



*EST FONDS VITAE*

## **DATE**

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December 30, 2018

## **SERIES**

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Stand Alone

## **TITLE & PASSAGE**

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*A Pastoral Departure*

Acts 20:17-32

## **OCCASION**

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A message presented by Pastor Marc Minter on the Lord's Day to the congregation of First Baptist Church of Diana, TX.

## **MAIN POINT**

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The local church is the beneficiary of God's good gifts and the target of evil assaults because it is the beloved flock of God.

**EMAIL QUESTIONS TO [PASTOR@FBCDIANA.ORG](mailto:PASTOR@FBCDIANA.ORG)**

## INTRODUCTION

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Today, I am preaching behind this pulpit, on this platform, for the congregation of FBC Diana for the last time for at least six months. The weight of this moment is tremendous upon me, but I carry a heavy weight into the pulpit every Sunday. It is no exaggeration to say that I am a burdened man.

I am burdened because I believe that Christ is the Savior of sinners and the head of His Church. I am burdened because I believe that God's word alone is powerful to save, to renew, to regenerate, and to nourish Christ's people in the world. I am burdened because I am responsible to explain and to help the members of this church family apply God's authoritative and life-giving words. I am burdened because I believe that Christ Himself will hold me accountable for every word I say and every word I avoid.

I am also a joyful man as I preach to you this morning. I am a joyful man because I have been graciously given the responsibility of teaching and preaching among you for the last four and a half years. I am joyful because I know that the word of God is powerful and active, always accomplishing God's purposes in the world. I am joyful because I have watched God produce spiritual fruit in our lives as we have followed Christ together.

Some of you have tearfully walked through Scripture with me. Some of you have diligently studied Scripture with me in an effort to grow and to understand it better. Some of you have prayed with me... for your fellow church members, for family and friends, for missionaries, for other pastors and churches, and for strangers who do not know and follow Christ. Some of you have even come to view the local church in new light because of our time together.

As I reflect on the last several years, as I anticipate my own departure, and as I contemplate our uncertain future, I have repeatedly thought about this passage from Acts 20, which will serve as our text for today.

In Acts 20:17-32, we read the words from the Apostle Paul as he was departing a local church family in the town of Ephesus, in the middle of the first century. Paul had ministered among the Ephesians for about three years during an earlier visit,

and he had seen much fruit there. In fact, the whole town was turned upside-down by the spread of the gospel.

Ephesus was the center for worship of the goddess Artemis (Greek) or Diana (Roman). As many people were converted to Christianity, the massive pagan temple was receiving fewer sacrificial offerings, and the idol-makers (selling figurines to superstitious customers) were going out of business (Acts 19).

Paul narrowly escaped an angry mob, which wanted to stop his preaching and keep the apparent stability of their paganism, and then Paul left Ephesus to further his missionary activity in a different town – Macedonia.

Now, in Acts 20:17, we pick up on Paul's return journey from Macedonia to Jerusalem, with a brief stop in a town called Miletus (which is about 30 miles south from Ephesus). Paul had evidently arranged this stop in Miletus (Acts 20:16), and from there he asked the elders / pastors in Ephesus to meet him before he departed. Paul suspected that he would not have the chance to see the Ephesian Christians again, so this passage is the record of his final words to the local church he loved with a pastoral heart.

Let's read together...

## **SCRIPTURE READING**

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### **Acts 20:17–32 (ESV)**

17 Now from Miletus he [Paul] sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. 18 And when they came to him, 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, 19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews;

20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, 21 testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every

city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. 24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

25 And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. 26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, 27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

28 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.

29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.

32 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.

## **MAIN POINT**

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The local church is the beneficiary of God's good gifts and the target of evil assaults because it is the beloved flock of God.

## **MESSAGE OUTLINE**

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- (1) THE GOOD GIFT OF PASTORING**
- (2) THE GOOD GIFT OF PASTORS**
- (3) THE REALITY OF EVIL ASSAULTS**
- (4) THE GOOD GIFT OF GOD'S WORD**

## MESSAGE

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### (1) THE GOOD GIFT OF PASTORING

Let me clearly say that I do not see myself as the Apostle Paul. I am not going away to imprisonment or afflictions, nor have I ministered among you with the same level of spiritual maturity and ability as the Apostle Paul did among the Ephesian Christians. I am not Paul, this is not Ephesus, and I do not intend to draw a direct line of connection from this passage to our situation here.

However, there are a few things in this passage that do provide parallels for us today. Human nature is still the same, pastoral ministry is still defined by Christ's commission, and the local church is still built up by the word of God. If we observe this passage in its context, we may indeed see several links to our situation.

Let's start by looking at the good gift of pastoring.

Paul was an Apostle. This means that he was one of several men who were specially commissioned and empowered by Christ to speak God's words immediately after Christ's resurrection and ascension (Acts 1:21-26; cf. Acts 9:1-19). As an Apostle, Paul went about sharing the gospel in a missionary capacity, crossing cultural and geographical boundaries. He also stayed a while in various places to make disciples over the course of months or even years. In this longer-term disciple-maker capacity, Paul served some Christian communities as a pastor or elder.

We have talked about these terms before, so I won't go into great detail here, but "pastor" and "elder" are essentially interchangeable terms for us. New Testament "elders" are those church leaders who do the work of pastoring or shepherding. Pastors / Elders are responsible to "lead" according to Christ's commands (1 Pet. 5:1-4), to "teach" and "preach" Scripture (2 Tim. 4:1-2), to strive for personal holiness (1 Tim. 4:7-16), to "rebuke" those who contradict "sound doctrine" (Titus 1:9), to "warn" those who become divisive among Christians (Titus 3:10), and train "faithful" and "aspiring" men to share in this same responsibility (1 Tim. 3:1; 2 Tim. 2:1-2).

This is exactly what the Apostle Paul had done among the Ephesian Christians during his 3-year-stay with them. He "lived among" them (v18) and "served the Lord with humility" (v19). He "declared [everything] that was profitable" to them, "teaching [them] in public" and in their homes (v20). He "testified" or "witnessed" to them about

“repentance” and “faith” (v21), which means he continually taught them about the gospel and what it means to follow Christ.

What a blessing it must have been for the Ephesian Christians to have had the Apostle Paul with them for 3 whole years!

What questions would you ask, if you had the chance to spend time with a living Apostle?

I can think of a couple of things I’d like to ask... I’d ask him to please explain what he meant when he wrote 1 Corinthians 7. I’d also ask him what it was like to have an encounter with the risen and glorious Savior on the road to Damascus.

Now, Luke records some pretty amazing miracles happening while Paul was in Ephesus (see Acts 19), but that is not the kind of stuff Paul mentions in his farewell address. In fact, Paul doesn’t mention anything particularly Apostolic at all... things like miracles or crazy-fast numerical growth. Paul only talks about the ways in which he served them pastorally. In his last few moments with these Christians... these Christians he served for one of the lengthiest stays he ever had on a missionary journey... he reminds them about how he pastored them.

I love the way Paul summarized his own assessment of his ministry among the Ephesians in verses 26 and 27. He said, “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.”

Do you understand what he is saying here? He is saying, “I have done my job well... I have declared the word of God to you in full, not holding back any of the hard parts.”

As I said out the outset of this message, I do not see myself as the Apostle Paul. And yet, this statement resonates in me as I stand before you today.

To the best of my knowledge, I have declared the word of God to you as your pastor. I have taught you from God’s word; I’ve not set my own agenda or tried to cherry-pick my favorite passages to preach on just the things I like. I have let the Scripture dictate our course, and I have worked hard to draw out the divine truths and to help you understand and apply them.

I have continually preached the gospel of Christ, urging you to repent (to turn away from disobedience and unbelief toward God) and to trust and follow Jesus. Some of you have probably even recognized that I use some of the same phrases again and again. On almost every Sunday I have said (during my opening greeting, my prayer, or my sermon) something like, “[This is what Christianity is all about...](#)” or “[This is the gospel...](#)”

[“You and I have not lived the lives we should... we are guilty sinners before God. But God has shown His love and mercy toward guilty sinners like us by sending Jesus into this world to live the life we didn’t and to die underneath the penalty for our sin and guilt. We know that Jesus has the power to forgive sin and the power to conquer death because He Himself came back from the dead.](#)

[You can do nothing to save yourself, but Christ has done everything necessary to bring guilty sinners like us into right relationship with God. We must trust in, believe in, love, and follow this gracious and marvelous Savior!”](#)

Furthermore, I believe I have demonstrated myself to be a man of the Scriptures in public and in private. I have made it my mission to live according to Christ’s commands, though I still fall short in numerous ways, and I have urged this congregation to live according to Christ’s commands as well. These things I have done because I love Christ and because I love you... and because I believe the Scriptures are truly God’s word – the ultimate authority on what we are to believe and how we are to live.

If you appreciate such pastoring or shepherding efforts, then you should praise and thank God for His good gift of pastoring. The work of pastoring among a church family is a God-given and God-empowered work.

Good pastoring is a blessing from God to His people... and the local church is the beneficiary of God’s good gifts... because it is the beloved flock of God.

But good pastoring is done by good pastors, which are also a gift from God.

## **(2) THE GOOD GIFT OF PASTORS**

Let’s remember who it is Paul is talking to in this passage. He is talking to the “[elders](#)” or “[pastors](#)” of the Ephesian church. In verse 17, we read, “[he \[Paul\] sent to](#)

Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him...” This is more significant than most of us probably recognize.

How many churches were there in Ephesus? One, is the answer.

And how many elders / pastors were there in Ephesus? More than one, since there were “elders” and not “an elder” or “the elder.”

There were multiple (I don’t know how many exactly) elders responsible for shepherding among the Ephesian congregation. This was a direct result of Paul’s pastoral service among the Ephesians some time before. Paul had evidently done his job well, because he had left a number of elders behind in his wake as he departed from the Ephesian church the first time.

Remember what I said earlier about what pastors / elders are supposed to do... Pastors / Elders are responsible to “lead” (1 Pet. 5:1-4), “teach” and “preach” (2 Tim. 4:1-2), strive for personal holiness (1 Tim. 4:7-16), “rebuke” (Titus 1:9), “warn” (Titus 3:10), and [*Note this last part carefully*] train “faithful” and “aspiring” men to share in this same responsibility (1 Tim. 3:1; 2 Tim. 2:1-2).

I’d like to argue that raising up fellow elders / pastors is one of the most important tasks of pastoring. Surely, anyone can see that a good pastor will inspire other godly men... a good pastor will make good men want to be better men... a good pastor will gladly share pastoral responsibilities and not try to build a kingdom unto himself.

Paul not only exemplified raising up fellow pastors / elders, he also commanded Timothy (one of his disciples who also pastored) to do the same. Paul wrote to Timothy, “what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). And in another letter to Timothy, Paul gave him some guidelines for recognizing “faithful men” who will rise to the occasion.

Paul wrote, “If anyone aspires to the office of overseer [that is “if anyone wants to be an elder / pastor”], he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer [i.e. elder / pastor] must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money” (1 Tim. 3:1-3). The qualifications continue a few more sentences, but you get the point. Pastoring is to be done by pastors / elders who are noticeably faithful men.

These men are not super-human, nor are they defined by some form of worldly success. The description we have of qualified men is what we might simply call *mature Christians*, with the one additional stipulation that they be “able to teach” (v3).

I realize that what I am saying right now flies in the face of many modern American Evangelical assumptions. We, modern American Evangelicals (especially Southern Baptists), assume that most Christians are lazy and dumb and completely selfish. We assume that only a tiny select few Christians will ever rise to any level of spiritual maturity or Christian fidelity. We also assume that those select few Christians are the only ones who are really responsible for being anything other than lazy and dumb and completely selfish.

I may be exaggerating a little for effect here, but I wonder how many of you here feel responsible for the spiritual growth of anyone else in this room... Do you?

Do you feel responsible for your own spiritual growth? Are you wiser, holier, and more knowledgeable in the Scriptures today than you were last December? If you are not, then is that a bad thing?

It is quite likely that most of us do not feel that kind of responsibility for our own spiritual growth... and we likely feel absolutely no responsibility for the spiritual growth of other people. But a sort of multi-tiered Christianity is just unbiblical.

Every Christian is a disciple of Christ (Jn. 8:31; 2 Jn. 9), and every Christian is commissioned with the task of making disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). Therefore, pastors / elders are not super-Christians... biblically, they are simply those Christians among us who are following Christ well and diligently helping others to do the same.

Now, before I went off on this tangent, I was talking about Paul's exemplary effort to practice what he preached by raising up elders / pastors in the local church, but this doesn't yet get me to the place I want to be with this point.

The point I want to make is that pastors / elders / overseers are good gifts to the local church, which implies more than just the notion that pastors are responsible to raise up godly men as fellow pastors... my point here is that Christ gives godly men as pastors to each local church. Christ Himself raises up pastors / elders among a church family.

In a letter the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesian church on another occasion, he said, “[Christ] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds [or pastors] and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood...” (Eph. 4:11-13).

There is much we may learn from this passage, but the interest I have with it today is regarding the assertion that Christ gave shepherds / pastors to “the body of Christ” [i.e. the local church] for the “equipping” and “uniting” and “building up” and “maturing” of the “saints” [i.e. Christians]. Simply put, good elders / pastors are good gifts from Christ to the local church.

So, I have a few questions I’d like you to consider. Does God love FBC Diana? Does Christ want the church members of this local church family to be equipped, united, built up, and mature? So, has Christ given this local church the good gift of pastors / elders?

Of course, I’d like to argue that Christ has not been stingy in His gift-giving to FBC Diana. I believe that Christ has indeed given good gifts in the form of qualified men to serve in the office of elder / pastor. I know there are a number of aspiring and faithful men among this very congregation.

Now our polity, our constitutional structure, does not recognize a plurality of elders / pastors, unless we were to hire such men as paid pastoral staff members. But we do not need to hire any staff at the moment, and we do not need to immediately rewrite our constitution in order to enjoy the good gifts Christ has given to us.

We may enjoy the benefits of good pastors / elders, as gifts from Christ Himself, if we will all strive see them through the lenses of Scripture rather than our traditions.

Just look at Paul’s admonition to the elders in our primary passage and see what he calls these pastors / elders to do. Paul told these elders to “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock... care for the church of God” (v28). Paul calls them to (1) pay careful attention to themselves, (2) pay careful attention to all the flock, and (3) care for the church.

Let me simply lay these calls upon you all today, and let me especially lay these calls upon the godly and faithful men in the room.

First, pay careful attention to yourselves! As the Scripture says, “**Look carefully how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil**” (Eph. 5:15-16). Or elsewhere we read, “**train yourselves for godliness**” (1 Tim. 4:7-8). And we are warned, “**Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour**” (1 Pet. 5:8).

Second, pay careful attention to all the flock! To all Christians, the Scripture commands, “**let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together... but encouraging one another**” (Heb. 10:25). And especially to faithful and godly men who serve as teachers, the Scripture says, “**Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers**” (1 Tim. 4:16).

Third, care for the church! This is distinct from paying careful attention to the flock or church in that it addresses the heart. The Scripture speaks directly to this elsewhere when it says, “**Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and... forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive**” (Col. 3:12-13).

Pay careful attention to yourselves, pay careful attention to all the flock, and care for the church.

Brothers and sisters, if you want to enjoy Christ’s good gifts of pastors / elders, then appreciate the men who do these three things well... let them and everyone else know how much you appreciate them... and look for ways you can encourage other men among the church family to follow their example.

The local church is the beneficiary of God’s good gifts... because it is the beloved flock of God.

The local church is also the target of evil assaults because it is the beloved flock of God.

### **(3) THE REALITY OF EVIL ASSAULTS**

Notice that there is a warning Paul gives to the Ephesian elders / pastors in verses 29 and 30. He says, “**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.”

Let’s break down this warning into two parts. **One**, “fierce wolves” do make evil assaults on the local church or the “flock” of God; **Two**, at least some of the “wolves” threatening a local church arise from within their own number.

First, “fierce wolves” do threaten the local church, the “flock” of God.

Paul is not the only biblical writer to warn people about “wolves” in this way. Jesus spoke of the same kind of thing in Matthew 7. Jesus said, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (Matthew 7:15). Because Jesus’ warning is so broad, it helps us to avoid the assumption that Paul might just be talking about some specific assault on the Ephesian church by some special group of “wolves.” Wolves are always a threat to the people of God in the world.

But how does Paul articulate the threat?

Paul says, “wolves” will “not spare the flock” (v29), they will “speak twisted things” (v30) and they will “draw away the disciples” (v30). Wolves will not spare the flock... that is they will not refrain from injuring or destroying sheep. The way they will inflict pain upon the sheep is by speaking “twisted” things... that is things that are crooked or out of step with sound doctrine... with biblical truth.

And the warning is sobering. Wolves seek to “draw away disciples.” They are not interested in merely keeping their errors to themselves. They want to sway you; they want you to listen to their twisted things, their false things, their empty things, and they want you to buy in.

Now, just as we might assume that Paul was only talking about a threat to the Ephesian Christians, we might also assume his warning is about some kind of pagan religion that might try to intrude on their church family. And such an assault would certainly fall into the category of “twisted things.” But let’s understand that there is a more common and dangerous assault on unsuspecting sheep.

The “twisted” words you are most likely to hear are words that appeal to your comfort, words that stir your sentiment, and words that affirm your experience.

Many-a-preacher makes a living telling people things that make them more comfortable. Who wouldn't enjoy someone working to make them feel at ease with who they are and where they are in life?

There are also very many teachers and preachers who draw a crowd to listen for heart-warming sentiment. A preacher might be liked by all if he learns to tell a great story that makes everyone feel good.

Many more preachers still will make their arguments and base their claims upon experience. Some will go so far as to urge you to measure spiritual growth and health by your own experience.

I am not saying that stories are bad, and experiences are meaningless, but I am saying that the person who seeks to cultivate spiritual life with such things apart from the substance of God's word will be sorely disappointed in the end.

When someone wants you to believe something, you should always ask, "[Where is this in Scripture?](#)" When someone wants you to do or not do something, you should consider, "[What does Scripture say on the matter?](#)"

If you don't know where to find something in Scripture, or if you don't know what Scripture says on the matter, then ask the godliest person you know to help you look and learn. Don't be prey to wolves! They are a real threat to you and to the whole church family.

Now, the threat of "[wolves](#)" is bad enough, but what is worse is that you don't always immediately recognize them. Wolves sometimes seem to be sheep... but they are not.

Let's remember what Paul said about wolves in verses 29 and 30. He said, "[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, part one of the warning was that wolves do make evil assaults on the local church, and part two of the warning is that some of the threatening "[wolves](#)" arise from within the local church family.

What a terrible and appropriate thing to say to a local church! The fact is that there will always be false Christians among a church family. Part of the pastoral

responsibility is to be aware of this, be watchful over the flock, and address threats when they present themselves.

Brothers and sisters, this may be the hardest thing we have had to grapple with as a church family during my time with you. I have repeatedly urged this church family to take Christianity seriously, to take church membership seriously, and to take discipleship seriously. I believe that the unity and health of the FBC Diana church family is directly related to our understanding and practice of biblical church membership.

We must recognize that not everyone who claims to follow Christ actually does so, we must understand that every Christian needs other Christians in order to grow in Christ, and we must love one another enough to be vulnerable and known among our church family.

The honest and open pursuit of Christ among a church family is messy and painful, but it is also one of the most beautiful and God-glorifying things I know.

It is the great remedy to the intrusion of dangerous wolves.

The local church is the target of evil assaults because it is the beloved flock of God, but God gives good gifts to His beloved people.

#### **(4) THE GOOD GIFT OF GOD'S WORD**

Near Paul's final few words to those beloved Ephesian Christians, he sends them off (as it were), entrusting them to God and to God's word. Look at it with me in verse 32. Paul said, "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"

Paul knew that God was their chief shepherd and provider. Paul also knew that God's word alone is able to build up and secure the inheritance of the saints.

As I stand before you now, a departing pastor, I know that God loves His people so much more than I do. I know that God is always in control of all of life's events, and I

know that He will do as He pleases with this local church. I, therefore, commend you to God, entrusting you to His goodness and provision.

For your part, I commend you to God's word. We both know that FBC Diana is made up of a membership that may have all sorts of preferences and plans, but there is one thing that may unite this church family. We may unite under the banner of Christ and His gospel, and we may unite under the word of God.

God's word is a priceless gift, but it is only beneficial to those who read it, meditate upon it, seek to apply it, and prayerfully submit themselves to it.

Let me close my message today by reading some portions from Paul's admonition to another pastor / elder.

"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... burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth... All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed... All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:1–17)

The local church is the beneficiary of God's good gifts and the target of evil assaults because it is the beloved flock of God.

May God graciously grant the gifts of good pastoring and many good pastors.

May God mercifully protect this flock from the evil assaults that will inevitably come.

And May God's word always be the steady anchor and life-giving nourishment for this church family.

**I'd like to take this time to pray for Barry, Russ, Joe, Bob, Scott, and Mike, since these men will bear an especially heavy load in my absence.**

### **Russ**

- Thanks for spiritual growth, eager learning, and genuine humility.
- May he grow in confidence and in understanding.

### **Joe**

- Thanks for theological insight, diligent study, and honest perspective.
- May he grow in love and in grace.

### **Bob**

- Thanks for gentle spirit, humble service, and faithful study of Scripture.
- May he grow in confidence and in courage.

### **Scott**

- Thanks for faithful service, careful study, and sincere approach.
- May he grow in friendliness and in patience.

### **Mike**

- Thanks for jovial involvement, openness to explore, and honest insight.
- May he grow in grace and in wisdom.

### **Barry**

- Thanks for diligent study, pastoral heart, and thoughtful care.
- May he grow in courage and may he be a faithful preacher.