Equipping Elders (Part 1)

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[0:00] Welcome to Built on God's Word, the preaching and teaching ministry of Highland Park Baptist Church in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.! Pastor Mike Scrivani teaches on Acts 20, verses 17-32.

So remember last week, Paul is making his way back to Jerusalem, and he has an offering that he's collected from the Gentile churches to be distributed to the believers in the Jerusalem church.
To meet the needs that they have there, and as he's making his way to Jerusalem, he's stopping in and he's spending time with the churches and the believers and ministering to them and equipping them.
And so we got to the story where Paul is preaching and is answering questions. There would have been this dialogue with the believers after he preached as he's answering their questions about Scripture, about the Gospel.
And they go late into the night, and there's a young man named Eutychus. They're in an upper level of a house, and you know, like, they didn't have air conditioning back then. And so it was night, sun went down, so they're lighting lamps, and I'm sure the room was smoky and warm.
[1:14] And a great place to sit would be the window, which is where Eutychus was, and he fell asleep and fell out the window. And so, if you remember, the main idea wasn't this, but it could have been, don't fall asleep in church or you could die.

Okay. Eutychus was raised again, and it's a pretty amazing story. So they go, the Lord raises Eutychus back to life through Paul, and then they go back up into the room with Eutychus.
He doesn't go home. He doesn't take the night off, and then they continue until dawn. And as we talked about last week, I suggested a few times that maybe we should try this.
We did finish eight minutes late, and Oscar shut that down, and I think James got blamed a little bit in there too. So one of these days, one of these days we're going to do it, but not tonight.
That's not my intention tonight. Acts chapter 20, beginning in verse 17. If you want to follow along with me, and I'll read through the end of the chapter. Now, from Miletus, we sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.
[2:29] And when they came to him, and this is Paul, he said to them, You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews, how I did not shrink back from declaring to you anything that was profitable and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance towards God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.
I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course in the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.
And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.
Pay careful attention to yourselves. And he's speaking again to the elders of the church in Ephesus. Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.
[3:53] I know that after my departure, fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. And from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them.

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Therefore, be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.
I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who are with me. In all things, I have shown you that by working hard in this way, we must help the weak and remember the words of our Lord Jesus, how he himself said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.
And when he had said these things, he knelt down and he prayed with them all. And there was much weeping on the part of all. They embraced Paul and kissed him, being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again.
And they accompanied him to the ship. Many of you, I'm sure, are familiar with the name Douglas MacArthur. Douglas MacArthur served as a general in the United States Army.
[5:11] He served with distinction in World War I as chief of staff of the United States Army from 1930 to 35, as supreme commander of the Southwest Pacific area from 1942 to 45, as supreme commander for the Allied Powers overseeing the occupation of Japan from 1945 to 51, and as head of the United States Command in the Korean War from 1950 to 51.

He is one of only five people to hold the title of general of the army and the only person to hold the rank of feared marshal in the Philippine Army.
And MacArthur, Douglas MacArthur, is regarded as a great leader, one of the great leaders in our nation's history. On March 11, 1942, MacArthur acted on an order from President Roosevelt to escape from the Philippines, which had been surrounded by advancing Japanese forces.
Roosevelt was concerned that MacArthur, one of his top military commanders, would be captured.
And so MacArthur obeyed the order, but was heartbroken to leave behind around 90,000 American and Filipino soldiers who no doubt would be defeated, captured, and tortured.
Speaking of this departure, MacArthur said, On the dock I could see the men staring at me. I had lost 25 pounds, living on the same diet as the soldiers, and I must have looked gaunt and ghastly standing there in my old war-stained clothes.
[6:58] No be-mettled commander of inspiring presence. What a change had taken place in that once beautiful spot. My eyes roamed the warped and twisted face of scorched rock.

Gone was the vivid green foliage with its trees, shrubs, and flowers. Gone were the buildings, the sheds, every growing thing. The hail of relentless bombardment had devastated, buried, and blasted.
Ugly, dark scars marked the smoldering paths where the fire had raged from one end of the island to the other. Great gaps and forbidding crevices still belched their tongues of flame.
The departure scene showed only a black mass of destruction. Through the shadowed ruins, my eyes sought topside, where the deep roar of heavy guns still growled defiance with the red blast tearing the growing darkness asunder.
Darkness had now fallen, and the waters were beginning to ripple from the faint night breeze. The enemy firing had ceased, and a muttering silence had fallen. It was as though the dead were passing by the stench of destruction.
[8:04] The smell of filth thickened the night air. I raised my cap in farewell salute, and I could feel my face go white, feel a sudden, convulsive twitch in the muscles of my face.

I heard someone ask, Was this chance Sarge of getting through? And the gruff replied, Dunno, he's lucky, maybe one in five. I stepped aboard PT 41. You may cast off buck, I said, when you are ready.
Paul, like MacArthur, had experienced his own kind of warfare, but his was of the spiritual kind. He had seen many salvations, many lives transformed, many churches started by the advancement of the gospel.
However, he had experienced a lot of rejection, and humiliation, imprisonments, and beatings. Acts chapter 20, verses 23 through 24, reveals Paul's knowledge, as we've read, that more suffering for him was on the horizon.
But instead of escaping it, his commander, Paul's commander, ordered him to sail towards it. And on his way towards that trouble, he called the Ephesian elders to meet him.
[9:21] These fellow soldiers of Christ were summoned to meet with their revered general to hear his farewell message. But this wasn't a woe is me message.

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Paul knew what he was sailing into. He was sailing into trouble, but that trouble would ultimately, he understood, fulfill the purposes of God. He also knew that his departure meant that these elders, these pastors, these overseers would face trouble too.
But he doesn't tell them to run from it. He doesn't tell them to hide from it or to live in fear of it. Instead, he spends these last few precious moments face-to-face with them to equip them, to prepare them, to press on in the work that they have been called and commanded to do for the Lord.
And so the main idea for our study tonight is that Paul equips the Ephesian elders to fight the good fight for the faith.
That's what we see happening in our passage tonight. Paul equips the Ephesian elders to fight the good fight of the faith. Now, the word elder, pastor, and overseer are interchangeable in the New Testament.
[10:41] In the examples we have in Scripture, we see that churches were led by elders. We see one of those examples in our text tonight. Paul calls for the elders of the church in Ephesus.

In this passage, they are called overseers, and their duty, we see, is as pastors, which is implied by the fact that Paul refers to the church members as the flock whom wolves, false teachers, would seek to lead astray and devour.
In 1 Timothy 3, 1-7, and Titus 1, 5-9, those passages of Scripture contain a list of qualifications which Paul gave to Timothy and to Titus to use as they evaluated men to serve as elders in the church.
And it wasn't just Paul. We see Peter in 1 Peter 5, 1-4, command the elders of the churches to shepherd the flock of God. So the model that we see in Scripture in the New Testament is churches who have a plurality, multiple, more than one, elders who work together to provide spiritual oversight of the congregation which they are called to pastor.
From Scripture, we are also able to discern what elders are called to do. First, they are called to be like Christ. They are to pursue holiness.
[12:15] They are to live above reproach. They're to set an example for everybody else in the church. Second, if they are married, they are called to manage their household well. Third, they are called to oversee, to direct the congregation towards decisions that serve the purposes of God for the glory of Christ.

Fourth, they are responsible to shepherd the flock. Fifth, they are to teach sound doctrine. And as a part of teaching sound doctrine, they're also to rebuke false teachings.
And sixth, they have a responsibility to pray for the members of their church and to pray for God's help as they oversee His church.
Now, many different churches have different ways to govern or to oversee the church, but the biblical model, the best way, and truly the only way, since it's the biblical model, is for a plurality, multiple elders to work together to pastor the members of the church they've received, the responsibility to oversee.
That's the biblical model. That's why we have elders in our church. Many different churches have, again, many different ways to do this, but the biblical example is a plurality of elders working together to pastor the church.
[13:44] In our text today, we see Paul's commitment to this model of church leadership as he equips the elders of the church at Ephesus.

Elders today are equipped by this instruction too. And it's good for non-elders in the church to know texts like this so they know how to pray for their elders, submit to their elders, and hopefully follow the good example that the elders are setting for them.
So here, again tonight, as Paul is equipping the elders, he equips them in three ways, and we'll get through two of these three ways tonight.
I didn't want to rush and cram in all of it, so better than cramming it in, we're going to take our time, and everybody will be happy because we should end on time.
Though, you know, we could go till midnight, but I don't... I have kids that got to go to school tomorrow too, so... First way, Paul equips the elders.
[14:53] He equips the Ephesian elders by reminding them of his example. He reminds them of his example in verses 17 through 24. So again, Paul is on his way to Jerusalem to distribute an offering he collected from the Gentile churches for the believers who were in need in the Jerusalem church.

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This offering would not only meet the physical needs of the Christians in the Jerusalem church, but also would serve to strengthen the spiritual bond between the Gentile congregations and the church in Jerusalem.
Paul's ship made a stopover at Miletus on the coast of Asia Minor, 30 miles south of Ephesus, and from there we read in verse 17 that he sent to Ephesus and called the elders to him.
For three years, Paul had nurtured these men and the other believers in the church in Ephesus. They had grown, these men, these elders in their knowledge of Scripture, hearing Paul teach it. They had grown in spiritual maturity as a result and Paul left them to follow his example, the example he had set for them as they watched him and probably worked with him over that course of time pastoring the church.
[16:11] As we continue on in verse 17 to 18, after they came to him, Paul said to them, you yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia.

The Ephesian elders, again, they had witnessed Paul's ministry during the three years that he was serving the church in Ephesus. Paul was constantly aware of the importance of his setting a good example for other believers and he would call other believers to imitate his devotion to the Lord whom he ultimately was imitating.
1 Corinthians 11, 1 through 2, for example, he says, be imitators of me as I am of Christ. Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you.
He told the believers at the church of Thessalonica, for we never came with words of flattery as you know, nor with a pretext for greed. God is witness, nor did we see glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have demanded it as apostles of Christ.
But we were gentle among you like a nursing mother taking care of her children. So being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also ourselves because you have become very dear to us.
[17:31] For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil. We work night and day that we might not be a burden to any of you while we proclaim to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct towards you believers.

Paul's reminding the Ephesian elders of his example served to establish himself as someone for them to emulate, and it also may have served as a defense of himself.
False teachers constantly attempted to tear down what Paul built. Paul had constant experience with this, and so as we'll see in verses 29 through 31, he was aware that there were some in the church in Ephesus chomping at the bit for him to leave so that they could get to work sowing their lies and leading people astray.
It made me think of the church I was pastoring in Leavenworth before coming here. We didn't have elders there, but we did have deacons who sort of functioned as elders, and there was a man in our church who had served as a deacon and caused problems.
He was also a seminary student, and I could tell that in my leaving, he saw an opportunity for himself.
[18:56] And so I told our deacons that this is the guy you need to bring in to be the interim pastor. He's going to do a great job. Not only is he going to preach great messages to you, but he's going to really protect this church and lead you in the right direction.

And I told him, and as far as this other guy, don't let him preach. Well, they followed my instruction about hiring the interim pastor I recommended, but they did not follow my second piece of advice, unfortunately.
but when they learned their lesson and when they did hire that interim, that man left. So, you know, that's that.
But he was ready. Sometimes there's people like that. They're just ready. They see an opportunity. Once a man like Paul leaves, okay, he's gone. Now is my chance to lead or to do whatever I want to do.
And so, again, some men aspire to the position of elder for the wrong reasons. Their intentions are ultimately self-serving instead of what they should be, which is to serve the Lord, as Paul says in verse 19.
[20:10] Serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews. The Greek word translated as serving here in the ESV is douleo, which is a verb form of the word doulos, which means slave.

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Paul used this term many times throughout his letters to describe how he viewed himself in relation to Christ. He was a slave of Jesus Christ.
Jesus was his commander and he was eager to serve his master. And in serving Jesus, he served humbly. Jesus said, a servant is not greater than his master.
in Matthew 10, 24. Paul was humbled by God's grace to save him. He was humbled by God's call or Christ's call.
Christ is God to serve him as an apostle. Paul never boasted in himself. He always boasted in the cross of Jesus Christ. Galatians 6, 14, he says, but far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.
[21:24] Even among the other apostles, Paul regarded himself as the least. 1 Corinthians 15, 9. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God.

Not only that, but in Ephesians 3, 8, we read, he considered himself to be the very least of the saints, of those who believe. Paul considered himself the least of the apostles and also the least among believers.
But not only that, in 1 Timothy 1, 15, he says, this saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost.
The more Paul served Christ, the closer he got to Christ, the lower the view he had of himself. Paul didn't suffer some kind of self-loathing condition like Eeyore and Winnie the Pooh, nor did he say bad things about himself as a manipulative tactic to try to get other people to say nice things about them.
You know how people will do that sometimes? You know, I don't really feel bad about myself, but I'll say bad things about myself because I really want you to say nice things about me. Paul didn't do that.
[22:42] That wasn't his motivation. Again, the more Paul knew Christ, the more he was amazed by his grace to save him. And the closer he got to Christ, the more he beheld his glory and he was amazed and he never stopped being amazed at the goodness of Jesus to save a sinner like him.

You've probably heard the expression never meet your heroes. Sometimes when you meet someone you look up to, you see their flaws. They may be great at what they do, but not a great person.
One of my heroes growing up was George Brett. You guys know George Brett? Maybe you've heard me tell this story before. I know Lee has. Yeah, Hall of Famer. The only Hall of Famer the Royals have for now.
Great baseball player. I mean, he was it. In Kansas City, he was the guy. And my dad, I worked in radio and so back when I was growing up, I was probably about eight years old, he had like a radio day where local radio personalities got to bring their children or a guest and you got to go behind the scenes at Kauffman Stadium.
That was Royal Stadium and they had a dinner for us and there was mingling with the players. You got to walk out on the field and we walked out on the field and there was George Brett taking pictures with all the fans and here I am thinking, wow, this is my chance.
[24:13] In fact, I had a Royals hat on with like a stitched in the side George Brett signature. If I can get a real thing right here. And so, I had the pen, I had the hat, I went up to him and I was polite.

Mr. Brett, would you please sign my hat? And he looked at me and he looked at some guy in a suit and gave him a look and that guy in the suit came over, son, Mr. Brett is not signing autographs today.
And I couldn't understand that. What, how long would it take for you to grab this pen and sign your name on my hat? And, whatever.
I don't have any excuses for George Brett that day. I don't care if he thought, well then I'm going to have to sign everybody's autograph. Who cares? I'm an eight year old boy who looks up to you as a hero. Sign my hat.
He also has a reputation in Kansas City of kind of doing the same thing. You'll hear stories about, and I understand too, and I'm going off on a rabbit trail. I'm sorry. I know that it would get old for everywhere you go for people to ask you for an autograph, but guess what?
[25:23] You make a lot of money to play a game for your life, and these are the people who pay to come see you play, so if you don't like it, then order takeout or something like that.

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Get used to it. Sign people's stuff. At Midwestern, another one of my heroes, now this is a better story, John MacArthur.
And he came to Midwestern. They invited him for something called the Spurgeon Lectures, and so he came on a Monday night. Place was full, and he preached, and it was amazing, and then he stayed to come the next day to preach to the students during chapel, and so the next day it was primarily seminary students.
And I've shared this story before too, but you know, just be patient with me. Usually, whenever we had a notable pastor, preacher come in during chapel, they would preach, they would get down off the stage, somebody would go up and pray, and that guy would be gone.
And I understand, you know, they have commitments, they're often coming from far away, they need to catch a plane, and I was amazed that after the prayer was over, John MacArthur was still there.
[26:31] Not only was he still there, but he didn't go back behind. He stayed in the front, and he was swarmed by seminary students who wanted him to sign books, and he signed them all, who wanted to have pictures taken with him, and he took pictures with everybody.

In fact, I heard a story the seminary president told, later, that he even signed a John MacArthur study Bible, and the president of our seminary said, were you comfortable with signing the Bible? And he said, I don't even look at what they put in front of me, I just sign it. But that was an example of, here's a hero of mine, and wow, he made the day of so many of these guys.
What a great example for the rest of us. But again, so Paul was humble, and John MacArthur example of that as well.
He wasn't too busy for these students, and he made sure to make the time. Paul was a humble servant of the Lord. The Ephesian elders had witnessed Paul's example and the tears that he talks about here.
[27:37] Paul's love for the Lord and his desire to see others come to the same love and saving knowledge of Christ was often met with grief by those who rejected the gospel.

Paul talks about his grief for his fellow Jews who rejected Christ in Romans chapter 9 verses 1 through 3. There he says, I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying.
My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen, according to the flesh.
Paul also shed tears over Christians struggling with sin in the church in 2 Corinthians 2.4. He writes, For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.
Paul also shed tears over the destructive impact of false teachers in the church. Philippians 3.18. He says, For many of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.
[28:53] The tears Paul speaks of in Acts 20 was the constant plotting of the Jews who rejected Christ and who sought Paul's demise.

Ironically, as John MacArthur points out, it was the plot of the Jews at Corinth that allowed the Ephesian elders this opportunity to spend time with Paul. And so there's another reminder of the truth of Romans 8.28.
God works all things together for the good of those who love him. In verses 20-22, Paul talks about his example in facing these plots. There he says, How I did not shrink back from declaring to you anything that was profitable in teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance towards God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.
The persecution Paul faced for preaching the gospel didn't achieve the results the enemies of the gospel hoped to achieve. In fact, it accomplished the opposite.
Paul was even more determined and committed to preach the gospel. Whether in public or in private, likewise, elders like Paul should not shrink back from proclaiming the gospel and urging people to repent of their sins and turn in faith to Jesus Christ.
[30:12] In verses 23-24, Paul says, Except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me, but I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself if only I may finish my course in the ministry that I receive from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

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So again, Paul knew that dangers awaited him as he journeyed to Jerusalem. He didn't know what specific afflictions awaited him, but he knew that the Holy Spirit is a communicator of truth.
And so Paul sets an example here for the elders of the church. Again, when hard things come, God's shepherds don't walk around it, they don't turn back and run away from it, they march into it head on, faithfully trusting in the Lord and doing what is right because they don't consider their lives of any value in the sense that they are seeking to create for themselves some kind of heaven on earth.
As Paul said to the Philippians, to live is Christ and to die is gain. So now the second way that he equips the elders is by exhorting them.
Paul equips the Ephesian elders by exhorting them to care for the church in verses 25 through 32. Verse 25, he says, And now behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again.
[31:48] Paul served with these elders for three years and while he understood his work for Christ wasn't finished, he realized his work in Ephesus with the elders of the church was finished.

The Lord's time for Paul in Ephesus was over. In verse 26, he reminds them again of his example and the seriousness with which he conducted his charge among them.
Again, verse 26 says, Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all. In other words, if there was a person to share the gospel with, I shared it with them.
If there was a sin that needed to be confronted, I confronted it. If there was false teachings, heresies, lies spreading in the church, I addressed those things head on.
Verse 27, For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. The exhortation here again is to follow Paul's example of not shrinking back, not softening the edge of God's word, not apologizing for what it says or being afraid of who it might offend.
[33:03] Paul continues his exhortation verses 28 through 30. Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to care for the church of God which he obtained with his own blood.

I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them.
So the first exhortation here he gives is for the elders of the church to pay careful attention to themselves. Paying careful attention to yourselves means regularly performing a self-examination. If you think about it if you feel sick you analyze your symptoms. You ask yourself questions. Did I eat something bad? Did I get enough sleep?
Did I drink enough water? If you feel hot you check your temperature. Maybe the symptoms persist and you need to see a doctor and usually the doctor will ask you what are your symptoms?
[34:13] What have you been doing to try to help yourself get better? And they ask those questions because they assume that you've already done some kind of self-examination.

You've attempted to make yourself feel better. And so you can communicate to them what you've tried and what did or didn't work. An elder and all Christians really must regularly examine themselves.
2 Corinthians 13 5 Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves or do you not realize this about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you unless indeed you fail to meet the test.
Elders are used by the Lord to examine the spiritual conditions of the people in their church in their flock and how are they going to do that if they aren't regularly examining their own spiritual health.
Richard Baxter the great Puritan pastor wrote a book called The Reformed Pastor which was written to pastors and this is kind of a lengthy instruction he gives to them but I think it's worth reading tonight.
[35:24] So this is Richard Baxter a pastor writing to other pastors. Take heed to yourselves lest you be guilty of that which daily you condemn. Will you make it your work to magnify God and when you have done dishonored him as much as others?

Will you proclaim Christ's governing power and yet condemn it and rebel yourselves? Will you preach his laws and willfully break them? If sin be evil why do you live in it?
If it be not why do you dissuade men from it? If it be dangerous how dare you venture on it? If it be not why do you tell men so? If God's threatenings are true why do you not fear them?

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If they be false why do you needlessly trouble men with them and put them into such frights without cause? Do you know the judgment of God that they who commit such things are worthy of death and yet you do them?
You that says a man should not commit adultery or be drunk or covetous are you such yourself? Shall the same tongue speak evil that speaks against evil?
[36:33] Shall those lips censure and slander and backbite your neighbor that cry down these and the like things in others? Take heed to yourselves lest you cry down sin and yet do not overcome it lest while you seek to bring it down in others you are bought into it and become its slaves yourselves O brethren it is easier to chide at sin than to overcome it and so his point is are you practicing what you're preaching and if you're not practicing what you're preaching then what does that say about you in your spiritual condition God's people are commanded to pursue holiness but if elders do not share that pursuit or have that desire they will not be on guard for themselves which means they will not be on guard against fierce wolves who seek to infiltrate the church and devour the Lord's sheep Paul exhorts the elders to be on guard against other elders to not assume that these men who have confessed faith in

Christ are truly in Christ he talks about how they will twist things and this refers to God's word how they will twist God's word trying to make it say what it doesn't really say and we see a lot of that today don't we in churches the word translated as draw away means to drag away or to tear away so the image here is of a wolf who grabs its prey around the neck and drags it away where it will devour it where it will eat it and if elders are not vigilant under shepherds this is what happens Paul says this is what will happen and tragically this is what happened in Ephesus in his letter to Timothy who pastored the church in Ephesus after Paul condemned the false teachers who had arisen from within the congregation and perhaps some of these false teachers were present at this time when Paul is giving this warning 1 Timothy 1 3 through 7 says as I urged you when I was going to Macedonia remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies which promote speculation rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith certain persons by swerving from these have wandered away into vain discussion desiring to be teachers of the law without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions 2 Timothy 3 1 through 9 but understand this that in the last days there will come times of difficulty for people will be lovers of self lovers of money proud arrogant abusive disobedient to their parents ungrateful unholy heartless unappeasable slanderous without self control brutal not loving good treacherous reckless swollen with conceit lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of
God having the appearance of godliness but denying its power avoid such people for among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women burdened with sins and led astray by various passions always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth and then he named some names Janus and Jambras opposed Moses so these men also opposed the truth men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith but they will not get very far for their folly will be plain to all as was for those two men he does name names in his letters to Timothy and in other places these are the guys who you knew and I knew and they served in the church and they have departed from us they have taught false things so faithful elders who follow Paul's example should equip themselves to know God's word well need to be well acquainted with the word of God so that they can be on guard for themselves and thus be on guard against false teachers false teachings in the church and the terrible impact that they have on
God's people I had a friend in seminary who was pastoring a church and did not have elders they had deacons which a lot of southern baptist churches do and all he was trying to do was just preach the Bible he was preaching the Bible he was in a Christ-like loving way he was confronting sin he was confronting some things in the church and the deacons didn't like it he was telling me because we were friends this past Sunday I had my Bible I was just greeting everybody I had my Bible over my chest and I preached something that one of the deacons didn't like and he this deacon took his fist and he said he pounded my Bible like this and was pushing me back like punching me he's like you in that book is we have a lot of leaders like that in the church who are leading in ways that contradict what
God's word says and that's unfortunate so thankfully here I know we have elders and I know that our elders are committed to doing what God's word says when it comes down to it that's what I love

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too like our desire is what does the Bible say and that's what we need to do because the Bible is the word of God so be praying for our elders because you know the work is never finished and will not be until the Lord comes back and I know I'm looking forward to that day aren't you the sooner the better all right let's pray Lord thank you for this time that we've had tonight to study your word this example from the life of the apostle Paul Lord a man who you were gracious to save a man whom you used mightily to advance the gospel
[43:18] Lord we pray for the elders of our church for leaders in the church God that they would follow this example of a man who was following you Lord ultimately you are our example to follow but here we have in scripture somebody who did it right somebody who had the right priorities somebody who is committed to do the right things and so Lord I pray that we would share that commitment that our desire would be as a church to be holy to be healthy and to be doing to be called us to do Lord I pray that you would just continue to help our elders and Lord help us to identify the areas where we ourselves need to be equipped so that we can better equip our church members to be on guard against Satan's attempts to infiltrate our body with lies and

Lord to combat them in the right way with your word and so Lord help us and be glorified Lord by what you see taking place here and in our lives we thank you for who you are we praise you Lord for what you have done we ask these things in Jesus name Amen to learn more visit us in person or

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