



### **"How God Provides Protection For His Church–Pt. 3"**

*In Acts 20:17-38, there are 4 essential practices of faithful ministry from the Apostle Paul that are necessary for all Christians:*

- I. A selfless practice that points others to turn only to Christ–vv.17-21
- II. A sacrificial practice that strives to be faithful through hardship–vv.22-24
- III. A safeguarding practice that provides for the care of others–vv.25-32
  - i. By giving that which is helpful–vv.25-27, 31-32

#### **ii. By protecting from what is harmful–vv.28-30**

Who can calculate the damage done during the past 2,000 years to the church of Jesus Christ because of inattentive, naïve, and prayerless shepherds? Many churches and denominations that once stood for sound, orthodox doctrine and life now reject every major tenet of the Christian faith and condone the most deplorable moral practices conceivable. How did this happen? The local church leaders were naïve, untaught and prayerless and became inattentive to Satan's deceptive strategies. They were blind watchmen and dumb dogs, preoccupied with their own self-interests and comforts. When their seminaries jettisoned the truths of the gospel and the divine inspiration of the Bible, they were asleep. They then invited young wolves in sheep's clothing into their flocks to be their spiritual shepherds. Hence, they and their flocks have been devoured by wolves. (1)

A shepherd's oversight of the flock expresses itself broadly in two ways: First, shepherds provide truthful, positive direction and leadership to the flock. Second, they warn of spiritual dangers such as sin, false teaching, and false teachers, including Satan's assaults against the saints. On one hand, the shepherd teaches truth, and on the other, he warns of sin and refutes doctrinal error. In leading the flock down the path of righteousness, the shepherd also watches for, warns, and even rescues the stray who has been enticed by false teaching and alluring sin. When shepherds exercise their oversight responsibly, they will have both a preventative and a confrontive side to their ministry. One cannot shepherd the flock with credibility unless he provides a corrective oversight of watching and warning. (2)

Take heed to yourselves, lest your example contradict your doctrine, and lest you lay such stumbling blocks before the blind, as may be the occasion of their ruin; lest you unsay with your lives, what you say with your tongues, and be the greatest hinderers of the success of your own labors. It hinders the work greatly, when men all week long contradict...in private, that which [they] have been speaking...from the Word of God in public...It is a [horrible] error of some ministers, who make such a disproportion between their preaching and their living; who study hard to preach exactly, and study little to not at all to live exactly...Oh how [greatly] have I heard some men preach and how carelessly have I seen them live! (3)

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, Rev. and expanded (Littleton, Colo: Lewis and Roth Publishers, 1995), 20.

<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur, Richard Mayhue, and Robert L. Thomas, *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry: Shaping Contemporary Ministry with Biblical Mandates* (Dallas: Word Pub, 1995), 339.

<sup>3</sup> Edited By William Brown, *The Reformed Pastor: Richard Baxter* (Edinburgh; Carlisle, Pa: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 63–64.