

ACTS 20:28

Acts 20:18-35 is a sermon for us.

It is the only sermon in Acts addressed directly to elders.

Spend these devotion times in our meetings reminding ourselves of what we are called to do as elders.

Look at verse 28.

A. The Context

1. Paul is addressing the elders of the church in Ephesus.

The speech has the feel of passing the baton of responsibility of caring for the church to these elders.

2. An example to copy (v18-21).

How Paul lived.

What Paul preached.

3. Called to wear a cross not a crown (v22-24).

Paul was willing to suffer for Christ.

4. Called to be faithful not successful (v25-27).

Paul has taught God's Word in the past and is going to task the elders with doing it in the present and future.

B. Keep watch over yourself

"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood."

1. Paul is addressing the elders – also calls them overseers and shepherds.

Three titles refer to the same people.

Elders = spiritual maturity.

Overseers (bishops) = spiritual authority.

Shepherds (pastor) = spiritual responsibility.

These are God appointed people, recognised by other elders, affirmed by the congregation.

2. They are to keep watch over themselves.

1 Timothy 4:16: "Watch your life and doctrine".

Be careful about your own lives – your conduct, your walk before the Lord.

Be careful about your beliefs – faithfulness to Scripture; keep reading, keep studying.

Not guaranteed for the future.

3 dangers: Stress (burnout); Sin (particularly sexual); Spiritual health (growing cold spiritually, love of the Lord, going through the motions).

APP: Accountability.

APP: Pray for our own walks.

APP: Keep growing.

B. Keep watch over the church

1. Feed the sheep

Elders are to be able to teach; Paul exhorts Timothy to preach the Word.

APP: Main job is to preach and teach.

2. Know the sheep

Know them my name; spends life with them; be interested in them.

APP: Richard Baxter – aimed to visit everyone in his parish over the year; Care list.

3. Guide the sheep

Walks the path first; be an example; leads them in thought, points out things to be accomplished and in the manner they best be done.

APP: We are to lead the way.

4. Guard the sheep

Sheep have legs; warn, correct, rebuke; Go after the 1 that has wandered from the 99.

APP: Pray for wisdom and courage.

5. Protect the sheep

Searches for foes on the horizon – false ideas, destructive interpretations, demoralising teaching.

APP: Awareness of false teaching; discuss doctrine.

6. Love the sheep

Character qualification – must not be selfish.

Vital because of whose the sheep are.

They are God's – church of God.

They are precious to Him – bought with Christ's blood.

7. We follow the example of the Good Shepherd.

He feeds, knows, guides, guards, protects, loves His sheep.

C. It is vital that we watch ourselves and the church.

1. See why this is so vital as we look at the next verses at our next meeting.