

# The Advantage of a Joyful Ministry: A Charge to the Church

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[ 0 : 00 ] If you'll please open your Bibles to the book of Hebrews chapter 13. Hebrews chapter 13 and our text for the passage will be verses 17 through 19.

So Hebrews 13, 17 through 19. Verse 17.

Obey your leaders and submit to them for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning for that would be of no advantage to you.

Pray for us for we are sure that we have a clear conscience desiring to act honorably in all things. I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.

Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father we ask that as we go to the passage that you would help us in our understanding of the passage. But also by your spirit in the obedience to the passage.

[ 1 : 27 ] Our living out what's spoken here. Lord we pray that you would bless this body for many years to come. And Lord we pray for Dave Thompson to have a joyful ministry here.

We ask this in Christ's name. Amen. So the name of my sermon is the advantage of a joyful ministry. Subtitle a charge to the church in preparation of Dave Thompson's ministry.

It's a mouthful but the advantage of a joyful ministry is really what I want to look at. So knowing that soon you're going to have a new pastor installed.

I want to encourage first the congregation really give a charge to you all. And at the same time next week give a charge to Dave.

So Dave's a little bit off the hook today. And I will be focusing really on the congregation. And helping. My thought is how can we make the experience of a new pastor as advantageous as it possibly can be.

[ 2 : 26 ] Now I want you to realize as well that as I go through this there will always be the temptation to think well Pastor Chad's talking about something he's experienced or he's complaining.

That is not what I'm doing in this sermon. I will tell you I did this same passage for Craig Regal when they were installed. I think when he was installed as a pastor in Camp Hill. So it's not just this church.

I've said it elsewhere. But if we want to prepare for a good ministry. An advantageous ministry for you all. This is something to consider going into this.

So as we look at our passage we'll just look again. Verse 17. Obey your leaders and submit to them. So first the point is obey and submit. And we live in a day and age where obedience and submission are not things that are looked upon very positively in much of the culture.

I've even noticed with weddings more recently getting more pushback from brides when it talks about obeying your husband in the vows. And so maybe this is something that rubs us a little to think of obedience and submission to your leaders.

[ 3 : 37 ] But God's word is calling the church to be obedient and submissive to Dave and to the elders. Now at the same time realize they're fallen men. This isn't absolute obedience.

You don't have to do everything they say. But as much as you can. As much as it's in line with the word of God. Obey them. Submit to them. They're looking out for you. There's good things that are happening for you that they're going about.

But only God has absolute authority. We obey God in whatever he commands us. Whatever the reason. We obey God. But at the same time as under shepherds. You've been called to obey and submit to your leaders.

Your elders. Now I'll tell you in this passage just a few lines down from what I just read in verse 17. As those will have to get an account.

And I said Dave's off the hook. So I'm not going to spend much time on that right now. But understand they have a responsibility to lead you in a good way in accordance with God's word. They're looking out for your soul.

[ 4 : 38 ] They're not Lord willing being heavy handed or authoritarian. They're doing this because they believe it in all their heart that they're doing what's good for your soul. And they're going to have to get an account if they mess up.

You don't need to rebel because you're not happy with them. They will give an account if they've not done what they should before God. Again I said Dave's off the hook today. So let me get back to this.

But understand that the authority that even Dave would have or the elders will have. The authority that they have is not theirs alone. But it's God's authority in them.

I said already they're undershepherds. Ephesians chapter 4 verses 11 through 13. It says and he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers.

To equip the saints for the work of ministry. For building up the body of Christ. Until we all attain to the unity of the faith. And of the knowledge of the son of God.

[ 5 : 36 ] To mature manhood. To the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. So we look upon our leaders and think God's given us Dave and the elders.

To equip us. To make us fit for works of ministry. To serve him. We also see again not domineering over those in your charge. But being examples to the flock.

They're living a life of an example. A model for you. And I've said already verse 17 says every leader will have to give an account. John Piper says of this passage of verse 17.

That it means that a church should have a bent toward trusting its leaders. You should have a disposition to be supportive in your attitude and actions toward their goals and directions.

You should want to imitate their faith. And you should have a happy inclination to comply with their instructions. So a bent towards trust.

[ 6 : 40 ] Now some of us that's not normal for our nature. Our personality. We don't have a bent toward trusting anybody. Maybe even in the world we live in it's easier to think.

My inclination is to doubt until proven otherwise. But we should have a happy inclination toward obeying. Toward listening. A bent toward following them and trusting them.

And I'm going to touch more on this. But the passage is really telling us how the church can help the elders, the pastor, to serve you well.

Having a bent toward trusting them makes their work a lot easier. And Lord willing will help in your sanctification. And we saw as well the leaders are to keep watch over your souls.

They're ones who are guarding your soul. That's something you can be thankful for. They care about your soul. They're not out to cause harm. They're protecting you.

[ 7 : 47 ] They're guarding you. And so as much as they do this as God's called them to, the church is to submit to that.

But secondly, there's a comparison in this passage, verse 17 again, with joy and groaning. So let's look at joy versus groaning. So we said already that there should be this inclination toward trust.

There should be obedient submission to the elders in their leadership of you in spiritual matters, accordance with God's word. But when you do that joyfully, when there's joyful submission to your leaders, that produces joyful leaders.

Now, most of you can probably understand this just in a secular sense of your workplace. If the work environment is a joyful environment, then it makes the boss or the manager happy to be there when they're working along with him.

But what happens if they're working against him the whole time or they're bickering among themselves? It can be quite burdensome to be leading. And I would say that a pastor's work is challenging enough.

[ 8 : 59 ] Now, in some ways, there are many days that I sit in an office and stare and read and study the whole time. And that doesn't sound all that difficult. I'm reminded sometimes by some family, you know, what are you tired from?

You haven't been doing anything. But it's a challenging job, not just in the study of God's word and handling it rightly, but also in ministering to God's people.

And we live in a day and age where you have access to better pastors than me. And forgive me, Dave, better pastors than Dave.

Maybe I should say better preachers. Right? We have access anywhere. We can go and listen to sermons from various men. There's stuff out there everywhere. And we can also use that as a means of criticism or comparison.

Right? I encourage you guys, listen to some good streaming messages, some conferences. But that should not result in you coming back and saying, well, my preacher doesn't preach that well.

[10:03] God doesn't gift every man the same. God doesn't.

I recently read an article that was speaking of, I think this was a Barna survey, but it was talking about how only one out of every ten ministers graduating from seminary will end their career in the ministry.

Ninety percent leaving the ministry. And I was reminded of that even this week as just, I think, yesterday or the day before, I received a letter from a friend who's a pastor saying he had resigned from his job at his church.

Stepping away from the ministry for a while, praying that he'll be able to come back in. But I don't know that we always perceive that. That we know that this is something that can be difficult as it is. So, again, this isn't about me. I'm trying to encourage you. How can you make this go well for Dave? Let it be a joyful ministry for him.

[11:39] By contrast, we could have groaning pastors. And sometimes I think the greatest cause for groaning in a pastor is that burden that they carry in their love and concern for you.

Now, that's a good thing. You want them to be burdened with care and concern and love for you. But sometimes that can become very difficult when, well, we could imagine even a parent with a child.

They love their child. They care for them. And they raise them up in the way that they want them to go. The way that God's word tells them to go. And when they see their kids rebel against that, how hard is that?

It's amplified because there's this great love and care and concern for them. And the pastor has this. And Lord willing, in a properly functioning church, he's meeting with you.

He knows what's going on in your life that other people may not even know. And that carries a heavy burden for him. That he's praying for you. He cares for you. He's concerned for you. Here's how Paul wrote to the church in Corinth in 2 Corinthians 2.4.

[12:53] For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart with many tears, not to cause you pain, but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

So you know that there were some problems in the church in Corinth. And Paul's writing to them in much affliction. And we may think Paul's talking about imprisonment or beatings that he's suffering. But that's not what it is.

He's writing to them with much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears to let them know the abundant love that he has for them. And so it's his love for them that causes affliction in him. Causes him to have anguish of heart. Causes him to cry many tears. Because teens are not going well in the church. And he loves that church. He cares for them.

And the burden becomes even more evident when the pastor's loving and caring for you. And I want to be careful.

[13:57] It doesn't have to be a reciprocal kind of thing. But when you perhaps even intentionally seek harm to the man who's loving you and caring for you.

I said this isn't personal. It's not about our church. And I have at least one place where it will be about our church. And I will tell you when it is. But I've heard stories and experienced to some extent.

Sometimes people leave the church and maybe they feel like they have to justify why they're leaving. But they can say the meanest things. And you have someone who's poured their life into you for years. And then you walk away and do so in a harmful way.

That hurts. Again, if you imagine the sense of a family relationship. If your kid says, I want nothing else to do with you because you're a bad parent and you did blah, blah, blah. That weighs upon your soul.

So consider the impact that you have upon your ministers and how that may cause groaning for them. Or maybe even when you make, I shouldn't say you, when someone makes shipwreck of

their faith.

[14:59] The pastor's been praying for them. He's been maybe mentoring, discipling them. And they're that seed that fell on the hard ground or fell among the thorns. Sometimes it's even the fact that one of the hardest things as a minister is to go to someone with their sin.

And call them to repentance. And when that's done, that hard work is done. And there is no repentance. When there's concern for the soul and pleading with them.

Don't continue in the sin. And yet they continue on. So what I'm encouraging you is to seek to have your pastor serve you with joy and not with groaning.

Seek the joy of your pastors. When they're interacting with you, be responsive to them. Cooperate with them. I know that's a crazy principle, right? You think about it as kids.

We don't normally think about cooperating with our parents. But cooperation is something that's important for you as a church. And the reason you do this is that you might reduce the groaning and increase the joy.

[16:12] So our ultimate aim as Christians is the glory of God. But somewhere penultimate, somewhere below that level, is we're aiming for the joy of our pastors.

Why? Because that's glorifying to God. That brings God glory. To see a church operating in such a way. Be patient with him.

Dave's going to mess up a lot. Sorry, Dave. But we all do. We're fallen creatures. We're not always going to get it right. But be patient. Love them enough to come and talk to them.

Again, in loving ways to help them. Not complaining behind their back or sending anonymous letters. I know I've had many pastors who say, If I get an anonymous letter, it goes straight to the trash can.

I don't even read it. If you can't come and talk to me, then the intention is not to help. It's to hurt. And so, consider how you might be helpful and patient with a fallen man who's seeking to serve you out of loving care for you.

[17:19] Now, I think one way is to avoid cheap or picky types of criticism. Again, I'll give you an example.

This was not in this church, but it was a time I preached in Pennsylvania. And I got done with the sermon. And I still remember the sermon was on Josiah. And the Reformation he brought because my son's middle name is Josiah.

And that passage was weighing heavily on my heart. My son's middle name was Josiah. And that was weighing heavily upon my heart. And so, I'd been studying Josiah.

And I preached this sermon on Josiah. And it was, Josiah brought Reformation. And I remember preaching, The church needs to be reforming. And I said reforming a number of times in the sermon.

And I had a man who had been a missionary and a pastor come to me and say, After the sermon, Hey kid, we get a breakfast the next day. I thought, what a blessing. I get to have breakfast with this man. Well, we went and had breakfast.

[18:20] And the whole time was spent. He was blasting me because I had bad grammar. Reforming wasn't the way I should have said it. I should have said it a different way. But there was nothing positive. I still remember what was said was, That may fly in the south.

But that kind of bad grammar will never fly in the north. You will never pastor in the north. Well, that was before I came here to pastor. So, I don't know if you guys weren't as discerning.

Or you realized it too late. But either way, The intention may be helpful. It doesn't always come off that way. So, consider how you might be a joyful, helpful member of the body.

I'll give you another example. And again, not here. Not with anyone that's here. But, okay. It happened here, but no one who's still here.

Is that okay? Is that permissible, Dave? Paul? Okay. So, you may remember our services used to begin at 1030. And so, that meant that if the sermon or the service went long, we would push over the noon barrier.

[19:26] And I would sometimes have someone come to me and say, Good morning, pastor. I mean, good afternoon. Now, maybe that's meant to be humorous or whatever.

But do you know what goes through a pastor's head when he hears that? I think how Satan attacks. Boy, your sermon was too long this morning. What is your problem? Can't you preach a sermon the right length?

So, in some ways, I was very joyful to move our service to 1030. Now, I can easily hit 1144. And I'm okay as long as I get done before Sunday school. But, that's not the best thing to say to your pastor right after he's finished a sermon.

Satan's already told him he preached too long. He doesn't need you reminding him of what a bad job he did. Or, here's another example. Was, again, no one here but to say, Pastor, that was a really good sermon you preached this Sunday.

I stayed awake the whole message. Okay, that sounds like a compliment. Really good sermon you preached. But, what does the pastor hear? This is the first sermon in a while that I managed to stay asleep through your boring sermons.

[ 20 : 39 ] Maybe that's just my personality. Maybe, again, that's Satan's temptation. But, I'm not sure David's all that different from me. And so, or any pastor for that matter.

It's so easy to hear only the negative. And so, consider carefully how you might encourage your pastor. I'm not saying just give lying compliments either. We're not saying just boost egos.

But, consider how that may weigh upon them. How might what you say this Sunday affect next Sunday sermon? Amen. This happened somewhere else with me.

I was preaching. And, it's an illustration I believe I've used here. But, I was sharing about the family member that has the sign up in their house that says, If my dogs aren't in heaven, I don't want to be there.

And, there just happened to be one man in the congregation who's especially ornery. And, who believes that animals have souls.

[ 21 : 38 ] And, they're going to be, you know, those same animals that we have will be in heaven. Who came up after the sermon and just blasted me. He said, that was a stupid thing to say. What you should have said was this. That was all he said about the whole message.

And, I feel like I graciously said to him afterward, Brother, I preached a 40 minute sermon. And, you came to me and the one thing you picked out was a 15 second illustration from that sermon.

To complain about. Where's the positive things that you saw in the sermon? You don't have to tell me. But, look, the pastor's not always going to say everything that makes you happy. But, look for the gold amongst the dross.

How can you take advantage and grow from what's being preached? Don't look for what I disagree with so I can complain after the sermon.

Or, maybe it happens even before the sermon. Maybe the worship leader said something or didn't sing the song we wanted so we pout or we complain to others.

[ 22 : 41 ] Sometimes even we whisper to one another and snicker about something the pastor said or the service. We're fallen men. We are aware of that, unfortunately.

Probably we miss it more than we see it. But, when we see it, that can be a great discouragement. Now, I said that if I'm speaking of our congregation, I'll let you know. So, here you go. And, maybe I need to wait even later in the message for this one.

But, get here on time. Now, that may seem like not a big deal to you. We've now moved our announcements because so many people were missing the announcements.

That's a sign of a problem. But, I can tell you from my experience, and not just from mine, but also from others of our elders. We get up here and we do the announcements to 12 people.

That is very discouraging. Where's the church at today? Those thoughts go through our head.

Again, they probably shouldn't. But, they do. And, so, have you considered how your timely arrival is good not just for you, but also for the pastor, for the worship leader, for those around you?

[ 23 : 55 ] Part of our worship is we're singing to one another as we sing to God. We're encouraging and admonishing one another in song. You can't do that if you didn't make it for the song.

And, again, maybe I should save this for even later because sometimes it's not until the application that we're arriving. But, you're missing what's good for your soul, but you're also hurting the body.

God's made us as a body. And, just imagine, here this body is. There's no hands for the whole service until the very end to play on Paul's illustration. So, okay, that was my one specifically at you.

And, probably most of you got here on time, so you're not feeling that. But, make it a priority for your soul and for the good of those around you and for the man preaching to you to get here on time.

And, then, the pastor has a hard enough job worrying about spiritual things.

And, I'm going to speak now not of my experience alone, but of the experience of many pastors that I've heard from during COVID. I don't know what happened during COVID. Years down the road,

people will write dissertations trying to figure this all out.

[ 25 : 03 ] If God used it as a purification process of the church. Or, if it just exposed how bad off the American church is. But, we had one instance happen in our country.

And, all of a sudden, the church is dividing. People walk away from the church, from the faith. Because, they disagree over a medical issue. Or, a political issue. So, my point there was actually this.

Don't argue and don't bring division to the church over non-spiritual matters. Over the application of spiritual matters in your personal life. I strongly believe.

And, I think I'm going to hit on some of this next week. When I give a charge to Dave. So, maybe next week you'll be more off the hook. He'll be more under pressure. But, I strongly believe that the pastor is called to preach Christ and Him crucified.

To preach the Word of God. And, there is a way in which, sure, I need to make application. And, the Spirit applies it to your heart. But, you have a responsibility to take God's Word and say, what does that mean in how I live my life?

[ 26 : 08 ] And, you're not all going to come to the same conclusion. So, thinking I can't worship with somebody who disagrees with me on third, fourth, fifth. I don't know how many levels we get down to. But, on things that are so far removed from the Gospel.

The Trinity. That's not good. You guys know I have a favorite soccer team. I don't think there's anyone that shares it. It's Manuel, isn't it?

Who likes the opposing team, Gordon Calvert, as well. Like, there have been people in our church who don't like my team. But, they're brothers who I love. Right?

We don't divide over that. Or, maybe it's football that you prefer. I mean, American football. You know. Hand egg. See, I said hand egg. Don't be offended. Right? That doesn't mean I'm a bad pastor to you or that I don't love you.

It means there are more important things than sports, than politics, than medical views, diet views. Focus on the major things.

[ 27 : 07 ] Know that your pastor cares about your soul. And, don't seek to divide God's body over lesser things. Now, I said this earlier, but I'll say again. Avoid comparisons to other ministers.

It's easy to do. Dave is walking in after me. I walked in after Ted. It's easy to be compared to other men. Don't do that. God gifts his servants differently.

My gifts aren't Dave's gifts. Ted's gifts weren't my gifts. God has gifted every man differently. And, God uses that for the good of his church. The ministry of one church isn't based upon a single pastor.

It's God's church. It's God's church. And, he's equipping not just the lead pastor, but also all the elders to serve you in various ways. You guys remember Rit Regal.

He was gifted in ways that I wasn't. Even among my family, sometimes he's like, Amanda, did you get new glasses? I'm like, what? Did you get new glasses?

[ 28 : 11 ] Of course I noticed that. But, he was very observant and was good at ministering on those personal levels in ways that maybe some of the other elders weren't. He filled up a weakness that we had.

I think Ted Vinatieri did some of that even long before. And, so just understand God gifts everyone differently. And, yet God graciously uses our gifts, even our weaknesses, to make his strength manifest.

One more. And, again, I feel like you've done a good job at this. But, don't set unrealistic expectations for your pastor or for his family.

This is something that really came to me from before when I was studying for the ministry. Pastor Steve Martin in Fayetteville, Georgia used to refer to the church as, oh, the church, how can I say this?

The pastor's family as fish in a fishbowl. Like, everyone's sitting around, they're always observing what's going on. And, it's easy to expect that because you're the pastor's son, you're not talking and looking at stuff that your friend has.

[ 29 : 21 ] Or, that you don't even hear that kind of exhortation. So, it's easy to expect that, but my kids are like your kids.

They don't deserve to be judged at a higher standard. Or, my wife, or my, and to be fair, Dave and his family. Okay.

So, summary of that. Seek to give Dave joy in his ministry. Now, I want to give a motivation. Why should you do this?

And, I'm not making this up. The author of Hebrews says this. Why should you do this? And so, my third point is, because it is for your advantage.

It's for your advantage. Let's look back at our text. Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.

[ 30 : 21 ] Let them do this with joy, and not with groaning. For that would be of no advantage to you. So, the author here is telling you, why should you make sure that they're joyful instead of groaning?

Because if they're groaning, it's not going to be to your advantage. So, he's basically saying, be selfish about your own spiritual state. Do you care for your own soul?

Then there's a man who's watching out for your soul, that if you make his ministry joyful, you're going to get the advantage of that. You're going to benefit from that. So, seek the joy of your pastors, because if you don't, then they won't have joy in their ministry.

They will be groaning, and their ministry will be of no advantage to you. So, again, to say it selfishly, seek Dave's joy and the elder's joy, for the sake of your joy, for the sake of your soul, for the sake of their ministry among you.

Or we could say this another way, and say joy spreads. When you have a joyful pastor, it's going to weigh on the congregation, it's going to be joyful in the congregation. Likewise, when we have a joyful congregation, that spreads to other members of the congregation and to the pastor.

[ 31 : 40 ] I don't know if you've experienced this before, but as a pastor, I can testify to experiencing this. Sometimes when people are here who are in the congregation, not necessarily here, but in the congregation, who have a critical spirit, who you know are complaining and judging, there's like a dark cloud hanging over the church that the sun just doesn't seem to want to break through.

Maybe that's influencing the pastor, maybe it's influencing the whole congregation, but sometimes it almost feels tangible in a body. You have a sense of a people as you walk into the pulpit sometimes.

And then other times you walk in and you think, man, they are on fire for the Lord. They are joyful.

They are ready to hear God's word. The soil is fertile here.

And it's a blessing. And probably somewhere subconsciously, it changes how the man preaches. Is he finding joy in the midst of preaching itself?

So I say that to say, consider, are you the type of church member who's spreading joy in the body?

Are you the type who's the dark cloud? I keep thinking of the cartoon where the guy walks around and there's one cloud that follows him and rains on just his head.

[ 32 : 55 ] You know, you have that guy in the congregation and inevitably some of the people next to him are going to see some shadow and get wet. Okay, so if Dave groans with the burdens and the difficulties of ministry, then he's not going to be an advantage to you.

He's not going to be good for you. If his delight in the Lord, if his joy in God doesn't sustain him, then it won't be to your advantage.

How can you encourage his joy in the Lord? I think sometimes we have this view, and maybe this is because we live in a largely Catholic community, that sometimes you think it's not okay for you to talk to your pastor about his spiritual stuff, only my spiritual stuff, guys, ask Dave how he's doing. Ask your elders, have you been reading God's word? We made it a point in our elders meeting to ask every one of us, has to give account if we've been reading God's word and if we've been sharing the gospel.

And part of that is because in all reality, no one else is going to ask us. Now, I hope that it's happening all the time with people in the body with one another, and it's just because you imagine the elders are on a different level.

[ 34 : 11 ] We're not. We need to be asked those questions. We need to be challenged. We need to be encouraged. So do that. So you need Dave to have a joyful ministry for the sake of your ministry, for your blessing as a people and as a church.

We can think of it this way, that if your pastor's groaning, how will it affect him? Well, it's going to affect his sermon preparation throughout the week. It's going to affect his prayer life.

It's going to affect his personal interaction with you and his ministry to you. Lord willing, he's still going to do it, but if he's groaning, knowing that this is going to be an unpleasant experience talking with you, then it's going to affect how he can serve you.

And if those things are true, that groaning, the end result of that is going to be your disadvantage. It will be of no advantage. It will be a disadvantage for you. So a few final thoughts and application.

One way that you can do this is to be praying for your pastor. Look at verse 18. Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience desiring to act honorably in all things.

[ 35 : 28 ] Pray for us. We've had now, it's got to be for longer than a year, but we've had up on the screen during the announcement, it's a quote.

And I'm just curious sometimes, like, have you read the quote or are you aware of it? Okay, I'm not sure from looking at you. Okay. But I put a quote up there some time ago from Jeremy Walker that I was, we were reading a book and using it for Sunday school.

And here's one of the things he says. Do you pray for the men who stand to preach in your church and elsewhere pleading with God for a blessing upon the work?

What is he saying? Pray that their ministry will be an advantage to you. He says then, good, assuming the answer was yes, good, there will be no success without it.

That is just a summary of this passage, just a way of admonishing you in terms of this passage.

Maybe you could say it this way, it's harder to have a critical spirit when you've been in prayer all throughout the week for your leaders, your pastors.

[ 36 : 36 ] prayers. And so you walk in tending not to be critical but to say, I see weaknesses, I need to pray all the more and encourage this brother all the more. And so when we're praying, it kind of takes away the room for criticism because we see our role in it.

We see we're invested in this man and he's invested in me. And so, I need to be praying for him. I need to be praying for the service this week, for the worship leading, for the preaching of the word, for visitors to come into the church, whatever it may be.

Pray for Dave and for your elders. And I would say, even in this passage, that it speaks of this joyful ministry. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning.

What's the joy spoken of here? Well, again, I'll have a chance to get on this some next week, but the joy that we're speaking of here isn't ultimately that people like me as a pastor.

I'm a likable guy. That's not the joy that's being spoken of. So, this isn't just praise him for the sake of addressing struggles with fear of man.

[ 37 : 47 ] No. Pray that won't be a struggle. But the joy that he should have and that we should have is joy in God. Even when there are plenty of reasons to groan and all of us have plenty of reasons to groan and yet that we would know joy in God in the midst of hardship and affliction.

That's the way you can be praying for him. And really, in many ways, when he says, so that the ministry will be, or the ministry will be of no blessing to you, how is his ministry going to be a blessing to you?

Lord willing, he's going to point you to joy in God when you're groaning, when you're afflicted, when you're suffering. Thirdly, in our application, there is much joy in ministry.

Don't get me wrong. I didn't mean to say, look, my prayer is that the Lord will raise some of you young people up to be pastors one day. I'm not trying to say it's all bad. It's not. There's much joy in the ministry.

And yet, at the same time, there's also enough sorrow and affliction to weigh down anyone's heart. And our enemy, Satan, demons, I think, really prey upon that.

[ 39 : 08 ] They use that for their advantage, for the disadvantage of you and the ministry. So, I say all this to say my prayer for you as a church is that in years to come, this will be a church that's known for or marked by the joyful ministry of their pastor.

And I'm saying so much of that depends upon you as a congregation. I'll be, I'll get on Dave's case next week, okay? He has a responsibility in this as your pastor.

But so much of this depends on how you as a congregation operate. And at the same time, remember the encouragement in the passage so that his ministry will be an advantage to you.

If we want the ministry of Grace Fellowship Church to be a blessing to you and to the community around you, it needs to be a joyful ministry of the pastor and of the body.

Now, Dave, I'll have a whole sermon to preach to you next week, but let me just in closing say that even though I preached this sermon, there's still going to be many reasons to groan.

[ 40 : 21 ] Many will come, but I want to encourage you to find your joy not in God's people, but in God. That's the source of our joy. And there's always the temptation to look to others or our circumstances to be our source of joy, but God is to be our source of joy no matter the circumstances.

And so, I'll close this sermon as probably I've closed many sermons with my favorite verse, Psalm 1611, you make known to me the path of life.

In your presence is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures forevermore. That's where we go for our joy. Dave, that's where you go for your joy. Congregation, that's where you look for your joy, not ultimately in your pastor.

our joy needs to be a joy that's focused upon God and his presence. Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are a God that is the source of much joy for us.

And Lord, more than we can actually know and comprehend, and we do such a poor job at times of even seeing that which ought to delight our hearts about you, but Lord, we pray that you would work in our hearts, that we would seek to be a joyful people, that we would encourage Pastor Dave to know joy in you and not, Lord, just to be a critical people.

[ 41 : 51 ] It's so easy, especially in this day and age with so much online, that we can just shoot criticism whenever we want to with very little consequence that we know of. But Lord, we pray that we would be a loving people, that we would be an encouragement to the work.

Lord, that the ministry of Grace Fellowship Church, of Dave, of Paul, of Pedro, and Charles, and Edgar would be one that is of great advantage to the members of this church.

Lord, we ask that you would be glorified here. Lord, that as we make this transition, that it will be all the more evident that this is your work, not the work of a man.

And Lord, we know that because this work and the advance of your kingdom is your work, there's no weapon that can prosper against it, no enemy that can overtake it. Lord, we pray this in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 42 : 58 ] Amen.