

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Grace Does Good

PART

2

TITLE

Leading Like Jesus

SCRIPTURE

Titus 1:5-9



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Well, good morning, church. My name is Daniel Savage. I am one of the pastors here, the pastor of discipleship. I have the privilege this morning of continuing our series in Titus in chapter one verses five through nine. Last week, Brian introduced the book. Pastor Brian introduced Titus by explaining that our good works, the good that comes out of our life is really an overflow of the grace of God. He talked about how grace leads to faith, and then we're built up in this knowledge of who God is, and we develop this identity of who we are in Christ. The overflow of all that is good works and things that glorify God. Often, we get that backwards. We try to manufacture these good works with self-discipline or effort, and it becomes this burden that we carry around. We become commandment keepers.

He was talking about getting that order right and understanding it's the grace of God that flows into our life that produces joyful obedience. We want to do good things. These good things flow out of understanding who God is and understanding what he has done for us and understanding what our identity is in him. This grace that comes into our lives and produces all this good, it comes in many forms. It's delivered through different means, different means of grace, these paths, these channels that God uses to pour his goodness into our lives. One of those means of grace, one of those areas where God is good to us and pours this grace into our lives is through the leadership in the church, which is what we will think about this morning. It's what Titus chapter one verses five through nine is about. It's about the leaders in the church, specifically the elders.

This is a little bit of a difficult sermon because none of you this week were in a deep, dark trial of faith and thought to yourself, "You know, what I really need to know is more about the qualifications of elders. That's what would really help me." No one has this felt need of knowing more about elders. None of you got out of bed this morning and thought, "You know what I hope the preacher talks about this morning is elders and their qualifications. I hope he just goes into great depth and detail about what makes an elder and what do they do. I hope that's what the sermon is about today." None of you woke up thinking that, but I am hopeful that this morning we will leave here with a better understanding of the role of elders in the church and, just as important, we will see in that the heart of God for us, that he provided leaders for us, for our good.

I want you to leave here saying, "Wow. I can not believe that God cares about me that much, that he would provide for me in such a way." Let me pray, and we'll ask God to give us grace even now as we read these verses and try to understand them. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, be with us now. I pray that even in this moment your grace would be poured out upon us, that we might be able to understand your word and what you're revealing about yourself through Titus chapter one verses five through nine. God, give us grace. Help us to see Jesus in all of his glory, in all of his beauty revealed in this passage so that we might be drawn to him. We pray these things in his name. Amen.

If you have a Bible, look in Titus chapter one. We'll read verses five through nine together. Starting in verse five, it says, "This is why I left you in Crete." This is Paul talking to Titus.

“This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you, if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an elder or an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”

The context of this is Paul says that he left Titus in Crete to put what remained into order. Now, we know that Crete was sort of a rough place, had sort of a bad reputation. Paul will talk about that in the next paragraph. We don’t have any record that Paul had any sort of extended ministry in Crete. When he says that he left Titus behind, he’s probably referring to the trip that he took in Acts chapter 27. In Acts chapter 27, he’s making his way from Jerusalem to Rome. We know that he sails along the southern coast of the island of Crete. He docks several times in different harbors. It could be that Paul was there just long enough to realize that there was a fledgling church there that needed some help getting started. It was having trouble organizing and getting itself off the ground.

How did this fledgling church get there? Well, one of the ways it could have gotten there is that in Acts chapter two, on the day of Pentecost, when Peter goes out into the streets, and the Spirit falls on the apostles. You remember that? The tongues of fire, and they begin speaking in tongues and proclaiming the gospel. It says that everyone there heard what they were saying as if they were saying it in their own language. It talked about how miraculous this was, that they’re preaching the gospel there, and everyone can understand it. Well, they list out all these nationalities. One of the people groups that they mention are the Cretans, that there are Cretans there.

It’s very possible that among the 3,000 who were converted that day in Acts chapter two, some of those were Cretans who then took the gospel back to the island of Crete and began to share it with their friends and families and neighbors. These groups of believers started, but there was no one to instruct them, no no one to tell them how to organize the church, no one to help them organize themselves the way that God intended. Paul sees that they need help, and Paul leaves Titus there to organize them and to appoint elders in every town it says. The next few verses here are a reminder to Titus about what kind of men he should be looking to appoint. The first thing I want you to see this morning is the grace of God in the role of elders.

Think about the importance of elders just as it’s seen in this passage. The fact that Paul is willing to leave his true son in the faith, Titus, behind for this job of organizing what is left to be put in order and, specifically, this job of appointing elders tells us that this job is really, really important. Paul, like I said, is making his way from Jerusalem to Rome. He’s already told elders in Ephesus he’s not going to see them again because he knows that persecution awaits him in Rome. He doesn’t think he’s going to leave Rome. He doesn’t think he’s going to make it out of Rome alive.

When he leaves Titus here in Crete, he is leaving his true son in the faith, this dear friend and partner in ministry, knowing he will not see him again or at least it's likely that he won't.

He makes this incredible sacrifice. Here he is on the way to be persecuted and to meet his end in persecution. He leaves his partner behind because this is so important for the churches in Crete. It leads us to ask, "What is an elder? Why is having elders so important?" Well, an elder, an overseer, and a pastor are the same thing. All three of these words overlap in the New Testament. They mean different things, but they refer to the same role or office in the church. Paul uses both elder and overseer just in these few verses. You see the overlap in other places too. In Acts chapter 20 when Paul calls the elders of Ephesus, and he's talking to them, he addresses them as overseers, as elders, and he says that their role is to shepherd the people of God. Peter says the same thing in 1 Peter chapter five when he says, "As an elder, to elders, shepherd the flock of God among you." That same word shepherd is used in Ephesians chapter four verse 11 when he is talking about pastors.

It appears that in Paul's mind and in his teaching these three words are all referring to the same role or function in the church, which is a group of men ordained by God to serve the church by leading them to God through the ministry of the word and prayer. They're supposed to serve the church by leading them to God through the ministry of the word and prayer. An elder is a leader in the church. He's a pastor. He's a shepherd. He's an overseer. What does an elder do? We get a good picture of that in a few different places in the New Testament. This book that we're reading, Titus, is a book to a pastor, shepherd, overseer. We can learn from 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus a lot about the role of elder or pastor, but we also see it in places like 1 Peter chapter five verses one through five. Peter tells the elders what they're supposed to be doing. One of the pictures that I love is this picture in Acts chapter 20.

In Acts chapter 20, Paul is on this same journey. He's moving from Jerusalem to Rome, and he passes by Ephesus. He had spent several years in Ephesus proclaiming the gospel, building up the church. He loved the people of Ephesus. He's passing by. He doesn't go to Ephesus, but he's passing near there, near enough that he calls for the elders of the church in Ephesus to come and meet him because he wants to give them some instruction. He wants to encourage them. He says as he meets them, "You won't see my face again." This is his last charge, his last time to interact with them. It pictures them weeping there together as he says that they would not see his face again. These men love each other. Paul loved the church in Ephesus, and so he gives them this charge as the elders.

Acts chapter 20 starting in verse 28, listen to what he says. He says to them, these elders, as they're weeping together, "You're not going to see my face again. Here's my last charge to you." He says, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number, men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. Be on your guard. Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears."

What are they supposed to do? He tells them, “Keep watch. Shepherd. Protect from the wolves who will come in to draw disciples away.”

How are they supposed to do that? By imitating Paul, who he says for three years never stopped warning each of them night and day with tears. They’re supposed to proclaim the truth. They’re supposed to encourage, teach, proclaim, pray, plead with the people, keep watch over them, warn them, encourage them. This is the job of an elder pastor. Like a shepherd who watches closely over the sheep of his flock and looks to fend off predators who seek to harm them or damage their faith, so the shepherds of God’s people are supposed to watch over them, working day and night to warn them of any dangers and to remind them of the things they need to know, namely, that this life is short and that there is a real eternity that is coming. One day, Christ will break open the clouds. We, as a people, want to be ready. It’s our job to remind you of this over and over and over again.

What does all this tell us about God? I want to ask this question a few times this morning because this isn’t just a purely administrative passage of scripture. Every part of the Bible reveals the character of God to us. That’s what the Bible is. It’s not a book about history, although it has history in it. It’s not a book about rights and rituals, although it has that in it. It’s a book that reveals God. It’s not just a book about the governance of the church, although that is here. Primarily, it is a book that reveals to us who God is. What does it reveal to us about God that he has given elders in the church? Paul leaves behind his close friend because he knows that these God-ordained roles are vital to the health and survival of the church in Crete. What does it tell us about God?

God created this role of elder for our good. He created this role of overseer, shepherd in the church, to watch over his people because he loves you. The fact that God would give us this gift of leaders, called out and gifted for the purpose of our edification and encouragement and protection is evident of his grace and his goodness towards us. I think about the exchange between Jesus and Peter after Jesus is raised from the dead. He’s been resurrected, and he’s meeting with different apostles, different disciples. He has this exchange with Peter. He asks him three times, “Peter, do you love me?” Every time, Peter says, “Jesus, you know that I love you. Lord, you know that I love you.” Every time, Jesus responds by saying, “Then feed my sheep. Tend my lambs.”

He’s saying, “Peter, if you love me, then the response that you should have is to watch over my people. This is what I want you to do. This is where my heart is. I want my people to be cared for, to be watched over, to be shepherded, to be taught, to be encouraged. I want you to protect them, Peter. Teach them the truth. Keep them from error. Love them.” It reminds me of the passage in Matthew chapter nine when it finishes describing this ministry of Jesus. You have the teachings of Jesus and then the miracles of Jesus. It says, as sort of this ending statement, that he went all throughout the land proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God and healing every disease and every sickness. Then, it says right after that, after it describes his ministry, it says that when Jesus saw the crowds, it’s in verse 36, “When Jesus saw the crowds, he was moved to compassion.”

The word there is like an internal groaning. It's like his insides were turning inside out because he looked out at the people, and he said, "They're harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd." It breaks the heart of God to see his people without leaders who are loving them and caring for them. He longs for us to have leaders who will remind us of the truth and point us to him and care for us the way that he intends. He turns to his disciples, and he says, "Pray to the Lord of the harvest that he would raise up workers to go out into the harvest. Pray that God would raise up people that will teach the truth. Pray that God will raise up workers who will care for my people."

We see God's grace in the role of elders. Secondly, we see God's grace in the character of elders. It's important for us to remember this morning as we think about these qualifications that God wasn't looking down from heaven, and he saw some really great men. He's like, "Man, those guys are super qualified for something. I should give them a job." Instead, he saw his people with a need, that they needed leaders. He poured out his grace into the lives of some men so that they would be qualified to lead you. It's important for us to remember that this is all of God. It's God's gift to us. It's God's doing. It's God's working. He's the one that sets apart men and qualifies them and shapes them and gifts them so that they can fulfill this role within the church.

Now, he's going to spend the bulk of this passage telling us what kind of grace we ought to be looking for. What kind of activity of God should we be looking for in the lives of men before we appoint them as leaders? There's really one qualification. That is that they would be above reproach. Because of the importance of this role and the responsibility that's given to elders in the church, Paul wants Titus to examine their character. He says that they should be above reproach or blameless. That doesn't mean that they're perfect. That's important for you to remember. There is no such thing as a perfect leader. Every leader is flawed. Every leader has weaknesses. Leaders in the church are men like you. He says that they must be above reproach, meaning that there's no obvious flaw in them.

If you polled the church and set one man up here that was appointed as an elder, and you say, "What's his weakness?" we wouldn't all say the same thing, "Well, there's one obvious weakness in that guy." They would be above reproach. Everyone would say, "I'm sure he's not perfect, but I can't really think of anything." In other words, their life is filled with good fruit. The reason for this high standard, why do they have to be above reproach? Why blameless in this way? He says in verse seven, "For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach." God is entrusting his people to the care and leadership of these men. As God's stewards, as those entrusted with the care of God's people, they must be above reproach. In order to think about that, he gives us three categories.

The first of the three categories that Paul gives us to think about is how are they leading in their home. Verse six says, "If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination." Paul wants us to ask, "What kind of a husband is he? What kind of a dad is he?"

He's supposed to be the husband of one wife. Now, people have interpreted that to mean different things. It's difficult to interpret because this is what we have. Some people think that Paul is primarily thinking about polygamy, that they can't have multiple wives. They have to be a man with one wife. Some have said that this is a prohibition for anyone who's ever been divorced. I don't think that is true.

I think you have to go back to that original qualifier, which is that this is supposed to be a man who is above reproach. I don't think divorce is an unforgivable sin. I think it's best interpreted that the elders should be a one woman man, meaning that he is a man who's faithful and devoted to his wife, and he's a faithful husband. I don't think divorce is this automatic disqualifier for the role of elder or deacon for that matter. Thinking back to that original qualifier, he is above reproach, I think there's several scenarios where divorce could be in someone's past, and we would still say that the person is above reproach. You would say consider a man who was married early in his life before he was a believer, and he marries an unbeliever. They get divorced. Then, years later, he comes to faith. Then, he finds a believing wife, and they are faithful to each other. They're loving their family well. He's leading well, and he does so for years at a time.

We could look at his life and say that is a man who is devoted to his wife and above reproach. We wouldn't say because he has this distant sin in his past that he's not qualified. Instead, we look at the way that he is leading. We think, "What kind of husband is he?" Second, we would ask, "What kind of dad is he?" It's another tricky one here. Paul says that his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. What does it mean for the elders' kids? Does an elder have to have perfect kids? You already know the answer. You're laughing right now. No, praise the Lord. No one has perfect kids, so what does it mean? He's referring to the way that a man manages his home. How is he leading? Paul's instruction in 1 Timothy is helpful here. He's giving Timothy a similar list of qualification.

He gives him a little bit more detail on why this is so important. He says in chapter three verse four, "He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him. He must do so in a manner worthy of full respect." Verse five, "If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how could he take care of God's church?" An elder's family doesn't have to be and never will be perfect, just like the church will never be perfect. What Paul is saying is that the family is like a microcosm of the church. You have a group of naturally sinful people that the leader is trying to encourage to follow God. Paul is saying if he can't lead his small troop, then why would we expect him to lead even larger numbers in the church? Again, we have to go back to the criteria above reproach. Does this mean that an elder's children all must be believers? Well, if my six-year-old isn't a believer, does it affect the way that you view me as a leader? I hope not.

Similarly, if an elder leads his family well and points his kids to Jesus but, as an adult, one of them walks away from the faith, this doesn't necessarily bring reproach. The question is, "Did he manage his household well?" The question is not, "Is the elder's family perfect?" Instead, "Is it obvious that he was leading them to God?"

When they fail, is he correcting them and pointing them to their need for the gospel? Is he constantly pointing them to the truths about God, giving them an example as someone who loves and follows God, exercising his own faith in such a way that it's an encouragement to them to love God as well? The question we need to ask is, "What kind of a dad is he? Is he a dad that's leading his family to love God, pointing them to their need for the gospel? Is he leading well? Is he managing his home?"

We're supposed to look at his family. Second, we're supposed to look at his behavior. Look at verse seven, "For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined." First, DA Carson, who's a pastor, theologian, writer, he sort of famously says about this list that's remarkably unremarkable. All these things that he lists out here, that they're not to be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy, those are things that all of us should do. It's remarkably unremarkable in that way. He's saying you should just be a fruitful Christian, a Christian who is bearing fruit in all these areas of your life.

If I could sum up this list, I would say that he is a God-fearing, people-loving, steadfast man. He's a God-fearing, people-loving, steadfast man. God-fearing meaning that he cares more about what God thinks than what people think, people-loving meaning that he loves others more than he loves himself, and steadfast meaning that he's not a man given to extremes of any kind. He's not always flying off the handle or losing his temper. He's not greedy for money. There's no excesses in his life that seem strange or that cause reproach. He's not a man given to extremes. He's steady, steadfast. These are the men that we want to look for as elders. Paul says we should think about his family, we should think about his behavior, and, finally, we should think about his doctrine and his faith.

Verse nine, "He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it." This is an area that sets elders apart. If you have this remarkably unremarkable list, that really they're supposed to just be fruitful Christians, this is what separates the elder. It's the same in 1 Timothy chapter three where the qualifications are listed out. They're almost identical to the qualifications of a deacon except this one, that he must be able to teach. This is why. He must be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. This is one of the major roles of the elder, is to teach and proclaim what is true.

Every elder does not have to be a preacher. Every elder doesn't have to be able to stand up and give a sermon, but every elder should be able to handle the word of truth rightly. They ought to be able to discern truth from error. They ought to be able to sit in a group of believers in this church and say, "Here's what's right, and here's what's wrong. . Let me encourage you toward this, and let me encourage you away from this." This is the role of an elder. He's watching over the people. He's teaching. He's protecting. He's warning, and so he must be able to teach. He must hold fast, hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, must be a man that's submitted to the word of God and teaches it as absolute truth.

Why does Paul give us all this detail and give us this long list? It's because leadership in the church is an incredibly important thing. Think about all the good that a leader who is meeting these qualifications can do for God's people. Think about all the encouragement he could give. Think about all the people he could point towards God, all the fruit that will come from a ministry of an elder, pastor, shepherd who is pointing the people to God and reminding them of the truth and praying over them diligently. Think about all the good that can be done, but, in the same light, think about all the harm that could be done if the wrong men have authority in the church, if men who are not trustworthy, if men who are greedy for gain, if men who are looking to see what they can take from the people instead of what they can give to them. They can cripple people's faith. They can tear them away from God instead of pushing them towards God. It is a serious thing.

Think about the words in Hebrews chapter 13 verse 17. They're sobering. The instruction to us as the people of God is, "Obey your leaders and submit to them." Think about that. To be in a church and to appoint elders and leaders is to say, "I am following these men. I'm entrusting myself to their care on God's behalf." It's a really serious thing. How should you respond to that? Well, you should be very careful about who you choose as leaders in the church. You should take the nomination and the ordination process that we do here at Providence very seriously. You should labor in prayer over the names coming in and entrust it to God that he would raise up the right people that would care for and lead our church.

If you ever go anywhere else, if job moves you across the country, and you have to find a new church, you should be very careful. That doesn't mean you have to operate in fear, but it just means you need to operate with the knowledge that I am called to obey and submit to whatever leaders of whatever church I join. You should know who they are, should know what they think. You should know whether or not they submit themselves to the word of God as true. You should know what you're getting into before you join. Then, we should submit to the leaders that we have because it is for our advantage that passage in Hebrews chapter 13 says. What is God's purpose in all of this? Why would he raise up certain men for this task of leading the church?

In Ephesians chapter four, Paul is telling us how Christ has gifted each one of us for the purpose of building up the church, and he speaks about leaders too in verse 11. He tells us why they're here. In verse 11, Ephesians chapter four, he says, "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." God's purpose, God's design is that the leaders of the church, the shepherds, and teachers would build the church up, would equip the saints for the work of the ministry so that then your gifts are all flourishing and working, and we all gain maturity together. We grow up together into the likeness of Christ.

It's God's grace in our lives. Why has God given certain people different gifts? It is for building up the church, and it takes us back to the gospel. Remember what Paul said in Acts chapter 20 to the elders of Ephesus. He says, "Shepherd the flock of God, the church of God, which he bought with his own blood."

The reason that he cares so deeply about us being cared for is that we are a people purchased by the blood of his Son. You and I are not just a random group of people who have assembled here to meet on Sunday mornings. We are a people who have been redeemed by God by the blood of Jesus Christ. We've been rescued and brought from death to life. Then, his sovereign hand assembled us together to form a church. We are a people bought with the blood of Jesus, and he cares deeply about what happens here.

He cares deeply about who the leaders are, and he cares deeply about how we would interact with you, the people, that we would teach you the truth, that we would not be greedy for our own gain, but that we would look to give ourselves away here. He cares deeply about that because you are a people that he bought with his own blood. The church was purchased by the blood of Christ not just to be saved from hell but to be a bride. You're being prepared for the day that you will be presented to Christ. God's purpose in saving you was that he intends to fully redeem you. He's going to take what has been marred and broken by sin, and he's going to completely restore it. The victory that Christ secured through his death and resurrection is your complete restoration. It begins with grace that fuels our faith, that we would believe in him, that we would turn from our own efforts and believe that he lived the life that we could never live.

He lived a life where he grew in favor with God and man because he did everything he was supposed to do. He died the death that you and I deserve to die so that my sin and your sin could be placed upon him, and his blood could wash it clean. Then, his righteousness and the favor that he had acquired was given to us, but it doesn't stop there. He's redeemed us. He has saved us. He's justified us. Then, he is continuing to sanctify us. He will complete the work that he has started. His goal for us is to be a bride for Christ. He has tools for doing that. It's the word. It's prayer. It's the church. It's the relationships that we share in here, and it's your leaders. He's given us leaders, shepherds, overseers, pastors, elders whose job is to wash you continually in the water of the word, pointing you back to God. One really important question I think for us to consider this morning is, "Do you know how desperately you need that?"

Have you learned this about yourself, that you need to be constantly reminded of what is true, that you need a Paul coming to you night and day in tears reminding you that there's more to live for than this life, reminding you that one day you will see him face to face, reminding you to wake up and think about the hymn Come Thou Fount, which says so accurately about us, he says, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart, Lord. Take and seal it. Seal it for thy courts above. Let thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to thee"? I think about Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane on the night that he was betrayed. He went into the garden to pray as his soul was troubled. He took his disciples with him, and he asked them to pray for him. He took Peter, James, and John a little farther, and he asked them to pray. It says that he told them, "My soul is sorrowful to the point of death. Will you pray with me?"

He goes a little farther, and he prays, and he comes back, and he finds them asleep. Here, his most trusted friends, his partners, his disciples, and they are asleep. What does he say? He says, “Wake up. Watch and pray that you may not fall into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Do you know that about yourself? The spirit indeed is willing. We want to do what is right. We want to follow God. We want to be faithful, but the flesh is weak. Twice more, he comes back. Each time, he has to wake them up. We all, you, me, all of us constantly need someone to keep saying to us, “Wake up. It’s almost time. Keep praying. Keep watching.” This is what the elder is supposed to do. What does this tell us about God? It tells us that God cares deeply about you. God knows your frame. He knows that you are but dust. He considers your weakness.

The remarkable thing about God is that he sees us in our weakness, and instead of turning his back on us and saying, “You know, that people is just too weak, too unfaithful. They’re always betraying me. They always walk away from my commands. They always think they know the best way to do it,” instead of writing us off, he says, “You know what? They’re really weak. They need constant reminders, so I’m going to appoint men who will be tasked with the burden of reminding them over and over again. I want them to bear the responsibility of pointing them back to God over and over and over again, a group of men, a band of men that I will appoint in each church to say, ‘Wake up. Remember. Look to the sky. Jesus is coming soon.’ I know they’re weak, and so I will provide what is needed.” This is the tender care and grace of God, and it is a remarkable thing.

What does this tell us about ourselves? That we are in need of being watched over. Even the elders need elders. That’s why there’s always a group of elders. Paul never talks about one elder. He always talks about elders. Elders are supposed to come in packs because elders need elders. What did he say to the elders in Ephesus or the elders from Ephesus in Acts chapter 20? He said, “Keep watch over yourselves and the flock of God.” Then he said, “Some will arise even from among you,” because elders are just like you. We need to be watched over. We need to be reminded. We need to be cared for. We’re supposed to do it together. All of us need to be watched over, need to be protected, need to be encouraged. For the Christian here this morning, I hope that you are encouraged knowing that God thought so carefully about what you would need and made provision for your needs in this way, that he would care for you so deeply.

We should respond by praying for our leaders. If you go to our church’s website, pray.org, you can find our leaders there on the website. You can find their names and pictures, and you can pray for them. You can email them and tell them that you’re praying for them or tell them that you have a question. You can interact with them. This is what they are here for. They’re praying for you. You pray for them. Pray that God would continue to raise up new leaders who are worthy of being followed. When we have a nomination process, you should participate. If you see men who meet these qualifications, steadfast, God-fearing, people-loving men, then nominate them, and pray over this process and participate in it because it is for your good, for your advantage.

For the non-Christian, I want you to know this morning that there is a God who wants to redeem you, and he's made provision for your rescue and forgiveness. He sees you in your helpless state, and he has commissioned us to be ministers of reconciliation, that we would share the good news with you, that there is forgiveness available, that you could be a part of a body, the people of God bought with his blood that's watched over and cared for by his leaders. Turn to Jesus Christ. Repent of your sins. I want us all to be grateful for the way that God sees us and provides for us. I want to close the service this morning by praying for our elders and pastors.

If you're here this morning in this service, and you're an elder or a pastor, I want you to stand up because I want everybody to see who you are. Then, I want you as a church body to join me as we close the service praying for our leaders, giving thanks to God for them and praying over them. I know you're in here. You have to stand. Elders and pastors, y'all stand up, and we'll pray. If you as a church body would join me, let's pray for these men. Heavenly Father, we're grateful for your provision, that we see your kindness in the way that you've set up the church, that we would have people that watch over us and teach us, care for us, love us, and lead us.

Even as a pastor, I need this. I need these men that are standing now to care for me. As I try to care for those in the room, God, I pray that you would be with us, that you would be with these men, that you would hold them fast to yourself, help them to be steadfast, God-fearing, people-loving men. God, continue to raise up the right people to lead and watch over this church. We entrust it to you. It is yours, purchased by your blood. God, would you move among us? Thank you for these men. Thank you for the role of elders. God, continue to use us, that we might equip the saints for the work of the ministry, that they build one another up, that we might reach maturity. God, give us this grace. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.



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