

Healthy Gospel Leadership

Titus 1:5-9

Grace Church | July 21, 2019

Good morning Grace Church. Last week we started our first week in the book of Titus. Titus is a letter written by the apostle Paul to his disciple Titus, full of instructions for Titus to establish healthy churches on the island of Crete. If you remember from last week, we said that Titus will show us that healthy churches are made up of healthy leadership, healthy doctrine, and healthy culture.

And ultimately, all of these things are linked to one another, because what we are taught, we believe, and what we believe goes from our head to our hearts and eventually to our hands, influencing directly how we act and behave.

Last week we also talked about the importance of getting the foundation right. The foundation for a healthy church is founded on what we called a right mythology: a story that shapes our belief or our doctrine. The Cretans were taught from the beginning a cultural mythology that was inherently anti-gospel, and therefore they were known as an ungodly, immoral people. What they believed eventually impacted how they acted. So we covered last week the important fact that in his intro to the book Paul reminds us of an authoritative, true, immediate, and Christ-centered mythology. This is the story of the gospel of Jesus, of his life and death and resurrection, is inherently counter cultural and is the foundation for every healthy church. In light of this, we were encouraged to seek out false mythologies we are believing in our lives and to start our time in Titus by orienting ourselves around a mythology crafted in eternity by a God who does not lie, a mythology that shows us Jesus Christ, not Zeus, as the centerpiece and ultimate example.

So now we are ready to move on to Paul's first instructions to Titus. Notice the importance, the urgency of his commands to Titus. **Read verse 5 again.** Paul's first order of business is for Titus to appoint elders in every town. In fact, Paul says it sums up the whole reason why Titus was left in Crete. This is because Paul's first, frontline, strategy for the health of the local church is to establish healthy leadership. This is important, vital work. Without right leadership the churches in Crete will falter and fail and fall away.

So here is the deal this morning: we will be working through a passage that you may not think applies to you. You are not a pastor of a church (unless you are Bracken or Buck or some visitor I am aware of this morning). But we are a people who believe that every

single iota of God's word is profitable for us—and this text is no different. The instructions to Titus to make sure the church has healthy leadership applies also to our church. Without right leadership, Grace Church will falter and fail and fall away. This means that the stakes are high, and getting this right is hard. But here is where it pertains to you: you are not stagnant in this. If you are a member of Grace Church, the health of the churches leadership is your issue just as much as it is the pastors. The instructions here are given for *you*. Establishing a healthy church is a work of the body. The kind of leaders described this morning are the kind of leaders you should look for, pray for, and some of you aspire to be. This issue is not a footnote in the Bible's instruction for church life: it is a foundational piece. Once we get our mythology right, the first step of maturity is implementing and sustaining healthy church leadership.

And yet, implementing and sustaining right, healthy, church leadership by the Grace of God is one of the most difficult things a church can do. Our church, of all churches, knows this well. I don't have to remind our members that we recently experienced firsthand how hard it can be to support and maintain healthy church leadership. Pastor Buck is the only pastor who has been here at Grace from the beginning. Bracken and I were ordained to and affirmed to serve you not even two months ago. Even today, you might be thinking that you're not really sure about us. We are young, we are inexperienced, we are new to this church as leaders. Maybe it's a bold move for me to even preach this text, but here we are. At Grace Church we don't back down from the full council of the Word of God. No, we let it expose us, shape us, mold us, form us, correct us, instruct us, orient us. In order to be a healthy church, we need healthy leadership.

No man is perfect, and God's plans are higher than ours. This means that leaders come and go, just as church members come and go. No man or pastor is entitled to leadership or rank, office, or status in ministry. And here in Titus we have God speaking with intent authority and urgency. See Paul's command to Titus: appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. He is calling on his apostolic authority. Paul, the servant-messenger of God, the apostle of Jesus Christ, has one command for you Titus: appoint healthy leaders. This is a difficult task, but the Scriptures are clear: we have to pay attention to something this important. And God is not silent to guide us—he has spoken. So let's listen.

Our outline this morning is very simple. I want to show you three things from our text about the purpose of Biblical Elders, of healthy leadership in the church. I want to show you that healthy elders provide **Spiritual Order**, healthy elders provide **Faithful Example**, and healthy elders provide **Doctrinal Discipleship**.

Healthy Elders Provide Spiritual Order

Read again in verse 5. Paul leaves Titus in Crete to appoint elders in every town. And what happens by the appointment of elders: Titus puts what remains into *order*. The word here means to reshape, to reform, to put something into order that previously was not orderly. Why is right leadership so important? Well, there is actually Biblical precedent to show the reality of life that without proper leadership, we find chaos. A lack of order.

What is the primary way the Bible speaks of the people of God? In two ways: children, and sheep. My baby is about two weeks old. It's our first child. Life as a parent is different, isn't it? You all tried to warn me. I really feel like my sermon illustrations are just going to get better at this point. I'll try not to use him as an illustration every week. Well, my wife and I have found out exactly how quickly *chaos* can erupt in our house with a newborn. There have already been a few days where he is sleepy, but won't sleep, he is hungry but won't eat. And when that happens to him, it happens to us. We get sleepy and grumpy and hungry and I think kind of revert into infancy ourselves. Introducing a tiny human into a home can cause some chaos.

Because children need order, don't they? They need schedules, rules, and ultimately they need *leadership*. If children only did what they thought was right, with no consequences and no leadership from their parents or other adults, what would happen? Chaos. No order at all.

Maybe you don't have children, so here is another picture for you. The Bible speaks of God's people as *sheep*. We are not an overtly agricultural people, but the idea here is that without a shepherd, the sheep wander away. Sheep are pretty dumb. They aren't loyal like dogs. They get lost really easy. Without leadership, they stray off—there is no order, no leadership. Chaos is the rule of the day. We are wired to need the order or healthy leadership—sheep needs shepherds, to find shelter, peace, order from the chaos of the world.

And we see in Scripture both examples of the need for order being fulfilled in right and proper leadership among the people of God. In 1 Timothy, Paul is writing to another of his disciples and outlining again the qualifications of healthy church leadership. He points to the elder's ability to manage his own household as an example of how he might manage the household of God. Elders act, in a way, as managers of the house of God, leaders of the children of God of which they are a part.

In 1 Peter, Peter is speaking again of the office of elder and he calls them *pastors*. The word pastor means shepherd. The leader of the sheep.

What is all this telling us? We learn from Titus and the council of Scripture that there is a right ordering to the church. God has not left us empty-handed. He has provided for us a way to order ourselves, a way to break into the chaos that is an assembly of people and emerge as a unified, functioning body of believers. What is his way to make sure his children and his sheep are put into order? Biblical, healthy, elders.

God has ordained it this way: every church is to have elders. Let me speak real quickly to what this kind of order looks like. I think we see the order God putting forward in the church to be one of plurality. This means that the primary way God has ordered his church is that there should not just be one elder. Titus is meant to elders in every town. This might mean that there are multiple house-churches in every town, or there is one church in a town, but the idea is the same. There are multiple elders in every town. I believe that the Biblical model for church leadership is that there are multiple qualified, approved, men who are equal in authority and share in this office together. This is what we have at Grace Church: we have men who are lay pastors, different day jobs, different personalities, different giftings, different leadership styles, but all pastor. And all pastor each other. Praise God I am not alone up here: Bracken and Buck are my pastors as much as they are yours! God has ordered it so.

Also see that in verse seven, which we will get to, Paul uses the term overseer. He is not introducing a new office of leadership. The sentence structure shows us that Paul is speaking about elders here. Paul has said the elder must be above reproach, now he says why. You might translate it this way: "As one who oversees, and as God's steward, an elder must be above reproach." So here we have another term, overseer, for the same office of elder. We've already mentioned elsewhere in Scripture elders are called "pastors" or shepherds. The weight of Biblical evidence is clear to show us that God is setting up one office, called by different names: elder, overseer, pastor. This is why at Grace Church we use these words synonymously. All of our pastors are elders, all our elders are pastors, all of them oversee. We do not have separate pastors and elders. We hold this to be the most Biblical order for a new testament church. One office of leadership: pastor/elder.

Notice too that this is an office of leadership reserved for men. This is part of the right ordering of God's church, and is affirmed undeniably all over Scripture. Here, these men are called to be the husband of one wife. I won't belabor this point, but I will say this: there is an order and a reasoning to this. God's aim is not to exclude. We believe this is the only office of leadership reserved for men in the church—women should be equipped and

encouraged and supported to serve in every other way besides this office of pastor/elder. Woe to the church that uses this as a way to demean or detract from the role of women in the church. God's aim in this is also not to place a hierarchy: the reason this office is reserved for men is not because men are better at it, or more up to the task. In fact, it is probably often the opposite. The reason this office is reserved for men is because God has so ordered his household, his people, that the elders represent Christ to the church—and in Scripture Christ is always portrayed as masculine, while the church is seen as feminine. We see the same idea in Ephesians to be lived out in the Christian household. So some of you may still be curious about this, and I would ask that you would come find myself or one of the other pastors, and ask us. We will take you out to coffee and explain our case for why we believe that God has ordained that the Biblical office of pastor/elder is reserved for men. You might disagree with us, and that is ok. We won't kick you out of the church. But we want you to be aware that this is the direction we will lead our church, because we believe it to be the most Biblically faithful direction.

Finally, notice the command to Titus: appoint elders in every town. This may lead you, at first glance, to determine that Titus is acting as the final arbiter of these decisions. But there is more going on here: there is also an underlying corporate responsibility here. Notice the importance Paul puts on the outward reputation of the men Titus is to approve. He mentions it in verses six and seven as "above reproach". This translates to "blameless". The men Titus is to approve as elders must be not perfect, but relatively blameless in their community. Titus has not been in Crete long, so he is relying on the reputation of these men to be his guide. In this way, the candidates would have been chosen from among the people of Crete as ones who stood out. They would be affirmed by the people as blameless in character, and then Titus would put his seal of approval on them. Passages like this are why we believe it is important that the members of this church have input and responsibility in deciding who their pastors are. Pastors of this church must be men known and approved by the congregation and considered by most to be without blame or above reproach in their character. I want you to know that the pastors of this church whole-heartedly believe that the most biblical way of selecting and affirming elders is by submitting the process to the affirmation of the members of the church. In a few weeks, we will be releasing to our members a new church constitution and set of bylaws that sets this practice in stone and makes it clear for our people its biblical precedent. Members will be able to review these bylaws before eventually voting and affirming them together as one body. Here is why this is important: because God has ordained that there is an *order* to the church of God. And this order begins with the affirming of healthy leadership.

You may be thinking: okay, so you are saying that the elders job is to balance the budget, tell us where to stand and what to say and where to go, and overall make sure the lights

stay on at the church and no one does anything crazy. Orderly, calm. Well, yes, I am saying that, but I am saying so much more. What is in view here is not simply earthly order, but spiritual order. Even the word, “elder” may not mean what you think. Paul is borrowing this language primarily from the leaders of the Jewish synagogue, who were known as elders. What is in view here is not “elderly”, and the emphasis is not on their age. The emphasis is on their leadership. Jewish elders were all different ages, and many of Paul’s companions, such as Timothy, were elders who were young in age. And I’m not just saying that because I am young. What is important here is that the term “elder” is a title meant to imply spiritual leadership, not age., because the elders primary responsibility is to provide spiritual order and leadership. Wisdom that comes from age is important, but not in focus here. Consider an example from Church history: “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

The people of God had no God-given leadership, and so what happened? They not only were dysfunctional, they were spiritually unordered. They worshipped idols and did only what they thought was right. The job of the pastor is not just physical orderliness, but spiritual order. The people of God should not be spiritually chaotic. There are fundamental things we believe, ways we act. We should be predictable, but not boring. There is a right way to worship God, a right way to follow Jesus. And the pastors job The pastor is supposed to show what is right—not in his own eyes, but in the eyes of God.

A pastor who makes up his own idea for spiritual order should never be trusted with leadership. Christ did not incarnate humbly, live perfectly, die unjustly, and rise victoriously so that he could hand over his church to men who order his bride after the whims of their own heart. No, we see this is in our text as well, in **verse 7**. Paul calls the elders God’s *stewards*. The implication here is that the elders are given oversight of something that is not theirs—they are called to lead the people of God. This is God’s church, and God has a way of ordering it with right leadership.

The elder who shows an example of himself or teaches lessons of his own wisdom is unfit for office and a false teacher who will lead the people astray. This is who the Cretans had in Zeus: a moral and cultural leader who taught them to live after his image. But in our new mythology of truth, we have gospel leaders: healthy eldership means providing order from chaos by both providing an example of Godliness and by teaching from God’s word.

So let’s turn then to those things.

Elders Provide a Blameless Example

Read verses 6-8 again. So now Paul gives Titus examples of what an elder is to look like. The tendency when we come to a description of right living like this is to make it a check-list. If you hit all of these, you're in; if you miss some, you're out. But the important thing here to know is that this list is not meant to be exhaustive. It's meant to show a pattern, a pattern of counter-cultural leadership.

It is safe to say that leaders in the Cretan culture were not men of character. If the consensus of their culture was that they were all liars and beasts and gluttons, what does that tell us about their leaders? These were likely not men who Titus wanted to set an example for the kind of leadership required in the church. So what does Paul give Titus? A list of traits that would separate certain men from the pack—that would make them the opposite of Zeus and those who followed him. The centerpiece of this pattern of godliness is found in **verse 6**: if anyone is “above reproach”. This may also be translated as “blameless”. In other words, these men must not be linked to the cultural morality of the day. They are set-apart, blameless, irreproachable in how they represent for the people godliness, not worldliness. John Stott sums it like this:

“Paraphrasing the word, [elders] should be ‘marred by no disgrace’... All this recognizes that the pastorate is a public office, and therefore the candidate’s public reputation is important.”¹

The character of the pastor is consistently under scrutiny by the public witness—it is a public office. Therefore, we must be blameless, set apart. Again, the emphasis is not on perfection, but on “set-apartness”. The emphasis is that these men would most publicly showcase to the world what godliness looks like.

So we see here two ways in which the elders are called to be blameless. **First, they are to be blameless in the home.** We see this first in the requirement that the elder is “the husband of one wife”. This is literally translated a “one-woman man”. It means that the elder is set apart and blameless in his faithfulness to this wife. He is not given to uncontrolled lust, emotional or physical adultery, or unchecked sexual fantasy. Not only that, he is a faithful provider, protector, and spiritual leader for his wife. In this way, he sets the example as to what a godly marriage looks like. His wife speaks well of him, people look to his marriage as not perfect, but rooted in godliness. If he is single than he is still a “one-woman” man, devoted to kill lust and wait patiently and faithfully for the wife that God may have for him.

¹ John Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus*.

In a few weeks, we will address the way that Cretans had messed up their priorities in the home. But suffice it to say that the culture of the Roman world, and the culture of Crete, at this time, granted men nearly unlimited sexual freedom. Zeus was not a one woman man. In this society, there were very little repercussions for infidelity, especially for men of wealth or status, or the leaders in society. It was common for men to have several, open, affairs as a way to assert their dominance. Marriage was a cultural rite, a way of moving up in the world or attaining something. A one-woman man was counter cultural then, and is counter-cultural today.

We also see in **verse 6** that the elder provides a godly example as to how his household is run. If he has children, they are submissive and responsive to his leadership, and are distinct from the world as long as they are under his care. The word here “believers” is hard to translate. It is also used in similar context to refer to the “faithful”. I think that might be a better translation. The point here is not that all the elders children must be born-again believers—if that was the case, you can disqualify me now. My son is two weeks old and I have not seen any signs of belief. We also know that God alone brings salvation—no man can force his children to believe. The point here is that his children are distinct, set apart, faithful. Not because of things outside of his control, but because he has created an environment in his home where the gospel is proclaimed, taught, and his children are disciplined to know Jesus and his truth and disciplined in love when they live in a way that counteracts that truth. He is in control of his household—he is a strong leader, his children are aware of it and so is the onlooker. This too is countercultural—a family that is centered not around neglect or worship of children but upon Godly discipleship and discipline should be the example that every Christian household should strive for. And our pastors should help provide us with that example.

Secondly, elders are to be blameless in their personal character. Because the pastor is the overseer and steward of what is not his, the church of God, he must be set-apart not only in his countercultural home-life but also in his personal discipline and character. **Read verse 7-8** again.

Let's put these first ones in a positive light. The pastor must showcase humility (not be arrogant), patience (not quick-tempered), temperance (not a drunkard or violent), generosity (not greedy for gain). Basically, Paul is reminding Titus, again, of this set-apartness. The church of God is a counter-cultural community led by counter-cultural leaders. What do all these things have in common? They go against the Cretan stereotype. How would you characterize an “evil beast” of a man? A man who is arrogant, quick-tempered, a violent drunkard, and greedy for gain. That is how I would classify an

evil beast. These are all sins of pride and desire. In a word, the elder is meant to be humble. He is a gentle man, not consumed by power or desire. He is always willing to lay down his time and even his status or occupation and title as a pastor, if it means the church of God is cared for. Look again at **verse 8**. He is hospitable, opening his home to the needy church member again and again. He is a lover of good—he does not only act in a countercultural way to prove a point, he *loves* godliness and is zealous for it. He is self-controlled, not a man of passion. He is upright, godly, holy, disciplined.

The focus here is not, in anyway, on competency. It's not on talent or gifting. Now don't get me wrong, these things are important—because a leader who does not aspire to learn and grow and be excellent in the service of the church probably has some hidden character issues. But the point here is supposed to be inherently counter-cultural: an emphasis on humble, gentle, Godly character. We are not looking for CEO's. We are not looking for "visionaries" or "protegies". We are heaven-bent on finding, sustaining, and praying for elders who are men of humility. Men of character. This is our standard of leadership—not eloquence, charisma, or we need Christlike men.

There is a normalcy here for the Christian life. Pastors provide the *example*, but not just so they can be more godly. They provide the example so that the body of Christ can be godly. The requirements for elders here act as a baseline, in a way, for healthy, countercultural living in Christ. Here is what we should all look for.

You know how important this is that we get this church? If we seek to follow the charismatic visionary man, and neglect the importance of his character, we are following our dream for leadership, not God's plan. Give me bland, boring, uneducated, Christ-like men everyday of the week as my pastors. Give me a church so committed to the uprightness of our counter-cultural character over the lights and production values and ministry offerings. Why? Because these kinds of leaders, this kind of church, might not entertain me or entice me with experiences, but they will point me to JESUS. Their model of him will point me back to him.

Church, Our savior was lowly in heart, his talent and appearance was nothing to write home about. He was from nowhere and in the end, became a hated criminal. Fame was not his goal, notoriety was not his aim. He did not win people over by his charm—he sent people home angry because he spoke the truth. And as he drudged up the hill to the cross, he exemplified humble leadership. He took on the shame and sin of his people—he bore it with patience, not with arrogance. Men spit on him, he did not lose his temper. Did you know he was a "one-woman" man? He loved his bride, his church, to death, and was not given to neglect her for the riches of the world offered to him by Satan himself! He is the

ultimate model for discipleship of his household, because all who come to him by faith will never fall away! He was not greedy for gain, but existed in poverty so that we might become rich in him. Jesus Christ is hospitable, dying so that we may be welcomed always into the very house of God—he is temperate, not given to passion or drunkenness, and never struck out in sinful anger or violence. He is the lamb of God, gentle and humble: self-controlled, upright, disciplined. And holy, Oh church, is he holy! I dare you to find fault with him, stare into the depths of his life and character and work, and all you will find is righteousness, set-apartness. Never was there a man like him before!

Church, it is so important that we model our Jesus. And one of the primary ways God makes sure his church models Jesus is by making sure they know the importance of godly pastors. Get this in our head: we need men who are zealous to look like Jesus, who are so in love with him that that show us his character. We need men who show us the humble, lowly, lamb of God.

But we also need men who set the example for us in showcased not only the zealousness of the humble lamb of God, we need men who are unafraid to showcase the roar of the Lion of Judah.

Elders Provide Doctrinal Discipleship

We need elders who are gentle and humble, but we are not looking for pushovers. Read with me the boldness of **verse 9**. So often, we sacrifice on humble character in leadership, because we say we want “strong” leaders. We want strong leaders who will fight for us, who will not back down, who knows how to get things done. And so we condone and elect and approve leaders who are arrogant and greedy, because they are unafraid to back down. Because they will say the things we don’t want to.

But the Scripture shows us a new kind of leadership—Biblical leadership destroys the false dichotomy between humility and strength. In a few months, we will start a study on Sunday morning in 2 Corinthians. We will be in second Corinthians most of the fall and into the spring. In that book, we find the secret to the power of the Christian life is not in bull-doing, I-want-it-my-way “strong” leadership, but humble weakness. When we are weak, Christ is strong.

And make no mistake, the elders we approve must be men with backbones. They must be weak, humble, sinners, who understand the rock-solid strength of the profession they

hold. Look at the text. Paul calls it here “the trustworthy word”. He says pastors must hold firm, with a tight grip, this trustworthy word.

This means that pastors *must* be theologians. The only way you can pry the truth from their grip is by killing them. They LOVE the good news of Jesus, they love to study it and revel in it and worship God for it. They have a noticeable and identifiable passion and zeal for right doctrine that fuels the church. The truth of the gospel has impacted these men in such a way that they teach and guard this doctrine with their life. They don’t succumb to the latest theological trends or water down the Word of God in their teaching so that they may be better liked. They don’t insert their own opinions into or over the text. They hold fast, tightly, always, to the word of God that is trustworthy. Here is why we preach from the text of the Scripture at Grace Church every week: because we love it. We hold firm to it. It’s got in our bones. I can’t help but teach it and preach it. The same should be true of you.

Notice that elders are called not to guard the truth in order to hoard it, but to *teach* it. They are not stuck up academics who look down on others who don’t have theological degrees. No, healthy elders are patient teachers. And they are also rebukers. They hold so fast to this Word that any doctrine that contradicts the gospel is called out and condemned. Next week we will do some of that condemning from the pulpit. We need elders, and church members following in their example, who love the truth of God so much and hold it so tightly that they are not afraid to call out those who would twist the word of God to promote a new sexual ethic, to justify racism, to kill innocent babies, to offer salvation by any other way save the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What does all of this add up to? This holding fast to and teaching right doctrine and rebuking contradictions to it, is what we might call doctrinal discipleship. We become like Jesus as we are taught right doctrine. Because what we are taught is what we believe and what we believe is how we act. So here we see this principle: our Pastors should lead the way in setting the example of intentional doctrinal discipleship. They should be the most intentional in reproducing themselves.

The best way to achieve healthy leadership is through the process of discipleship. And how does discipleship happen? Through gospel doctrine creating gospel living. We must be a people so devoted to discipleship that identifying godly, equipped men to lead from within our church is the norm, not the exception. A quick plug for our residency—we have two incoming ministry residents this year: Chase Strickland and Abel Castro. Both of these guys are committed to those first stages of discipleship: trying to figure what it means to be a follower of Jesus in service of his church. I also want to let you in on another

vision your pastors have: to see more men take part in not just this ministry residency, but a separate pastoral residency, where we can take men who sense the call to pastoral ministry and put them through a specific pattern of discipleship. The goal is to create a pipeline of healthy leadership within our church that leads to more pastors here, more churches planted, and more churches strengthened.

My vision for Grace Church is that there are men in this church who are new believers, maybe not even Christians, men who are addicted and enslaved to sin habits and pride, who in three years, five years, eight years, ten years, might be future pastors and church planters and missionaries.

We can't go soft on this, church. Again, the reason why we should aim to raise leaders in doctrinal discipleship is because Jesus is not soft on this. He is not only the lamb of God, he is a lion. His enemies will not stand on the day when he returns. He came into the world to save sinners, but also to announce to the world: truth has arrived. He came to rebuke any false premonitions or revelations of God and proclaim finally, "thus says the Lord". And Jesus says that in these days false prophets will come, false Christs, who proclaim the truth of the Lord. We must be those who hold fast to right doctrine and hold fast to discipleship, so that we can have healthy leaders who teach us right doctrine and point us to Jesus. He is the very truth of God and the center of our right doctrine.

One last thing, church. You may have tuned out today. You aren't a pastor, and you won't ever be. So this has nothing to do with you. But if you expect to be a part of the flourishing people of God, you must understand what healthy leadership in the church looks like. You need healthy leadership for a healthy church. This is the way God has ordained it. If you are a member of this church, this is your job. Hold us accountable to this. Without all of us in on this, we will fail.

And remember this: the point of healthy leadership is always to point you to Jesus. If you don't strive for healthy leadership, you are missing out on this. He is our great shepherd. He is the head of our church. He is our leader, our teacher, our rabbi, our king, our savior, our husband. He will hold his church fast when leaders fail. We are all in need of him and his saving grace. Here is what the scripture does for us in relation to our leaders: it shows us that we all *were* evil beasts, liars, gluttons. The only way we are transformed into people who look like Jesus is through understanding, belief, and growth in the gospel of grace. That's it. That's it for our pastors and for every other member of this church. We need Jesus. And we need healthy leadership to point us to Jesus. Let's aim for that together, church.

Some practical points for you this week:

Pray regularly for your current pastors and that God would raise up more godly pastor/elders.

Forgive your pastors, bear with them, honor their sacrifice, and submit to their leadership as God's ordained order in the church.

With loving and patient care, hold your pastors accountable in grace not to perfection, but to the high calling and qualifications assigned to them.

If you are a man, consider if God has placed on your life the high calling to pastoral ministry. If so, be humble enough to desire discipleship, not status.

Man or woman, live in such a way that you show a robust love for Godliness and for the truth of the gospel, and therefore encourage your pastors and fellow church members with your faithful example.

When you fail, or when your elders fail, look to Jesus. He is the perfect elder, pastor, overseer, and he will never abandon his church or let them down.