

(Acts 20:17-30) "shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock."

I. God designed the Church's hierarchy (1 Pet 5:1-4).

A. God calls members Sheep; A Congregation is a Flock.

1. [John 10:2-3]

> "But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of **THE SHEEP**. To him the porter openeth; and **THE SHEEP** hear his voice: and he calleth **HIS OWN SHEEP** by name, and leadeth them out."

2. God calls the local Church, His flock.

> [1 Peter 5:2] "Feed the flock of God which is among you..."

B. God calls the Pastor a Shepherd - He leads the sheep.

1. [v. 1] "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder..."

> [v. 2] Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof..."

2. Elders, Examples, Taking the oversight thereof...

> God has appointed the Pastor as the Under-Shepherd; and the Overseer.

C. Jesus is the Chief-Shepherd; Good Shepherd!

1. Jesus is the Good Shepherd of the sheep.

> "The Lord is MY Shepherd..."

2. He's the Chief-Shepherd.

> He is the Shepherd of the entire Church; The Pastor is the Shepherd of a local Church.

D. But there are Wolves in Sheep's Clothing.

1. Our text [Acts 20:28-29]

> "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood..."

> For I know this, that after my departing shall GRIEVOUS wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock."

2. [Matthew 7:15]

> "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

Using this thought, I want to preach on:

"Wolves In The Church"

I. The Types of Wolves in the Scriptures.

A. Ravening Wolves.

1. *Jesus said: "Inwardly they are Ravening Wolves."*

> [Matthew 7:15] "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

2. [Eze. 22:27].

> "Her princes in the midst thereof are like WOLVES RAVENING THE PREY, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain."

3. *Websters 1828 Dictionary: RAVENING.*

> Preying and devouring with voracity; as a ravening wolf.
> **RAVENING, Eagerness for plunder.**

4. *It speaks of a wolf that kills for pleasure, not just to feed.*

> "...to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain."

B. Evening wolves.

1. [Hab 1:8] "EVENING WOLVES..."

> "Their horses... are more fierce than the EVENING WOLVES..."
> They are "Creatures of the night!"

2. [Zephaniah 3:3] "EVENING WOLVES..."

> "Her judges are EVENING WOLVES; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow."
> THIS MEANS THEY CHEW ALL NIGHT AND LEAVE THE BONES FOR MORNING.

3. *Its not just about the need to eat, its about the desire to shed blood.*

> "Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways."
> ITS ABOUT DESTROYING THE CHURCH!

C. GRIEVOUS WOLVES.

1. *In our text the Apostle Paul spoke of these:*

> "For I know this, that after my departing shall GRIEVOUS WOLVES enter in among you, not sparing the flock."
> These bring GRIEF to the work of God.

2. *GRIE'VOUS, a. [from grieve, or grief.]*

> Heavy; oppressive; burdensome; as a grievous load or burden. Painful; hard to be borne.
> **THEY BRING GRIEF TO GOD'S WORK.**

Jesus warned of RAVENING wolves.

The O.T. Prophet spoke of EVENING wolves,

Paul, called them GRIEVOUS wolves.

II. How These Relate to Real Wolves and Wolves in the Church.

A. WOLVES ARE VERY ADAPTABLE.

1. Wolves can live in almost any climate.

2. A wolf can enter a church and quickly become an integral part of the work.

B. WOLVES CAN BE VERY LARGE AND STRONG.

1. Real live wolves can be as big as man.

> **Most adult male wolves weigh about 175 pounds.**

> They measure about 6 feet long and almost 3 feet tall.

2. Wolves can easily kill a sheep.

> **A wolf in the church will have a VERY STRONG personality.**

> He quickly gains control in the Church.

C. WOLVES HAVE VERY KEEN SENSES.

1. A wolf has excellent VISION, a keen sense of SMELL, and fine HEARING.

> **A wolf can see and/or smell a deer more than a mile away.**

2. A wolf in the church has extraordinary abilities.

> They can sense wounded prey.

> **They can easily locate the disgruntled.**

E. WOLVES HAVE BIG APPETITE.

1. A wolf has 42 teeth, including four fangs at the front of the mouth that are used to wound, grab, and kill prey.

> The fangs may measure up to 2 inches long from root to tip.

> **The wolf has a large stomach and can eat as much as 20 pounds of food at one time.**

3. A wolf in the church will not be satisfied to only hurt one or two...

> They have a large appetite.

> **They will want to devour as many of the church as they can.**

F. WOLVES HUNT IN PACKS.

1. Wolves live in family groups called packs.

> Most packs have about 8 members, but some may have more than 20.

2. If there is ONE wolf in the church, there is most certainly ANOTHER.

> **And, there will soon be many more.**

> They will group together, and hunt together...

G. WOLVES ARE VERY AUTHORITY CONSCIOUS.

1. *Each wolf pack has a social order called a dominance hierarchy.*

- > Every member of the pack has a certain rank in the hierarchy.
- > **High-ranking members, called Alpha-wolves...**

2. *This hierarchy is clearly seen in their actions and characteristics.*

- > The dominant wolf stands erect, holds its tail aloft, and points its ears up and forward.
- > **The subordinate wolf crouches, holds its tail between its legs, and turns down its ears.**

3. *Church wolves are highly position and authority conscious.*

- > They demand recognition.
- > **They rule by persuasion.**

4. *Behind every dominant Alpha-male is a small, but aggressive female wolf.*

- > Even though female wolves are much smaller than the male...
- > **Females have such a persuading power over the male, that she actually leads the pack.**
- > When they come to a cross road, He will wait for her to choose which direction...

III. Why Does God Allow Wolves to Come into the Church?

A. (1 Cor. 11:18-19) God uses them to manifest leaders in the church.

1. *Notice the last part of verse 19: "That they which are approved may be made manifest..."*

- > In other words, God is going to allow wolves to come in order to SHOW who is in charge!

2. *Never will you know the strength of your Pastor as when he is dealing with a wolf.*

- > **The work of the Pastor is to shepherd the church and protect the sheep from wolves.**

3. *The Shepherd and the hireling.*

- > A Pastor is not an employee of the church;
- > **He serves the Lord Jesus Christ.**

4. *The difference between a shepherd and an hireling...*

- > [John 10:12-13] "But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep."
- > A true shepherd is ready to defend the sheep, even with his life.
- > **A hireling will not risk his life for the sheep.**

B. The Men in the Church will be manifest when confronted by a wolf.

1. Lost church members will be treated as sub-ordinate wolves by the Alpha-wolf.

- > The lost Church members, will submit to the Alpha-wolf, rather than the Pastor.

2. Young or baby Christians are looked at as weaker sheep.

- > **These will be devoured, unless protected.**

3. The stronger Christians in the Church will stand by the Pastor against the wolves.

- > These are Christians that are willing to help the Pastor fight the wolves.

4. When the Pastor is dealing with a wolf, the following will often take the side of the wolf.

- > **Weak Christians - Not yet mature enough to see what is happening.**
- > Carnal Christians - Do not like any form of Church discipline, and therefore will not support the Pastor.
- > **Lost Church members - By default they are sub-ordinate wolves.**

B. God uses wolves to weed out false professors...

1. Not everyone in the church is a TRUE Christian.

- > Every church has unsaved church members.

2. The lost get mad and leave when there is conflict in the Church;

- > The leaders get ready to fight!
- > **Wolves bring out the best in true leaders, and bring out the worst in false professors.**

IV. How To Spot A Wolf.

A. They always operate behind the shepherd's back.

1. They try to assemble small groups...

- > Sometimes they have "Fellowships" in their homes.
- > **They stop talking if the Pastor walks over.**
- > They obtain authority in the church by dividing the sheep.

2. The last thing they want you to do is get the Pastor involved.

- > **You can spot a wolf by how he responds to "Let's ask the Pastor about that!"**
- > Never want a private meeting with the Pastor, and will always want a public confrontation.
- > **This gives them the support of weak or carnal Christians, and the support of lost Church members.**

B. They are critical of the Shepherd.

1. *Some of the things that a wolf may say about the Pastor may be true.*

- > But this is not justification for undermining the ministry of the Pastor.
- > **Especially to weaker members in the church.**

2. *If the Pastor is out of line morally, or doctrinally, that is one thing.*

- > But, these attack the Pastor over personal issues.
- > **Its not about SOUND DOCTRINE, its about personal preferences.**

3. *They seek to bring the Pastor down as a way of lifting themselves up!*

- > If they cant get to the Pastor, they will try to get to his wife.

4. *[Acts 20:30] "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."*

- > **They sow discord in the Church; They cause division.**
- > They would destroy an entire ministry just to get ahead.

C. They boast of their own spirituality

1. *They rarely brag on the Lord.*

- > **They rarely talk about what God has done for them.**
- > Instead they brag about all they do for God.

2. *They brag about how much they do, and how long they have been doing it.*

- > **They brag about their HIGH STANDARDS...**

3. **LISTEN TO THIS TRUTH:**

- > Those who really are spiritual NEVER SAY SO...
- > **And those that SAY they are spiritual, ARE NOT!**

D. They tend to attack the weak.

1. *They find strength in tearing other down.*

- > Lift themselves by lowering others.

2. *[Romans 16:17-18]*

- > **"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.**
- > **For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; AND BY GOOD WORDS AND FAIR SPEECHES deceive the hearts of the simple."**

3. *Wolves seem to have a kind of internal radar by which they seem to detect the weak believer.*

- > They try to find disgruntled church members to use as a diving tool.

V. How to Deal with Wolves.

A. Rebuking and Rejecting.

1. [Titus 3:10-11].

> "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself."

2. Nearly any other kind of problem in the church...

> ...is handled with patience, compassion and mercy!
> **BUT NOT SO WITH WOLVES.**

> **But, "After the first and second admonition... REJECT!"**

The first step: Rebuking and Rejecting...

B. Second step: Running Interference.

1. The Pastor must stick his nose into EVERY affair.

> He cannot be "nice" about it.

2. When a Pastor sees a wolf, he must remember he is not dealing with a sheep that can be helped.

> A wolf is NOT in church to receive instruction and correction...

> **A wolf WILL NEVER submit and be helped.**

3. The Pastor must run interference for his sheep.

> He must be constantly on guard for every move the wolf makes.

You deal with a wolf by...

Rebuking & Rejecting.

Running Interference. and...

C. Realizing their weaknesses.

1. Wolves have no Authority.

> **They act as if they do, but they don't.**

> They have no more authority in the church than any sheep (maybe LESS, because not saved).

2. Wolves have no TRUTH.

> **They are spiritual phonies.**

> They know how to sound pious but its all show.

> **They say words without power.**

3. Wolves have no spiritual power.

- > They are LOST! They operated in the flesh.
- > **They have no REAL power in God's kingdom.**

And Finally, You deal with a wolf by...

Rebuking & Rejecting.

Running Interference.

Realizing Their Weaknesses. And...

D. REMOVING THEIR HEADS...

1. The wolf cometh to kill and destroy...

- > **The wolves will show NO MERCY to you or your sheep.**
- > "...NOT SPARING THE FLOCK!"

3. If the Pastor shows any signs of weakness they will be all over him in minutes.

- > **A wolf will first test its prey by small attacks...**
- > If he senses fear or weakness, he will move in for the kill.

4. YOU CANNOT REASON WITH A WOLF.

- > **You will never convince them to LOVE the sheep.**
- > A wolf has an appetite for sheep and WILL NOT be persuaded to spare the flock.
- > **You must get them out of the Church!**

VI. Experience.

A. I have seen many things in my tenure.

1. God is on the Shepherds side.

- > Read how often the people rose against Moses...
- > **And see how severely God judged them.**

2. Some Pastors have been hurt so often and so severely that they have quit the ministry.

- > Some have committed suicide.
- > **Some preacher's wives have done so!**
- > I am not exaggerating this point, I am actually diminishing it...
- > **I KNOW LOTS OF ILLUSTRATIONS ABOUT THIS! BUT I LOATHE TO TALK ABOUT IT**

B. I have also seen and heard stories about the demise of wolves.

1. I heard about a Pastor that invited John R. Rice to preach at his Church.

- > One of the men in the Church told the Pastor:
- > **John R. Rice will never preach in this Church; You'll have John R. Rice over my dead body.**
- > The man died the week before Dr. Rice came to the Church.

- > As the pall bearers were carrying the casket to the hearse they walked under the Church sign that read "Revival with John R, Rice."
- > John R. Rice was at that moment over his dead body.

2. *I've seen or heard many cases where a wolf rose up against the Pastor and God killed them.*

- > **Every preacher has a half dozen or more stories...**
- > Some where the wolf won, and drove the Pastor out.
- > **And some where the Pastor won, and drove the wolf out!**
- > But either way, God still judged the wolf.

3. *I know personally of a Pastor that was driven out by wolves...*

- > **Less than a year later, one was caught stealing from the Treasury.**
- > One was caught having an affair, cheating on his wife.
- > **And, one's wife died, and took all of his thunder away!**
- > The remnants of the Church begged the Pastor to come back; But he told them "NO WAY THAT WILL HAPPEN!"

4. *God will reveal a wolf, so everyone will see him.*

- > **Preacher Larry Brown said he was describing the characteristics of a wolf at a Church...**
- > He said that as he described a wolf, the entire congregation began turning and looking at a couple...
- > **It was so obvious that you could see the couples faces turn RED.**

C. I am an old man now...

1. *I used to look up to the Old Men of God...*

- > And now I am one; At least I'm old.

2. *But, I have years of experience in spotting wolves...*

- > **I have been attacked a few times, and I have almost quit a few times.**
- > And, I have the scars to prove it!

3. *But by the H.S. I have also knocked out a wolf or two.*

- > **And I know how to spot a wolf!**