

**Protected**  
Acts 20:27-31  
Dr. Paul Cannings

**A. The Sword (vs. 27):**

1. I did not shrink – Paul purposefully did not withhold, conceal, or withdraw himself from providing to the elders all they needed to know.
  - a) Declaring the whole counsel of God goes back to Jesus speaking first after God said to Peter “that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God”. It starts and ends here with the Spirit illuminating the path forward.
2. Declaring - To declare means to provide a considerable amount of detail so that the elders are well informed about the Word of God.
3. The whole purpose – The purpose of providing all the Biblical detail Paul shared was to make sure the elders understood the will of God. They needed to understand the intent the Lord had when He wrote the Word.
4. God – The Biblical detail that serves to guide everyone’s life is from the sovereign, eternal God who is Creator of everything.

**B. Guarded (vs. 28):**

1. Be on guard – Elders must make it a habit to pay attention to themselves so that they take heed to any character traits that can damage the ministry.
  - a) Discipleship helps a person to know how to be on guard.
2. Holy Spirit – The source of the attention which the elders provide must come directly from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the only person who can make them overseers. This is why they fasted and prayed in Acts 14:23.
3. Overseer; Shepherd; Guardian – To be an overseer is to preserve the body from attacks of Satan which can only be done when elders are committed to live their lives directed by the Holy Spirit. This brings the “keys”, we discussed in Matthew 16:19 to life. This takes place because of the illumination of the Word that is provided by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10-15).
4. Overseer; Shepherd; Guardian – An overseer is a spiritually maturing man who cares for the Lord’s flock. They are servant leaders because while they provide oversight, they

serve the needs of God's flock (Mark 10:41-44).

5. Shepherd, feed – Shepherding the Lord's church means that the overseers are responsible to guard the church against false doctrine (this is most likely one of the reasons they were provided the whole counsel of the Lord; 1 Timothy 4:1-5), themselves (turning away from the Lord like the elders in the days of Christ) and Satan. They are also responsible to lead the flock as the Lord directs.

- a) The true shepherd knows no dividing line, no factions, loves every sheep, especially the weak and the needy. The lambs as well as the sheep—how often are these neglected! If your heart is not big enough to embrace “all the flock,” it is not big enough to shepherd any of the flock.<sup>[1]</sup>

6. The church of God – The church belongs to Christ because it is a collection of faithful believers gathered as free citizens (Ephesians 2:19) in a public assembly, called by a preacher/pastor to worship Christ. So ‘the church of God’ is not the name of a church it is representative of what Christ said in Matthew 16:17; “flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.” It is this revelation that established the Rock (Christ; 1 Corinthians 10:4) that builds the church which He purchased by His blood.

7. Purchased – God acquired the church by means of the blood of Christ that was shed on Calvary's cross.

8. I know – Paul has a complete divine understanding, from his experiences, that after he leaves the church savage wolves will come in.

9. Savage wolves – Wolves and Satan are similar but are two separate persons. We read of the fulfillment of this prophecy in 1 John 2:18-25; 4:1-3 and Revelation 2:1-7.

- a) Ravenous wolves were talked about by Christ in Matthew 7:15.

10. Savage wolves – The persons who will enter the church are cruel, troublesome, and fierce. An example of this is found in 2 Corinthians 11:4, 12-15, 20.

11. Savage wolves – These persons are viewed as wolves because they view church members as persons they can terrorize (2 Corinthians 11:20). These wolves can be demon possessed (1 Timothy 4:1-2; James 3:13-15; 2 Peter 2:1-3).

- a) False teachers, called savage wolves, would enter the flock, or even some of their own would distort the truth. This warning is attested by subsequent references to the church at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:6–7, 19–20; 4:1–7; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:17–18; 3:1–9; Rev. 2:1–7). Again, Paul urged the leaders, to be on guard! He repeatedly warned them of the danger of doctrinal error. In fact, he did so with tears (cf. Acts 20:19).<sup>[2]</sup>

12. Sparing – These ravenous wolves do not refrain from doing evil and creating trouble in the church.
13. Speaking – These wolves will be very vocal because they are trying to divide the church.
14. Perverse things – The things these wolves are very vocal about is the twisting of the truth. They create diversions away from the actual vision of the church so that they can create their own disciples that they soon lead away from the church (Romans 16:17-18; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; Titus 2:8-11).
15. Draw away – These savage wolves will continually, aggressively seek to pervert believers' convictions so that they pull them away from the church.
16. Disciples – The purpose of these wolves is to make these believers become their followers rather than followers of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:12-15).

### **C. Remain Alert (vs. 31; 1 Peter 5:6-11):**

1. Be on the alert – Leaders are not allowed to be lax in their responsibilities or spiritual development. They must remain watchful, vigilant, and never indifferent about what they need to do to lead and care for the church (1 Peter 5:6-11).
2. Have not cease – Paul never stopped serving and instructing these leaders.
3. Admonish/Instruction – The purpose of the scriptures was fully served when Paul taught these leaders. The scriptures are “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).
4. Admonish/Instruction – They were not only instructed in the full knowledge of God, but they were also corrected when wrong, held accountable, and provided the proper advice on how to function when there is danger or how to operate as a leader.
5. Admonish/Instruction – What Paul challenged them to be, which is to care for God’s flock, he modeled; “admonish each one with tears.” He did the same again in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8).

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<sup>[1]</sup> Lenski, R. C. H. (1961). [\*The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles\*](#) (p. 847). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House.

<sup>[2]</sup> Toussaint, S. D. (1985). [\*Acts\*](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 414). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.