

A CONVERSATION ABOUT THE ELDERS WORK (Acts 20:28-32)

1. Pay attention (Acts 20:28).

- a. The first work that an elder has is to pay attention, which is the meaning take heed.
 - i. The word can be translate “adhere to”.
 - ii. It has within it the idea of paying careful attention to it.
 - iii. An elder’s mind is to be giving careful attention to this.
- b. There are two things to which an elder is to pay careful attention.
- c. The first is himself.
 - i. Peter told elders that they are to be an example to the flock (1 Peter 5:3).
 - (1) An elder must pay attention to his own life in order to be a proper example.
 - (2) He must pay attention to his spirituality and why he is doing what he is doing.
 - (3) He must pay attention to his family and not neglect them while doing the work of an elder.
 - (4) He must pay attention to his ego and not allow it to swell because of being in the position he is or any praise that may come his way (1 Timothy 5:17 - elders should be praised).
 - ii. To be the proper example, his life must be in order, which, in reality, is something that was shown before he became an elder.
 - iii. If an elder is to effectively lead, he has to be worthy of following.
 - iv. He does this by paying heed to the qualifications that made him worthy of the office before becoming an elder and continuing to grow or maintain those qualities that caused him to be chosen.
- d. The second is the flock.
 - i. The flock stands for the congregation in which he serves..
 - ii. He does not rule over any other congregation (1 Peter 5:2).
 - iii. The Holy Spirit made him an overseer by means of laying out the qualifications and him having met them.
 - (1) The Holy Spirit does not reach out to a man and place him literally into the eldership.
 - (2) The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write down the qualities that elders should possess and then commanded that men who possess them should be appointed as elders.
 - iv. The way that an elder pays careful attention to the flock he serves is by caring for them.
 - (1) The KJV says “feed” the church.
 - (2) It literally means shepherd or tend.
 - (3) Everything that an elder does for a congregation is implied in this word.
 - (a) He, in the context of an entire eldership, is to guide the church towards heaven and away from that which would harm.
 - (b) The eldership is to guard against that which would harm the flock.

- (i) This is not limited to false doctrine.
- (ii) Shepherds took care of individual sheep.
- (iii) Some sheep are more prone to harm themselves than others.
- (iv) Elders are to guard individual sheep while guarding the whole flock.
- (c) The eldership is to lead the flock to spiritual nourishment.
 - (i) The teaching program is under the oversight of the elders.
 - (ii) The preaching that is done is to be that which brings spiritual nourishment.
 - (iii) Whomever is brought in to speak should be done so with a mind to feed the flock.
- v. It is important to note that one of these areas of shepherding done by an eldership can't be done to the neglect of other areas.
 - (1) Each area of shepherding is important and needed.
 - (2) Feeding can't be done to the neglect of guarding the flock.
 - (3) Tending to the needs of individual sheep can't be done to the neglect of teaching the whole flock.
- vi. I believe that this is why God commanded a multiplicity of elders and not just one.
- vii. In an eldership, some of the elders may be strong in one area and other elders strong in another and, in this way, they compliment each other.
 - (1) No area will be neglected this way.
 - (2) Members will be fed, guarded, and guided by the eldership, not just one elder.
- e. The whole time they are doing this work, they keep in their minds that it is the Lord's church that He purchased with His blood.
 - i. It's not an elder's church.
 - ii. It's is God the Son's church because He paid the price for it.

2. Feed the flock (Acts 20:28).

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- c.I believe that this is why God commanded a multiplicity of elders and not just one.
 - i.One man cannot do these things properly or fully.
 - ii.In an eldership, some of the elders may be strong in one area and other elders strong in another and, in this way, they compliment each other.
 - iii.No area will be neglected this way.
 - iv.Members will be fed, guarded, and guided by the eldership, not just one elder.
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- e.Notice what Paul then tells these elders: The wolves are coming for your flock.
 - i.This was spoken to the elders of the church in Ephesus but it is not limited to that congregation.
 - ii.Wolves are out there even today.
 - iii.Elders must care for the sheep in their trust because someone else wants those sheep for his own use, not to the benefit of the sheep.
 - (1)The eldership needs to care for the sheep no doubt, but we sheep need to be able to defend ourselves.
 - (2)The analogy of sheep to humans is a wonderful one and an inspired one.
 - (3)However, humans are different than real sheep in that we have the ability to arm ourselves and fight against the wolves.
 - (4)We each are to put on the whole armor of God.
 - (5)We each are to be able to wield the sword of the Spirit.
 - (6)You and I better not wait on an elder or eldership to come defend us when a wolf comes knocking.
- f.Sadly, some wolves rise up from the midst of an eldership.
 - i.Much false doctrine has made its way into the church because of men placed in the eldership who do not possess all the qualities the Holy Spirit said they must in order to be elders.
 - ii.Many of the problems we face today in the Lord's church are their because of men who, though called shepherds, are really wolves.
- g.This started out with a command to pay attention to themselves.
 - i.Some do not do that as they should.
 - ii.They allow the position to cloud their vision possibly.

- iii. Some allow a family situation to change their doctrinal position.
- iv. Elders must watch themselves first and foremost because they can be a source of error for the flock.
- h. There is an old saying, absolute power corrupts absolutely.
 - i. Elders have to be very cautious to not let the power they have as an elder to pervert their minds.
 - ii. Again, this is why each individual elder must pay attention first to himself, then to the flock.

3. Be on guard for the flock (Acts 20:31).

- a. Paul told these brethren to watch, which means look out for or be on guard against.
 - i. He then reminded them of the warnings that he had given them over the three years he had spent with them.
 - ii. These warnings were against the false teachers that were coming as well as the problems they faced as those being hunted by Satan.
- b. This leads one to the conclusion that elders must be students of God's word as well as informed about things in the brotherhood.
- c. Each flock has its own problems.
 - i. You and I, as sheep, have our own weaknesses of which good shepherds are aware.
 - ii. Good shepherds, following the example of the Great Shepherd, know their sheep (John 10:27).
 - iii. Elders can spend a considerable amount of time dealing with us, and they should.
 - iv. Our attitude as sheep should be that it won't be me causing the shepherds problems.
 - v. You and I are to make the shepherd's job as easy as possible.
- d. A problem can come from this however, which is shepherds get so busy tending their flock that they are not aware of false doctrines that may be being spread through the Lord's church.
- e. You can't warn someone about something of which you know nothing.
- f. Remember what Paul told Titus (Titus 1:9)?
 - i. That text deals with qualities that an elder must possess.
 - ii. One of them is being able to use God's word in a skillful manner to encourage and convict those that teach error.
 - iii. Elders are to be apt, or able, to teach those in error (1 Timothy 3:2).
 - (1) That qualification is not limited to teaching Bible class.
 - (2) There are a multitude of ways to teach.
 - iv. But notice that an elder has to be able to use God's word properly.
 - v. He can't use it properly if he does not know it.
 - vi. He must know God's word well enough to know error when it is taught.
- g. Elders must know God's word to be able to warn the flock they shepherd of false teaching that has been or will be presented.
- h. Taking care of the flock cannot be done to the detriment of study of God's word.

4. Stay with God and the book (Acts 20:32).

- a. Paul knew that he was leaving them and that is something that caused them

grief as the following verses teach.

b. Knowing that he would never see them again, he commended them, or sat them before God and the word of His grace.

c. Paul had warned them that wolves were coming.

i. It was not if but when.

ii. The same as it is today.

iii. I spoke with an elder of a nearby congregation a few weeks ago.

iv. They have had several baptisms recently and I talked with him about that.

v. He told me that things were going good but wondered where Satan would attack them because he knew he would.

d. When the wolves come, only God and His word will fight them off.

e. Elders cannot lean on one another alone, or on the preacher, or anyone else because all of those are human and have the potential to let him fall.

f. It first to God and His word that an elder must turn when the wolves come.

g. I believe that turning to God here is a reference to prayer.

i. Elders ought to be praying men.

ii. If they are men of the book the way they ought to be then they will be because the book teaches the power of prayer.

iii. Turning to God in prayer indicates a belief in His ability to answer prayer providentially.

h. The reason to turn to God's word is because it is powerful.

i. The word "able" is the same Greek word translated "power" in Romans 1:16.

ii. With the word of God you will be able to fend off the attacks of Satan as well as go on the offensive to save souls.

i. Paul reminded these men how powerful God's word is:

i. It is powerful enough to strengthen them, which is the meaning of build you up.

(1) God's word is the source of faith.

(2) Faith causes us to be strong in the Lord.

ii. It is powerful enough to give you an inheritance along with all the rest of those set apart in Christ.

(1) Following that word leads you to heaven.

(2) This is the inheritance about which Peter spoke (1 Peter 1:3-4).

j. Preachers, family members, other elders, and other Christians have the potential to let elders down.

k. God and His word will never let an elder down.

l. Every wolf will flee from the Sword of the Spirit.

m. The devil runs when he is resisted with God and His word.