

# DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

*Verses & Notes April 11, 2007*

*Acts 20:28-32*

- 28: Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock,  
in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers,  
to care for the Church of God  
which he obtained with the blood of his own Son.
- 29: I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you,  
not sparing the flock;
- 30: and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things,  
to draw away the disciples after them.
- 31: Therefore be alert,  
remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day  
to admonish every one with tears.
- 32: And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace,  
which is able to build you up  
and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

## INTRODUCTION:

- From the very beginning, the enemy—the devil—has tried to stop the message of the Gospel—"the Word of His grace"—from spreading. During the life of Jesus, the enemy hardened the hearts of the very religious leaders who should have understood from the prophesies of scripture who Jesus was and why he came, but instead they turned away and had him crucified. After the resurrection of Jesus, sin, death, and the devil were defeated, yet the enemy refused to give up. He continued his war against God, doing everything he could to stop the proclamation of the good news. And one way he did this was by sending into the Church wolves in sheep clothing, men in the guise of faithful, trustworthy Christian leaders, yet who taught a false, incomplete gospel. This is what we will be discussing today on **Deep In Scripture**.

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- Welcome ... website / phone numbers / special:
- Preparing for our study of Ephesians:
  - Looking at the historical biblical background to understand why Paul wrote his letter to the believers in and around Ephesus.
  - So far, we have examined the spiritual development of the believers in Ephesus, and how this compares to our own spiritual development;
- Several weeks ago, we began looking at St. Paul's final message to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20 as he met with them on his journey back to Jerusalem...
- Last week, we looked at verse 28 in which St. Paul gave six points of instruction to the bishops he had appointed to watch over the flock in Ephesus, and we considered how these apply not just to bishops but to us:
  - 1.** They must take care of themselves; **[So must we!]**
  - 2.** Then, of course, they must then take of the flock; **[We are called to "love others as ourselves..."]**
  - 3.** They must take care of ALL of the flock; **[Who are the difficult people in our lives?]**
  - 4.** They must remember that they are a part of and from the flock; **[We must not be just "Jesus & me" Christians! We are part of the family of God.]**
  - 5.** They must remember that they did not achieve their leadership position on their own; it was given to them; they were made bishops by the Holy Spirit; **[Each one of us received what**

***we are & what we have & what we have to give as a gift of God's grace.]***

6. They must remember the seriousness of their calling: they are called to care for "the Church the Church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son." ***[We must never forget the seriousness of our own calling and the Church for which Christ died!]***
- This week, beginning with verse 29, we'll consider St. Paul's words of warning: these early bishops, as well as us today, must be vigilant for false teachers in the Church!
  - Read text, starting with verse 29...

## **BREAK**

**29: *I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;***

**30: *and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.***

- "I know": A certainty from his experience, observations, and insight; (Jn
- "after my departure": His presence is a barrier to the oncoming evil; therefore his melancholy!
- "Fierce wolves": Common scriptural image of false leaders / teachers:
  - Ezekiel 22:23-31
    - [23] And the word of the LORD came to me:*
    - [24] "Son of man, say to her, You are a land that is not cleansed, or rained upon in the day of indignation.*
    - [25] Her princes in the midst of her are like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured human lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in the midst of her.*
    - [26] Her priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things; they have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded my sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.*
    - [27] Her princes in the midst of her are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain.*
    - [28] And her prophets have daubed for them with whitewash, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' when the LORD has not spoken.*
    - [29] The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery; they have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the sojourner without redress.*
    - [30] And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none.*
    - [31] Therefore I have poured out my indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath; their way have I requited upon their heads, says the Lord GOD."*
  - Jesus warned his disciples to watch for "wolves": Luke 10:1-3
    - [1] After this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to come.*
    - [2] And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.*
    - [3] Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.*
- From without and within!
- "Not sparing the flock" ... not really caring about their welfare!
- "speaking perverse things" ... literally distortions; NAB = "perverting the truth;" twisting the truth to cause schism.
- Proven to come true in biblical drama:
  - St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians, 1:6-9
    - 6: I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel --*
    - 7: not that there is another gospel, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.*
    - 8: But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed.*
    - 9: As we have said before, so now I say again, If any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.*

- St. John gives witness to this problem in Ephesus! 1 Jn 2:18-27
  - 18: *Children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come; therefore we know that it is the last hour.*
  - 19: *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out, that it might be plain that they all are not of us.*
  - 20: *But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all know.*
  - 21: *I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and know that no lie is of the truth.*
  - 22: *Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.*
  - 23: *No one who denies the Son has the Father. He who confesses the Son has the Father also.*
  - 24: *Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father.*
  - 25: *And this is what he has promised us, eternal life.*
  - 26: *I write this to you about those who would deceive you;*
  - 27: *but the anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that any one should teach you; as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him.*
- And we especially see the sad proof of this warning in the Apocalypse, 2:1-7
  1. *"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.*
  2. *"I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear evil men but have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and found them to be false;*
  3. *I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.*
  4. *But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.*
  5. *Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.*
  6. *Yet this you have, you hate the works of the Nicola'itans, which I also hate.*
  7. *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'*
- Later we hear of this from St. Iganitius of Antioch, Letter to the Ephesians:
  - CHAP. VII.--BEWARE OF FALSE TEACHERS.  
*For there are some who make a practice of carrying about the Name [of Jesus Christ] with wicked guile, and do other things unworthy of God; these you must shun as wild beasts, for they are ravening dogs, who bite secretly, and you must be upon your guard against them, for they are scarcely to be cured...*
  - CHAP. VIII.--RENEWED PRAISE OF THE EPHESIANS.  
*Let none therefore deceive you, and indeed you have not been deceived, but belong wholly to God...*
  - CHAP. IX.--YE HAVE GIVEN NO HEED TO FALSE TEACHERS.  
*I have learnt, however, that some from elsewhere have stayed with you, who have evil doctrine; but you did not suffer them to sow it among you, and stopped your ears, so that you might not receive what they sow...*

**31: Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.**

**32: And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.**

- Given what he has forewarned, he concludes:
  1. Be watchful, alert; do not become complacent!!!
  2. Remember & imitate me! I have prepared you, not once but many times!
  3. Remember my tearful admonition: Why? He knew all along this day would come!
  4. (Like Jesus) Remember, you are not left alone (Jn 14-16):
    - Commends them into God's care
    - & the apostolic message of Grace, which is able to build them up ; give them the strength they need;
      - Give them an inheritance!
        1. A gift of grace
        2. (pf ptc pass) made holy amongst the holy.