

What Every Christian Needs to Know About Going to Church

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Titus 3:12-15
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Well to everyone watching online, thanks for watching and for everybody here, welcome back. Here we are. It's been a long time. It is. You guys clapped much more than the last service. Good job. It is good to be here right now. Thank you for your prayers. Thank you for your support and thank you for your trust during a time that is just unlike anything I'm sure all of us have ever experienced before. It looks like everyone here is social distancing pretty well. So that's good. Remember, today starts phase two of our plan to restart ministry and regather as a church, and so that means that we've left it up to you and said you spread out where you feel comfortable. We've got things outside in the lobby, and we've said if whether you wore a mask or not, again, that's up to you. So if you didn't wear one, we expect you to love those who did, and if you did wear one, we expect you to love those who didn't. If you're watching online and you're not coming back for a while, that's okay. We love you. Just want you to know that and want you to know we want to hear from you. So could you just please let us know how you're doing info@redeemeraz.org. It is fine that you're taking longer to come back. Totally fine. We just want to know how you're doing. So please let us know.

Now, open your Bibles to Titus chapter 3, Titus chapter 3. If you got a Bible from an usher, that's page 1100, Titus chapter 3 and if you forgot a Bible and you need one, we've got one for you. Just raise your hand and they will give you one, and you can follow along on page 1101 in these Bibles that are being given away. Titus chapter 3, when you get there, drop down to verse 12, Titus 3:12. This is our 35th and final message in Titus. So wherever you are in the room or online, and if you are able, please stand for the reading of God's word. When we do this, we're not only saying with our posture that something special is taking place when we read the Bible, but we're also aligning ourselves with people for thousands of years literally who have stood for the reading of God's word. You can see this in Nehemiah chapter eight, which is 3,500 years ago.

Titus chapter 3:12. This is God's word to us this morning. "When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way. See that they lack nothing, and let our people learn to devote themselves to good works so as to help cases of urgent need and not be unfruitful. All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all." That is God's word, you may be seated, and as you are, join me in prayer.

Father, even though these words seem just like the end of a letter, which they are, there is a depth and a richness of truth here that I pray you will help us all to understand. We need you for that. We are not going to understand this and we're definitely not going to apply it to our lives if we don't come to this text with humility saying, teach me, show me your truth. So I pray that for all

of us here today, and I pray that for Gateway Fellowship just down the street. Church there, Pastor Larry, use him right now he's probably preaching in the last service they're having. Father, bless him, use him powerfully, please, to convey your truth in such a way that people are saved and that Christians grow in their salvation. That they be more like Jesus because the ministry that's happening at Gateway Fellowship, use them powerfully, please, in this community. There's so many lost people, there's so many people that need to grow in their relationship with you. Use Gateway Fellowship, please, powerfully in our community to do just that. Father, I pray the same thing here for us now. Open our eyes that we may behold the wonderful things that are found in this word. Do this, please, for our good. Do this, please, for the glory of your name. Amen.

So it's good to be back, and for us, it's been 11 weeks since we last gathered. I hope if there's anybody here who was kind of taking church for granted, I hope that we never ever do that again. Preaching to a camera in an empty room is just kind of not the same as all of this. There's just something that happens when we're together as a family, when followers of Jesus come together. Nobody loves church and everything that goes into church more than pastors, and you just need to know, the pastors are super excited that we are officially regathering. It's not easy being separated, it's not easy being home each Sunday, missing friendships, missing the sound of dozens, a couple hundred people singing together. It's not easy missing, interacting with people from all walks of life. Think about it. Nothing in the world compares to what happens in churches every single week.

I've been in this short series as we've been concluding, the Book of Titus called What Every Christian Needs to Know, and we've talked about what every Christian needs to know about pastoral ministry. What is a faithful pastoral ministry look like. That was chapter 3:8, and then last week, chapter 3:9-11, we talked about what every Christian needs to know about church discipline, and today we're going to talk about what every Christian needs to know about what we're doing right now and what we've been longing for the past 11 weeks. We're talking about what every Christian needs to know about going to church.

Now, this is what we've been waiting to do so badly, right? Go to church, and I know people say we don't go to church. We what? We are the church. I get that. Well, while that's true, the word church refers to an assembly of people, and that's what we are right now. An assembly of people regathered to worship Jesus. So while the church is the people, yes, church is also something that we go to, and there's a lot of mistakes that Christians make as to when it comes to going to church. Everyone who's been going to church, you've been going for a while, all of us, we need some correction on this because everybody makes the mistakes that we're going to see here now. So today I want to help all of us better understand what does it mean biblically to "go to church". Now remember, all scripture comes from God. God is the source of all scripture. The scriptures benefit us by teaching us, confronting us, correcting us, and training us to do what's right. That is true of all scripture, which means that is true of these words at the end of Titus chapter 3. This text is going to help us understand what it means for us to just go to church, at least what God wants us to know about going to church. So's start in verse 12.

It says here, "When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you", Paul wasn't sure at the time of writing who he was going to send, but it's one of these guys. "When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I've decided to spend the winter there. Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer, and Apollos on their way." So Paul, you can see here, has this network of gospel ministers that he's moving all over the Roman empire. Unlike the false teachers and those who stir up division within the church, these were godly trusted men, that Paul could trust that they were going to be Paul when Paul couldn't be somewhere, and right now, I want to tell you about these guys. Crete is this culture, on that island was a culture of pirates or cowboys, but not the good kind of cowboys, the bad kind. Pastoring there was a hard assignment. That wasn't, hey, go look after the churches on Maui. That's not Crete. But what we know here from verse 12 is that this wasn't a permanent assignment. He got a new assignment in verse 12, hey, leave there and come see me, and then there are these four guys, four ministers that are named. Two of them, we know almost nothing about them except for their names.

So take look the first one, verse 13, Zenas, all we know about Zenas is that he's a lawyer. Which should tell you something, that God, he can save anybody. A lawyer got saved and got thrust into ministry. That is how gracious God is. Lawyer means either an expert in Roman law or an expert in Jewish law. We don't know which one that is, but what we can safely say about this man is that he was a godly man that Paul had enough confidence in to give him an assignment. I'm going to send Zenas to you, it says there. When they get there, speed them on their way. So Zenas is on his way doing ministry that Paul wanted him to do. The other one that we know almost nothing about is Artemas, verse 12. All we know is his name. But what we know about him, because he is named here, is that he's part of some band of brothers that Paul had that are doing ministry all over the Roman Empire. He must have been trusted. Paul's going, I'm not sure who I'm going to send, one of these two guys. What would that tell you is these are faithful, godly men who could minister the gospel. Then there are these two other guys, Tychicus and Apollos, and we actually know about these guys Tychicus, we meet in Acts chapter 20 and he's ministering alongside Paul, and then we see him in Ephesians and Colossians, and what those two books really imply is that he was the one who delivered those letters.

So he took those letters, Paul writes them, takes them to the church in Ephesus, then keeps going and takes them to the church in Colossi. Paul calls Tychicus, if it's the same guy Paul calls him, "a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant of the Lord." So this is a trusted, godly, good man that is going out doing ministry from the Apostle Paul. In Titus, he's being considered as a replacement for Titus. That's verse 12. Which means that Paul must have really trusted him and thought, okay, it's a hard mission over there, and Tychicus or Artemas, one of these two guys, I'm sending, and I think Bible nerd moment, I think that Paul sent Artemas. And the reason I think that is because Second Timothy 4:12 says, Paul's writing to Timothy and he says, hey, I sent Tychicus to Ephesus.

So Tychicus goes to Ephesus, I think Artemas goes down to Crete to replace Titus. And then there's Apollos. If it's the same Apollos in the Book of Acts and Corinthians, then not only is this

a godly man, but this was probably the most powerful preacher in the New Testament, except for Jesus. Listen to what is said about him. Acts 18. He was "an eloquent man competent in the scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord being fervent in spirit. He spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus and greatly helped those who, through grace had believed, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public showing by the scriptures that the Christ was Jesus."

Listen, any preacher that hears that goes, I want to be described just a fraction of that, please. This guy was so incredible that there was actually a cult following that grew up around him that put him on par with Peter and Paul. Remember this in First Corinthians, people are going, they've got their fanboys. 'I'm Paul', 'Oh yeah, well I'm Peter. He walked with Jesus. Paul didn't and the super spiritual, "Well, I follow Jesus, I don't know what's wrong with you guys, I follow him." Then there's just fourth group of people that go, "I follow Apollos." That's the level that this guy was in the early church. Now, he didn't encourage any of that. When you put all the verses together about him, you find he's a choice servant of God, and the church saw many people come to faith in Christ and grow in their relationship with Christ because of this man.

So Apollos and Zenas, notice verse 13, are mentioned because they probably brought this letter to Titus, that Paul writes it, gives it to them and said, "Take this to Titus", and then another Bible nerdy moment. If Zenas was an Old Testament lawyer, if he was a scribe who is a Jewish convert and you put that together with Apollos who was going into synagogues and preaching Jesus, you put those two guys together on a missionary team and you send them to Crete, which we've been seeing the false teachers on the island of Crete, there's some Jewish flavor to their false teaching, you put those two guys and put them on the island of Crete, it's going to be war for the truth. So that may have been what's going on. Hey, these guys are going to take over. I'm going to send Tychicus to you in a little while, or Artemas, and Titus, notice verse 12, I want you to come to Nicopolis. I want you to meet me there.

Now that city, likely northern Greece, about 300 miles north of Crete, notice, Paul doesn't say why, so I'm not going to say why; I have no idea why he wanted him there. But notice he wanted him there, he's like, don't let anything stop you from getting there, get there. The last thing we hear about Titus, 2 Timothy 4:10, is that Paul sent him to a region called Dalmatia. Now, that's not where dalmatians are from, but Dalmatia is a place, is a region, which now we call Croatia or Serbia. So it makes sense that Titus kind of wrapped up the ministry assignment on Crete. Somebody came to replace him. I think Artemas. Artemas shows up, he takes off, goes to Nicopolis, gets there before wintertime and then eventually goes north. He's like, I spent the winter there. The idea there is it is dangerous to travel on the Mediterranean Sea in the wintertime, and Paul did that once, Acts 27, and he was a shipwreck and it was not good.

So, one last thing, verse 15. It says, "All who are with me send greetings to you." So not only is Paul sending guys all over the Roman Empire, but there's a group, a team of people who are with him when he writes this letter. So, we kind of maybe picture him as this singularly focused solo missionary pastor, but he was always around people doing ministry with them. There's no

indication at all that he's a lone ranger, Rambo type, I work alone. No, he did nothing by himself. There was always a team of people around him. He needed people who could be him when he couldn't be somewhere. He didn't do everything himself, he built a team, trained a team, deployed that team into ministry all over the known world, and that's where, from Paul's example here, all these guys running around, this team of people with him, from this here, I think he shows every Christian that going to church is about sharing ministry with the elders.

So point #1) what is going to church all about? It starts with this. ***Share the Ministry with the Elders***. In the New Testament, ministry is shared. There's no such thing as a lone ranger. That ministry is shared between Christians and in a local church. It's shared with the elders, those who God has given leadership in the local church. The elders share ministry with each other amongst each other. They share it with the church and the church shares it with each other. So if you think about it, ministry comes from the senior pastor, which is Jesus, he's the chief shepherd. It goes from him down to the pastors and the elders, and then, because we're blessed here at Redeemer, goes to the staff and then goes out to the rest of the church.

Each Christian is given a spiritual gift, and we kind of mistake this because we think that's some kind of skill that we have. I've got some special skill that other Christians don't have. That's not what that is. Your gift, your spiritual gift, is your ministry. It is a ministry that God has uniquely given to you, a way for you to uniquely blessed people. That is what your spiritual gift is. Every Christian, if you are a Christian, you have a ministry that God has created and saved you to do. Ephesians 4:7, Jesus gives gifts to the church, and in Ephesians 4:11, he tells us these are apostles and prophets, which I think we have the result of their gifts right here in the Bible. Then there are evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Now listen to why Jesus gave these gifts to the church.

Okay, so pastors, teachers, evangelists, why are they at your church? "To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." Did you hear that? The pastors and the elders, we aren't the ministers. The title for a pastor, he's the minister, that could not be any more opposite than New Testament. What the New Testament teaches is that if you are saved, you are a minister. So as you think about yourself, I'm a Christian, I'm a follower of Jesus, I'm a disciple, I'm a brother or sister, I'm a saint. Wrap your mind around this idea, you are a minister. That is, you are saved to serve in some kind of ministry that God has specifically gifted you to be able to accomplish. You're like, 'Well what about the pastors?' The pastors are the coaches, but the pastors are player coaches because all of us are supposed to be in the game on the field ministering to people.

When I first got to this church, as I've told you, if you've been here, it was dying and it was dying pretty rapidly. Six years later, we have seen an absolutely dramatic turnaround that only God can do. But when I talked to a handful of people at the time, it became very clear why the church was dying. For many of them, not all of them, but for many of them, they were treating church like members of a country club. They gave their money, which was like their membership dues, which entitled them to do whatever they wanted, entitled them to all the privileges, and it paid

the staff to do the ministry. I don't do ministry, I pay you to do the ministry while they watched and enjoyed all the benefits, critiqued what was going on, got angry about what they didn't like, but hardly ever ministered to others.

I am so thankful that is not true of this church anymore. For many of you, you understand that going to church is about sharing the ministry load. You don't expect the staff to do everything while you watch and criticize. You know it's not possible for the leaders and staff, it's not possible for us to do everything. So you meet needs, you care for people, you share the ministry, you get in the trenches, you serve, you treat church more like being a member of a family where everyone has their part to play, and listen, that's right. That is what it means to go to church. You are not meant to be a spectator watching everybody else use their gifts. You are meant to use your gifts to show everyone around you how great God is and to help and bless those around you.

So I know some of you are fairly new, but all of us, we've all been given this kind of reset. Before the crisis, we've got our plans and we've got our routines and we're doing all these things and just like everything was settled, and then everything changed for every single one of us. Everything. Now, as we're kind of getting back to normal, make sure sharing in the ministry of your local church goes from optional to a priority in your life. Wherever your local church is, it doesn't have to be here. Wherever it is, make sure that this is more and more of a priority, if it wasn't before the crisis. If you're a Christian, everyone here has a ministry. Maybe right now it's your family, especially your kids, that's great. But there's still small ways though. Certainly, ways that require less time. There're still ways to share in the ministry here. For others, you're not here right now because you're online, but you can make calls, you can send cards, you can say, "Hey, I've got some time." Reach out to us. Let us know how you could serve and share in the ministry load that we have here.

For most Christians, it's as easy as this. Go to your church, here or somewhere else, find a need. Hey, I see a need over there and fill that need. It's that simple. Find a need and fill it. It's being available. You can let us know through a connect card or info@redeemeraz.org. This is one of the really cool things about the pandemic. We're getting emails. I was. Hey, I'm so and so. Maybe you know me, maybe you don't. But I have this skill, this ability. I work in this industry. If anyone needs help that you think I could help with, hey, I just want to let you know. Here's my contact information, send them to me. I want to help. That was just so cool to see that kind of selfless, I want to minister to people. It's incredible, but my fear is that going back to normal means we're going to start filling our lives again with stuff that wastes our time rather than maximizing our time for ministry that God has gifted you to do. Christian, you should never ask, should I do some ministry? Should I be in ministry? That is a question of obedience or disobedience. The only question is where should I be in ministry? How should I be ministering at my church? In the words of JFK, ask not what your church can do for you, but what? Ask yourself, what can you do for the church that you go to?

From Paul's example, we move next to Paul's expectation, which is really God's expectation for every Christian when they go to church. That one kind of stung. Verse 13. "Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way. See that they lack nothing." Paul repeats this idea, hey, do your best. Let nothing get in the way of something. And notice verse 13, he is to do his best, it says there, to speed Zenas and Apollos on their way. Apparently, they had some, they give Titus this letter and then they were off to go do something else. I think maybe go on to Crete, go start confronting false teachers and rescuing people from their clutches. But it's this word speed that I want you to know about. It sounds like, hey, don't let them stay long. Don't let the grass grow under their feet, keep them moving, get them out of there. But that's not what Paul is saying here. This word means provide whatever Zenas and Apollos need for wherever they're going and whatever they're going to do. It means help them. Make sure they have everything they need, and whenever this word is used in the New Testament, it primarily refers to money.

Paul is saying, do your best to make sure they have everything they need to live, money, food, clothing, and everything they need to do their ministry. So much so look at the end of the verse. "See that they lack nothing that they need." Ensure that everything they need for life and ministry is supplied to them. Verse 13 is a command given specifically to Titus. I don't think he was going, hey, Titus, reach into your pocket and make sure that you do this personally, and the reason is because verse 14 begins with what word in ESV? Begins with the word, and, which means that in the Greek there's no period after verse 13. This just continues from 13 to 14, which I think what Paul's doing is saying and he says, "Make sure they lack nothing and let our people learn to devote themselves to good works so as to help cases of urgent need and not be fruitful."

So there's this general principle that's true, Christians should be devoted to doing good, which here includes helping people who need the necessities of life, who need food and clothing, the most basic things. When you put all of that together from the New Testament, after their family should have taken care of them and if possible after the government is there to take care of them. After those two things, here comes the church. However, in this context, at the end of Titus, the needs being referred to, the good that Paul wanted Christians to be devoted to was making sure that these pastors had everything that they needed. This obligation to care for these men is a good work. You see that in verse 14 that all Christians are responsible for. This is not something that comes naturally. Notice verse 14. This is something that they had to what, you see it there, they had to learn it, which means they needed someone to teach on it and they needed to humbly receive that teaching so as to do it.

These pirates, you know when I say that, not literal pirates, right? This pirate-like culture. The people on the creek needed to be reprogrammed to care for the needs of their pastors and missionaries. That word speed there is a command in the present tense, meaning this is a required course. This is not an elective. Zenas and Apollos, Titus and Paul, faithful shepherds who fed the flock God's word, led in humility according to God's word, cared for people and protected them from false teaching. So, the idea is that out of gratitude for their hard work and their faithful work the church was to give so that their work could continue. Notice this is a quote, "Good

work the church is to be devoted to". So as to "help cases of urgent need". The idea there is that is Zenas and Apollos. They're not coming in there on their Rolls Royce, their Bentleys, cruising in on their yachts into the harbor of Crete. The idea is probably they're getting there on fumes, they're running out, they've got pennies in their pocket and that's it, and Paul's saying, "You better make sure that they don't leave that way. You better make sure they have every single thing that they need." So, Paul's expectation here shows every Christian that going to church is about supporting the ministry of the elders.

Point #2) *Support the Ministry of the Elders.* Yes, we support with our time. Yes, we support with our talents, our gifts, our ministry. That's point number one. But this is referring to our treasure, our money. In the Bible, going to church includes supporting your church financially. However, I'm not talking about any church. I'm talking about churches that are faithful to the apostle's message which we have in the New Testament, which Zenas and Apollos would have been faithful to, that's why Paul sent them because he knew they will say what I would say if I was there. Churches that are being led by faithful pastors like Titus and Zenas and Apollos, support those ministries financially. Many pastors will not teach on this because they're afraid of being thought of as greedy or a con man who's just using the church to get rich. But listen, you need to know this. I'm never going to apologize for what the Bible tells us to do, ever, and this, what I'm saying to you right now, point number two, support the ministry of your elders is commanded in the Bible.

First Corinthians 9:14. "The Lord commanded", there's the word, "that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel." Galatians 6:6. "Let the one who is taught the word", that's all of us. "Let the one who has taught the word, share all good things with the one who teaches." Share is a command. It's not one time or erratic or accidental giving, this is regular planned financial support. Also share means a partnership, not a payment. This isn't a tip for goods received. There's a mutuality here. Think about that word. Pastors share good things from the Bible with the church. That's the idea, and the church shares good financial things with the pastors so that both are benefited, both are blessed. There's a mutuality there.

Now, saying all that, often people want to know why. Why give to church? Isn't it okay to drop a 20 in the box as I leave because I like those songs and that message was fine. Here's a tip, thanks. Isn't that okay? No, no. There's a lot of reasons why we are to give regularly to our church. I'm just going to highlight two of them. First one has to do with Jesus. This is Second Corinthians eight and nine. The idea there is that Paul says Jesus gave up his riches, 2Corinthians 8:9 He gave up his riches becoming poor and even dying on the cross, and he says so that we might become rich, spiritually rich forever. So all of the riches that Jesus had in heaven become ours because he became poor, and he says, if that's the case, we're to be zealous, ready, cheerful and even excel in the act of giving, that is, supporting faithful gospel ministry financially.

The second reason to support your church financial is because of what it does for you, and in studying this, I'd never thought about this before. I preached on the verse I'm going to take you to right now and I still, like it didn't register. Listen to how John puts this in the letter we call 3

John, talking about men who are ministering all over what is now the country of Turkey. There are churches all over the place and there aren't enough pastors, so guys would go to different churches, stay a while, teach, go to another one, stay and teach, and they just do this circuit all over Turkey, and John's saying, he says to them, we ought to support people like these, that's financially. We ought to support people like these and then he gives the reason. That we may be fellow workers for the truth. I read that pretty fast, so let's think about this. We ought to support people like these, these pastors going around all over the place, that we may be fellow workers for the truth. So when you give the faithful gospel ministers, like Zenas and Apollos, or the men that John mentions here, you become a fellow worker for the truth with them. You are there advancing the truth with them in their office or on the mission field and you're doing that by giving to their ministry.

This, I think, is what Paul's getting at in Titus 3:14 when he says he doesn't want Christians to be unfruitful. If they didn't give, he says they wouldn't have a part in the ministry that Zenas and Apollos were going to accomplish. He is saying if you give to that, some of the blessings from their ministry is going to be accredited to your account. Is that how you think about giving to your church, whether it's here or somewhere else? You are a fellow worker right alongside the elders. So when God saves somebody in their office, like somebody did for me this week, some of that is credited to your account. Or when God fixes that marriage in the counseling room, some of that is credited to your account. Or when God meets the needs of a family whose dad's lost their job, some of that is credited to your account. Or when God uses the pastor to preach or teacher or whether that's here or on the other side of the planet, God credits some of that to your account. You become a fellow worker for the truth with us when you give here. If you don't give regularly to the ministry of your local church, not only are you being disobedient, but notice verse 14, again, you are unfruitful.

Fruit is typically good works that God produces, and I think he's talking specifically financially saying there's no fruit growing out of your wallet. There's no fruit growing out of your bank account that shows God's glory, God's work, God's will being advanced in the world through you, and he's like, I want that for you. I want you to have that coming out of your life. Now if you're like, 'Okay, Pastor, I don't go to church here, but I see now I haven't been supporting the ministry like I should. I need to give regularly where I go to church. I need to do that, and so where do I start?' I'd say start with a percentage of your income, whether that's 1%, 5%, 25%, that's up to you and God, and that's determined, I would say, based on your financial state right now. There's no required percentage in the New Testament. However, 10% is a good starting point, you've heard that before. So, what I teach people is give first 10%, save second 10%, live on the rest. A pastor friend of mine puts it this way, giving first honors God, saving second builds wealth, living on the rest teaches contentment. So whatever your yearly income is, whether before taxes or after taxes, that's up to you and the Lord again. Take the last zero off the end, divide it by 26, which is the number of paychecks most people get, and that's a good starting point for you. If you're like, "That's too much." Okay, cut it in half and start there. It doesn't matter. If you decide to support the ministry here, thank you. You can give online, give by mail.

That's what I do. I just two clicks on my bank account's website sends the letter, and that's done. There're boxes in the back.

People always want to look for the reason why a pastor would say what I just did. So I need to tell you this. Number one, it's because it's the next passage and we're going through the Book of Titus. Number two, it's because this is what Jesus wants me to tell you in the next passage. Because number three, we're not struggling financially here. That's typically what happens right now. They're like, "Oh, this is the money message because they're really struggling." We're not. We're really not. The people that go to church here, members here, they know that's part of the expectation and they give and they've given generously, and so we're fine. This is nothing to do with needing money from you. This has to do with what I want for you, which is your next step of obedience if you're not being faithful to what God wants you to do with your local church, supporting it financially.

So, if you're being obedient to point number two, if that's new for you, if that's a big step for you, listen, choose a percentage of your income, whatever that is, doesn't matter, between you and the Lord, commit to giving that to your church for the next three months, 90 days. If that's you, one last thing, could you just drop me a note, just drop me a note, let me know. Email me, let me know that you're doing this. Last night someone sent me actual numbers, I don't want that. I just want to say thank you for personally taking the next step of obedience in your life. Whether you're going to support this church or another church, I don't care about that. I want to celebrate God's work in your heart. Listen, if you decide to give here, I can't say this for other churches, but if you decide to give here, and at the end of 90 days you're like, this is too much for me, then we'll give it all back to you, all of it back to you. Financial people are like, what did you just say? But seriously, I'm just kidding, they totally agree. We'll give it all back to you because again, we don't need it. We're not struggling here. We want to help you take this next, this is what it means to go to church. You share the ministry with the elders and you support the ministry of the elders. That is just Church 101.

Now, from Paul's example and Paul's expectation, we come to the last verse in the letter. This is Paul's exclamation, verse 15. "All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all." Notice, there is just love in this last verse, right? Love for Titus. There's love for the people Titus is pastoring. Notice that first part, "All who are with me send greetings to you." So, there's this cluster of Christians around Paul. They express their love for Titus, which must have meant a lot to him. Pastoring on an island full of pirates and going, this is hard, and knowing there are people there who love him, who are probably praying for him, must have really encouraged his heart in the work of ministry. Then notice, "Greet those who love us in the faith." Paul expresses his love for the cluster of Christians that Titus was pastoring on the island, which must have meant a lot to them.

As we've been going through this book, we've seen that it wasn't easy being a Christian on the island of Crete at this time. False teachers, false Christians, the domination of this pirate-like culture around them and what Christians need in those moments are this word, greeting, this

encouragement that Paul gives them there. They remained faithful. They didn't defect with the false teachers. They didn't leave their commitment to Jesus when there were probably tremendous temptations to do so. Paul shows, he shows us by his example here in verse 15, that pastors are to encourage the lives of those that they lead, that we are to be a source of encouragement for you, and verse 15 shows every Christian that going to church is also about encouraging the elders in their ministry. So, point #3) ***Encourage the Elders for Their Ministry.*** In addition to sharing the ministry and supporting the ministry, going to church includes encouraging the leaders for the ministry that they do.

There's nothing easy about Titus's time on Crete. There's nothing easy about the ministry of your staff and elders. What they need is not gutless sniper shots on social media or slander or believing the worst or assigning motives or harsh criticism. What they need, and listen, what they need if they are faithful to the gospel, if they're faithful to the truth like Titus was here, what they need, what God wants for them is encouragement. Listen to First Thessalonians 5:12. This is a verse that people who go to church often not only ignore this church but they violate it and in their violation of it, they call it maturity. First Thessalonians 5:12. "We ask you, brothers, that's all Christians, we ask you to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you and esteem them very highly in love because of their work." Hebrews 3:17. The pastors, the elders "are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account." Let me pause right there. So every Christian is going to stand before Jesus and give an account for their lives. Every Christian, not for whether you're going to go to heaven or not, but this is for rewards for your life, live for Jesus, and so we all have that appointment that we're not going to miss, and you're going to stand in judgment for your own life. I'm going to stand in judgment for my life and your life. Anybody want to be a pastor?

The text goes on and it says, "Let them do this. Let them care for your souls. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning," and then he gives the reason, "For that would be of no advantage to you." You would think it would say that would be no advantage to them, but it says that would be of no advantage to you. Don't miss that. Happy, encouraged pastors are a blessing and a benefit to you. That's God's goal. But some Christians think it's their job to keep the pastors humble, which is code for be a jerk to the pastor who you're commanded to respect and esteem. So try and make it practical. Wherever your pastors are, whether here at Redeemer or somewhere else, doesn't matter. Are you a source of encouragement for them? When they see you coming, is there something jumping inside, they're going to get love, encouragement, honor, or do they groan because they know disrespect and low esteem is coming?

When they see your name in their email box, are they excited to open it? Click. What do they have to say or do they put it off for a few weeks? They're like, oh, I got to get my heart ready for this. Again, we're talking about pastors who are faithful to the word of God. We're not talking about pastors who are violating the word of God, number one. And number two, just know this, because this, again is like, okay, what's going on here? Just know I'm not saying this because my love cup is empty and I need all of you to fill it. You are incredibly encouraging as a church. The

past 11 weeks, seeing all those comments on the live stream, seeing all the thank you's and the encouragements, and we're praying for you. That is unreal. That is the gift, the joy that pastors, some pastors, long for is to see that kind of encouragement. The reason I say that is because I'm coming off of two conversations that I've had recently with pastors that broke my heart. The first one comes from a man who's been pastoring for over 50 years and he just started a new ministry recently, and he said to me, "Jon, the place where I'm pastoring now is treating me better in the last week than I've been treated for decades, " and I thought, "What?" I said to him, "That breaks my heart to hear that."

Then there's another conversation I had last week with a pastor friend of mine in New York City who gets his food every day from the local shelter because his church refuses to pay him enough for rent and food. They refuse to pay him. The church he pastors doesn't share the ministry much with him, certainly doesn't support him financially so that he has all these needs and which is like the epitome of discouraging him. It's church abuse. He's breaking down and it's because of what we saw here, the very basics about going to church. They aren't even happening in this church, and the saddest, most infuriating part of it is they aren't bothered by it at all. You know why? I got to keep you humble, Pastor. I got to keep you poor. You got to depend on the Lord, not all of us. I have no words for that, because this text is clear then when it comes to just going to church, it means sharing the ministry, supporting the ministry, and encouraging the leaders in the ministry. That's just Church 101. I'm going to leave it up to you how you put point three into practice. But listen, whether it's by example here or by way of command as we saw in 1 Thessalonians or Hebrews. Either way, positive presence, being an encouragement to your pastors, wherever those pastors are that is commanded for Christians.

Now verse 15, we come to the end, the last five words of Titus. "Grace be with you all." Notice those last two words, Y'all. Means Paul was a Texan. That's what that means. No. No, but what it does mean is that he expected more than just Titus to read this letter and do what it says. He's been writing. In other words, with the churches of Crete in mind, maybe Titus's replacement in mind, and this is no mindless benediction. This is not a kind of like thoughtless nicety to close the letter. This is a genuine prayer that those who receive this letter, those who would read this letter, will experience God's grace among them. This grace, as we've seen in Titus, is Trinitarian, comes from the Father, through the Son, by the power of the Spirit. This is in the Greek, the grace, the special grace that stands out from all other forms of grace because it's God's undeserved, unearned kindness. It's compassion to those who can never earn it by their good works, but freely gives it to those who believe. This is the unearnable compassion to sinners who've ignored him and hated him and defied him and disrespected him and even encouraged other people to do the same. Anyone like that in here? I know I am. Yet, God in his mercy and his grace shows this undeserved kindness to sinners. This is the grace that accompanies peace with God, in chapter 1:4 This is the grace that saves sinners. 2:11. This is the grace that trains sinners to rid themselves of all known sin and to live their lives to please God. Chapter 2:12. This is the grace, in chapter 3:7 that justifies us, which means that when we believe in Jesus, our life resume full of sin is replaced by his resume full of doing what's right so that when you stand

before God and are judged, you will be treated as if you were Jesus, but only if you give your life to him.

Now at the end of 3:15, not just for Titus, not just for the Christians on Crete who would read this letter, but for all of us here and anybody watching wherever you are, this is a prayer that God's grace will be with us. You see that? It will be with us, it will be at home with us. And it's plural with means at home in our church. It is to be wished for and prayed for. It is to be the priority of all faithful elders because where grace is at home, God is at work. Where grace is at home, when there is grace in a church, people are getting saved. When there's grace in a church, people, Christians are growing in their salvation. They're becoming more like Jesus because God's grace is they're training them, 2:12, to renounce ungodliness and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives.

As we've been seeing, these godly lives that grace produces are not meant to just so that we kind of enjoy it with each other, but the grace that transforms our life is meant to be seen by the non-Christians that we interact with. They see it and they go, okay, there's something different here. Jesus makes a difference in your life and it's a difference for the good. And I want to know what that grace is about. That's the message of Titus. It's not just good works for God's glory. It's not just good works to be a blessing to the church. It is godly living so that ungodly people in the world go, "I want to know more about this Jesus." Because chapter 2:13, he's coming again. He's coming again to take us home. And when he appears, the grace that we just kind of taste right now, that grace will be fully experienced when we see him face to face, and when we see him face to face, I think the first thing that is just going to overwhelm our hearts is going to be, I should not be here right now, but I am, because of grace. That is the message of Titus. Let's pray.