

A Healthy Gospel Church Takes Authority Seriously

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[0 : 0 0] Well as the kids head out if you can turn with me to Ezekiel chapter 34 That's gonna be our first reading Ezekiel chapter 34 verses 1 to 16 They'll come up on the screen, but you might want to also turn there in your Bibles Ezekiel chapter 34 I'll read from verse 1 The word of the Lord came to me Son of man prophesy against the shepherds of Israel prophesy and say to them even to the shepherds Thus says the Lord God Our shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves should not shepherds feed the sheep You eat the fat you clothe yourselves with the wool you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep The weak you have not strengthened the sick you have not healed the injured you have not bound up the strayed You have not brought back the lost you have not sought and with force and harshness you have ruled them So they were scattered Because there was no shepherd and they became food for all the wild beasts

My sheep were scattered they wandered all over all the mountains and on every high hill My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth with none to search or seek for them Therefore you shepherds hear the word of the Lord as I live declares the Lord God Surely because my sheep have become a prey and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts Since there was no shepherd and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep But the shepherds have fed themselves and have not fed the sheep Therefore you shepherds hear the word of the Lord Thus says the Lord God behold I am against the shepherds And I'll require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves I will rescue my sheep from their mouths that they may not be food for them For thus says the Lord God behold I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered

So I will I seek out my sheep and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered On a day of clouds and thick darkness And I'll bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and I'll bring them into their own land And I'll feed them on the mountains of Israel by the ravines and in all the inhabited places of the country I will feed them with good pasture and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing ground land There they shall lie down in good grazing land and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep and I myself will make them lie down declares the Lord God I will seek the lost and I'll bring back the strayed And I'll bind up the injured and I'll strengthen the weak And the fat and the strong I will destroy I will feed them injustice Well this passage forms a helpful background and um looking forward to the coming of Jesus

Who is the perfect shepherd that we're going to think about a bit later, but now let's come to God in prayer Heavenly Father, we thank you that as we've been thinking about with the kids that um your word is clear Lord, we thank you that even as we read this passage we see um the wonderful story of redemption played out We see it pictured in Israel's leaders Failing to look after the sheep We see it in your promise to send the perfect shepherd The perfect king Who will rescue who will save who will bind up the broken And who will destroy those who go against you Lord, we thank you that um By the help of your Holy Spirit, we can understand your word We thank you that you haven't left yourself without witness, but you have given us your word You've given us um Your spirit to interpret it Lord, we pray that you'd increasingly give us eyes to see you'd open our eyes more and more even as we read your word in a bit in one Timothy so that we can

Understand more and more of who you are that we can know you more that we can delight in you more Lord, we pray that the riches of your word will feed us They will sustain us. They'll give us life and joy And we thank you that Christ is the perfect shepherd And Lord, we are sorry for ways in which we have Um, we have not listened to him In which we haven't listened to the voice of our shepherd king. So please help us to listen as we come to your word And Lord as we think about even in this passage, um the abuse and misuse of authority of those who have Who have used their authority for tyranny. We think about people across the world who are in that position We think of people who are not occupied Ukraine, but also in many other countries Lord Countries that don't make the news headlines as much where it's um the weak The vulnerable those people who without means to defend themselves those who maybe

[5 : 19] Yeah, those who are often children women disabled those people are are so often trodden under by those who have authority and Lord it horrifies us And we grieve we ask you to bring an end to it Lord We ask you to bring justice and peace. We thank you that you are a god of justice We thank you that you haven't left You haven't you don't leave sin unpunished and that you will bring You will cause every sin to be called to account on the last day And you will judge those who have abused their authority most most severely Lord we thank you for that justice that we have a just God And so Lord we pray for that we pray come Lord Jesus come even as we see um hardship Even as we see this kind of abuse and miscarriage of justice Lord we pray now for our loved ones especially those who can't be with us this morning Um those who are stuck at home those who are in other places Um, all we know we have lots of friends and family on the mainland and throughout the world who we care deeply for

We pray especially for those who don't know you Lord today whether they are um in carl away or abroad We pray that they would come to know you we pray that they would come to know Christ as their good shepherd Lord we thank you that you know all your sheep by name and that your sheep do listen to your voice We pray that they will hear the voice of their savior That they would turn they will return and come back to him We pray for this evening as we um Think more and more about how to reach out to our community and welcome them in Lord that you would help us to be always pointing people to christ our shepherd Lord help us to be excited by your gospel by its power to transform lives and may that drive us In our desire in our mission to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth So Lord now prepare our hearts to hear your word Please take away any distractions. There are so many things that can um so easily snatch away your word legitimate things lord like um worries for those who are suffering for

Those who we care so deeply for physical pains mental health anxiety all these things lord Lord we pray that you would calm our minds you'd give us peace You'd give us the ability to focus on your word and you teach and feed us now we pray in Jesus name. Amen Well, will you turn with me now to one Timothy chapter five we've been going through the letter of one Timothy and we've come now To the second half of chapter five And we're going to read from verse 17 to six verse two One Timothy five from verse 17 Paul writes let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor especially those who labor in preaching and teaching For the scripture says you shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain

And the laborer deserves his wages Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses As for those who persist in sin rebuke them in the presence of all so that the rest might stand in fear In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging Doing nothing from partiality Do not be hasty in the laying out of hands. Do not take part in the sins of others Keep only keep yourself pure No longer drink only water but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments The sins of some people are conspicuous going before the minted judgment But the sins of others appear later So also good works are conspicuous and even those that are not cannot remain hidden Let all who are under a yoke as bond servants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor So that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers

Rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved Well as I said we're back in 1 Timothy chapter 5 and if you remember we've seen so far that the identity of the church is that of the household of God the church is the household of God And the church's role is to hold up and hold out the gospel John can you just give us that first slide? Hopefully that diagram helps a little bit The church is the household of God Paul says in the right in the middle of 1 Timothy that it's to be a pillar and buttress of the truth That means it's to be guarding the truth of the gospel and Showing the truth to the world almost like Jesus describes the church as a lamp on a stand It's that kind of thing the church is to hold up and hold out the gospel And as in the first half of 1 Timothy Paul's been particularly focusing on all what is that gospel?

[10 : 46] What is that truth? And it's been working through both combating false teaching And also helping us to get really clear on what the gospel is and on how we stay on track with it And now in the second half of 1 Timothy Paul's been focusing a bit more on the behavior of the church Because what we've seen is that the way the church behaves Really in for one thing that flows from how we understand the truth But it also really impacts our witness for the gospel How we live should reflect the gospel that we preach and so Paul's really concerned With you might say life in the household of God So that's been what kind of that's the overarching theme of chapter five and you can see I've just broken that down a little bit So we saw in verses one and two that we should have chapter five that we should be relating to everyone as family And Paul throughout chapter five then we see this at the beginning of chapter six We see this word honor come up three times To honor widows to honor elders and to honor masters and some commentators have suggested that could be broken down as almost honoring different parts of the household both the fathers and mothers

And brothers in the household. I don't know you can take that as you will But the point is is that family relationships should characterize the way we relate to people in the church And in particularly honoring one another And in this second half where we are now of chapter five Those last two categories particularly concerned honoring those in authority and this might not be We as you look at it something that we maybe a passage we'd naturally turn to if you're to say, you know You know what if I was to be thinking well, what would I preach today?

It probably wouldn't come straight to a passage that talks about how to honor those in authority and what it looks like to elect elders and what church discipline in that case looks like But actually as we're working through god's word we let god set the agenda and this is what um This is what was a priority for god to write down for the people in timothy's context And by the holy spirit god has chosen to keep that in his word so that it's for our benefit too And so as we consider what a healthy gospel church looks like this morning And what I want us to see is that a healthy gospel church takes authorities seriously We have a god who takes authority seriously. We see that in um in this passage And I hope that we'll do that too We'll see that in the two headings that both authority in the church and authority in the world and work you might say But before we look at in detail in these areas, it's worth saying that

We need to be balanced when we talk about authority Um, we must not only talk about we need to talk about the right use of biblical authority We also need to talk about the abuse of authority Um In recent years, there's been some truly horrible accounts. I'm coming out um of abuse of authority both in the church and christian organizations and in various Workplaces In hollywood for example And we need to be aware of that We need to be balanced as we talk about authority Because while authority isn't bad in and of itself In fact, authority is vital for society to function for a church to function Authority is god given But god has a lot to say about what that should look like He gives us jesus as the template Of what a true exercise Of authority and servant kingship should look like And god hates the abuse of authority

Because it destroys the lives of men and women and children who are Made in god's image So god really cares About authority and I don't know everyone here. I don't know everyone who's listening online But it may well be that some of you have been victims of that kind of abuse Of authority whether in the church or in the workplace And so can I just say if um, i'm sorry if this any of this brings up Brings the surface any difficult memories?

[15 : 07] um, or any present Um situations and please please do talk to people whether that's Um friends or family or hr Or even the police if that's necessary Um, these kind of things shouldn't just get glossed over Um, and it goes without saying I hope please do you talk to me or thomas or any of the elders as well?

Um, if you think that would be helpful Well, let's now dive into the passage and look at these two sections though. First of all looking at authority in the church Let me read those first two verses again Verse 17 that the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor Especially those who labor in preaching and teaching for the scripture says you shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain and the laborer deserves his wages now, um, a lot of people have talked a lot about what does it mean by double honor?

We've seen honor, um come up throughout this section. Um, what does it mean by double honor? Does it mean that um, you're to honor all all elders, but some get a special amount of honor? Um, because you know, maybe they do twice as much um I think it's quite helpful that some convent commentators have pointed out that Especially can also be translated as as a namely and I think it's most likely that this isn't talking about two groups Two types of honoring for two groups of people But rather two aspects of honoring those who are involved in preaching and teaching I can talk more about that afterwards if you have a question um And so this double honor We see I think refers to both respect and provision. Let me just unpack that a little bit first of all provision Um, not extortion. I'll give the opposites provision not extortion. So verse 18 We see that there is a money element to honor honoring Um, that those who are laboring for the gospel should also be provided for just like um, the widows should be provided for

That's what part of the honoring looks like. So those who are um, Leading in the church and giving their time to to teaching and to caring um, they should be provided for And you see the first quote is actually from Deuteronomy I talked about you should not muzzle oxen when it treads out the grain if you want to know what that looks like so um, normally In those times to kind of break up the wheat in the chaff and ox would have gone around in a circle carrying a Pulling a sledge sometimes weighed down by rocks or people to break up the grain And it would have been a bit hot harsh if you muzzled the ox while he was doing all those hours of sweaty work And they let him just eat a bit of the grain that falls around on the around it And paul's argument is essentially that if god cares how we treat working animals Then god how much more does god care about those who are laboring for the gospel in his church?

And the second quote there comes from jesus's lips himself And paul isn't campaigning for big salaries. He isn't um, kind of saying, you know, you've got to get a A jet for your pastor or something like that. These are certainly not grounds for extortion the kind of things that we See sadly in lots of maybe the kind of prosperity gospel teaching that infects um parts of the churches in well, particularly some Get some north american south american in africa where people are abusing their authority To take money away from people that's certainly not what paul is talking about Rather, he's just concerned about the just and fair provision Of those who are working for the church or those who are laboring for the gospel So that's why I say the first aspect of honor is provision. The second is respect And if you want the opposite, I guess I'd say respect Not reverence Maybe that's maybe respect is the most obvious aspect of honor later on we'll see that

[19 : 01] Um, those who are bond servants should honor their masters by showing them respect and it's a similar thing Um for elders Um, so what does that mean? What does that respect mean? I just suggest it's three things First we'll pray Maybe that's obvious, but the most obvious most the most helpful way Of respecting those in authority is praying for them is recognizing actually that their role is critical to the health of the church And that they need your prayers as they seek to shepherd and guide the church So praying for pray for your leaders The second aspect um, pete in one peter Five verse five peter tells the church to be subject to your elders I don't know what you think of when you think of that word, but essentially it means supporting them at them in their decisions Um, and not just being always out there to butt against them You know respecting that these are the people who god has put in charge

And that actually god will hold them to account for the shepherding of his flock They might be we might have different opinions and preferences Um, but ultimately they're the ones who be held to account And so we need to try to support them in their decisions. That's what it that's I think the second aspect of respect That leads to the third Which which I say is encourage and not grumble Um in the old testament the people of israel frequently their mistake is to grumble against god's leaders Especially we see in there going through the wilderness. They grumble again and again and again And just yeah, let that not be us, you know again, we might have different preferences about whether it's music or something else. So I don't know different Um, there'll be different minor aspects of church life probably that we'll have preferences about But let's bear with differences And what those are what our elders what thomas needs most of all is our encouragements not grumbling so easily

It's so easy to only talk about the things that you want to change or the things that are bugging you Let's make sure that you know thomas and the elders welcome feedback Well, let's what let's make sure that we always start with the encouragement And that we're always saying twice as much in some ways of the things that are working well Before we get to the things that we're not sure they're working The devil's already out to discourage our leaders to pull them down To distract them from their work part of respecting Part of supporting them in that role is praying for them And encouraging them. So let's do that Now I say to respect not reverence because there's always a danger in churches that a minister or elder can be placed on a pedestal that's happened Um across different churches across the world and that can really be a problem Especially when it comes to abusive authority Because when someone's put on a pedestal When people forget that this person is also a sinner who makes mistakes

Then that's when you get problems like someone makes a complaint There is an allegation and people say people dismiss it straight away and saying oh that that could never be He would never do something like that So while we while we respect We mustn't revere We're going to remember that those are in authority are still humans. They are still saved sinners And that brings us to the next big section really that's in our passage Where paul is dealing with allegations of abuse And I think this is it's really helpful. This is in god's word. I think we might think that this is just some strange Safeguarding protocol, but again, it shows that god cares about authority and he cares about abusive authority And the principle is quite simple in verses 19 to 21 And that's that elders should be treated fairly and not protected Everyone has heard the quote probably well probably from spider-man that great power with great power comes great responsibility But we might add to that with great responsibility also should come great accountability

Those who are in positions of authority should be Right held rightly to accountable to account And see leaders are Are visible Um, nope. I just skipped down a line. It doesn't matter Um, but so elders have great responsibility. They should have great accountability Um, we have to recognize that elders are sinners like the rest of the congregation Um, but with those because they are in such positions with such unique responsibilities with so much power Actually, that's why paul says that they should be above reproach in chapter three verse two And so now he's working through how they should be held accountable Basically if an elder is persisting in a sinful practice then the church has a responsibility To do something both to guard its unity and to guard its witness You know, we've seen that the church should be a pillar and buttress of the truth If those people who are meant to be Guarding and holding that pillar together as it were And keeping the truth visible if those people are going off and doing something different

[24 : 18] Or their lives are contradicting the truth. It's vital that that is held in check And so paul gives us three three points as it were to follow a three-fold practice That we should follow in that case First of all verify the accusation To verse 19 do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses Leaders are visible leaders will attract slander And to admit a charge is to say that something is true and paul is instructing timothy to exercise fairness and justice He isn't timothy isn't to assume someone is guilty. He isn't to assume they're innocent And actually you'll know that again tremendous damage has been done when people immediately jump to a conclusion that someone's guilty and spread that around the congregation And even whether someone has done something wrong or not Their life has already been ruined and often the life of their family with them This is just this is fair. This is loving to make sure that timothy looks at the evidence first

We can misunderstand things things can get lost in translation people can bear a grudge And so timothy is to make sure that any accusation is verified with witnesses And actually if you're to look at what he's doing And actually if you're to look at what he's quoting from when he's talks about the evidence of two or three witnesses to Paul's there borrowing language from the template from Deuteronomy um, it's actually It's from Deuteronomy 17 where most is actually instructing the people not to be hasty with the death penalty And that someone's only to be condemned condemned to death with two or three witnesses So you can see how serious it is Paul's making the point that with serious accusations We should be serious about verifying The charge with multiple witnesses And I hope you can see that with it always starts the first port of calls should always be talking to the person

Paul isn't just waiting for two or three witnesses and then he cuts that person off Whenever there's this kind of thing whenever there's whenever someone has fallen into sin Whether there's someone in authority or not The first thing that church shouldn't do is to just chop and this person we're never going to talk to them again The first thing that we see always in the Bible is that you first approach them You talk to them you plead with them to repent from their sin And that's what you should do here the exception of course is if they're sin immediately disqualifies them from office um, if someone has been embezzling money or there's um Allegations of sexual abuse or physical abuse or those kind of things that has to be taken straight to the authorities But other than that If it's not those kind of severe things Then time should be spent Talking with someone from God's Word again Whether this is someone in authority or not pleading with them to return and to repent When we talk about in some ways this is talking about church discipline when we talk about church discipline

We might immediately think of someone being barred from the communion role and people not talking to them really What the Bible when the Bible talks about church discipline?

What it's saying first of all is how to help people to how to disciple people Church discipline and discipleship could come should come side by side Walking with someone living life with them So that as someone if someone is slightly starting to air And starting to stray we see that straight away not before it's too late And we have a chance to plead with them to talk with them to live life with them and to help them get back on track with God's Word Not straight away just cut But timidly we see that But Timothy does reckon sorry Paul does recognize that that might come Then it might come to that We see in verse 20. This is you might say the next stage That if an elder is unrepentant Then they must be reviewed rebuked. So verse 20 as for those who persist in sin Rebuke them in the presence of all so that the rest may stand in fear Persistence sin is the bit that's important again here You know this public rebuke only comes after the private confrontation the private pleading to repent

[28 : 46] The aim of rebuke whether small or big should always be restoration Whether that's you know, whether that's talking to a friend or to a spouse or to anyone When we challenge people about their sin, we should never be doing it in a way to smack them down We're all sinners who've been saved by grace Christ challenges us about our sin through his word Not to condemn us and make us flee go in the opposite direction But so that we'll repent and come back to him and that should be our aim as well To try to bring people back with the gospel to the foot of the cross And if we But if the person isn't repenting Then Timothy then Paul is clear that this person is disqualified from the office of the elder Elder ship and you see the motivation there the second part of verse 20 Rebuke them in the presence of all so that the rest may stand in fear We don't know whether it's not clear whether the rest a congregation or elsewhere or other people

But the point is that public sin public unrepentant sin must be dealt with publicly So that people can see the seriousness of sin Again the churches across denominations have been Marred by cover-ups over the recent years often because people think okay Actually when someone has fallen into sin someone has done something wrong Well, if this gets out the gospel is going to be in big trouble if this gets out people are going to People aren't going to want to come to church Christianity is going to be tarred with a black brush We've got to make sure no one knows about it. Well, actually for one thing eventually it always comes out And covering something up is the opposite to a good witness Actually while we want to exercise while we want to be gracious and forgiving Part of the best witness of the gospel Is to hold sin to account Is to show that we take sin seriously now again?

That's not done harshly and that's always the case Again, that's not done harshly and that's always first Done in private if it's not something that needs to be taken straight to the authorities But sin but the church's witness isn't helped by cover-up Of course in these things, you know, well, hopefully of course in these things It's difficult because people know each other people love each other. They've grown up together often People know each other well and so the last warning for Timothy is to show no partiality You see that in verse 21 in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and the elect angels I challenge you to keep these rules without prejudging Doing nothing from partiality Show no favorites no bias is good or bad Now you've probably been thinking when are we going to apply this to us?

And that's what I want to do now to think a bit about what does this look like for us and not because There's something I know of that's happening or whatever. This is more just think of it like a fire drill We often only think about these things when something goes wrong It's important that we think about what God's word says for this kind of thing In preparation so we know what to do if that if something goes wrong So think of this as a fire drill What does this look like for us though?

I talked to Thomas a bit because I didn't know and I'm actually the free church of updating and as a denomination and making some What's the word?

[32 : 19] In the general assembly they they decided that more things needed to be updated to have Better more rigorous and consistent protocol for dealing with abuse in the church But in general the protocol is that if someone has any concerns About abuse in any form whether physical or verbal or sexual Whether in church or outside That the first people you should take that to the first part of call Port of call is the safeguarding coordinator or the deputy safeguarding coordinator and then the elders in the church And for our church, um Helen pick it. She's the safeguarding coordinator and Neil Ingram. He's the deputy safeguarding coordinator It's just worth highlighting those names Again, not saying this because I know of anything going wrong This is like a fire drill just so we know it's good to know Um, and we pray that there'll never be a fire, but it's good to know what will happen if there is Now you might be thinking that this all sounds like boring protocol This sounds like one of those meetings where you go to to learn your safeguarding because you have to

Get the box ticked you have to get the certificate for camp Whatever, but actually the meeting sounds quite boring But I hope you can see that this passage is here because god takes This stuff so seriously God takes authority seriously. Just look at verse 20. Just look at the weight of those words As for those who persist no sorry verse 21 in the presence of god and of christ jesus and the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules Timothy's charged to keep these rules with all those witnesses. That's how seriously gods takes it We have a god who takes authority and abuse of authority very seriously And that's something we should be immensely thankful for God doesn't tolerate abuse of any kind you will call every instance into account and james 3 verse 1 reminds us that those in authority will be judged more severely God hates injustice

He hates abuse of power He hates when people use and manipulate their power for getting something for themselves and for Lauding it over other people And in fact abuse of power forms you might say the backdrop for the gospel It forms a backdrop for one of the greatest promises that we see in the old testament for the sending of jesus The one we read in ezekeiel 34 Israel's leaders are like those bad shepherds who are literally fleecing the sheep We saw that that language Um How they were they'd scattered the sheep they ruled them harshly They'd not bound up the broken the sheep were all scattered across the hillside And god responds by saying I I myself Will search and seek them out I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep and I myself will make them lie down declares the lord Abuse and misuse of authority has existed ever since the fall We've maybe experienced that harsh rule ourselves

We've been witness to our loved ones experiencing it But god takes it seriously. He hates it and he will punish it But more than that he sent jesus into the world And when jesus came into the world he experienced it Jesus from them you could say from his birth he experienced the abuse of authority as As harrod went and he killed all those kids as he was trying to get at jesus He died under an unjust judge or judges People who are biased people who are in it for themselves christ understands that But more than that he was raised from the dead So that he could give new life and hope so that he could give new life and hope So that christ is the shepherd who can actually lead us in paths of righteousness. He can bind up the broken He is the perfect shepherd king the one to whom we look for when we trust in jesus

When we come into his family We're not coming into the family of a abusive leader who rules with a harsh rod We're coming into the family of The king who gave his life for us The king who said who did more than anyone else can do and ever has done for us Yes, he is our king. Yes, we must bow before him But why wouldn't we want to bow before such a king?

[36 : 58] Christ has never misused his authority Christ lay aside His all of that glory all of that Glory that he deserved to come and die for us The new testament repeatedly calls leaders of god's church then to be under shepherds to be under shepherds not just because Christ is the supreme shepherd because the church doesn't belong to the elders of the church But also under shepherds in following christ's example And so brothers and sisters Let's take authority in the church seriously because christ does god does If I could speak to those of you who are elders and deacons, can I urge you to follow the chief shepherd?

As we read at the beginning of the service, I thought the son of man came not to be served but to serve And give his life as a ransom for many Will you ask yourselves what does that look for me look like for me?

What will it look like for you to give your lives in self sacrifice for the for the flock? For whom god has appointed you to be under shepherds Congregation brothers and sisters Our leaders need our prayers. I hope you've seen how seriously god takes it We need to give thanks for the godly men that god has given us But they also need we also need to pray for them We need to pray that god by his spirit will strengthen them so that they can strive for godliness like paul tells timothy So that they can run the good race So that they can grow in wisdom and knowledge needed to teach god's word So that they can withstand the attacks of the devil that they so that they can keep a close watch on themselves and their teaching So that they're not ensnared by sin Part of the integrity and health of our church is held together By our leaders whom god gives us we need to pray for them And for all of us we need to pray that god will raise up more

Jesus says famously the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly that the Lord of the harvest will send out laborers into his harvest. We need to pray that God will raise up more men and women for the UK for abroad. Whether that's people working full-time or part-time for the church or missionaries. We need to pray that God will raise up people from our number. Maybe who'll go on to be the next generations of pastors in Lewis, not just Lewis and the rest of the UK. We're hoping to plant 30 churches by 2030. We need God to raise up workers, you know right now as many people are retiring as becoming ministers. We need to pray for more workers for the harvest fields. And we also need to pray for workers in our own church. You know people not everyone is a minister. Well the majority of people aren't paid. Ministers part-time or full-time. All of us we labor in the harvest field. And we labor for Christ and for his gospel. We need to pray that God will keep raising up among us people who can

do things like leading Sunday school and take a lead in helping to serve others who can tell who can set an example. In building up one another in love and come along coming alongside people who are new Christians and teaching them the gospel and the faith. We need God to raise up workers for the harvest fields. Well, we don't have time to look at verses 22 to 25 in detail, but essentially that emphasizes that as God raises up new leaders we need wisdom and discernment to make sure that we don't hastily appoint them. It's the same kind of principle of taking authority seriously. We need to prioritize character over gifting this. Well look at these verses a bit more on Thursday. But essentially God cares really seriously. Again about who we appoint we shouldn't be rash. We shouldn't be quick to put someone in a position. We need to be able to look understand their character. We need to live life alongside them first.

[41 : 10] Well, I was going to be looking at six verses one and two but looking at the time. I think actually we'll leave it for this week. We've seen that God takes authority in his church seriously. And that means we should too that means we should honor those in authority. That means that abuse of authority should never be tolerated. And we should always be led as we look at that to rejoice in the perfect leader that God has put on the throne. We should rejoice that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Christ. Because he deserves it and he's the best one to hold all that power. But bruised reed he'll never break. He'll never abuse his position. So to him be the glory forever and ever amen. So to him be the glory forever and ever amen. Let's pray.