

ACTS 20:33-38

Introduction:

Paul has been giving his farewell message to the Ephesian elders (pastors-leaders). He is challenging them to remain **vigilant**, because if not...the wolves will draw away their sheep and devour them with **un**truth and error.

The largest group of people who leave their church or denomination to go to cults are Baptists. (I've read surveys.) I wonder **why?

A.

Acts 20:33-34 - I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Acts 20:34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

1. Paul reminds them that, while he was with them, he had worked with his own hands (tentmaker) to support **him**self. That way, no one could charge him of being a huckster, or being in the ministry just for the money. Paul was an example of self**less** giving and proved he wasn't in ministry for money. Notice how he sheds light on this:

I Timothy 3:3 - Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

Titus 1:10-11 - For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Titus 1:11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

2. Paul is **not** saying it is wrong to receive financial support from a church, but to be careful one is not in it for the money. However, the church **is** to take care of its leaders.

I Corinthians 9:14 - Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

I Timothy 5:17-18 - Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 1Tim. 5:18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer *is* worthy of his reward.

*I personally believe one big reason that Paul did not ask for support was because, at the beginning, "the gospel of grace" message had **never** been revealed to these new areas. For it to be accepted and to have credibility, the message of grace could have been hindered through money. So Paul wisely provided for his immediate needs himself. But, he correctly encouraged the churches **al**ready established to take care of their leaders.

Also, it is important to see that though Paul worked to make his living, he **did receive financial assistance from other established churches and believers to help him to proclaim the gospel.

II Corinthians 11:8-9 - I robbed other churches, taking wages *of them*, to do you service. 2Cor. 11:9 And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all *things* I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and *so* will I keep *myself*.

Philippians 4:10, 14, 16-17 - But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Phil. 4:14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. Phil. 4:16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Phil. 4:17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

B.

Acts 20:35 - I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

1. Paul exemplified Jesus' words: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This is not said in pride, but to challenge believers to be **generous** in sharing with others - you will be blessed!

****Jesus' example: II Corinthians 8:9** - [For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.]

2. This quotation from Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive", is not recorded in the gospels, but evidently was known among early believers. Remember, not all of Jesus' words and works were recorded from His earthly ministry.

John 21:25 - And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

C.

Acts 20:36-38 - And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. Acts 20:37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, Acts 20:38 Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

1. Dr. Stam: "This parting scene is almost too sacred to intrude upon."
2. Paul, having finished speaking, kneels down to have a final prayer with these believers. There is such a **spontaneous** tearful moment of emotion. There was such a special affection between them and Paul. He had **revealed** "the gospel of grace" to them and they had believed. Paul was their spiritual **father** and that made him extra-special to them. Who is your spiritual father or mother?
3. They loved Paul and were concerned about the dangers awaiting him at Jerusalem. But, most of all, they wept for the coming **absence** of God's Word from Paul.

Remember: John 6:67-69 - [Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? John 6:68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. John 6:69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.]

4. They perhaps should have sorrowed greater about Paul's **prediction** of incoming wolves and church apostates from within that would rise up. Could it come from one of these elders? **Judas!**

****Tragically, this Ephesian church did experience Paul's prediction.** Some of its leaders did defect from the truth. When Paul wrote to Timothy, he was the pastor of the Ephesian church. Paul condemned the **false** teachers who had arisen from within the Ephesian church.

I Timothy 1:3-7, 20 - As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, 1Tim. 1:4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: *so do.* 1Tim. 1:5 Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and *of* a good conscience, and *of* faith unfeigned: 1Tim. 1:6 From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; 1Tim. 1:7 Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. 1Tim. 1:20 Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

II Timothy 1:15 - This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.

II Timothy 2:17 - And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus;

D. Paul's concern about false teaching from within:

1. "Wolves in sheep's clothing" has the idea of people who **claim** to be Christian, or orthodox in their beliefs, but they are not. They then begin to share with others in the church false-heretical-cultic-undispensational teachings that cause some believers to be **shipwrecked** in their faith.
2. These believers (or even non-believers) who fall for **false** teachers are usually biblically ignorant, making them **easy** prey.
3. Error is more serious at some times than others. Wolves add to, or subtract from, God's Word by using multiple **versions**. They are sly to somehow add works to salvation and keep one away from true doctrine. Some say they have had further revelation, or use a false prophecy to gain hearers. They **redefine** the meaning of words and doctrine. Paul says in II Cor. 11:3-4 - "another Jesus", "another spirit", and "another gospel".

Example: Modalism - T. D. Jakes believes this. (Oneness Pentecostalism)

- a. *It is the belief that the three persons of the Godhead - Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) are simply modes, ways, **forms**, or roles of the same **single** person. It denies the doctrine of the Trinity.
- b. Carm - "Modalism teaches that God is a single person who has revealed himself in three modes or forms: **first** in the O.T. - as the Father, **at the** incarnation - as the Son, and **after Jesus' ascension** the mode is the Holy Spirit. These modes are **never simultaneous**. **In other words, they say that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit never exist at the **same** time - only one after another."
- c. Modalism denies the distinctiveness of the three Persons of the Trinity. Today's groups that hold this error teach that the name of God is **Jesus** - Who has manifested Himself as the Father, Son (Himself), and Holy Spirit. They say you must be baptized for salvation (formula?).
- d. Modalists accuse Trinity believers of teaching that there are three gods. That is not what the Trinity is. The Trinity is one God in three eternal, coexistent, and **distinct** Persons - Who always exist at the **same** time.
 - (1) When Jesus was baptized, the Father said in Matthew 3:16-17 - [And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: Matt. 3:17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.]

*If Jesus is just a different view of the same God, why would He say something like that to Himself?

- (2) When on the cross, Jesus cried out in Matthew 27:46 - [And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?]

*How could He forsake Himself if he is the same person forsaking and being forsaken?

- (3) Hebrews 9:14 - How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

*How can Christ offer His own blood to Himself if He is the same person?

- (4) In John 17, Jesus talked to the Father. Who sits on the throne today?

- (5) Conclusion: The Bible clearly teaches that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all three God, all existing at the same eternal time. But, they are also clearly distinct from each other at the same time. The Father is NOT the Son, Who is NOT the Holy Spirit, Who is NOT the Father, etc.

II Corinthians 13:14 - The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, *be* with you all. Amen.

I John 5:7 - For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.