

Acts 20 - Be On Guard (Week 4): How to become a wolf

1. Introduction

- a. Ever look back on your life and wonder, “How did I get here?”
 - i. Those “don’t get cable” commercials
 - ii. Slow fade → families, churches, lives don’t explode overnight
 - iii. How do we get there? How do churches get there?
 - iv. Today we are going to discuss this idea and how we can be on guard
- b. Set the stage w/ Paul heading back towards Jerusalem, rounds up the Ephesian elders to warn them.
- c. *I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. (Acts 20:29-30 ESV)*
- d. That’s where we are headed - that’s the inevitable problem Paul described
- e. We want to look at HOW you get to that point → “How to become a wolf”
 - i. How do you recognize a wolf, what are the compromises that a person makes to become a wolf
 - ii. 6 warning signs = a person could hit all seven or just one
 - iii. So we can be on guard as a church and as individuals

2. Acts 20:20-21, I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

- a. Wolves don’t teach salvation by faith
 - i. Many people teach that salvation is found in Jesus + Something, but **Jesus + Nothing = Everything**
 - ii. True faith results in good works → know them by their fruit, test yourself
 - iii. Works come after faith, not before.
 - iv. **The Gospel says that you are saved from works to do good works**
- b. Wolves don’t teach repentance
 - i. Repentance and faith do go hand in hand → two sides to same coin
 - ii. Repentance defined = turning (picture of repentance for slide)
 - iii. To repent means you stop trusting in your idol (self, false god, etc)
 - iv. You can’t have saving faith without repentance!
 - v. **The Gospel demands that you turn from your life of idolatry to Jesus**

3. Acts 20:22-24, And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

- a. Wolves make the Gospel about prosperity and not sacrifice
 - i. I would love to tell you that if you come to Jesus you will get...
 1. And people would come, Revolve would grow. People like to get their ears tickled

- 2. But it would all be a lie and not the true Gospel!
- ii. God does bless people, but the Gospel is not a meal ticket
- iii. This idea is grounded in bad interpretation of the OT covenants
- iv. So to Mr. Osteen and others, I say this: **If the Gospel you preach isn't true all over the world, then it isn't the Gospel**
- v. Jesus, the man of suffering, never talked about an easy rode...
 - 1. Let the dead bury the dead...sell all you have...carry your cross
 - 2. What does it profit a man to gain the whole world?
 - 3. To Paul: I will show you how much you must suffer...
- vi. All this is worth it because of the true abundant life of the "Good News"
- vii. The Gospel demands you lose your life to gain it**
- 4. **Acts 20:26-27, Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.**
 - a. Wolves pick and choose what they like from the Bible or don't study it at all.
 - i. Jesus Seminars - verse by verse throwing things out
 - ii. People in our culture do this → you might do it too
 - 1. Don't like what Jesus has to say about money, marriage, sexual purity, following governmental authority, forgiving others, etc
 - iii. We are called to submit ourselves to the Bible
 - 1. **2 Timothy 3:16-17, All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**
 - iv. The Gospel defines you. You don't define the Gospel.**
 - 5. **Acts 20:28, Pay careful attention 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 his own blood.**
 - a. Wolves abuse their leadership
 - i. There was a vast difference between the way that Jesus led and the way the leaders of Jesus day led.
 - ii. Leaders of the world use their position to maintain advantage over those they lead (c.f. politics, a bad boss/manager, etc)
 - iii. Jesus placed himself in a position of weakness and was completely humble with his disciples
 - iv. Although he could have demanded of the world, he humbled himself and became their servant
 - v. The Gospel calls for servant leaders willing to die**
 - b. Wolves refuse to submit to authority
 - i. We have another word for this - rebels
 - 1. Rebellious spirit, it's the American Way
 - 2. Many Christians take pride in the idea of not submitting to authority
 - 3. Manifested in:

- a. Passive aggressive behavior (easier to ask forgiveness than to ask permission)
 - b. Being the overseer of the overseers
 - c. Stick it to the man - always disagree w/ leadership
 - ii. How do you know if you are rebellious?
 - 1. You don't want to ask a leader for advice/opinion at all
 - 2. If you do you just ignore it and not trust him/her anyway
 - iii. The Gospel calls you to humble yourself and submit to authority**
 - 1. And if the authority is leading as a servant, that shouldn't be scary
- 6. *Acts 20:29-30, I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.*
 - a. Wolves fracture the church and cause disunity
 - i. The inevitable consequence from these behaviors is disunity
 - ii. Disunity, rooted in arrogance and pride, comes when people care more about themselves than the body of Christ
 - 1. My preference, my opinion, my view
 - iii. People who cause disunity assume the worst about others rather than beginning in a place of trust**
 - 1. They don't go the extra mile to see why a decision has been made
 - iv. They gossip, they backstab, they bicker and fight
 - v. Wolves target the weak and the stragglers, so as you fracture the church you create more food for other wolves
 - vi. The Gospel unifies across all borders**
 - 1. Unifies us to God & to one another as members of the same body
- 7. The solution to all these things is to cling to the Gospel → to live a life that revolves around the cross
 - a. You need to be on guard against all of these things lest you become a wolf
 - b. How? By **clinging to the Gospel**. By clinging to the Cross.
 - i. The Gospel calls us to repent
 - ii. The Gospel calls us to trust in Christ through faith
 - iii. The Gospel calls us to die to self & sacrifice
 - iv. The Gospel calls us to accept the revelation of God (Bible)
 - v. The Gospel calls us humble ourselves as leaders
 - vi. The Gospel calls us to submit to authority as people
 - vii. The Gospel calls us to fight for unity
 - c. The answer is the Gospel...and what is the Gospel?
 - i. Explain the Gospel
 - ii. The Gospel isn't just for that moment of salvation when you first surrender
 - iii. It is also for the way you live your life today
 - iv. Whether you've followed Jesus for a minute or for a lifetime, you need the Gospel
 - d. Cling to the Gospel - Be on guard lest you become a wolf**