

Glimpses of Godliness (Part 4) – Godliness and Leadership

Beau Hughes – August 24, 2014

How y'all doing? Great. It's good to see you. Glad you're all here, for many reasons. One, just safety-wise. You can always tell when school is back in session because Oak Street here... By the way, if you're new, Oak Street goes this way. It's a one way, and it goes this way. Hickory is this way. It's that way. The fact you made it here... I'm thankful for that.

In all seriousness, if you're really brand new here this morning (I know Brad already did this), I just want to welcome you. My name is Beau. I'm one of our pastors and elders here and just delighted God has brought you to be a part of this service today. Don't know if you came with a friend or if you just showed up.

I don't even know if you're a Christian. Maybe you're not a Christian and you're just here and exploring the claims of Christianity or just wanted to be here for some other reason, but we're thankful you're here. We'd love to meet you before you head out this morning. I'm just grateful God brought you into this room, and we've already been praying for you.

Those of you who are coming back... How many of you were gone for the summer but now you're back? It's not like you're new here but you're just finally back. Amen. Michael Braxton is excited as are the rest of us. We're glad y'all are here. If you have a Bible, turn to 1 Timothy. That's where we have been studying for the last four weeks. Last week we had a guest speaker, one of our pastors from Flower Mound (tongue in cheek a little bit there). We've been studying this letter.

If you are brand new, we like to study through books of the Bible. We don't always study the books of the Bible. This fall we'll have a sermon series on manhood and womanhood, what God thinks about that, and what God has designed for man and for woman. We like to study books of the Bible because we think it's actually God's Word, so it's really helpful to just read what he gave us to read and to internalize it and to respond to it.

As we're studying this letter from Timothy, one of the things we've been talking about is the purpose of the letter was to tell the church, and Paul says this to Timothy, to teach the church how they ought to live as the household of God. That's 1 Timothy 3, verses 14 through 16. He says, "This is part of what I want you to get out of this letter. How to live together as a church."

In other words, in God's mind, Paul is explaining, God has saved the church. He has called us together. He has brought us together as one, and he has a way that he wants us... There's an "ought to" in the Christian life, not just personally but corporately, a way that he wants us to live together. There are these glimpses of that in 1 Timothy we've been looking at.

Of course, the church in Ephesus was a mess, so we're looking both at what they did that God did not want them to do and learning from that, but we're also learning about what Paul says how this is how you're to flourish as the people of God. For us as a campus... If you're new here, we're right in the beginning of becoming a campus that is transitioning. We are to be our own church in a year.

Covenant members (I know Brad mentioned this), that member meeting on the first Wednesday of September (not this Wednesday but the following) is really important. If you're a member, I can't encourage you enough to be there. Just to even give you a teaser, we're going to be talking about all sorts of details. Our elders have been working on the transition plan since July.

One of the things, just to encourage you and maybe even to help you want to be there, since we announced the vision for the transition and even a little bit before that, we are year to date \$500,000 surplus. That's what the projection is. That's not a humble brag or anything (not that it would have been humble if it was a brag; it's a pretty big one), but it's just something to say God is doing things in our church. He's leading us together to become a church.

First Timothy, therefore, is so significant because it teaches us how to do that. How else are we going to know? Are going to pool our wisdom and say, "Okay. Is this is what God wants us to do?" No. We're going to look to God and say, "What do you want us to do? Teach us and help us to do that."

That's what I love about the Word of God. As we read it, it's not just information. If we're not careful, even in these services we can come in and we can sort of open the Bible like we open the paper. Not that anybody reads the paper besides me anymore. You could open the Bible and just

sort of get information, but the Word of God is not something that's just meant to inform you, although it is that. You have to have information to even know who Jesus is.

But it's also something we are participant receivers of that we're meant to submit to. As we read the Bible, God is speaking. He's really speaking as we read the text today as if he were here, so that's great, but at the same time, we come in here with burdens and thoughts, things we even just prayed about, that can potentially cause us from hearing really well, so I want to just pray again as we read this Word this morning we would hear what he wants us to hear.

Father, whether we're Christian or non-Christian, whether this is our first time here or this is where we have been for years and years and years (this church), Lord, we pray this morning you would open our hearts. Open our ears. Help us to be ready to receive what you want to speak to us, what you will speak to us.

Lord, speak to our hearts in such a way we won't just be hearers of your Word, but we'll actually do it. We'll actually be so motivated, so compelled, to obey you, to submit to you, to trust you in the ways you'll call us and invite us to do this morning. Lord, we do love you, and we are so grateful you have given us your Word whereby we can know what you want of us as much as you have revealed it there. We pray these things in Christ's name, amen.

First Timothy 3... We're going to talk about leadership this morning. We have looked in this series at what it means to be a godly church in the way we gather together, in the way we come together and express our manhood, our womanhood, even fulfill our roles as members of the church. We also talked about two weeks ago what it means to come together and actually be a family. That's who God saved us to be. Not just a group but actually a family who loves each other, treats each other, and sees each other as a family.

This morning we're going to talk about the importance of leadership in the church. That's something that is really significant. Of course, in culture it's absolutely self-evident, is it not? Leadership is important. One of the most critical decisions, and I won't belabor this because I think it's obvious... One of the most critical decisions, though, any group, any company, any institution, any organization, any team, and any band (I'm trying to hit all of you)...

Whatever grouping there is, one of the most important decisions for that group is who is selected as the leader or the group of leaders. There's an old African proverb that sort of talks about this. It

conveys how significant leadership is. The proverb asserts leadership is so important that an army of sheep led by a lion can defeat an army of lions led by sheep.

Have you guys ever seen that? That's how important it is. That's how important leadership is, and that is profoundly true. Everybody understands and recognizes even if it's subconscious the significance of leadership. It is why (despite our fatigue of politics) elections still matter, and those we elect to political positions still matter because they're leading. They're representing. It's why it's still important even if we're cynical about it and frustrated with it.

It's why boardrooms and the CEOs who sit at the head of the tables in boardroom still matter for companies, for economics, and for everything in between. It's why head coaches matter. Some of you are athletic... Some of you wish you were athletic and try to be. You're not, but that's all right. It's why it matters. It's why people get contract extension and raises.

Those of you who are freshman... I'm not going to have you raise your hand. I'm so glad you're here. Hope to meet you at the lunch after this service. Especially if you're at UNT. There are wonderful things going on (continuing to go on) with the athletics at TWU with gymnastics and basketball and all sorts of things.

But UNT... There is the reemergence of the Mean Green football program. We just want to recognize... What is the thing at TWU, the hand thing? Pioneers. I'm not going to go into that. I just wanted to make sure I was not unaware of it. At UNT we've seen the reemergence of the Mean Green football program.

I've only been here just a little bit short of a decade. I've been here seven years. Some of you have been ticket holders for a lot longer than that, so you have much more authority to speak to this, but those of you who are freshmen coming in, you don't know where we've been. Come in. Get excited. Be pumped about that. Join the Mean Green Nation but don't feel entitled to this. This is a big deal. This is big stuff that's going on.

So much so that Apogee Stadium got so excited that now they're selling alcohol at the games. That was a new deal. Even more importantly, everybody has recognized this. Do you know what we did this spring? We extended the contract of Head Coach McCarney. It's not like we're saying, "Oh, the football guys just decided to eat healthier, balanced meals or whatever."

No. There's a recognition that the coaches, led by the head coach, had something to do with this, because leadership matters. So we extended the contract and even bumped the pay a bit. The importance of leadership... It's evident. There is a whole industry now that has come around it. There are books and conferences and millions and millions of dollars in this industry that has emerged to help people be better leaders, because we all understand as the leadership goes so goes the organization.

Think with me now. If leadership is this important for anything (for an athletic game, for running a restaurant, for overseeing a construction site), how important do you think it is for the church? If people take leadership this seriously with their fantasy football teams, how much more seriously do you think the God of the universe takes the leadership of his church? Need I remind you we just sang about the church this God purchased for himself with the blood of his own Son?

His Son was slaughtered so he could ransom a church. He could buy a church from slavery. That's what that means. Do you think he just bought this church from slavery with the death and the blood of his own Son and said, "Okay, I'm glad I did that; now you can just go and do whatever you want"? No. Do you know what he did?

He established leadership in the church. He established leadership before the fall in Genesis 1, but he establishes leadership in the church because he intends for his church that he purchased and that he cares about to be led and cared for and served in a particular way and to go a certain direction.

When we come to these texts about church leadership in the Bible, it's not something you can just go, "Oh, that's totally irrelevant to my life. I'm a Christian, but that's what the leaders of the church need to know about." No. That's what we all need to know about, because if it's this important to God, if this is of the mind and heart of God, we need to pull up a chair and listen in to what our heavenly Father has to say about these things.

I'm so thankful for the Bible. We don't have to wonder. It's not like we can sort of theorize and go, "Okay. Wow. Leadership is important to God for his church. That makes sense. I get it. Now what do we do?" "I don't know." No, no, no. He has told us what to do. That's why his Word is so deeply instructive, because he has not left us in the dark about what is in his mind about leadership of this people who he loves so much that he sent his Son to purchase.

In 1 Timothy 3 and in 1 Timothy 5 as we get there, we'll see a glimpse of this. If you're with me in 1 Timothy 3, listen. Leadership in the church of Ephesus, which is the church this letter was written to and about (to the guy named Timothy who is at the church of Ephesus)... It's a train wreck, the church is. It has gone astray. It has all sorts of internal chaos. The biggest problem in the church is leadership. That's the primary problem Paul wrote this letter to address, leadership in the church.

He left Timothy behind. There was this disease of teaching that was spreading, this plague that was spreading through the false teaching of these leaders in the church. Timothy is meant to quarantine that plague and to lead the church and to get it back up and healthy. In 1 Timothy 3, Paul reminds Timothy of what the leadership should be like.

He's contrasting it with what it is. It's not just this random list of qualifications. Typically, when you hear this text preached on, which is not bad, it's just separated from the context of the letter, so people just walk through the qualifications. It is that, but there's a reason he's putting these qualifications here right after chapter 2. It's because he's going, "Okay. I've reminded you about how you need to pray together, about how you need to gather together, what your roles are. Let me remind you now about the leadership, because the leadership is really dysfunctional."

This list he gives is a great summary of leadership in the church. Let's read it. There are other sermons online if you want to dig more into this. We have preached a handful of sermons about these texts about elders, so I don't want to go too much in depth. Just suffice it to say I just want to summarize what he says here.

He says, in verse 1 of chapter 3, "**The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer...**" The office of an elder, which is this group of men as we talked about a few weeks ago who God has ordained to lead the church. He has designed this group of men called *elders* to lead the church. He says if a man desires for that, he desires a good thing. A noble task. In verse 2 he says, "**Therefore an overseer [an elder of the church] must be above reproach...**" That's sort of the big-picture summary of this list.

"...an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?"

He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil." Again, the very thing that was happening at the church of Ephesus.

Then he says, "**Deacons likewise must be dignified...**" Deacons are this group of men and women here at our church who must be dignified. "**...not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.**" Again, that above-reproach sort of language.

"**Their wives...**" The women who are deacons. Scholars disagree on what exactly he's saying there, but it says the wives, or the women in the Greek, "**...likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.**"

Summarizing this, for the church to flourish (in Ephesus then and in Denton, Texas, now) what the church needs in regard to leadership are these types of men and women serving her and leading her. Men, and in the case of deacons men and women, who are above reproach. They are above reproach.

They are servants who believe the Bible. They believe the gospel. They hold to it with a clear conscience. They consider the church, their brothers and sisters in the family, more important than themselves. They inspire confidence in Christianity both within the church and outside the church because of their behavior. This is who is to oversee the church.

Now I feel like I need to say, obviously, this doesn't mean the elders and deacons are super-Christians who are sort of pulled out from among the not super-Christians in the church.

That's not who the elders and deacons are. They're not perfect men, the elders. They're not perfect men and women, the deacons.

What is amazing is even one theologian said what is so remarkable about this list of qualifications is how unremarkable it is. It actually says you can't get drunk. You can't be a drunkard. That's the bar,

at least on the elders. Does that mean everybody else who is a Christian can go get drunk? Go do the Fry Street crawl? No! That is not what he's saying. He's not saying this is a group of super-Christians. He's saying this is a group of Christians. That's what the leaders of the church are.

They are a group of Christians whose Christianity is profoundly seen and evidenced in their lives. In fact, one of my seminary professors said an elder is somebody who, if somebody came up to you who wasn't a Christian and was learning about Christianity and said, "I just want to learn about Christianity. Teach me about Christianity," which some of you could be in that chair today, you could look at an elder and say, "Well, follow that guy around for 24 or 48 hours and you'll see a glimpse of what Christianity is about."

They're Christians, and they're Christians who are leading the way and keeping up a good reputation for the faith inside the church and outside the church. Church, I just want you to know as we transition from a campus to a church, this is the type of men and women you have leading your church.

I know you don't get to sit in the rooms I do to be around the elders. The elders are men who fit this description and love you, who God has gifted to you and to me, which is unbelievably good news, because not every church can walk through this list and go, "Yeah, that's the type of leadership we have," as simple as the list is.

You have deacons. You have men and women who love you, pray for you, who scurry about in all sorts of ways and serve you in different ways that would blow your mind if you knew about them all. This is what God has done here. That's good news. So as we look forward to becoming a church, just know that God has provided and celebrate that and worship the Lord for that.

Yet, the problem in Ephesus is they didn't have these type of leaders. Coming back to the letter, that's what they did not have in Ephesus. They actually had elders who didn't fit this description, which is why he's reminding Timothy of the description. They had elders who were actually doing the opposite of this.

Paul himself had appointed these elders, which is crazy. He's the one who said, "These are the guys to lead the church," and yet, they had drifted outside the bounds of faith and were taking others with them. They were even taking advantage of widows in the church. How slimy is that? It's like the most vulnerable group of people within the church.

We read about this two weeks ago. They were taking advantage of the widows. They were spreading false teaching, and beyond all that, they were just bringing disrepute from those who aren't Christians on the church. They're making people think less of Christianity by all of their activities and their actions.

In the second part of chapter 5, Paul finally addresses this. If you're in your Bible there, turn to chapter 5. He addresses what you do about that. If you have great leaders in the church, we honor them. We'll get to that in a moment, but if you don't, what do you do? If you have a mess like you have in Ephesus, what is the responsibility of the church and those leading the church to deal with this?

He goes into it here in the second part of chapter 5. Remember, the first part of chapter 5 is the first real problem going on in Ephesus, which is the young widows. Now he's addressing the other major problem, which is the false teachers there, the elders who are leading the church astray. He says in verse 17, "**Let the elders who rule well...**" Who lead well. Who are managing (overseeing) the church well.

Let those elders "**...be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.**" This is a stunning statement that Paul could say that, especially if you keep in your mind what is going on in Ephesus. Listen. The leaders are not leading well in Ephesus, and beyond that, the fact that the apostle Paul appointed these men himself personally...

Do you think he was a little wounded by these elders in Ephesus who were doing what they were doing? Do you think he was disappointed? Do you think he was discouraged by them? These are guys who he loved, who he poured his life into. It's almost like a parent with a grown child who goes astray. You can just imagine the heartbreak in Paul's heart about what is going on in Ephesus.

What is amazing in a glimpse into Paul's character that is instructive for us is what he does in light of that. He doesn't go the route of cynicism. He doesn't say, "Oh, these leaders I love hurt me. They've disappointed me, so I'm going to go away from God's plan for leadership in the church all together. I'm just going to buck authority. I'm going to buck the idea of authority."

Or even worse, which a lot of people do today, "Because these leaders of the church have hurt me, I'm just going to give up on the church altogether." Paul doesn't do that. He doesn't throw the baby

out with the bathwater. He stiff-arms that temptation, and instead, despite the train wreck that was going on in Ephesus in the leadership, he doubles down and he affirms the goodness and the givenness of God's design for leadership in the church.

He says, "Instead of being cynical, instead of pulling back from the table, instead of just giving up on the church, press in and honor them. Show them double honor." That's amazing, especially if you've been wounded by the church. I know some of you have. Some of you have very valid wounds, like the apostle Paul. I think for us not to miss here is he makes this little statement and gets into what he's going to say is to go, "What an example to follow. What wisdom the apostle Paul had, that he knew this was God's plan."

Even though there is fallibility in the leaders, it doesn't mean we give up on God's plan altogether for leadership. It doesn't mean we give up on God's plan for being a part of his church. I just think that's helpful for us to see and very instructive...listen...especially for us. We live in a culture that has such a deep, deep aversion and cynicism toward authority. Any authority but me being the authority we don't like.

We'll get into this next week as we talk about work (on Labor Day, no less). You just listen to the way people talk about the authority they have at work. There are very few people who say good things about their managers. Part of it is because they're bad managers, but part of it is because we have an aversion to authority.

What Paul is saying here, especially in the church, is really deep and really helpful for us. What you see here is a healthy church is one that is living together in such a way that the leaders who are leading well are being honored. That's being recognized by the church, especially those who are leading well in preaching and teaching.

Also, the church is recognizing to a degree that they're worshiping God by showing honor to these men, which is an amazing thing. Church, I just want to encourage you. You do that really well. He says part of showing honor (the next verse) is actually paying some of these elders for their service. He says, "**For the Scripture says...**" This is Deuteronomy 5.

"You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain..." It's like that big ol' boy ox-treading the grain. Take off that thing from his face. Let him eat some of that while he's treading over it. Let

that guy get some of his grub while he's working for you. Then it says the same thing. He quotes Jesus. **"The laborer deserves his wages."**

Again, Paul's point is how to treat those elders who are doing their work well. Again, we know from the letter, the elders in Ephesus (at least some of them) weren't doing their work well. Right? Back to that. They weren't teaching well. They weren't preaching well. What about that? What do we do about that in a church, then and now?

If you have a teacher who is not teaching the gospel... Leading well doesn't mean the elders aren't serving your preferences. It doesn't mean they're not meeting your spiritual taste with the music or with the preaching or with whatever. That's not what he's talking about. He's talking about they're not teaching the gospel. He's talking about they're sinning in some sort of observable, explicit way, which he'll get to.

How do we deal with that in the church? He says in verse 19, **"Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses."** The first thing we think about is how to discipline elders and leadership who have gone bad. You make sure there are no unsupported charges brought against him. I think this is really helpful that Paul puts this here, because first of all, we should treat everybody this way. The Bible makes that clear. Right?

This is not just for the elders. He's talking about elders here so he goes into that, but we should treat everybody this way. We should never bring a judgment against someone until we have all the information. We should never speak a judgment against anyone until we have all the information. Paul is saying, as a church you have to have a culture where you're not quick-lipped. You're not loose with your tongue. You don't come to the elders and start bringing charges because you feel a certain way about something.

Listen. It sounds so simple. Does it not? It's like, don't hate on your elders like that. But our hearts are so eager for the first word, aren't they? Especially in such an Instagram, Insta-whatever... I'm not hating on Instagram. An insta-culture. We just want to have the first word. It doesn't matter if it's a true word; we just want to have the first word, and the church has to be responding differently. The church has to be, as the brother of Jesus himself would say, slow to speak and quick to listen.

Even some of this you have seen in the headlines and how people have responded in the last couple of weeks. Paul is saying we withhold judgment until the evidence demands it. Maybe one of the most famous examples of this... Because we live in a culture that technology (as we're going to talk about in the Parenting and Technology forum) just magnifies this, does it not? Maybe one of the most infamous examples was who some say is my celebrity look-alike, Ashton Kutcher. I don't see it.

In 2011 in Forbes magazine, there was this example of what we're all tempted to do, so don't hate on him. The example, I think, is helpful. It says in the article, "On Wednesday night actor and tech lover Ashton Kutcher, heard Penn State coach Joe Paterno was being fired. He tweeted to his 8 million followers:

'How do you fire Joe Pa? as a Hawkeye fan I find it in poor taste,' along with the hashtags #insult and #noclass. This set off an uproar on the Internet, as Kutcher seemed to be voicing his support for a college program that covered up...decades-long sexual molestation of poor, inner-city children."

Of course, lesson learned. Kutcher wasn't trying to do that, but what did he do? He shared. Made a judgment before he had all the information, so the next day he deleted the tweet. Then he wrote, "As an advocate in the fight against child sexual exploitation, I could not be more remorseful for all involved in the Penn St. case. As of immediately I will stop tweeting until I find a way to properly manage this feed. I feel awful about this error. Won't happen again."

That is actually a great picture of repentance, not that that's driven by the Spirit. It's driven by his sense of morality, but it's a good example. All of us... We can hate on that. All of us are prone to this. Not on Twitter hopefully, but there as well, but in our relationships, in our Home Groups, in our conversations, at our workplaces.

I just wonder. When was the last time...? Because God tells us as a church, as a family now, to put away gossip and slander. When was the last time you slandered without all the information? When was the last time you did that? Not that particular thing, but you did what he did? Maybe even, where are the areas...?

I laid these questions over my own heart this week and was deeply convicted. Where are some areas or maybe even some people who you're more tempted to do it consistently with that group of

people for some reason, about that topic, in that setting? Especially as Christians... If you're not a Christian, again I'm so glad you're here. You're learning something about the ethics of Christianity, but for us as Christians, where are you tempted to do that?

Maybe even this morning, right now, to just repent before the Lord and say, "God, would you help us as a church put that away from our family? Would you help, by your Spirit, our first instinct to be slow to speak and quick to listen, slow to anger? Help us, O God, to do that." This is part of what Paul is saying.

If you want to discipline elders (kind of coming back to leadership now) you have to not be so eager to have the first word that you don't validate it, but if you do find an elder's sin (there is observable, explicit sin they're not repenting of), what do you do then? If it's a valid charge, what do you do? He says in the next verse, which I love, "**As for those who persist in sin...**" Like these guys were in Ephesus. He says, "**...rebuke them in the presence of all...**" Public leader? You publicly rebuke them in front of everybody, "**...so that the rest may stand in fear.**"

If you're new to this text or even to Christianity, that may sound really harsh to you. It's like, "Wow! You get up and you expose their dirty laundry in front of everybody?" I'm an elder, so I feel like I can say this. As an elder, this is one of the most comforting sentences in the entire Bible to me. This is not harsh. This is good news for elders. Let me tell you why.

Because God loves me so much he has given you this sentence and this charge to care for my soul. If I am sinning and I don't see it and the other elders don't see it and nobody is calling me out or I'm unwilling to submit to what they're calling out from the Bible, God says this is what you do. God loves me so much he has given me this sentence to protect me from myself. That's crazy good news! He loves me so much he has given me you to know this sentence and do that. That's amazing. That's so helpful.

Discipline in the church (all discipline that's done lovingly) is a gift. It's not a curse. It's not harsh. If you don't discipline your children as a father, you don't love them, is what the Bible says. This to me is great news, but it's not just good news and grace for my life as an elder or as a leader; it's also good news for the church. Look what he says at the end of the verse.

He says, "**...rebuke them in the presence of all...**" Why? "**...so that the rest...**" The rest of the elders. The rest of the church. "**...may stand in fear.**" It's not just for me; it's for everybody that God

would do this. When his leaders are walking in sin, when his people are walking in sin, he exposes the sin, and he disciplines it in such a way that is meant for us who are watching to go, "Oh, my gosh! It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a holy God."

Listen. We don't talk about the fear of God much in churches anymore, and it makes sense. There have been enough fire-and-brimstone sermons where you're trying to scare people into whatever that is not helpful, but it's still true. You have an all-powerful, all-knowing God who is holy. Fearing God doesn't just mean standing in awe of him. It doesn't mean that. It doesn't mean respecting him. It also means being afraid of him.

One of my favorite pictures of this is in the book of Revelation. The apostle John who... By the way, he wasn't sinning. He was just being swept up into the heavens and seeing a picture of God in Revelation. He comes before Christ in his vision, and it says Jesus to him was so beautiful, so holy, so pure, and so glorious, the text says he fell at Jesus' feet as though dead, terrified in front of such beauty and holiness and righteousness and perfection.

Then it says what Jesus did. I love this picture. It says yet Jesus knelt down and put his hand on him, because God is holy and he's fearsome, but he's merciful, and he's gracious. Yet, when we see people be disciplined by God publicly... Even like Ananias and Sapphira, who were publicly disciplined in Acts, chapter 5. What happened? The whole church stood in awe and fear of God.

If I'm sinning, if I have hidden sins in my heart, I need to bring those before the Lord. He already knows about them, but I need to bring them and confess them so I don't get disciplined, so I don't, more importantly, lose my faith, so my heart doesn't get hardened to the love of God and the truth of God that I wouldn't obey God.

This isn't just grace for the elders; it's grace for the whole church here. You can imagine how this would have worked itself in and through the church at Ephesus and how it would work itself through our church here. In verse 21...stay with me...he says... Listen. This is so important. **"In the presence of God..."** He's kind of stalling here.

He's saying, "In the presence of God and in the presence of Jesus Christ and of the angels even, the elect angels (the ones who didn't disobey God). He says, **"...I charge you..."** He's speaking to Timothy and to the church here. **"...I charge you to keep these rules..."** Do these things. This is important for the health of the church, the flourishing of the church, that you actually do this.

He says, "...**I charge you to** [do this] **without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.**" Which means, you do this before God. God is the one who wants you to do this. (Jesus Christ, even the elect angels) But do this in a way that nobody in the church is a teacher's pet. You have that? I was never a teacher's pet. Some of you were. That's fine. I'm working through my bitterness about that.

Nobody in the church gets to be a teacher's pet. Nobody on the team gets to be that team captain who has a different standard. A healthy team is where nobody gets star treatment, even the team leader, even the all-star. If the team leader is the team leader, you would hope part of why they were selected as the team leader is they know that. Right? They know they should submit themselves to the same standards, the same discipline, as everybody else on the team.

Sadly, whether it's sports or anything else, that's often not the case, especially not in the church. "That pastor and that first lady think they're just above that. They just think they're insulated from correction, that nobody can approach them about their sin because they're at a different level. They're the all-star of the church. They're the people who are sort of beyond the body. They're not a part of the body of Christ; they're the head of the body of Christ."

No, sir. Jesus is the head of the body of Christ. Nobody in God's church is king except for Jesus, which is part of what he's saying here. Love each other enough to not let anybody be a king. Love each other enough to discipline each other. Correct each other. Encourage each other with no partiality.

If a church is going to flourish, that has to be the case. Nobody can be king here. Nobody can be afraid to reproach anybody about these things when they're sinning against a holy God, so this is just great stuff Paul is saying. Then he says because it's so serious (leadership is this serious in God's church), don't be hasty to lay on hands, in verse 22, which is the way you would appoint a leader. You would lay your hands on them and they'd become an elder. You'd pray for them.

He says, "Don't be in a hurry to do this, and don't take part in their sins," which James says as well in his letter. If you're correcting somebody about their sin, be careful you don't fall into the same sin. It's like you go over to the party to go rescue somebody and you wake up the next morning and you were the party. That's what he's saying. Be careful about that. Don't partake in their sins. He also says, "...**keep yourself pure.**"

It's interesting he says this and what he says next because some of the false teachers in Ephesus were saying to be pure in God's eyes meant you were abstaining from marriage, you were abstaining from alcohol, or you were abstaining from these good gifts of creation God gave us. He says, "That's not what I'm talking about by *pure*." We know this because verse 23 says no longer drink water, but actually use a little wine for your stomach ailments. He was drinking water because he maybe even bought into this vision of purity.

He was like, "No, no, no. That's not purity. The purity I'm talking about is purity in sin. Don't sin." That's what he says. He says, "**...the sins...**" in verse 24, "**...of some people are obvious.**" They go before these people into judgment. You see it. Before they get in the courtroom you know they're guilty. He said but others, their sins, they appear later. That's why you shouldn't be hasty to lay on hands.

Paul knew this. He had appointed these men in Ephesus, and then their sins appeared later on, didn't they (which is the whole purpose for the letter)? He concludes on a more positive note. He says in verse 25 that good works are that way as well. Good works, for some people, also go before them, but then, for some people, they later on get revealed.

Eventually, he's saying, someone's character is going to be revealed, good or bad, so don't be hasty to appoint leaders. A lot of wisdom here. Take a deep breath. What does this mean for us? It means a lot of things for us, but I just want to summarize it. Leadership is important. It came from the mind and the heart of God. You need to know that.

Humans didn't make it up. John Maxwell didn't make up leadership. He's not the creator of leadership or whoever it is who is a leadership guru you may hear about or follow. God made it up in the garden when he said, "I want you to have dominion over all the earth." That's leadership. God's heart is that the church is led well, so we should care about this. I'm going to give you a list of a few things to draw out of this to summarize.

1. *We should care about leadership in the church, because it matters.* It doesn't just matter because it has to matter because God's important so whatever he thinks is important. Yes. But it also matters because it affects each and every one of us. Just like in the home. Whoever leads the home, the home is going to follow that person. In the church, whoever leads the church, the church is going to become like that leader, to some degree.

Whether you like it or not, you're affected by how the people are leading here at this church or any church. We all are. I am. Everybody is. It matters. It's also why, church, it matters you're actually a part of a church, because apparently God thinks we need leadership. I know, again, we think we can be self-directed and self-led. Fine.

But apparently God thinks we need leaders in the church. Apparently he thinks we're sheep and we need shepherds because we're sheep. Take it however you want, but that's true. We need care. We need protection. We need oversight for us to persevere in our faith, which is why, if you're not a member of a church, you're in a dangerous place, because you're like a sheep without a shepherd, and there are wolves out there.

That's the whole picture God gives in the Bible. That's why church membership is important. Not because you can check some box off or be on some list formally, but because this is the way God has made it to be, and to go against the nature of how God has created it is not a good thing for you. It's not a good thing for me. Even if you're not a member of a church, maybe you want to come to our membership class. This isn't a plug for that, but just to be thinking and to continue to think about these things.

2. If you have wounds in your heart because of the abuse of leadership (the sinful abuse of leaders in your past who have wounded you), deal with it. I'm not pretending like you can come pray with me after the service and you've dealt with it. Some of you have some deep, legitimate wounds that are going to take a long time for you to walk through, but by you not staring it in the face it is hindering you from actually doing and being who you ought to be in God's church, in his kingdom. That's part of what this is saying.

I may have even wounded you. I have no idea, but you do, and you know it's there. Even this morning as we've been walking through this, the Holy Spirit has convicted you of that. Some of this baggage you bring in... Maybe it's not like somebody did something personal to you. It's just this cynicism that has developed in your heart which is sinful toward the leadership of God's people. Deal with that. Let's talk about it. Let's drag those wounds out into the light and let God heal them so we can be this type of church God is saying, "If you want to flourish, this is who you have to be."

3. As we're being slow to lay our hands and appoint leaders, get to know them. By the way, this is why who we appoint as leaders is so crucial. It's why we announce it. It's why we ask you to come to meetings to ask questions. Because we need to be asking questions. We shouldn't be hasty to

appoint new leaders. As we do that, especially if you're a member of this church, I would encourage you to know your leaders. At least kind of have a familiarity with their names.

That doesn't mean you have to take them out for ice cream every week, although I do love Yogurtland. The S'more flavor is really good this week. I wouldn't be upset if you came by. Anyway, get to know them. Get to know who they are (your elders and deacons) so you can encourage them, so you can pray for them, so if need be you can correct them and even discipline them. We need this.

Again, the responsibility here... You don't read the leadership text of the Bible and go, "Oh, that's just for the leaders. They need to get that lesson. That's good." As a church, we read it and go, "This lesson is for us too. We have a part to play here too. We're all a part of the same body." God says in the book of Hebrews we ought to do this because the leaders, the elders of the church in particular, are those who are keeping watch over our souls as those who will give an account. This is why this is so crucial.

You know, at the same time the good news is we are approaching a day... In fact, we're now an hour and 7 minutes and 21 seconds closer to being at a day when leaders in the church won't be necessary anymore. At least, the type of leaders we have now, because we will be with the chief Shepherd. We won't need leaders anymore. We won't need under-shepherds like me, and I thank God for that. I thank God for this role now, but I thank God he is the Chief Shepherd.

The Scriptures say one day this Chief Shepherd, the Lion of Judah (the conquering Lion the Bible pictures him as) is coming back to get his sheep. He's coming back to ultimately (even as we prayed) make all things new and take us with him. That's good news, isn't it, man? It's crazy. Peter says the unfading crown of glory that's imperishable.

You know, they're giving out these little crowns in Little Village today. My son brought it in. It's sort of like a Burger King thing, but it's a little bit better because it's Little Village and not Burger King. It's not that crown. It's salvation that, Peter says, God is keeping for us. He's protecting it for us. When that Lion comes back to get his sheep, he's going to give it to us. We look forward to that day even now as we strive to be a church that lives out how we ought as his people. In that sense, indeed, it really is better to be an army of sheep who have a Lion leading us, who we'll come pray to now.

Father, we thank you for your mercy to us. God, this text is just so... Your kindness is all over it to us. Your love for us is so there, so we recognize it together and we're praying and asking now you'd help us to live in light of it. Help us encourage each other in these things. Teach us, Lord. If this was so simple, there would be far more churches that do this. There wouldn't have even been a need for this letter to have ever been written. We thank you that you have not left us alone in these things, and we bless you. In Christ's name, amen.

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