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The Pastor's Task – Acts 20:28-31

I. INTRODUCTION – Read vs. 26-32

A. “You’re the Pastor”

1. = Sunday morning early; the alarm goes off.
2. = The wife wakes & rolls over but her husband doesn't stir.
3. = She says, “Hun, time to get up.” He just moans.
4. = She pulls the covers back & pokes him in the shoulder.
5. = He pulls the covers back up & over his head.
6. = She says, “C'mon hun—we have to get up & get ready or church.”
7. = From under the covers he says, “No! I'm not going.”
8. = She says, “Why? Are you sick?”
9. = He says, “No, I just don't want to go today.”
10. Puzzled, she asks, “Why?”
11. He says, “I don't like our church. The music's bad. The service is too long. The sermon's boring. And besides, those people don't like me. I don't want to go.”
12. She waited a few seconds then said, “But you have to go; you're the pastor!”

B. Today's Pastor

1. = **Being a pastor today is a challenging proposition because it's come to mean so many different things to different people.**
2. = **Several years ago, a poll was conducted of church members to find out what they expected of a pastor.**

- a. **The results were interesting. Summarizing their findings the research said R= 11;**
- b. **A pastor should preach no more than 15 minutes.**
- c. **He condemns sin but never makes anyone uncomfortable.**
- d. **He works from 8 AM until 10 PM; studying, counseling, praying, doing visitations, & taking care of the janitorial needs of the church.**
- e. **He makes \$500 a month, wears good clothes, drives a new car, & gives \$50 a week to the poor.**
- f. **He's 32 years old & has been preaching for 25 years.**
- g. **He's handsome, stands 6 ft. 2 inches tall, but is never intimidating.**
 - 1) **He's slender not skinny, but also large without being overweight.**
 - 2) **He parts his hair down = the middle; one side is straight & blond, the other is dark & curly.**
- h. **He loves to work with children & youth, & spends many hours with seniors.**
- i. **He makes 15 calls a day on church members, shut-ins, & hospital patients, = but he's always in his office when needed.**
- 3. **= The report finished with this humorous conclusion:**

If your pastor does not measure up to this profile of the perfect pastor, send this description to 6 other churches that are tired of their pastor. Then send your pastor to the church at the top of the list. In one week you'll receive 1,643 pastors. One of them should be perfect.

C. Set the Scene

- 1. = Paul is returning to Jerusalem at the conclusion of his 3rd missionary trip.
- 2. = As he sailed eastward, he stopped at the port of Miletus & called the elders of the church in Ephesus about 40 miles north, to come to him.
- 3. = When they arrive, he gives them a farewell address.
 - a. He knows he will not see them again.

- b. So in an emotion-filled speech, he gives his last words to these men he'd poured 3 years of his life in to.
4. = First he calls them to remember the example he'd left them as leaders.
 - a. Paul knew difficult days were ahead for both him & them.
 - b. God repeatedly warned Paul of the trials that would come to him in Jerusalem.
 - c. False teachers would use his arrest & imprisonment as grounds for attacking his ministry.
 - d. So Paul called the Ephesians elders to remember what kind of a person he'd been & how he'd conducted himself throughout the 3 years he'd been there.
 5. = Then he turns in vs. 28-31 to tell them what they were to be about as leaders of the church.

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 28

²⁸ 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.

1. = The first thing they must do is "take heed."
 - a. That means to be diligent toward something;= focused, to bend all effort in one direction.
 - b. It was used to describe the attitude & actions of a captain bringing his ship into a busy & crowded port.
 - c. If you're "taking heed" to something it occupies your complete attention.
 - d. It isn't one of many things you do,= it's the only thing.
2. = As we read on we find these elders were the = pastors of the Ephesian church which numbered in the thousands.
 - a. They had no central meeting place; but met in homes all over the city.
 - b. Elders were pastors of these home churches.
3. = Paul said they must embrace their calling as pastors & make it their own, part of their identity – how they defined themselves.
4. = They weren't weekend warriors. Their calling to pastor the church was a

divine call, God's appointment, 24= /7.

5. Then he said they were to exercise this diligence in= 2 directions; toward themselves, & toward the church.

6. = **First** & foremost, the = pastor has to show careful attention to his own walk= , cultivating a healthy & intimate relationship with the Lord.

a. He needs to make sure he's growing in grace & faith.

b. For the leader can't take those he's leading any farther than he himself has gone.

7. = Paul begins here because he knows well the trap the full-time minister can fall in to.<= /p>

a. It's th= e trap of professionalism;

1) Where one's relat= ionship with God is no longer personal & intimate;

2) It becomes limited to j= ust what you do in the course of your ministry.

3) The pastor spends so mu= ch time studying the Bible preparing for sermons, he stops reading the it devotionally, for his own spiritual nourishm= ent.

4) He spends so much time = praying for the needs of the congregation,

5) He spends little just s= itting with the Spirit.

6) He spends so much time = & energy leading public worship,

7) He neglects that private pouring out of his heart to God.

b. He becomes l= ike an ambassador living in a foreign land, telling other about how wonderful his country is, defending her interests, & persuading others to visit her –

c. But he's so busy in his ambassadorial duties he never returns home to enj= oy the blessings of his native land.

8. Would you hire a gardener who= se yard was a jungle of weeds or whose lawn was dead?

9. Would you go to a dentist who= se teeth were rotten & yellow?

10. So how can a pastor expect a positive res= ponse to his ministry if his life isn't marked by the holy joy that comes o= nly by personal partaking of Christ.?

11. **Second**, Paul said they mus= t take heed 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.”

12. The image of God’s people being a flock of sheep is common in scripture.

a. The prophets often spoke of Israel as God’s flock with their civil & religious leaders being the shepherds.

b. Psalm 95:7 - “He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, the sheep of His hand.”

c. In John 10 Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd & spoke of His followers as His flock.

d. The beloved Psalm 23 draws from this same image.

13. Paul tells the Ephesian elders their diligence is to work itself out in their taking care of the flock -

a. A flock that really belongs to God, not them.

b. He’s the Chief Shepherd & the sheep are His.

c. The elders role is as under-shepherds who tend the flock **FOR** Him.

14. But notice = Who made them pastors – The Holy Spirit; God!

a. They did not appoint themselves.

b. They didn’t earn the position by attending seminary.

c. They were called by God & set in their office by divine appointment.

15. Their task = is as overseers, he says; guardians of God’s flock.

16. It’s to this calling they must take heed.

B. The Pastor’s Job-Description

1. = These verses give us a job description for pastors.

2. = Most businesses have some kind of job description for their various positions.

a. Whatever the job, there’s a list of guidelines for what the job entails.

b. When I worked in fast food, on every employee’s first day, the first thing we had them do was sit down, read their job description, & watch a training film.

- c. Being certified for their position meant passing a written test & showing proficiency in the specifics of their job description.
3. = Pastors have a ministry description – it's found here.
 - a. The work of a pastor isn't defined by man –
 - b. It's set by God because it's His flock & the pastor works for Him.
 4. = The pastor must remember that before he was hired by a church, he was ordained & appointed by God.
 5. = Because of the day to day complexities of ministry, it's easy for a pastor to lose perspective on his calling & begin to try meeting the expectations of people.
 - a. Since the Church Board hired him & has the power to fire him,
 - b. He can easily slip into the mode of trying to make them happy, instead of doing what God has called him to.
 - c. The temptation to be a mere hireling instead of a true shepherd is all too common.
 6. = Paul reminds the Ephesians elders that they must bend all diligence toward their calling.
 - a. They do that by shepherding the flock of God.
 - b. For us that's a bit abstract; we're not a pastoral society as they were, so what he means by shepherding = isn't so clear.
 - c. For the Ephesians, it would have been crystal. They all knew what a shepherd did.
 7. = His task lies in 3 things à **To Feed, Lead & Protect the flock.**
 - a. No more, no less. Really, this is all he's to do.
 - b. The thing is, if he does these 3 well, the flock will be well-served & will be healthy & grow.

C. Feed the Flock

1. = The first task of a pastor is to Feed the Flock.
2. = Shepherds know that the health of their sheep is directly tied to their diet, so they seek out the best pasture.
3. = In the same way, pastors must be diligent to provide a steady diet of God's

Word.

4. = That's exactly what Paul had done in the 3 years he spent in Ephesus.

V. 27 - For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

a. As a pastor's Pastor, Paul knew the importance of a well-rounded spiritual diet.

b. He didn't center his teaching just on pet = topics or scriptural hobby horses.

c. In the years he spent in Ephesus, he'd taught through the Scriptures.

5. If a pastor spends all his time teaching just one section of the Bible or just a few comfortable topics, then he's feeding the sheep an unbalanced diet. They won't be healthy.

6. = Growing up, all 3 of our kids were rather finicky eaters.

a. If they'd had their way, they'd have had only one thing for most of their meals – French fries & catsup.

b. As parents, concerned for their health, Lynn & I knew a diet of fries would make them sickly,

c. So we put other food before them to eat.

d. Though they preferred fries, there were no fries – so they ate what we gave them.

e. And they grew up to be healthy & strong – & thank us for the love we showed by giving them what they NEEDED, not what they wanted.

7. = The children of God are often like our kids – there're certain things they love to hear about.

a. And if they had their way, they'd get a steady diet of only that.

b. Last Days Prophecy. The wonderful blessings & promises of God. His mercy.

c. These are the spiritual French fries most would love to stick with.

d. But if they're all they ever got, they'd end up spiritually weak & sickly.

8. = So pastors must be diligent to make sure they give a well-balanced diet of the whole counsel of God.

a. This is why at CC we teaching expositionally **THROUGH** the Bible, book by=

book, chapter by chapter, verse by verse.

b. We do 2 OT books, then 1 NT book, alternating through the whole Bible.

c. When we're done, we start over again, & will till Jesus returns.

d. Following this patterns we've already made our way through the Bible once & are now about half way through the second time .

9. = Having said that – let me also say that as the shepherd tends the sheep, he keeps a careful eye on them.

a. If he notices there's something distress among them that can be corrected by a specialized diet, he moves them to that pasture.

b. And so it is with the flock of God.

c. Sometimes we go through seasons of special need, where a whole lot of folk are dealing with the same issue.

d. When that happens, we take a break from our normal course of study to do a topical message or series. We consider such topical messages as spiritual vitamins that meet a specific need .

1) We've had periods of wide-spread marital trouble; so we teach on marriage.

2) We've had seasons of intense spiritual warfare; so we teach on our authority in Christ and the armor of God.

3) We've seen times of when there are a lot of people coming to faith; so we took a few weeks to lay a solid foundation in the basics of the faith .

10. The point is, the pastor's goal is healthy sheep & their spiritual diet is the most crucial aspect of that.

D. Lead the Flock

1. = The pastor's second task is to Lead the Flock.

2. = Along with a healthy diet, sheep need exercise.

a. In Psalm 23 we read – The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want,

He makes me to lie down in green pastures.

He leads me besides the still waters.

b. If all the sheep ever do is eat & lie in green pastures, they get fat.

- c. And a fat sheep is in grave danger!
3. = Phillip Keller was a professional shepherd who wrote a marvelous little book titled= *A Shepherd Looks At Psalm 23*.
 - a. His insights into the life of a shepherd & sheep open up Psalm 23 into a wonderful masterpiece.
 - b. Of course, David, who wrote the 23rd Psalm was himself a shepherd.
 - c. Keller says that left to themselves, sheep are such = creatures of habit they'll stay in one place & so over-graze it, it = ruins the pasture for years.
 - d. They'll keep going over the same trails until they're deep, muddy ruts.
 - e. They'll graze until the grass is gone, then paw the dirt to dig up the roots.
 - f. As their health deteriorates, parasites & diseases take hold.
 4. = So the diligent shepherd moves the flock from pasture to pasture.
 5. = It's no wonder God likens people to sheep. We too are creatures of habit.
 - a. Many believers don't like change.
 - b. But if we're going to grow, we must = change – there's no growth without it.
 6. So pastors must be diligent to keep the flock of God from becoming complacent & settling down to a religious routine that fails to stay current with the Holy Spirit.
 7. = Remember, It's God who calls a man to be a pastor.
 - a. With the call, comes all that's needed= to fulfill the call. Where God guides, He= provides.
 - b. Since a pastor's task is to LEAD the flock, God gives him what he needs to = take them **WHERE** God wants th= em led à A **VISION!** When God calls, He installs.
 8. = That vision is a heart-picture of what God wants t= he flock to become; a healthy, holy, loving, growing congregation doing= a specific work in their community.
 9. Faithfulness in the pastoral ministry means staying on course in the pursuit of that vis= ion.
 10. Let me stop= at this point to say that we have a vision here at Calvary Chapel.

a. In the simplest terms, our vision is to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

b. Our goal, as individuals & as a group, is to attain to the fullness of the stature of Christ.

1) We want to see the character of Christ, characterize our lives.

2) We want to do His works & speak His words.

3) We want His life to flow through us in such a way that when people see us, they see Jesus & are drawn into a love relationship with Him.

11. If you're a visitor & that vision strikes a harmonious chord within you, we want to invite you to come and be a part of that vision.

E. Protect the Flock

1. = The 3rd task of the pastor is to Protect the Flock. Look at v. 29 -

²⁹ For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, = not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

2. Paul is speaking both by experience & by prophecy here.

3. = In many of the churches he'd planted, once he left, false teachers appeared & started in with their attacks.

4. = He knew it would happen in Ephesus.

5. = So he warned the elders to be on guard & watch out for false teachers. They'd come both from without & within.

6. = One of the greatest concerns of a shepherd is predators.

a. Wolves & wild dogs hover round the edges of the flock, waiting for the chance to make off with a lamb.

b. Lions & other large carnivores see sheep as easy pickings'.

7. So a good shepherd keeps a sharp eye out to protect his flock.

a. His diligence is enough to keep the wolf at bay.

b. But lions are more bold & attack even when he's watching.

c. So he intervenes with the tools of his trade.

- 1) The rod was a deadly weapon in the hand of a skilled shepherd.
 - 2) The sling could really put the hurt on.
- d. David tells of 2 times when predators came to take from his father's flock.=
- e. But he delivered the sheep from the lion & the bear.
- f. It was that experience that emboldened him to believe he could go against a predator named Goliath when he was harassing the Flock of God, the people of Israel.=
8. Paul tells the pastors of Ephesus they must= keep watch over & protect their flocks.
- a. They face perils from without.
- 1) False teachers are like= savage wolves with one aim,
 - 2) to feast on God's= people.
- b. They also face peril from within.
- 1) Some of them, the very = men Paul was speaking to that day in Miletus would go bad.
 - 2) The power of their position would corrupt them & they would go off into destructive doctrines & practices that would bring spiritual ruin.
9. The same is true today.
- a. There's danger from without.
- 1) Cults, false teachers, religious shysters & hucksters abound.
 - 2) They hover round the edge of the Church, looking for the opportunity to rush in & rip people off.
- b. There's also danger= that rises from within.
- 1) Wolves in sheep's clothing who appear to be a part of the flock but who have their own agenda= .
 - 2) They worm their way into people's confidence.
 - 3) Then they slowly start to draw people away from Truth through clever means.
- a) They say things that sound godly but really just appeal to the flesh.

b) They suggest those God has ordained to lead aren't as pure & holy as they could be.

c) They plant doubts in people's minds through some seemingly off-hand remark.

d) It isn't off-hand at all; it was coldly calculated to fire a dart of doubt into their hearts.

10. Today's Religious Landscape is covered with aberrant groups who're following dozens of false teachers.

11. Because of the emphasis on protecting the flock Paul gives the Ephesian elders, I'm compelled to warn about some false teachers & groups seeking to rip people off & take them away from the flock of God.

a. I realize mentioning names could offend some, but I make no apology.

b. We have Biblical warrant for identifying false teachers in **Romans 16:17**. **Paul said we're to note, mark, call attention to false teachers.**

c. **As a pastor, I'm called to protect the flock.**

d. **So when I see a wolf trying to disguise himself in a fleece, I'll point him out & say, "See that? That's a wolf! He wants to eat you!"**

12. The JW's, the Mormons, The Unification Church are all heretical groups.

13. The International Church of God is a cult.

14. The Word-Faith Movement is filled with heretical teaching & many of its leaders are false prophets.

15. The Emergent Church began as a legitimate attempt to reform the evangelical church but it's strayed off into bizarredom.

16. Be cautious of just about everything on TBN.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Deceit

1. Deceit has ever been Satan's most ready tool.

2. His first ploy was to go to Eve to question & challenge what she knew about God.

3. As the followers of Christ, Who IS Truth, we ought to expect that we'll

face= a constant barrage from the devil's emissaries, seeking to turn us away from the Way.

4. = It's the task of the pastor to Feed the flock with the Word of Truth.

a. To Lead them in the Way of Truth

b. And to Warn them to stick With the Truth.<= /p>

5. = Look at the passion & intensity Paul had in all this in = Ephesus . . .

³¹ Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone n= ight and day with tears.

B. My Job

1. = I want you to know what my job as your pastor is.

2. = My ministry description was not written by man. It's authored by God = 211;

To lead, feed, & protect the flock.

3. = One day, I'll stand before Him & give account for how I've done.

4. = I live & labor so that I may hear those precious words, "Well done my go= od & faithful shepherd."

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