

The Church - Guard the Flock, Protect the Bride!

Dr. John Carmichael

[Act 20:28-31 NASB95] 28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for 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. 29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

- We have seen some dark things recently. This is not play time. What we saw may have been traumatic and woke us up. It's been dark for a long time, yet the enemy has shown his hand. Yet, many of us have not been aware, or not wanted to be aware, of just how dark things are.
- God's plan to combat the darkness in the world is the church. [Mat 16:18 NASB95] 18 "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.
 - The Greek word is ekklesia (ἐκκλησία), and it's far more dynamic than our English "church" suggests.
 - Ekklesia literally means "called out ones" - from ek (out) and kaleo (to call). In the Greek world, it referred to citizens called out from their private affairs to assemble for public business - a governing assembly with authority and purpose.
 - When Jesus says "I will build my ekklesia," He's not talking just about a building or religious institution. He's declaring He will gather a people called out from the world to form His governing assembly - citizens of His kingdom with delegated authority ("keys of the kingdom") to conduct His business on earth.
 - This transforms everything. The church isn't just a place you attend; it's a people you belong to. It's not a passive religious gathering but an active governmental body representing Christ's rule. Every believer is a called-out citizen with kingdom authority and responsibility.
 - The church is God's people coming together as a unified body, loving each other as a family, and structured like a kingdom. There is no NT model for a relationship with God that does not include being together as the church.
 - The gates of Hades won't prevail because this isn't a defensive institution hiding behind walls - it's an advancing governmental force carrying the unstoppable authority of heaven itself.
- Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17–38) is one of the most moving passages in the New Testament. He warns them with tears, charges them with responsibility, and reveals the heart of a shepherd who values the church. In verses 28–31, Paul makes it clear: the church matters to God, therefore it must matter to us!
- The world treats the church as optional as do many professing (not practicing, Christians), but Paul reminds us the church is purchased by the blood of Christ and must be guarded against danger.

What does this passage teach us about the church?

Here are three important truths about the church this passage teaches.

I. The Church is Purchased by Christ's Blood

- a. [Act 20:28 NASB95] 28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for 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.

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- b. The leaders were instructed to guard themselves and the flock. This is directly written to the leaders. It is indirectly written to the flock. The leaders cannot lead if the flock does not follow. We were always going to have human overseers.
- c. Love the church like He does. [Eph 5:25 NASB95] 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,
- d. If Christ shed His blood for the church, then we cannot treat it casually. Prioritize worship, gathering, serving, and giving. If the church is worth the cross to Jesus, it must be worth our commitment!

II. The Church Must Be Protected from Wolves

- a. [Act 20:29-30 NASB95] 29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.
- b. Notice the savage wolves are coming. Wolves are real, but the church will stand!
- c. Inside wolves. Outside wolves.
 - i. They want us to water down the word of God. Hinder the Holy Spirit. Compromise sin. Not speak to the culture.
 - ii. They will come in with impure motives and a lack of a genuine heart for God.
- d. [1Pe 5:8 NASB95] 8 Be of sober [spirit,] be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.
- e. Guard the flock! Protect your family's faith. Be discerning about false teaching, dangerous influences, and divisive spirits. Shepherds and members alike must be alert. Don't be naïve! Wolves are real, but the flock is worth defending!

III. The Church is Sustained by Vigilant Shepherds and Committed Saints

- a. [Act 20:31 NASB95] 31 "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.
- b. Notice the time and tears. The church needs people who give it time and tears. I do not listen to critics of the church who do not love it. I do not listen to people who leave.
- c. Do not give up on the church, fight for it.
- d. [Heb 10:25 NASB95] 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging [one another,] and all the more as you see the day drawing near.
- e. Pastors and leaders must be watchful and sacrificial, like Paul with his tears. Saints must show up faithfully, encouraging one another, refusing to drift into apathy. The church is strengthened when shepherds watch and saints commit.

- **Because Christ purchased the church with His own blood, it must be protected, valued, and prioritized in our lives.**
- **Paul wept over the church because he knew how precious and how vulnerable it is. He reminded the elders—and us—that the church is not a club, not a hobby, but the blood-bought Bride of Christ.**
- **We must value the church as Christ does: attend faithfully, serve joyfully, give sacrificially, and defend diligently.**