

Monday

April 15

Savage Wolves

Read Acts 20:27-32. What specific warnings did the apostle Paul give to the church leaders from Ephesus regarding the coming apostasy?

"For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." Acts 20:27-32 KJV

The purpose of Paul's counsel was to prepare the church for what was coming. In these passages he describes two [THREE] major concerns.

1. HIS FIRST CONCERN AND THE MOST IMPORTANT WAS TO "FEED THE CHURCH OF GOD" AS PAUL HIMSELF HAD DONE BY NOT SHUNNING TO DECLARE THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD WHICH HE HAD APPARENTLY BEEN DOING FOR THREE YEARS NIGHT AND DAY WITH TEARS. TALK ABOUT AN EVANGELIST!

2. WITH THIS FIRST CONCERN, PAUL SHARED A SECOND CONCERN AND THAT WAS A WARNING REGARDING GRIEVOUS WOLVES ENTERING IN AMONG THEM TO DEVOUR THE FLOCK. THIS SECOND CONCERN IS THE REASON FOR HIS FIRST ADMONITION. THAT IS WHY HE CONNECTS THE IMPORTANCE OF FEEDING THE FLOCK THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD WITH THE SOMEWHAT CONJUNCTIVE PHRASE "FOR I KNOW THIS."

DO YOU SEE THAT IN THE TEXT?

FEED THE FLOCK OF GOD THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD.

DON'T SHRINK BACK,

DO NOT COWER,

DO NOT CONCEAL,

DO NOT SHUN ANYTHING PROFITABLE.

FOR I HAVE WITHHELD NOTHING NEEDFUL FROM YOU.

THESE ARE THE WORDS OF A MAN WHO HAS NOTHING TO LOSE. NO REPUTATION TO PROTECT. NO PASTORAL POSITION TO WORRY ABOUT KEEPING. NO PENSION OR RETIREMENT CHECK TO SHUT HIM UP.

AS NOTED IN VERSE 22 PAULS ONLY BONDAGE, HIS ONLY CONCERN IS THAT ALL THAT HE SAYS AND DOES IS IN HARMONY WITH THE SPIRIT OF GOD. HE IS "BOUND IN THE SPIRIT." OH THAT WE - THE MEN AND WOMEN OF GOD TODAY - WOULD BE BOUND IN THE SPIRIT LIKE PAUL. WILLING TO DO AND DARE FOR JESUS AND NOT SHRINKING FROM DECLARING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD.

3. PAULS THIRD CONCERN AND ANOTHER ONE THAT WE FACE TO THIS VERY DAY- BELIEVERS GETTING A BIG HEAD ABOUT THEMSELVES. NARCISSISM IN THE CHURCH. MEN RISING UP TO DRAW DISCIPLES TO THEMSELVES INSTEAD OF JESUS.

WE SEE AND HEAR THE FRUIT OF THIS THIRD CONCERN TO THIS VERY DAY. WHENEVER WE QUOTE MEN AS OUR AUTHORITY FOR BELIEVING THIS IDEA OR THAT ONE WE HAVE BEEN DRAWN AWAY AFTER THEM.

WHEN WE GO TO CHURCH FOR OUR FAVORITE PREACHER OR DO NOT GO FOR LACK OF OUR FAVORITE PREACHER WE ARE FOLLOWING AFTER MEN WHO HAVE RISEN UP AMONG US FOR THE VERY PURPOSE OF GETTING FOLLOWERS.

HOW MANY FOLLOWERS DO YOU HAVE MR PREACHER ON YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT? ARE YOU FAITHFUL TO DECLARE THR WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD WITHOUT SHRINKING BACK FROM ANYTHING EVEN IF YOU LOSE A FEW FOLLOWERS AND LIKES ON YOUR SOCIAL FEED?

THE SPIRIT OF GOD SHOWED PAUL A VERY DARK TIME OF SPIRITUAL COMPROMISE. THIS COMPROMISE CAME TO GODS CHURCH IN THE 4th AND 5th CENTURY AND LASTED FOR CENTURIES. IT ENDED FOR AT A TIME OF SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT.

COMPROMISE WAS WOUNDED - ITS DEADLY HOLD LOOSENED. AND LIBERTY NOT SEEN SINCE THE DAYS OF CHRIST WAS BROUGHT FORTH. ACCORDING TO THE PROPHETIC TIME CLOCK THERE IS TO BE A PREDICTED HEALING OF THE DARKNESS ONE LAST TIME FOR JUST ONE PROPHETIC HOUR BEFORE THE SHINING FORTH OF ETERNAL LIGHT.

His first concern is "savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock" (*Acts 20:29, NKJV*). In other words, believers would face fierce persecution, but from within the church. This prophecy was fulfilled in the first and second centuries. Christians that refused to worship the emperor by bowing to the gods of Rome were tortured, imprisoned, and burned at the stake.

The apostle expressed a second concern when he said, "also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (*Acts 20:30*). Heresies would enter the church. False doctrines would be substituted for divine truths. Pagan practices would prevail. In the fourth and fifth centuries compromise subtly crept into the Christian church, with mission advance being the probable justification. But the terrible result was a departure from the truths of God's Word.

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12. How does the apostle Paul describe the coming apostasy? What characteristics should they look for?

"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his

mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12 KJV

IN THESE VERSE GOD LAYS OUT FOUR PRINCIPLES THAT PREPARE THE WAY FOR DECEPTION IN OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH. AND THIS IS A SUBTLE DECEPTION FOR MOST OF US WILL PERISH WITHOUT EVEN REALIZING WE WERE DECEIVED-THAT IS THE VERY NATURE OF DECEPTION.

1. THEY RECEIVED NOT THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH
2. THEY BELIEVE A LIE.
3. THEY BELIEVE NOT THE TRUTH.
4. FINALLY- THEY ACTUALLY HAD PLEASURE IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. AND THIS LAST ONE IS THE GAME BREAKER SO TO SPEAK. PLEASURE IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. PERHAPS THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN SPEAK TO OUR HEARTS TODAY RIGHT NOW AS WE LISTEN.

ONLY THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN POINT OUT IF THERE IS ANY UNRIGHTEOUSNESS IN OUR LIVES IN WHICH WE HAVE PLEASURE.

1JOHN 5:17 SAYS THAT ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS IS SIN.

1 JOHN 3:4 SAYS THAT SIN IS TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW.

SO IS THERE ANY TRANSGRESSION OF GODS LAW THAT WE ARE HAVING PLEASURE IN? ARE WE CHOOSING PLEASURE OVER KEEPING GODS TEN COMMANDMENTS. IF SO WE ARE SETTING OURSELVES UP FOR DECEPTION SO GREAT THAT IF POSSIBLE THE VERY ELECT WILL BE DECEIVED.

ONLY GOD CAN KEEP THE VERY ELECT FROM BEING DECEIVED BY THE DECEPTION THAT IS NOW COMING UPON US. AND ONLY A LOVE OF THE TRUTH, REJECTING THE LIE, BELIEF IN THE TRUTH, AND REFUSING TO HAVE PLEASURE IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS WILL MAKE US GODS ELECT- REMEMBER ALWAYS THAT JESUS CHRIST IS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

ACCEPTING JESUS WE REJECT UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.

JESUS IS THE TRUTH. ACCEPTING JESUS WE ACCEPT THE TRUTH AND REJECT THE LIE. JESUS IS OUR BELIEF SYSTEM.

EVERY TEACHING WE ACCEPT IS CENTERED IN JESUS.

TRUE ETERNAL PLEASURE IS FOUND IN A MEANINGFUL CONNECTION WITH HIM.

MAY GOD KEEP US CONNECTED.

PSALM 16:11 -MAY GOD SHOW US THE PATH OF LIFE. IN HIS PRESENCE IS FULNESS OF JOY. AT HIS RIGHT HAND ARE PLEASURES FOREVER MORE.

Paul's comment, "the mystery of lawlessness does already work" is significant. Even in Paul's day there was a gradual departure from the truth of God's word regarding obedience to God's law. This departure would flourish in the later centuries.

Contrary to the second commandment, idols were introduced into Christian worship. For millennia idols were in the forefront of all pagan religions. To make Christianity more acceptable to heathens coming into the Christian Church, pagan deities were renamed as so-called saints. Sunday, the day of worship for the sun god, was gradually adopted as the day of Christian worship in honor of the resurrection. This false day, not sanctioned in Scripture, prevails even now.

What kind of compromises do we see entering the church today? More importantly, what compromises might you be making? Is it sometimes by blending truth and error?

