**BIBLE - DANGERS THAT CONFRONT THE CHURCH**

***ACTS 20:28-32 – TEXT***

**INTRODUCTION**- In our lesson we will consider today we want to examine some dangers that confront the church today. We want to sound the warnings so we will be aware of these dangers and be careful, watchful, and very cautious to not allow the church to become spotted and defiled. We must be alert!!! Paul spoke to the elders of Ephesus and warning them of dangers that would confront the church - **ACTS 20:28-32 - *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. 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. 31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. 32 So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.***

Why did Paul warn these elders of the oncoming dangers? Paul did this simply because he wanted them to be watchful and alerted to the dangers that confronted the church at Ephesus.

***DANGERS TO THE CHURCH TODAY:***

1. **CONTENTEDNESS** – We have polarized views when it comes to contentment.
   1. **AMOS 6:1** – Christians today are guilty of the same sin that condemned Israel we are content with our lack of spiritual commitment and we think just as they did that because we are prosperous and strong militarily as a nation then God must be well pleased with us. Israel was prosperous economically but spiritually they were bankrupt. ***Woe to you who are at ease in Zion, And trust in Mount Samaria****,* ***Notable persons in the chief nation,***
   2. **2 TIM. 4:3-4** – Oftentimes the very people who are content with their perceived “faithfulness” in their service to God are not content with his word of truth. Why is truth so important? ***For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.*** Why is truth so important?
   3. **EPH. 4:15** – In order for us to grow up in Christ we must speak and follow the truth. ***but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--***
   4. **1 TIM. 6:6-11** – Many are not content with their material possessions in the Lord’s church. Paul instructed Timothy to learn to be content. ***Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.***
   5. **PHIL. 4:11** – Paul was not instructing Timothy to do something he did not practice in his life. ***Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:***
2. **APATHY** – Lack of emotion, indifference, without feeling
   1. **REV. 3:14-22** – Example of the church at Laodiciea –The Christians there were lukewarm they could care less about spiritual matter and it made God sick. Because of apathy they did not use the word of God as their standard for their conduct but viewed themselves as OK. ***"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'--and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked-- 18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. 21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." ' "***
   2. **LUKE 10:30-37** – Indifference will cause to see those in need of the gospel and just walk on by. ***Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. 33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' 36 So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" 37 And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."***
   3. **1 COR. 15:58** – Instead of apathy we need energy. - ***Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.***
   4. **1 JN. 1:7-10** –We cannot be apathetic toward our sin if we do so we deceive ourselves and will not repent and confess. ***But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***
3. **SYMPATHY** – To share the sentiments, feelings, or ideas of another.
   1. **2 PET. 3:14-18** – Peter clearly states we cannot be sympathetic toward error and we need to be watchful so we will not be lead away with the error of the wicked. We can only share in the sentiments of truth. ***Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; 15 and account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation--as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. 17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.***
   2. **PSA. 119:104** – We cannot share the feeling or ideas of a false teacher - ***Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.***
   3. **JAMES 5:19-20** – Those headed away from truth must be turned back - ***Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.***
4. **EMPATHY** – To regard.
   1. **2 PET. 2:1-3, 18-19** – We cannot hold in regard those who teach error – It does not matter the reputation or name of a person in question what matters is what they teach. ***But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. VS 18-19 -For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. 19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption;*** for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.
   2. **MATT. 7:15** – Jesus warned of false prophets who would be as ravenous wolves – dangerous. Do not hold them in regard. ***"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.***
   3. **1 TIM. 6:3-5** – Paul warns Timothy to be very careful. ***If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, 4 he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, 5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.***
   4. **REV**. **2:2** – Commends church in Ephesus - ***"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;***
5. **CONFORMING TO DENOMINATIONS** –
   1. **1 SAM. 8:5-7, 19** - The initial problem that ultimately led to the downfall of Israel was their decision to have a king so they would be like the other nations. and said to him, "***Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the LORD. 7 And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.* VS.19 *-Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No, but we will have a king over us,***
   2. **ACTS 28:22** – Many are willing to conform because they do not want to be spoken against. The church and its members were spoken against in the 1st century. ***But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere."***
   3. **2 COR. 6:14-17** – We cannot be yoked, agree or have fellowship with darkness = denominations – Read letter from church in Destin. ***Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." 17 Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."***
   4. **MARK 15:15** - Denominations wish to satisfy the multitudes. Pilate did not want to be opposed by the Jews. ***So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.***
   5. **JER. 6:16** – We do not need to conform to the denominations but rather implore them to return to the good way. ***Thus says the LORD: "Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'***
6. **MATERIALISM AND WORLDLY MINDEDNESS** –
   1. **MATT. 6:26-33** – Too many Christians today have an undue concern for worldly riches and this poses a great danger to the church. ***Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 28 So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 "For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.***
   2. **1 TIM. 6:17-19** – The problem becomes a danger to the church when we trust in riches instead of God. ***Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.***
   3. **LUKE 12:15-21** – The parable of the rich man. And He said to them, ***"Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." 16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." ' 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' 21 So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."***
   4. **ROM. 8:5-6** – What is one of the main reasons we walk after the flesh and have a carnal mind – materialism and being worldly minded. ***For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace****.*
   5. **COL. 3:2** – We need to have the proper priorities or the church will be in danger. ***Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.***
   6. **2 COR. 8:1-5** – Notice the good accomplished by the Christians in Macedonia because they had the right attitude toward their worldly goods. ***Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: 2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. 3 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, 4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 5 And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.***
7. **IGNORANCE** –
   1. **HOSEA 4:1-6** – The church is in danger because we have not been as diligent in the study of God’s word as we should be. Members of the church used to be known as walking bibles. It is not that we do not have access to knowledge but rather that we reject it. ***Hear the word of the LORD, You children of Israel, For the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land:" There is no truth or mercy Or knowledge of God in the land. 2 By swearing and lying, Killing and stealing and committing adultery, They break all restraint, With bloodshed upon bloodshed. 3 Therefore the land will mourn; And everyone who dwells there will waste away With the beasts of the field And the birds of the air; Even the fish of the sea will be taken away. 4 "Now let no man contend, or rebuke another; For your people are like those who contend with the priest. 5 Therefore you shall stumble in the day; The prophet also shall stumble with you in the night; And I will destroy your mother. 6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.***
   2. **ACTS 20:17, 28-30** - The corruption of the organizational structure of the structure of the church was a result of rejecting knowledge. The early church had a plurality of elders. ***From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.* VS – 28-30 *- 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. 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.***
   3. **1 PET. 5:1-2** – Not only was it a plurality but they only oversaw the work of the church which they were shepherding. The corruption of God’s knowledge in regard to his organizational plan led to the first denomination coming into existence the Roman Catholic church. ***The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;***
   4. **EPH. 3:10-11** – The church is the manifold wisdom of God. The fact is there are only three institutions approved by God – the family, the government and the church. God equipped the church to do every work he intended for it to do – evangelism, edification and limited benevolence - needy saints. ***to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,***

**CONCLUSION** –

Are we watching and aware of the dangers that confront the church today? Are we alert?