

THE NEED FOR VIGILANCE

While guarding against over-suspicion, we must also guard against its opposite extreme. Many problems that beset the church may be traced to this root. If some brethren are hyper-suspicious, perhaps more are hyper-naive about everybody and everything. Some have chosen the course of a carefully premeditated ignorance concerning what is being taught and/or practiced by various brethren. I deem this course to be even more dangerous than the former, exhibiting both abject practical folly as well as rebellion against God's Word. The statements of Scripture are numerous that urge upon us the spirit of vigilance.

Paul gave **elders** the directive to "watch" (be awake, alert, vigilant) for those who would arise among themselves, speaking perverse things to gain a following (Acts 20:31). Elders are to watch for souls in their care (Heb. 13:17). Many congregations have been stolen by those who love not the Truth because elders were not vigilant. Some not only refuse to be watchful on their own, but they refuse to heed warnings when indisputable evidence is laid before them.

Paul told Timothy (a **preacher**), "watch thou in all things" (2 Tim. 4:5, KJV). This admonition was in the context of warnings that some would despise the Truth. Paul was not like many modern preachers who pride themselves on their ignorance of "brotherhood issues" and of who is saying what. Had he been like many modern disciples he would have told Chloe that he was so busy in Ephesus that he did not even want to hear about problems in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:11).

Many preachers pride themselves in avoiding knowledge of crucial errors and their sources with the flippant excuse: " I don't keep files on the brethren. I let others do

that; I just try to mind my own business." Yet, when one of these problems crosses his threshold, guess who he is most likely to call—one of those "busy-bodies" who has kept some files to help him deal with the problem.

Peter gives the instruction concerning vigilance to **all**: "Be sober, be watchful" (1 Pet. 5:8). Rather than sleeping, we must all "watch and be sober" (1 The. 5:6). We are to "beware" of (observe, keep our eyes open for) false doctrines and philosophies (Mark 8:15; Col. 2:8). Paul felt this need of vigilance so keenly that he had upon him "anxiety for all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28). Let us not be consumed with suspicion, but neither let us foolishly deny the need for vigilance and concern for all of the error and sin that have found their way into the church. Worse, let us never allow imply endorsement of such by a guilty silence.