

## CHURCH, "BE ON THE ALERT"

### A. Danger is a part of life.

1. There are warning labels on the products we buy, because there is some danger associated with the use or misuse of them.
2. Recently, we had weather alerts warning us of the dangers of hazardous weather.
3. We are aware of potential dangers as we travel by various means.

### B. The Holy Spirit has also warned us that the church that we will face many dangers: Drifting away; False teachers; Corrupt elders

#### Hebrews 2:1-4

1 For this reason [Jesus is God the Son, chapter one] we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, **so that we do not drift away from it.** 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, 3 **how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?** After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, 4 God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

#### 1 John 4:1, 6

1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because **many false prophets have gone out into the world.** 6 We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

#### Acts 20:28-30

28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for 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 I know that after my departure **savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;** 30 and from among your own selves **men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.**

### 1. How do these dangers affect us?

- a. They affect what we believe; believing the truth is vital to salvation (John 8:31-32).
- b. Secondly, these dangers (drifting away, false teaching, corrupt leadership) affect our unity; we are commanded to be unified in what we believe, to NOT be unified is a work of the flesh (1 Cor 1:10; Gal 5:21).
- c. So ultimately spiritual dangers affect our soul's eternal salvation (Gal 5:19-21)

### C. So what can we do about these spiritual dangers?

1. Jesus and His apostles gave us the same answer to that question.

Mark 13:37

37 "What I say to you I say to all, '**Be on the alert!**'"

Acts 20:31-32

31 "**Therefore be on the alert**, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each 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.

[The eternal inheritance is what we lose if we are not alert to the spiritual dangers around us and how to avoid them or overcome them.

Well, it would be helpful - then - to know **what are some of these dangers are**.

And that's the purpose of this lesson.]

I. EMPTY PREACHING (soft peddling truth)

- A. When we hear the word "preaching" we may think of it with a negative view.

1. Someone says, "Don't preach at me!" When someone is simply trying to offer some good advice.

- B. But what is "preaching" really, from its description in the Word of God?

1. Preaching is proclaiming the Word of God.

1 Peter 4:11

11 **Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God**; ~~whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies~~; **so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ**, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

2 Timothy 4:2

2 **preach the word**; be ready **in season and out of season**; reprove [reprimand, express disapproval], rebuke [censure, correct severely] exhort [spur on, encourage] with great patience and instruction.

2. Preaching is proclaiming sound doctrine, which is truth.

2 Timothy 4:3-5

3 For the time will come when they will not endure **sound doctrine**; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from **the truth** and will turn aside to myths. 5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

3. Preaching is proclaiming a distinctive message of truth.

1 John 4:6

6 We are from God; **he who knows God listens to us**; he who is not from God does not listen to us. **By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.** [John implies a preacher]

C. It should be obvious then, the point at which preaching becomes empty.

1. Preaching becomes empty when there is little or no scripture is used.
2. Preaching is empty when the emphasis of the message is on what a man wants to say, rather than on what God wants us to teach.
  - a. Storytelling and comedy.
  - b. That may be reason for Paul injunction to Timothy.

1 Timothy 4:13

13 Until I come, **give attention to the public reading of Scripture**, to exhortation and teaching.

3. Empty preaching is often well received by many audiences in the religious community, because there is no distinctive challenge issued that we must obey God to be saved.

a. Let it be known early, as we discuss this topic, that the true church of our Lord preaches a message that is distinctive from the sectarian denominational community.

4. Empty preaching may come across vague or difficult to apply in your life; it may sound very scholarly.
5. It may have a social or political objective: community needs or advocating a party.
6. Empty preaching is not always dangerous for what is said; it's dangerous - most often - for what is NOT said (concerning matters that God expects us to understand).
  - a. A lot of Scripture can be preached, understood, appreciated, and rejoiced in, but if the preaching never identifies "the sin that so easily ensnares [entangles] us" (Heb 12:1), or the false doctrines that prevail among religious people...

...then we are in danger of falling prey to sin, AND to being led away from the truth of God's word by false teachers.

- D. All empty preaching has the effect of robbing the gospel of its power to redeem us from sin and to save us eternally (Rom 1:16-17).

James 1:21

21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, ***in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.***

1. The result of empty preaching will always be: weak/unstable Christians and churches.

[Well, let's take this a step further. Empty preaching will lead to another danger facing the church.]

## II. WORLDLINESS

### A. What is the world?

1. The world is the whole round of human activity that is NOT rooted in the desire to know and to do the will of God. (God is not in their vocabulary)
2. And when a person does not want to do the will of God, his actions follow his lusts.

Romans 12:1-2

12 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And ***do not be conformed to this world***, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you

may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

1 John 2:15-17

15 ***Do not love the world nor the things in the world.*** If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the ***lust*** of the flesh and the ***lust*** of the eyes and the ***boastful pride*** of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

2 Timothy 2:22

22 Now ***flee from youthful lusts*** and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

- B. Worldliness is the participation in the sins that are common in the world; sins that are identified in the Word of God.

1. We could make a long list couldn't we?

- a. Uncovering the body or immodest dress
- b. Getting high on drink or drug
- c. Dancing; stirring up unholy thoughts
- d. Live-in arrangements between the unmarried
- e. A love for unwholesome entertainment
- f. A lack of respect for [parental] authority
- g. Envy, Bitterness, Hatred
- h. Divorce
- i. Greed or materialism

- Worldliness contains such an extensive list of sins that Paul couldn't even make a complete list.

Galatians 5:21

21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and **things like these**, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that **those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God**.

- C. So what are the signs that plain old worldliness is becoming a problem to the local church?

It goes back to empty preaching doesn't it?

1. When there is little or no preaching against the sin of worldliness, then there will be an ever present danger facing **that** church.

2 Timothy 4:2

**2 preach the word**; be ready **in season and out of season**; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12

11 just as you know how we were **exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you** as a father would his own children, 12 so that you would **walk in a manner worthy of the God** who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

2. A second indication that worldliness has become a problem to the church is when those who participate in those things we mentioned are left alone and nothing is ever said to them about their sin.

1 Thessalonians 5:14

14 We urge you, brethren, **admonish the unruly**, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

Titus 1:12-13

12 ...a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." 13 This testimony is true. For this reason **reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith**,

3. A third indication that worldliness has become a problem to the church is when there is so much worldliness allowed to remain in the church that the members cannot avoid being entangled in it.

2 Thessalonians 3:6

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you **keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life** and not according to the tradition which you received from us.

1 Corinthians 5:11

11 But actually, **I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother** if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler — not even to eat with such a one. (cf. 1 Cor 15:33)

Romans 16:17

17 Now I urge you, brethren, **keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them**.

[There is a third danger of which we need to "be on the alert".]

III. TOLERATING ERROR (false teaching)

A. The word “tolerant” has many definitions.

1. **“A disposition to allow freedom of choice and behavior.”**

- a. We are tolerant of children, because we don’t expect them to act like adults.
- b. We also have to be tolerant of people, in general, knowing that they have a legal right to do many things we wish they wouldn’t do.
  - And we can disallow freedoms in our children - which we cannot in adults.

[But a second meaning of “tolerant” gets to point we want to make.]

2. **“A willingness to recognize and respect the beliefs or practices of others.”**

- a. It’s one thing to know that people have a right to their own views and behavior.

- b. But it’s quite another matter to show that we agree what everyone believes and practices.

B. Paul WOULD NOT have been considered “tolerant” **in our day**. Turn to Acts 17.

- 1. Paul was NOT tolerant with the beliefs and practices of the Philosophers in Athens.
- 2. He was not mean spirited or violent towards them; he was not verbally abusive, but neither was he tolerant of their views.
- 3. Paul was not broadminded about the world’s religious views; if he had been, they might have concluded that he agreed with some of their philosophies.

Acts 17:22-32

22 So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. 23 For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' **Therefore what you worship in ignorance**, this I proclaim to you. 24 The **God** who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, **does not dwell in temples made with hands**; 25 **nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything**, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; 26 and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 27 that they would seek God,

if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as ***even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'*** 29 Being then the children of God, ***we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.*** 30 ***Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance,*** God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." 32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, ***some began to sneer,*** but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this."

C. Religious error is dangerous to everyone, but especially to the church.

1. That's why there are so many warnings against allowing error or untruth to infiltrate the local church (1 Cor 15:33; Rom 16:17-18; 2 Tim 2:16-18; 2 Thess 2:10-12).

Hebrews 13:9

***9 Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings;***

2. But, still, error finds its way into the church.

***a. Some error comes in under the cover of opinion.***

- In Romans 14, Paul said we have a right to our judgments, where God has not clearly spoken, we just don't have a right to advance our opinions at the expense of others (14:13).

***b. Some error comes in under the cover of prominent and respected men.***

Romans 16:17-19 (2 Pet 2:1)

***17 Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.*** 18 For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. 19 ~~For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you,~~ but ***I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.***

- Now, just because a person claims to be honest in what they teach does not mean that he is not teaching error.
- There are many people claiming to be honest and sincere who teach error:
  - 1) Sins forgiven before baptism
  - 2) No sin can cause you to be lost
  - 3) Adulterers can remarry
  - 4) Women can be shepherds
  - 5) Add instruments/dance to worship
  - 6) Same gender marriage

[There is a fourth danger facing the church.]

#### IV. FAILING TO FOLLOW GOD'S FAMILY LAWS

A. A local church is only as strong as the families that make it up.

1. Every relationship within the family has been turned upside down by our culture.

a. **Husbands** often don't give enough consideration as to how Christ loves and leads the church to know how they should relate to their wives.

Ephesians 5:25-29

**25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,** 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but **that she would be holy and blameless.** 28 **So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies.** He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but **nourishes and cherishes it,** just as Christ also does the church,

b. **Wives** may only follow the lead of their husbands to the degree that it does not interfere with their goals.

Ephesians 5:22-24

**22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.** 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. **24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.**

c. **Children** seem to honor and obey themselves above all else.

Ephesians 6:1-3

**6 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.** 2 HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), 3 SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.

d. **Parents** set secular goals for their children, and are often more elated when they achieve those goals than if they had been done something for the Lord, His cause and His church.

Ephesians 6:4

4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but **bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.**

2. When these things happen, the church doesn't have a leg to stand on.



- a. Elders, deacons, preachers and teachers of God’s word cannot be taught, trained and developed under those conditions.
- b. So churches become weak and vulnerable to attack from false teachers.

B. The ideal situation is that the children sitting on these seats will take the places of their father and mothers (either here or in some other faithful congregation).

1. Too often our children leave home and digress in faith rather than progress.

2. **How can you tell if a child is progressing in faith?**

*Simple, they will be showing more of an interest in serving and helping their parents and their fellow Christians, regardless of age, in the congregation.*

That goes for all of us doesn’t it?

Galatians 5:13

13 For **you were called to freedom, brethren**; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but **through love serve one another**.

1 Thessalonians 4:9-10

9 Now **as to the love of the brethren**, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10 for indeed **you do practice it toward all the brethren** who are in all Macedonia. **But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more**,

- 3. Let’s see if, by the grace of God, we can cause that to happen in next generation sitting here today.
- 4. Let’s devote ourselves to prayer and to a deep devotion to our Lord’s service.
- 5. Let’s don’t plan to fail - by - failing to plan for their spiritual education.
- 6. Let’s teach them how to respect the authority of Jesus Christ and the New Testament.
- 7. When they learn how to do that, then they will have respect for God and for you and for His church.
- 8. God will give the increase if we will commit ourselves to that great work.

[There is a fifth danger of which we need to “be on the alert.”]

V. CONFUSING EDIFICATION W/ EXCITEMENT -- FELLOWSHIP W/ FUN

A. Let's start out by saying that edification is the result or the consequence of fellowship.

1. **Strong's:** In Paul's language, "edification" was a compound word meaning: the base of -- architecture, a structure (Strong's).

**Thayer's:** *The act of building, or constructing a building.*

1 Corinthians 14:1-5

14 Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. 2 For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries [unless he is able to interpret or someone is present to interpret, 12:30; 14:13; 14:27]. 3 ***But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.*** 4 One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; ***but one who prophesies edifies the church.*** 5 Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, ***so that the church may receive edifying.***

1 Corinthians 14:10-12

10 There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. 11 If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me. 12 ***So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.***

1 Corinthians 14:26

26 ~~What is the outcome then, brethren?~~ When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. ***Let all things be done for edification.***

2. Those passages refer to teachers within the church giving instruction from the Holy Spirit to the church.
3. But the word "edification" also refers to speaking words of comfort, acceptance and encouragement to others.

Romans 15:1-3

15 Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. 2 ***Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.*** 3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME."

Ephesians 4:29

29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, ***but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment,*** so that it will give grace to those who hear.

B. The word "fellowship" is also used several times in the NT.

1. **Strong's:** In Paul's language, "fellowship" meant: : partnership, participation, or social interaction, or benefaction (pecuniary: involving money).

2. And while the Greek word Paul used had a wide meaning in his day, we are interested in how that word is used in the NT.

Acts 2:42

42 ***They were continually devoting themselves*** to the apostles' teaching and to ***fellowship***, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

1 Corinthians 1:9

9 ***God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son***, Jesus Christ our Lord.

2 Corinthians 6:14

14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or ***what fellowship has light with darkness?***

2 Corinthians 13:14

14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and ***the fellowship of the Holy Spirit***, be with you all.

Galatians 2:8-9

8 (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), 9 and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, ***James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship***, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

Philippians 2:1

2 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, ***if there is any fellowship of the Spirit***, if any affection and compassion,

Philippians 3:10

10 ***that I may know*** Him and the power of His resurrection ***and the fellowship of His sufferings***, being conformed to His death;

Philem 4-7

4 I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers, 5 because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints; 6 ***and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake***. 7 For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.

1 John 1:3

3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, ***so that you too may have fellowship with us***; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:6-7

6 ***If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth***; 7 but ***if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another***, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

C. What is our purpose in reading all these passages?

1. To point out that ***edification*** IS NOT another word for excitement.
  - a. We may say things like, "That song service was so *edifying*" when we really mean that it moved us emotionally.

b. Now we can be edified, too, by the words of the hymns; but edification is not merely an emotional high.

2. Another purpose in reading those passages is to point out that **fellowship** IS NOT another word for fun.

a. We may say things like, “Potlucks give us a chance to fellowship one another.”

b. And while that use of the word fits into the general meaning of the Greek word, the NT writers used the term “fellow-ship” in the context of our spiritual connection to God to one another.

3. A church’s **fellowship** (joint participation in the body) is for the purpose of **edification** (building up the faith of each member of the body).

[Finally, there is one other danger facing the church today to which we must be alert.]

## VI. COMPROMISING SCRIPTURE WITH DARWINIAN EVOLUTION

A. Many have tried, in vain, to reconcile God’s description of His creation (Genesis) with scientific theory.

Earth: 4.5 Billion years

Dinosaurs: 250 Million years

Modern man: 195 Thousand years

1. **Gap theory:** a long expanse of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:3.

2. **Day age theory:** each day of creation represents a long expanse of time.

3. **Day + gap theory:** a long expanse of time between each day.

B. What are the consequences of trying to reconcile all science with God’s word?

1. If we do that, then the remainder of Genesis suspect to figurative interpretation.

2. It calls into question the accuracy of God’s revelation to man.

3. It certainly undermines our faith in Him.

C. What did Moses write in Genesis?

1. In Genesis one, Moses wrote that an evening and a morning was a single day.

Genesis 1:5 (1:8, 13, 19, 23, 31)

5 God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. **And there was evening and there was morning, one day.**

2. The work week for the Jews was parallel to the creation week.

Exodus 31:16-17

16 'So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.' 17 It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; **for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed.**"

3. There was not great elapse of time between the days of creation; it happened as quickly as it took for God to speak the words.

Psalms 33:6-9

**6 By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host.** 7 He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deeps in storehouses. 8 Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. 9 **For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.**

4. Adam was placed upon the earth from the very beginning of time.

Mark 10:2-9

2 Some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing Him, and began to question Him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife. 3 And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?" 4 They said, "Moses permitted a man TO WRITE A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY." 5 But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. 6 **But from the beginning of creation, God MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE.** 7 FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, 8 AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

CLOSING

- A. What we have discussed in this series certainly does not represent all the dangers facing the church, but most dangers will fit into the main points mentioned.

1. All dangers can be avoided if we will learn to "be on the alert" (Acts 20:30-31).