

# Take Heed

## Part 1

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Place	Catford
Duration	00:37:14
Online version	<a href="https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/gw009/take-heed">https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/gw009/take-heed</a>

*Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.*

[00:00:01] In Lohestoft, we've been reading through Matthew's Gospel.

And when we were reading, I was noticing various phrases which occur a number of times. And one of those is the little word, take heed. In Matthew's Gospel, it occurs four times.

Six times in Mark, and six in Luke.

And then when I carried on into the epistles, I found that it occurred some twelve times.

And of that twelve times, I've simply picked up and picked out these five occasions where we read, take heed.

It is obviously very important that we take heed to what the Spirit of God has said through the Apostle Paul and also through the Apostle Peter.

If you are road users, and I suspect all of us are road users in one way or another, [00:01:05] it is important that we obey the signs.

And there are some road signs which are clearly indicated by the round that you must obey. And then there are the road signs which are triangular, which are warning signs. And here, we have brought before us warnings.

The Spirit of God has given the saints warnings as to what will happen and as to what they should respond to it.

And so very simply, with the Lord's help, we will just look at a few of these verses, which have this little word, take heed.

The opening one in Acts chapter 20 is very interesting.

The Apostle Paul went to Miletus, and from Miletus he called the elders of the church at Ephesus.

[00:02:07] And when they came to him, he spoke to them what we have from verse 18 to the end of the chapter.

But when we come to verse 28, the Apostle Paul has this heed.

Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock.

And so I think that I can say that although we don't have elders in the same way as they had them in the apostolic day, if we were to call the elders of the church in Capfor together, we would have great difficulty. Great difficulty, first of all, of knowing where the church was at Capford. There are no doubt those that gather here, but there are other companies that gather elsewhere. And what a difficulty we would have to call together the elders in the church at Capford. [00:03:02] We do not also have, as we will clearly see, an apostolic succession in order to appoint those elders. The Apostle here says, after my departure, he commends them to God. And Peter gives a very similar idea.

But what we can say is that in every assembly and in every company, there ought to be those people who are eager for the benefit of the assembly and are seeking to maintain the truths of the scriptures in building up the assembly. And whilst I would speak to those, as they are the prime ones that are spoken to here, isn't it true that every one of us should have a deep interest in the Lord's work down here? And in the verse that we read, we have the key reason why we ought to be interested in the Lord's people, in the local assembly, in the gathering of Christians. Why is it that we should be interested in them? [00:04:02] It's because the Lord Jesus is interested in them. And it's because God is interested in the company of Christians. In other words, we can say that the company of believers in this world, the assembly that has been called out from all shapes of people, are the ones that the Lord Jesus is interested in. And we too should have a deep interest in them.

Not only the brothers, but the sisters as well. We have a great opportunity to feed the flock of God.

Now the word here for feed, as most of you will know, is not the word just to feed, but to shepherd. Whereas you may argue with me, it's not right for the sisters to teach in the assembly, I will say to you, what does the word of God say? And quite clearly the word of God says, [00:05:01] I suffer not a woman to teach, nor do you serve authority over a man. That's Peter. It also says the women should keep silent in the assembly. So as far as in the assembly is concerned, the women do not teach. But there is a tremendous opportunity for the sisters to feed and to shepherd the sheep. It's not only in the assembly, but outside of the assembly, in that Sunday school work, in that little housework, in that little group where you as individuals are working. What a great opportunity we have to feed and to help and to carry on the testimony.

And here the Apostle Paul gives them, take heed. Why do we need to take heed?

Because, for this I know that after my departing, grievous wolves shall enter in amongst you.

The Apostle Paul, you know, when he went to Ephesus, he was an all-rounder. [00:06:01] He wasn't a gospel preacher only.

He wasn't a minister and brother only. He wasn't a person that just laboured on one line of scripture. But in this little verses that we have before us, in verse 24 he says, I have preached unto you the gospel of the grace of God. So Sunday evening, 6.30, Paul was there preaching the gospel, preaching that which meets man's needs.

Not only Sunday evenings, of course, throughout his life, he was one who would preach the gospel of

the grace of God. But also in the next verse, preach the kingdom of God.

He also preached the fact that we were responsible to the kingdom.

Responsible people in the kingdom, I should say. And we find that the Apostle Paul preached man's responsibility. But also in verse 27, he speaks about, I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsels of God.

[00:07:03] And how important it is that not only did he preach the gospel, not only did he speak about man's responsibility, but he also spoke about the wonderful counsels of God, that they should be accompanied with his beloved son throughout an eternity. Good thing it is that the Apostle prepared these Ephesians in order for the day when he would depart and they would be left.

And you know the warning is given that after his departure, there will be these grievous wolves enter in amongst them. I know when we look at this verse, it is literally speaking about Paul's departure. When Paul moved off the scene, when he was promoted to heaven, these grievous wolves came in. And we know this is really a prophetic scripture. We know it did happen that after the Apostle had gone, there were much wolves that came in amongst the church. And what a disaster it became.

[00:08:03] But I think we can take it morally tonight, dear friends, that the moment that we depart from the ministry of the Apostle Paul, there will be an opening made for wolves to enter in amongst us. The moment that we depart from what the Apostle Paul said in relation to the supper, 1 Corinthians 11, there will be an opportunity for the wolves to come in. The moment we depart from what the Apostle Paul said in relation to the ministry and the functioning of the church, as in 1 Corinthians 14, there will be an opportunity for the wolves to come in. Let us take heed. Let us be on the guard. The only guard to avoiding wolves coming in is the word of God.

The Apostle says that in verse 32, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace. And we need to be steeped in the word of God.

We need to be established in order that when these enemies come in, [00:09:04] we have that which we can counteract them. We need to take heed to these things.

Now my next verse is taken out of context.

The Apostle Paul had been arrested.

The Apostle Paul was taken to what we have in this verse, the castle. He's in Jerusalem and he's taken there. And as they come to arrest him, he asked a simple question, is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman? In other words, he was a man that had Roman citizenship. And the answer is given, when the centurion heard that he was a Roman, he went and told the chief captain saying, take heed what thou doest, for this man is a Roman.

I want to take it out of his context, as I said, and say, if we are a good Roman, [00:10:02] in other words, if we are established on the gospel, as the Apostle Paul wrote in the epistle to the Romans, people ought to take heed.

And it will give us a bulwark against the enemy. When the enemy comes to our door and speaks

about the Lord Jesus in a derogative way, if we're a good Roman, we'll be able to stand against him. It used to be said, a good Roman can go anywhere.

And as I thought of this statement in the book of Romans, I simply came up with a few suggestions. In the first chapter of the book of Romans, it says there, in relation to the Lord Jesus, it speaks about the gospel of God, concerning his son, who was made of the seed of David.

And in that very opening verse, we have an established fact [00:11:02] that the son was made of the seed of David.

It proves to me very clearly that he ever was the son. Before he became incarnate, before he became of the seed of David, he was the son.

And there in Romans chapter 1, a good Roman, when someone stands at your door and denies the fact that he is the son in eternity, you've got the answer. The answer is in the book of Romans. We have the authority to say he was the son in a past eternity.

And then when we read down chapter 1, we have brought before us very clearly the fact that the heathen, what does it say about the heathen? Well, it tells us in verse 20, they have the creation and they are without excuse. And then in chapter 2, we are brought face to face with those who are the good living people. [00:12:01] And what do we say about good living people? We're inexcusable.

And then in chapter 3, we have the Jews brought before us. And the question is said, are they any better than us?

And the answer is no.

And then God concludes, all men under sin.

He says, are they any better?

We have both proved that Jew and Gentile, that they are all under sin.

And so as far as anything that we can do to obtain eternal salvation, as far as anything that I can do to get in favour with God, if we're a good Roman, we stand upon the authority of the word of God and says there's nothing that we can do to obtain God's blessing. But what we can do as a good Roman is that we can read that God has done something towards us.

And in verse 24 of chapter 3, we find, [00:13:02] all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Yes, if we have put our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus, it is justified freely by his grace.

It is not something that we can merit. It is not something that we can do. It is a free gift of God. And we find as a good Roman, we can stand upon that fact that our eternal blessing is a free gift from God. Chapter 5, verse 1 tells us that we are justified by God.

If in being redemption would have the thought of a slave market, we're taken out of the slave market in the thought of justification. We're taken out of the law courts. And there's nothing that people can

say against us because God has justified us.

God has redeemed us.

What a wonderful standing. [00:14:02] Let us take heed to these things. Not only do we take heed to what we've already said in relation to our standing before God, but we read also in these first five chapters that God has dealt with our sins. And in the very next few chapters, we read that God has dealt with sin. What a wonderful thing it is to be a good Roman. And then you know the question that is often raised. Can a soul be saved one moment and lost the next? And how often Satan will tempt us from within. Are you saved? You're not living your life as you should live. We read in Romans chapter 8, who shall lay any charge against God's elect?

What does a good Roman say? He turns to Romans chapter 8 and he finds there that God has justified us and no one can lay any charge against us.

We also find in those verses at the end of the chapter, who shall separate us from the love of God? There is nothing that will separate us [00:15:02] because of his love to us.

And then in chapters 9, 10, and 11, we get the answer as to what is going to happen to the nation of Israel. And we find in those chapters, which we often call the dispensational picture, we see there in chapter 11 it says, all Israel shall be saved.

Yes, the Old Testament prophecies, which are given in relation to Israel, will be fulfilled.

And there is a day coming when the nation of Israel will be born, as it were, in a day. And there will be a wonderful time of blessing to the nation of Israel. We know it from the Old Testament, but we can prove it from Romans chapter 11.

And so we need to take heed. This man is a Roman.

Practically as well, we find in chapter 12 to the end, we have much that would affect our practical life down here. [00:16:01] In chapter 12 we find, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, present your bodies a living sacrifice, something that we have to do every day, a living sacrifice.

And in those next few verses, we get our attitude towards the church, towards our ministry.

We then get the verses in relation to our social responsibilities. In chapter 13 we get our relationship in relation to this world. The question is often asked, do we have to obey the authorities? Do we have to abide by the speed limits? A good Roman would abide by the speed limits because Romans chapter 13 says we should obey magistrates. And a good Roman, there's nothing that you can say against a good Roman. I was thinking of the first Roman that lived and I think it was Daniel because they tried to find fault with Daniel and they said the only way that we'll find any fault is in relation to his God. You know, if we stick to the scriptures, [00:17:01] if we know there is going to be a departure from the word of God, we need to stick very clearly to the truth of scriptures and every one of us ought to be well grounded in the truth of the Roman epistle.

In 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians chapter 3 verse 10, according to the grace of God which is given unto me as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation and another build thereupon, but let every

man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

The apostle Paul had laid that foundation.

He had been to Corinth and there for a year and a half he had laboured.

And no doubt during that time the foundation of their Christian faith was securely laid. We could read from Matthew chapter 16 [00:18:01] where the Lord Jesus says, upon this rock will I build my church. And in that connection the foundation is that Jesus is the son of the living God.

We can also read from Ephesians that it is built upon the foundations of the apostles and the prophets. The apostle Paul had laid these foundations. He has, as it were, put out the truth of the gospel. He had, as it were, put out the truth of the assembly. And then he goes on to say, let every man take heed how we build on that truth.

And the simple question is, is how are we building on this foundation?

Because there are six ways in this verse which we have before us as to character of the building.

There is gold, there is silver, precious stones, wood, hay and stubble.

[00:19:04] And what character would we build on of gold?

Well, I think that we have been taught that gold would speak of divine righteousness, gold would speak of deity.

And perhaps the most important thing as we build upon the foundation and upon the truth of the assembly is that we have right thoughts in relation to the person of the Lord Jesus.

Is that we acknowledge who he is in the Godhead, equal with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, the one that came into this world in order to accomplish the will of his Father. And therefore, the first thing that we must make certain that we do is that on this building, we are right in relation to the person of the Lord Jesus. The poet wrote the verse, what think ye of Christ is the test, to try both your state and your scheme. [00:20:02] You cannot think right in the rest unless ye think rightly of him.

And the most important thing, I believe, that we are building is that it is the Lord Jesus. The second thing is, in the same verse, silver.

Most of us will know from the Old Testament scripture that there was a time when they had to bring the redemption money, which was a piece of silver.

And perhaps silver would speak of the work of the Lord Jesus. What a wonderful thing it is that we can build upon this basis something of the greatness of the work of the Lord Jesus, that work which has met the claims of God upon man.

A grand thing it is to speak about the work of the Lord Jesus and to build that of silver would speak not only of the work that he's done, but of the great result of that work that will last throughout eternity. [00:21:05] And then we come to precious stones. And some people have said that this would

be speaking about the moral beauties of the Lord Jesus as he moves through this scene. What a good thing it is to speak about the greatness of the Lord Jesus as he moves through this scene.

But I also think that we could speak about the stones as those stones which were on the breastplate and on the shoulders of the high priest. They were precious stones and they indicated and they were typical of the nation of Israel. And perhaps each one of us, as we think about building upon the assembly, we can think about how we would help and how we would encourage the Lord's people. And perhaps there are some here who are old and are weak and we find that there's not a great deal that we can do. And perhaps you can't bear the saints upon your shoulders, [00:22:02] but I'm absolutely certain that every one of us can bear the saints upon our hearts. We can be much before the Lord for his people and we can build up the assembly by our prayers for them.

And then we have these three negative things, wood, hay and stubble.

I think wood, we could clearly see, would speak of man.

When we think of the Ark of the Covenant, we speak about the shittim wood which would speak of the deity and the wood would speak of the manhood of the Lord Jesus. And so the simple suggestion is, is that that which is put forth in the building, which is of man, is of no good whatsoever.

And the hay and the stubble.

Both are opposite ends, you know. Hay is the very best of grass and hay is always well looked after. [00:23:01] The farmers will cut the grass and will make sure that it is the right dryness before they bale it and then they will keep it covered and they will always put hay in the best part of the barn. It has to be kept dry.

It has to be kept in the right humidity. The hay is the best.

And the stubble is absolutely no good at all. We leave it on the fields, we plough it in, we get rid of it. It doesn't matter what we're talking about. If it's man's best or if it's man's worst, it is no good in the building of this assembly.

What will happen? Every man's work shall be made manifest. There is a day coming, which says here, for the...

Every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it.

There is a day coming when we will have to give an account to the Lord for everything that we have done. For every hour that we have spent, [00:24:02] for every moment that we have done, and we know that that which we have done, for the Lord Jesus and with His glory in view, we will get a reward.

But it also says that every man's work shall be... If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss.

But, you know, in this verse here, we have a wonderful encouragement. Even though our works shall suffer loss and shall be burned, and yet he himself shall be saved. We raise the question, could a

person be saved and lost? I think here is another verse which would give us the clear answer that we cannot be saved and lost.

Our works would be lost, but we ourselves shall be saved.

And so we need to take heed how we build. The verse is often quoted, this little life will soon be past, only what's done or formed of Christ will last.

[00:25:02] And these are challenging words to me, that as our life, as it were, comes to the close, what have we done for the Lord Jesus himself?

Now I turn over.

And before I go to Colossians, I'm going to read one verse in Galatians.

Galatians 5 and verse 15.

Galatians 5 verse 15 says, But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

Just in passing, what a tremendous challenge this verse is to us. What a fact it is.

That, you know, if as a company of the Lord's people we spend all our times [00:26:03] devouring, biting one another, speaking against one another, we'll be consumed and we'll be destroyed.

And I often look back over the history of the brethren and will have to say that this verse has been true, very sad to say, of many of our assemblies in this land.

There's been much biting. There's been much devouring one of another. What is the result?

It says, Take heed, lest ye be consumed one of another.

And let these words sink into each one of our hearts that if we are against our brothers, if we're against our sisters, and if we probably don't have any reason to be against them, the result will be that we will be consumed one of another.

And then we go to Colossians.

[00:27:01] Colossians 4, verse 17.

And say to Occipus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

How many of us here have been in this room many times?

Without a show of hands, I guess that most of us here have been in this room. Most of us here have sat under a great deal of ministry.

Most of us have ministry on our bookshelves.



We've had a tremendous privilege.

This verse says, particularly to Occipus, I want to apply it to each one of us, to myself. Take heed to the ministry that thou hast received.

You know, there was an aged brother who used to visit us at Lowestoft [00:28:02] and on this verse he would comment as thus. I've never found anybody else who's said it or wrote about it. He said when the Apostle John was right into the seven churches in Asia, as we find in Revelation chapter 1, 2 and 3, it says there John to the seven churches in Asia.

And when we get a map we find that those seven churches are there, they're all in Asia Minor. And he said where was Colossae?

Now Colossae geographically is right next door to Laodicea.

I know we will argue, well, the seven churches are a typical picture of the church in its complete form.

But he said it says the seven churches.

And the simple suggestion that he had was that here was a man, Occipus, [00:29:01] who had not taken heed to the ministry and as a result the church at Colossae had gone.

And you know, unless we take heed to the ministry, there is this grave possibility that our assemblies will cease.

The assembly at Ephesus was a tremendous assembly.

It was an assembly that the Apostle Paul wrote the epistle that we call the highest truths.

And yet when we come to Revelation, God says to that same assemblies, unless you repent, I will remove thy candlestick.

And I'm going to say it because I think it is true and I want you to understand what I say, that God is not sentimentality. God is not sentimental about assemblies.

God doesn't look at assemblies and says that one's a nice one. Unless we stick to the word of God, [00:30:02] unless we take heed to the ministry that we have, there is a possibility that our assemblies will die out and we need to take heed to the ministry that we have heard. What a great opportunity we have with the word of God before us to take heed to the ministry that has been given to us by the apostles.

And there we finally, the second Peter, here we find a more sure word of prophecy, or unto you do well that ye take heed.

In this second chapter of Peter, it's a real encouragement to some of us who are called upon to give a word of ministry.

The apostle Peter says in verse 12, Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, [00:31:04] though ye know them and be established in the present truth.

Even though I am repeating things that perhaps you know and have heard for many times, it is very good, as Peter says here, to have them brought to your remembrance and to repeat these things. He says in verse 13, Yea, and I think it is meet as long as I am in this tabernacle to stir you up by the putting you in remembrance. He wanted you to remember those things that they had already heard and known all about and it's a good thing to draw our remembrance to these things. Because he says in verse 16, For we have not followed cunningly devised fables.

Yes, the Christian pathway is not one of following some fable or some idea. The Christian truth is based upon the authority and the fact of the Son of God. [00:32:04] And Peter here, he had this wonderful glimpse of the glory of the Lord Jesus when he was on the Holy Mount.

We could read about the transfiguration in Matthew, Mark and Luke. And yet you know, it never seemed to have lost from the mind and from the heart of Peter. He says here, And the voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with him in the Holy Mount. What an impression it made upon Peter when he was there in the Holy Mount and he had a little picture of the fact that the Lord Jesus was going to come and was going to reign and that he was going to be supreme in this world of his rejection. But in verse 19 he says, We have also a more sure word of prophecy.

For unto you do well that ye take heed.

We have in our hands the scriptures.

[00:33:04] Particularly as we think of the words of prophecy in those Old Testament. And how many Old Testament scriptures look forward to the glorious day when the Lord Jesus would be supreme. When he would be the one that is in control of this world. And he goes on to say, For unto you do well take heed as unto a light that shines in a dark place.

We live in a world you know which is characterised by darkness. And that word darkness could be further translated as filth. As something that is obnoxious. That's the sort of place in which we're living in today. And what is there that can shine? What light have we got? Surely it's the wonderful fact that the Lord Jesus is going to return. The Lord Jesus who has been rejected by this world is going to come back to this world. And we can go back into the Old Testament scriptures [00:34:03] and we can go back into the New Testament scriptures and see clearly laid out the wonderful fact that the Lord Jesus is going to come and he's going to judge this world. And he's going to put this world right. And there is a day coming as we find here, until the day dawns.

That is a glorious day coming when the Lord Jesus will come into this scene. And when the day of the Lord will begin. And when the day of Christ will be here. It has been suggested, you know, that the day of the Lord would speak of that time when the Lord will come and will reign and there will be judgment on his enemies. The day of Christ will be the day when he will come and he will give blessing. And then we read in Philippians, the day of Jesus Christ, when the man that was humbled down here, he will be exalted and supreme.

And so we find that this light, this wonderful prophetic scriptures that we have, [00:35:02] they point to the wonderful fact that the Lord Jesus is going to come into this world. It ought to have a practical

effect upon us. It ought to have the effect of making us be more for him.

Whilst it says, and the day star arise in your heart.

You know, whilst we are waiting for the Lord to come, and we know that it's not going to be far off, and yet here I believe it is something that ought to be real in every one of our hearts. We should be waiting for his coming. We should be watching for his coming. We should be living with the expectancy that he should come at any time.

What a joy it will be when the Lord Jesus does come and take us out of this scene to be with him forever. But it is our opportunity and our privilege now to have his coming in our hearts, as it were, to keep looking for that wonderful day [00:36:01] we often used to hear the poem, I wake every morning with thoughts of his love. He's living for me in the glory above. Each moment expecting he'll call me away. What a wonderful thing it is if we take heed to the prophetic scriptures, if we realise that he is coming, and we have this hope in our hearts.

And so, dear friends, as I come to the close, these little things, we should take heed to what we've heard, take heed to that which is of the Lord, live our lives down here in such a way that is honouring to him and having him as the one that is supreme in our hearts.

I have another little hymn. It's 364.

Have I an object, Lord, below, which would divide my heart from thee, which would divert its even flow in answer to thy constancy, [00:37:02] O teach me quickly to return and cause my heart afresh to burn. 364.