pleasant, and some parts are challenging
  - 1. Some churches only focus on one or the other
  - 2. God is love, but He is also a righteous judge
    - a. Teaching the whole counsel of God’s Word ensures Believers are equipped with the right balance
- b. Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock
  - i. **Acts 20:28a** - *“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.”*
  - ii. *Take heed* is **prosechō** in the Greek, which means “give attention to”
    - 1. Leaders must pay attention to their own spiritual condition and their own families **before** attending to others, or they will not be able to adequately care for anyone
      - a. The pastor is not supposed to be everything to everybody—only Jesus can do that
      - b. Pastors need your prayers
        - i. If the pastor falls, the congregation is impacted
- c. Tend to (*“shepherd”*) the church of God
  - i. **Acts 20:28b** - *“Shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”*
  - ii. *Shepherd* in the Greek is **poimainō** which means “to tend” or “to feed”
  - iii. God calls pastors to tend, care for, and feed His people
    - 1. The church belongs to God, not the pastor
    - 2. Your pastor did not bleed for you; Jesus did

#### 4. Warnings for the Church

- a. **Acts 20:29-30** - *“For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”*
  - i. There is an imminent threat from outside the Church
    - 1. Persecution broke out against the first century Church and continues in many places today

2. Deliberate opposition precedes deadly persecution
  - a. Weaponization of the government against the Church
  - b. Discouraging and silencing the Church
- ii. There is also an imminent threat from within the Church
  1. Paul warns against churches “speaking perverse things”
    - a. No longer holding to the inerrancy of Scripture
    - b. Substituting social justice for Biblical justice
    - c. Tolerating and celebrating sin under the banner that “God is love”
  2. [Acts 20:31](#) - “*Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.*”
    - a. We must be vigilant—may God help us to be courageous as His Church and bring glory and honor to Him

### Discussion Questions

1. Read [Acts 20:25-31](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Why is it important for churches to teach the “whole counsel of God’s Word?” (See #3a-ii above)
3. Read [Ephesians 4:11-13](#) and [James 3:1](#). Why does God judge pastors “more strictly”? (See #3a-iii above)
4. What happens when a pastor only focuses on either the “pleasant” or “challenging” parts of the Bible? Why is a balanced approach important? (See #3a-iv above)
5. How can a pastor best care for the flock entrusted to him? (See #3b-ii-1 above)
6. To whom does the church belong? What is the pastor’s responsibility to the congregation? (See #3c above)
7. Discuss threats to the Church from outside. Where do you see these types of threats in our culture today? (See #4a-i above)
8. Discuss threats to the Church from within. What do these types of threats look like? (See #4a-ii above)
9. How can we be vigilant to protect God’s Church? (See #4a-ii-2)
10. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)