

# Placed in God's Hands

Acts 20:32-38

*Halifax: 5 May 2013*

## **Introduction:**

Today as we continue our sermon series in Acts, I want to remind you about what we have been looking at.

- We are presently in chapter 20 where we find Paul bidding what he believes to be his final farewell to the saints in the provinces of Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia.
  - He has made his way to all the cities where he had planted churches and has been busy encouraging them with many words.
  - And in verse 17, he has at last come to meet with the Ephesian elders who have gathered to see him off at Miletus.
- Up until now, Luke (the author of Acts) has given us very little in the way of details about the content of Paul's farewell sermons...
  - But here, with the presbyters of the city where he had spent so much time and planted so many congregations, we are given a full record of what he said.
- And what a gripping message it is!
  - He begins by reminding them of his own example—of the importance he had placed upon the ministry of the word...
    - How he had kept nothing back from them that was profitable, but had preached the whole council of God, both publicly and from house to house.
  - He goes on to charge them that now this weighty responsibility must be carried on by them!
    - In v. 28 he says to them—and this applies to every elder in every place:
      - **Acts 20:28: Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.**
    - The Holy Spirit Himself has given elders this task to oversee the people of God—to shepherd them...
      - recognizing that they have been purchased with very blood of God Himself!
      - recognizing that there are savage wolves about who want to devour the flock—some who will arise from within the church!
      - recognizing that like Paul did, it is theirs to watch over the flock and warn them night and day with tears throughout their ministry.
- My brothers and sisters, in the last sermon, I had the task of laying this very heavy weight upon our elders and upon my own shoulders...
  - It is a God-given responsibility and it belongs to us!
    - I also applied this to you who are fathers as the Holy Spirit has made you overseers of the flock that is in your home...
    - And I applied it to all of you individually as you are individually charged to watch over your own soul!
      - It is a very solemn and weighty responsibility—
        - It causes us to cry out with the words of 2 Corinthians 3,
          - “Who is sufficient for these things?”
  - If anyone can hear of this weighty responsibility and conclude that you are up for the task,
    - it is certain that you neither understand the task nor your own ability.

- With the great apostle in 2 Cor 3:5 we must all confess:
  - **2 Cor 3:5-6: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.**
- You see how he confesses that it is only by the grace of God that he and his fellow ministers can fulfil their ministry.
  - It is only by the Spirit's working in us—not just by having a list of duties (the letter).
  - My brothers and sisters, as I told you, only 1 in 10 pastors finishes well.
    - Even with all the training that we are given, 80% of us leave the ministry in the first five years.
      - And only 1 in 10 is still at his calling at retirement or death.
      - And that is even given that low standards of our day where 77% say they do not have a good marriage.
      - There is moral failure, burn out (70% have a major battle with depression), and just plain discouragement.
        - **Our sufficiency must come from God!**

As we move along in our study of Paul's farewell sermon in Acts 20,

- we see that this is exactly where Paul points the Ephesian elders.
- After laying upon them this weightiest charge,
  - In verse 32, he commends them to God and His word of grace.
    - That is where our strength must come from if we are going to finish well in the ministry that God has given us...
      - This is true of every pastor, every elder, every husband, every parent, every individual Christian...
      - Your strength must come from God.

Today we will look at this—

- First at how we must be placed in God's hands if we are to carry out the ministry that He has given us...
- Secondly, that it is only in Him and in His gospel that we are others-focused.
- And thirdly, that only in Him and in His gospel are we bound together in true unity.

Listen now, as I read to you from our text in Acts 20:32-38:

Acts 20:32-38: "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. <sup>33</sup> I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. <sup>34</sup> Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. <sup>35</sup> I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And May the Lord bless the reading of His holy word.

remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' " <sup>36</sup> And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. <sup>37</sup> Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, <sup>38</sup> sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

## **I. First, consider from this text that we must be placed in God's hands if we are to carry out the ministry that He has given us.**

A. See in verse 32 how Paul commends these Ephesian elders to God...

**A.1.** After laying the weighty charge upon them, he says:

- Acts 20:32: So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.
- The word παρατιθημι translated *commend* literally means *to set before*.
  - It is used, for example, of setting food before someone.
  - The idea here is that these poor elders having been given such a heavy charge are set before God—
    - They are entrusted to His care!
- This is really both a prayer to God and an exhortation to the elders...
  - On the one hand, Paul is saying to God,
    - “Do you see these men, weak and insufficient as they are? Have mercy upon them O Lord and give them grace and strength to do their work.”
  - And on the other hand, Paul is saying to the elders,
    - “Yes, I am going away, but I am leaving you in the most capable of hands—I commend you to God and to the word of His grace.”
      - “Look to the Lord and He will surely take care of you!”
      - “Say, ‘The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want!’”

**A.2.** In His hands! Under His care! What a great place to be!

**A.2.a.** Surely we have everything we need in these hands.

- You are not left to flounder about on your own!
- Do you remember the comfort that was given to Moses when he trembled at being called of God?
  - The Lord simply said, “I will be with you.”
  - When he complained of his speaking, the Lord said, “I will be with your mouth.”

**A.2.b.** And this great encouragement is repeated again and again...

- He told Joshua that He would be with him when he led in the conquest of the land—otherwise, it would have been impossible.
  - He told Gideon that He would be with him when He called him to go after the Midianites—otherwise, it would have been impossible.
  - He told His disciples when He commanded them to make disciples of all nations...“**Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**”
- And He says this to all of us who are believers and so in His service...“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”
  - Do you want to minister faithfully for him in your home?
  - Do you want to live a godly Christian life?
  - If you have made it your business to serve Him, He will see to it that you have all that you need to carry out His ministry.

**B.** Notice further how Paul not only commends them *to God*, but also *to the word of His grace*.

**B.1.** *The Word of His grace* refers to the gospel which Paul and the other apostles and prophets of the New Testament preached, and which has been deposited for us in Holy Scripture.

**B.1.a.** Jesus promised His disciples that they would have a special working of the Holy Spirit in them so that they could speak His word.

- He told them that those who heard and believed would live—
  - And that those who rejected the word would die in their sins.
  - This assures us that the word carries the full authority of God.
- We need to understand that Paul and the other apostles all understood that they were speaking and writing the very word of God that had power to save those who believe.
  - To the Thessalonians, Paul said:
    - **1Th 2:13: For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.**

**B.1.b.** Even though Paul was moving on from Asia,

- He was leaving the word of grace that he had preached with them...
  - the word he had spoken which they could remember...
    - and of course already there had been letters from him that were beginning to circulate.
- FF Bruce has very well expressed how God used the words of the apostles in the first century and beyond. He says:
  - **In due course Paul, with all the apostles, passed from earthly life; but the teaching which they left behind to be guarded by their successors as a sacred deposit, preserved not only in their memory but eventually in the NT scriptures, remains to this day as the word of God's grace. And those are most truly in the apostolic succession who receive this teaching, along with the rest of Holy Writ, as their rule of faith and life.**
- If we want to be sure that our teaching and preaching is from God, we must see that it is true to the scriptures.
  - It is so good that we have the word preserved for us in writing because if we didn't, we could never be sure what God really said...
    - As soon as the church moves away from the scripture, she drifts into all sorts of error.
    - By giving us the scriptures, the Lord has given us a precious resource that the church can refer back to in order to check our doctrine.
    - The Westminster Divines did just that—they took a vow in writing the Confession and Catechisms that they would assert nothing beyond what they believed to be true to the scriptures,
      - And by their work, the church was reformed according to the word in worship, in practice, in doctrine.
  - Those who add man's traditions and insights to God's Word only corrupt the purity of their teaching.
  - As Howard Marshall says:
    - **It is significant that these blessings come through commitment to the word: Paul and Luke know nothing of the idea that church leaders stand over the Word committed to them and are in control of it; on the contrary, they stand under it.**

**B.2.** Paul describes how the Lord uses the Word of grace in our lives...

**B.2.a.** First, he says that it is able to build you up.

- Understand, of course, that before it can build you up, it must first establish you on the foundation of grace...
  - You can't just start building unless you first build a foundation...

- The Word calls you to look to what God has done (grace) rather than to what you have done (works) for salvation.
- It tells you that you that Jesus came for the purpose of giving His life a ransom for us...
  - That He died on the cross to atone for sin and that we must trust in that work if we are to be saved.
  - It tells us that He also fulfilled all righteousness for us and that we must trust in His merit because we still come short even after we have been saved.
    - It is a very humbling doctrine—and one that sinners naturally resist in their pride—
      - but that does not make it less true...
      - It only proves what sinners we are that we cannot accept such a gracious provision.

TRANS> But I am saying that the word cannot build us up until it has first established us in Jesus Christ.

- But once we are established, how does the word of grace then build us up?

B.2.a.1) First of all, it builds us up by continually pointing us Christ as our strength.

- It tells us the very thing that we have just been talking about...
  - that we must look to the Lord if we are going to finish well—if we are going to do the work that He has called us to do.
  - So you might say that it continually directs us to the source of our strength by which we are enabled to serve God.

B.2.a.2) Secondly, the word of grace builds us up by instructing us in the way that we are to live...

- As soon we turn from our own way and come to Christ for salvation, we have a new heart that wants to be directed by God.
  - It is a gift that God gives us at conversion. He writes His law on our heart...
  - We no longer trust in our own wisdom, and the word tells us how He wants us to live...
    - It teaches us how to worship God, not according to our vain human traditions, but according to His will.
    - It teaches us what it means to love God and how we are to go about doing it...
      - and what it means to love our neighbour and how we are to go about doing that.
  - Often, it convicts us and exposes our sins—but always with a view to correcting us rather than simply to beat us down.
    - It tears down what is corrupt in us and forms in us what is godly so that we are more and more conformed to what is beautiful—to what pleases our heavenly Father.

B.2.a.3) Thirdly, the Word of grace tells more and more about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

- We learn more and more about His perfections, His majesty, and His glory...
  - We learn the great difference between us as creatures and Him as the Creator.
- We learn more and more about the riches of His grace toward us in the gospel, and about the things that He has promised...
  - This strengthens our hope and enables us to suffer for His name...
- We see the depth of Christ's love

- and this encourages us to love Him back—to delight in Him—to be grateful to Him...and to imitate Him.

TRANS> You see that there are a myriad of ways that the Lord uses His gracious word to build us up!

- Building us up is the first thing Paul tells us that the Word does...

**B.2.b.** Secondly, he says that it is able to give us an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

- *Building up* refers to causing us to grow—
  - *Giving us an inheritance* refers to preserving us in the sense that the Word works in us to keep us until we receive our inheritance.
- This is what Paul has been so concerned about in his message to the Ephesians...
  - He has told them that there are those wolves who will try to draw away disciples from their inheritance in the Lord.
  - That as shepherds, they must not become lax and so fail to watch over the sheep...
    - And that if they do,
      - over time, the church will lose its first love and a generation will come along that does not know the Lord.
      - He is concerned that many of the shepherds to whom he speaks will not finish well and neither will the sheep they are called to watch over!
  - But He tells them that the Word is able to give them an inheritance.
    - Yes, it is the Lord Himself that keeps us...
      - But the primary instrument that He uses is the word of grace!
      - Jesus Himself said in John 8 that His true disciples are not the ones who merely profess to believe in Him,
        - but those who continue in His word!
    - In Matthew 13, He told the parable about the four different kinds of soil—
      - one kind that does not receive the word at all...
      - two that receive the word only at the start but do not continue in it...
      - and only one that receives the Word and truly bears fruit so as to obtain an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven.
  - He tells many other similar parables that stress the fact that we must continue in His Word if we are to be saved.
    - There's the one about the house on the rock and the house on the sand—
      - the one on the rock receives the sayings of Jesus and stands,
      - the one on the sand does not receive His word and falls.
    - So you see the point—
      - These shepherds who are charged with warning others and pleading with them to continue must themselves continue in the Word.
      - If *they* depart from it, what will become of the flock?
  - So Paul shows that everyone who is truly sanctified obtains his inheritance by continuing in the word of grace...
    - These elders, like everyone else, obtain an inheritance through the word of grace.

- And that same word must be faithfully preached to the flock if the flock is to obtain the inheritance.
- To quote John 8:31:
  - **Joh 8:31: Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.”**

TRANS> So you see how Paul commends these elders to God and to the Word of His grace.

- This is where they will find their sufficiency for ministry...
  - Not the word alone, for they must look to God for grace and strength...
  - And not in God alone, for they will distort what they believe and teach about God unless they hold fast to the word of grace that He has given us.
- In God and His word, you have everything that you need for life and godliness!
  - Don't attempt to shepherd others without God and the word of grace...
  - Don't attempt even to live the Christian life without them...
    - You will utterly fail.
      - But what hope and what confidence there is in these!
- Now let's move along and look at two of the out-workings of having God and His Word that are described in Paul's sermon...

## II. Having God and His Word makes us others-focused

A. Paul points to his own life as an example.

A.1. First, he says what he did not do...he did not covet.

- **Acts 20:33-34: I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.**
- When you are thinking about getting, you are not thinking about giving—
  - You are all focused on what you want instead of on serving others.
  - You are there for the opposite reason that Jesus was here—to be served rather than to serve.
- How far Paul was from coveting!
  - He did not even claim what was rightfully his according to his own teaching and that of Jesus Christ...
    - That those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel...
    - That having sown spiritual things, he was entitled to reap physical things.
- No, Paul was so far from seeking what was theirs that he often provided for himself and for those who were serving with him by labouring with his own hands.
  - There were times when others supported him—
    - as at Corinth when Timothy and Silas came with a gift from the Philippians that took care of his necessities,
      - but he was always willing to work if necessary and unlike many in his position,
        - did not use his authority to make himself rich.
    - He could have brought in a lot of dough with his healing ministry!
      - But he was not out for what he could get but for what he could give!

A.2. The importance of this for ministers and elders cannot be overestimated!

**A.2.a.** If a man comes into the ministry to gain *anything*—money or fame or even if he simply comes looking for appreciation...

- It will not go well for him.
- If he is fuelled by money or fame or appreciation, there will be times when he will not have these and he will quit.
- Or worse, he will fall into some kind of scandal—financial or getting into an affair...or compromising what he believes to gain a greater following...

**A.2.b.** Like every believer, if he is not fuelled by God and the word of his grace, he will run out of gas.

- There is no way around it.
- If you have come to Christ looking for some by-product, you will be gone in time.
- Oh brothers and sisters,
- be sure that you have come to Christ—not merely to some by product!
- Be sure that it is the gospel that fuels you!

**A.2.c.** If you are not satisfied in Christ, your heart will be constantly going out after the things you are coveting...

- It may be riches, it may be honour, it may be acceptance—
- I have known poor miserable souls who hung around the church simply because it was a good place to find friends...
- That is not enough—you must come first for the Lord!
- One way that you can tell that you are not finding your satisfaction in Christ is that you find yourself feeding at other tables...
- There are those who are feeding their souls on porn...
- There are those who are feeding their souls on their career or who are constantly dreaming of more wealth—
- Unless they repent and find their all in Christ and His gospel, they will not remain with us.
- And elders cannot minister Christ properly if they are feeding on something else...
- Actually, by His grace to the people they are ministering to, they can, but it is only to the ruin of their own soul.

**B.** It is only when we have God and His Word of grace that we are able to truly give to others...

**B.1.** Paul was so enamoured with the gospel that he felt himself to be debtor to everyone.

- He truly believed that he had so much more than he deserved that it would be unjust for him to do anything but pour his life out for others!
- That is how we all ought to feel as believers—because it's true!
- God has lavished you with His grace!
- He has treated you so much better than you deserve!
- We need to meditate on what Christ has done for us and then we will become true givers—truly out to enrich others.

**B.2.** Paul sets out the principle of Jesus which is:

- “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”
- In verse 35, he says:



- **Acts 20:35: “I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”**

**B.2.a.** Interestingly, we have no record in the gospel of Jesus actually saying that.

- But of course He said a whole lot more than what is recorded in the four gospels and Paul had access to some of those sayings...
  - The gospels were not yet written during much of his ministry, but he had access to oral tradition as well having direct interaction with Jesus.
- And more importantly, this is the substance of what Jesus taught...
  - He told everyone that if anyone wants to follow Him, they must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Him...
    - They must stop living for themselves and get caught up in living for God and so also for others!

**B.2.b.** And of course Jesus Himself beautifully lived this out!

- The mind of Christ, as Paul described it to the Philippians,
  - was that He esteemed others more highly than Himself!
  - Did He ever!
    - He was more concerned about us than He was about Himself.
    - He made our needs more important than His own needs!
    - So much so that He left the glories of heaven and came into this sin cursed world to die for us—that we might be saved!
    - He lived out to the max the principle that it is more blessed to give than to receive!
- That is what will be so marvellous about heaven!
  - It will be a place where we freely give to one another...
  - We won't be all tight and narrow and self-focused—
    - We will pour out our lives in love for others—and all the while they will be doing that for us!
  - You say, “Well I would do that if others were doing that for me...”
    - But no you wouldn't!
      - If you were like that at your core, your life would be radically different than it is now!
      - Jesus is the one who broke the cycle of selfishness because He came and poured Himself out for others in this world!

**B.2.c.** And I tell you that it is only those who know Him and who love Him and that are empowered by His grace that can do this at all...

- Paul was able to do this because He was so captivated by what Christ had done.
  - Can you imagine how alien it would be for Paul to quit the ministry because the people at this or that church were not nice to him?
  - Or for him to quit because he was not getting enough income?
- But I tell you, the reason that this was so foreign to him was not because he was so mighty...
  - It was because he continued in God and in the word of His grace!
  - He was fuelled by the Lord and by His gospel!

- B.3.** Some of you will say—But what can I do? I am not like Paul.
- As all of you very well know—neither am I—but what can we do?
    - We can go where Paul put these Ephesian elders—
      - He commended them to God and to the word of His grace!
      - You need to constantly run on this gas.
      - The reason you and I are not like Paul is because we are not drawing our strength from God and His word.
        - Present yourself to Him and ask Him to fuel you in the gospel.

TRANS> Now let us turn to another outworking of having God and the gospel...

- Not only does it make us others-focused...

### **III. Having God and the gospel also unites us together.**

A. Ultimately, this is what the gospel is all about—it unites!

- It reconciles us to God from whom we have been estranged by sin.
- A.1.** We were created in the first place to have communion with God, but because we, the entire human race, rebelled, we were cut off.
- And that estrangement affects our relationship with each other as well.
    - We have just seen that we don't have the mind of Christ toward each other—our life is not about giving to others but about getting.
    - Right after Adam sinned, he immediately blamed his wife—
      - and soon after that Cain murdered his brother Abel.
  - James says it well:
    - **Jam 4:1-2: Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war.**
    - Our disunity is not itself the problem—not the root...
      - The root of the problem is covetousness because we are not feeding upon Christ and the gospel.
- A.2.** But Jesus is the good shepherd who gives His life for the sheep—that we might be reconciled to the Father and to one another...
- And when we realize what He has done for us—it cannot but draw forth our love for Him!
    - Once God's Spirit opens our eyes to see that we really deserve to go to Hell and that Jesus suffered the full pains of Hell for us...
    - We start to love Him—We love Him because He first loved us!
      - We cannot do otherwise!
    - And then, as we have just seen, we start to follow His example and to pour out our lives for one another...

TRANS> And what is the result of that? What happens in a community where everyone is feeding on Jesus and pouring out their lives for each other???

B. We become dear to one another—we are united to each other in mutual love and affection and commitment!

- B.1.** The gospel does that when it comes to us and fills our lives.
- The more we mutually pour out our lives for each other, the more we cherish each other.
    - This is especially true
      - of elders who give their lives for the sheep.
      - of husbands who give their lives for their wives.
      - of parents who give their lives for their children.
    - One of the reasons we don't have unity is because we have not done our part...
      - I always hear parents complaining about their children or husbands about their wives...
        - And yes, pastors and elders about the sheep...
        - But very often you would be much closer to the mark if you took a much harder look at yourself!
          - Have you not contributed to the problem by your own selfishness as a leader?
          - Have you *really* poured out your life for them?
      - Don't get me wrong...
        - The children and the wives and the sheep have not poured out their lives as they should to be sure...
          - It is not as though they ever do all that they ought to do.
      - But the shepherds are responsible to begin the process.
        - We love Him because He first loved us.
- B.2.** But here at Ephesus we have a beautiful example of the unity that was initiated by the faithful loving sacrifice of one under-shepherd.
- That of Paul—they loved Paul because he first loved them.
    - We know that this was true from the history, but this unity is beautifully displayed here, two actions that symbolize the relationship between Paul as shepherd and the Ephesian elders as his sheep.
- B.2.a.** First, that Paul gets down on his knees and prays with them all.
- This is what he had been doing since he met them—yearning for them!
    - It was not about him, it was about them!
  - He gets down on his knees and he prays with them all.
    - **Acts 20:36: And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.**
  - How moving this must have been for them!
    - We are not told of the content of his prayer, but we could hardly imagine that he did not pray for what he had just spoken to them about...
      - They knew how much he loved them!
  - They could remember how earnest he had been for them and their walk with God and how many tears he had shed for them...
    - And now he is pouring out his heart, pleading for their faithfulness on behalf of the flock at Ephesus...
    - Praying against the enemies that would come to threaten them and to draw away the flock after them...

- Pleading for their protection, for their watchfulness, and for God's abundant grace to strengthen them.

**B.2.b.** And now you see their response of tears...

- **Acts 20:37-38: Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.**

B.2.b.1) They loved him back!

- There was unity here because Paul, the shepherd, truly cared for them.

B.2.b.2) Oh brothers and sisters, how good it is for the brothers to dwell together in unity!

- It is so much more appropriate for us as Christians to have such unity!
  - It is so much more honouring to God—so much more pleasant than strife and discord.

B.2.b.3) Not only that, but it is also much safer for us...

- I spoke to you about this a few weeks ago...
  - Unity helps us all to continue in the faith...
- It provides an additional wall of protection to keep us from going astray.
  - We do not want to disappoint and hurt one another.
- Of course that must not be the only thing that keeps you...
  - But it is something God uses—we think about how our sin would affect those who love us the most and unless we have stony hearts, it helps us to turn away...
    - I know it helps me when temptation comes—
      - Do I want to lose or even hurt my children?
      - Do I want to lose or even hurt my wife?
      - Do I want to lose or even hurt you?

**B.2.c.** But there is a cost to having this unity...

- If we are to have such unity, we will have to invest ourselves in each other's lives.
  - Truly, the more we invest in each other—in the relationships that we have—the more we give ourselves to each other—the more a bond is formed.
- You will actually be far happier if you give yourself for others for the Lord's sake...
  - but your flesh will oppose you all the way.
  - The Devil will tell you that you will be taken advantage of if you lay down your life for others—and of course people will take advantage of you—but so what?
- You who are shepherds—it is up to you to start the process!
  - You lead the relationship—you set the pattern.
  - It is your responsibility to set the tone of love and care.
- And if you do not, it is still incumbent upon the other members of the society to do their part,
  - but by the grace of God, let the elders do their part.

**Conclusion:** And that brings us to back to the place we started.

- In ourselves, we are not sufficient to do any of these things...
  - But we have the LORD and His gospel which are able to build us up and to give us an inheritance among all those that are sanctified.

- Stay close to the Lord and to the word of His grace and you will do your part to preserve the church that it may glorify God.