



Sermon Text: Acts 20:28

Sermon Date: February 5, 2017

This Sunday, as we appointed elders for the first time in the life of our church, Pastor Justin gave them a charge from Acts 20:28. In this text, Paul is speaking to the elders of the church of Ephesus, pressing upon them the responsibility of their ministry. From verse 28, Pastor Justin emphasized four points.

1. **AN URGENT TASK.** *“Pay careful attention...”* The first command Paul includes in his speech to the elders is a call for a continuous state of readiness—vigilant watchfulness. An elder’s task is urgent. He is tasked to protect the church from real, deadly dangers (false teachers and division) that will assault the flock. In order to pay careful attention to the church, an elder must keep close watch of his own spiritual life.
2. **A DIVINE APPOINTMENT.** *“... in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers...”* Paul stresses that the elders have been divinely appointed by God. Pastor Justin thinks Paul did so for two reasons. First, this truth gives confidence to the intimidated elder who could be tempted to shrink back from the hard task of teaching, admonishing, correcting, and rebuking. Second, this truth must promote humility if an elder is tempted to grow domineering and abusive. God has appointed them, so they must remember their accountability to Him for the way they lead the church.
3. **A SACRED PURPOSE.** *“... to care for the church of God...”* Once again, Paul is emphasizing God’s divine ownership of the church. The church belongs to God. And He entrusts to elders the sacred purpose of caring for His people—shepherding them with love and care.
4. **A PRICELESS ASSIGNMENT.** *“... which he obtained with his own blood.”* As if he had not already intensified the solemnity of the elder’s responsibility, Paul raises the stakes even higher. Jesus shed his priceless blood to purchase every single Christian within the church! The church is incomprehensibly precious to God. Elders must regularly remind themselves of the weighty glory of their task.

Although Pastor Justin spent most of his time speaking specifically to the elders, he concluded the message with two points of application for the church. How does this text apply to the entire church?

1. **Recognize the reality of danger.** It is amazing that Paul presses home the importance of the elder’s task by emphasizing the reality of danger. In this season of transition, we must recognize that real danger confronts our church. Therefore, we all must be on guard to protect the always fragile unity and harmony of the church.
2. **See your need for spiritual oversight.** If God commands elders to do something—exercise spiritual oversight—He is also requiring the church to submit to that thing. In Hebrews 13:17 it says, *“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”* One way to let the elders do their task with joy and not with groaning is by gladly submitting to their care.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you from the sermon and the biblical text from this Sunday?
2. In what ways can you recognize the reality of danger confronting our church in this season of transition? How can you help “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ep 4:3)?
3. Look at Hebrews 13:17. What sticks out to you about this verse? How can you let the elders keep watch over you with joy and not with groaning? Why is a ‘groaning’ elder of no advantage to you?