

# The BEACON



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## **FACTORS LEADING TO DEPARTURE**

In Acts 20:28-31 Paul warned the Ephesian elders—"Take heed to yourselves and to the flock over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he has purchased with his own blood. For I know this that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."

I am certain from the text, that many thought Paul's warnings were unnecessary. They were like Israel of old, wanting to hear "smooth things" that made them feel good. The fact is that Paul's warnings were not just his ideas but came from the inspiration of God. Like Moses who spoke God's word to a stubborn and murmuring people, Paul had to fight those who viewed his warnings as making much over nothing. In Revelation 2 we read that the church at Ephesus had "left their first love." Church history records that by the late first and early second century men were seeking position in the church and digressing from the pattern of God for local church organization. New positions like "bishops and metropolitans" were added to God's pattern. Departure had begun.

Paul went on to warn in every epistle he wrote of the danger of falling from the faith. He instructs the young evangelist, Timothy in 2 Tim. 4:2-4: "preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables."

It is sad, but true that the same warning is relevant to the church today. Many brethren are content to hear smooth words and have their ears scratched. They do not wish to be made uncomfortable nor admonished to order their lives according to the Word. This is shown in the attitudes and cries we see and hear from some today. Apathy reigns in many places today. If it is not in the church where you are it will

present itself soon. Satan realizes that the best way to render the church ineffective is to get everyone “comfortable.” When people are comfortable in their weakness and satisfied in their sins, they are open to apostasy. The sad thing is, they never see it coming. In many places warnings are not welcome from the pulpit. Preachers and elders, who warn against trends that are active among us, are ridiculed and labeled as “alarmists, legalists” and a host of other derogatory names. Respect for sound, solid, convicting preaching is sadly going the way of the horse and buggy. The “old Jerusalem ring” has been replaced in many congregations with sermonettes preached by preacherettes resulting in Christianettes. Instead of getting sermons from the text of the Bible, many weak and lazy preachers are getting what they preach from the fountains of denominational pep talk books and motivational sales speeches. There is a type of weak Christian that goes wild for such. All of us to some extent, are susceptible to the soothing “I’m O.K. you’re O.K.” line. It requires no change, encourages weakness and provides no true spiritual nourishment leaving instead just a longing for another spiritual “sugar fix” and a soul still bound for hell.

Brethren and friends let’s take a look at what constitutes New Testament preaching.

1. Preaching against the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-22; 1 Cor. 6:9-11) Paul preached against, fornication, immodesty, drinking, idolatry, dishonesty, lying, stealing (gambling), lasciviousness (modern dance), false teachers, materialism and apathy. When was the last time you as a preacher, preached on any of these subjects? When was the last time you heard lessons on these things? If it is not unpopular where you are to preach on these things yet, guard yourselves for it will soon be coming to a church near or among you.
2. New Testament preachers called names and identified error and the ones who espoused it. There was no doubt in the minds of the hearer who or what was being talked about. Hymaneus, Philetus, Demas and Diotrophes are just a few who departed from the truth and were named. The fornicating brother in 1 Corinthians 5 is clearly called out resulting in his repentance. Simon the sorcerer is abruptly identified as being in error, even though he is a fresh, new convert. His sin is serious and must be repented of. The result of clear identification of error in his life resulted in his humble repentance. The first gospel sermon recorded in Acts 2 is blunt and to the point in verse 36 –“let all the house know for certain that the Lord has made this same Jesus who you have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” The result of such straight preaching is seen in verse 37- “when they heard this they were pricked in their hearts and said to Peter and rest of the apostles, Men and brethren what shall we do?” Preaching like this used to be referred to as “shucking the corn” by pioneer preachers. The gospel was certainly made relevant by not only preaching the principle but making the application. Many preachers are almost apologetic for the gospel they preach punctuating their lessons with phrases like “the Lord is suggesting here” as if what is being said is not binding.
3. Paul preaches against instrumental music and denominationalism. To the Corinthians he strongly and clearly rebukes following men in chapter one. In Eph.

5:19; Col. 3:16 he preaches vocal music only.

4. James preaches against “faith only” in James 2 and makes no apology for it.
5. Paul stood in the midst of the intellectuals of his day on Mars hill and clearly set forth the truth on the One True God. The result was that some wished to further investigate what he taught.
6. The essentiality of baptism is clearly taught by Peter in 1 Peter 3:21 and the refutation of the “once saved always saved” doctrine is refuted in 2 Peter 2:22.
7. Jesus’ teaching about the nature of the kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount and the character of citizens in the kingdom is clearly seen in His message.
8. The horror of hell, fearing the Lord and being prepared for the Day of Judgment are clearly taught by Jesus and others in the New Testament.
9. Scriptural worship, reverence and true service are themes also.
10. Warnings against apostasies are throughout the New Testament.

It is also scriptural to preach on Bible subjects like, grace, peace, mercy, pardon, love, accountability and humility. The moving story of the crucifixion is a dominant theme along with the nature and work of the Lord’s church which he purchased with His own blood.

This is not meant to be a complete list of scriptural subjects but elders and brethren everywhere should request and support strong, bible preaching on subjects like these.

Let it be clearly understood that anyone that teaches and preaches on these subjects and at times must reprove and rebuke the brethren, should not relish his task. Preaching demands application. Jeremiah was not very popular among the people of his day neither will anyone if they preach the truth. Many thought him to be sort of overzealous and negative but He was speaking what God said they needed and he continued to love them even though they did not heed his words.

No one needs to use the pulpit as a place to beat up the brethren. But neither should the pulpit be used as a place to compromise or ignore the truth. The truth is to be spoken in love but that does not preclude it being spoken with force and conviction. It should make us indignant and passionate when souls are in peril. There is no room in the pulpit for apologies for what God has said. Let us all understand that when apathy reigns in the pew then apostasy rules in the pulpit.

May we all heed the warnings of the New Testament and the lessons of the Old. Many are surprised that some Christians believe in instrumental music and doubt the necessity of baptism. Let us none of us throw out the welcome mat for digression by tolerating weak teaching and preaching. ---SWA---

**We meet at 656 St. James Ch. Rd. in Newton,  
NC**

**Sunday  
Bible Study - 9:30 AM  
Worship – 11:00 AM**

**Wednesday  
Bible Study – 7:00 PM**

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**➤ Your soul is important to us ◀**

**If you would like to set up a study, or if we can help you in any way,  
please contact us.**

## **Dry Wells**

. . . The world needs to reach out to Jesus, the Saviour (Matt. 1:21). He alone has the answer to our greatest questions and the solution to our most profound problems. Philosophy and psychology, considered apart from Him, are "wells without water."

—J. Ervin Waters, (*Outreach*, Nov., 1967)

## **Infant Baptism**

1. The Bible does not mention it.
2. The person must depend upon the testimony of others in after years.
3. It robs the individual of the joy of personal obedience.
4. It is done in the name of the Father; the heavenly Father does not require it.
5. It is done in the name of the Son; the Son never taught it.
6. It is done in the name of the Holy Spirit; the Spirit never authorized it.
7. It is practiced not only without the will of the child, but often against it.
8. Men say it comes in the room of circumcision;  
only male children could be circumcised.
9. Teaching must precede baptism. (Matthew 28:18-19.)
10. Preaching must precede baptism. (Mark 16:15-16.)
11. Faith must precede baptism. (Heb. 11:6; Acts 8:37.)
12. Conviction of sins precedes baptism. (Acts 2:37.)
13. Repentance must precede baptism. (Acts 2:38.)
14. Baptism follows a confession of faith in Christ. (Acts 8:37.)
15. Only those who received his word were baptized. (Acts 2:41.)
16. Those who were baptized continued steadfastly. (Acts 2:42.)
17. It is sinful, because it is without faith. (Rom. 14:23.)
18. Infants are subjects for the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 19:4.)
19. Originated in the idea that without it they would be lost. (Wesley.)
20. Must be traced to Rome, not to the Bible.

—A. G. Freed (*Apostolic Doctrine* Jan. 1968)