

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **The Marks of a Powerless Leader**

Scripture: Matthew 23:1-12

Code: 80-215

The Lord knows what He's doing, and I suppose the reason I'm speaking this year, aside from what the Dean said, is because it was in the Lord's purposes that it happened...and whenever I have such an auspicious occasion as this, which can only occur once a year, it's not like preaching every Sunday, I always seem to feel like there's something very special that should happen, some ringing note of clarity should be sounded. And I can only trust that the Lord has prompted my heart in picking Matthew chapter 23 as a text.

All of us are aware of the fact that we have many people today who claim spiritual leadership. Many people who claim to be evangelical leaders, evangelical pastors of note, of significance...people who claim to be the gatekeepers theologically to the truth of Scripture...And sad to say, many of them fall short of Biblical qualification for that responsibility. Maybe for a while they maintain a certain amount of credibility, and then very frequently a moral disaster occurs, and they plunge from their parapet into some chasm from which they will never recover in terms of their ability to lead.

The issue of spiritual leadership is a critical, critical issue. The church goes forward. As the head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ mediates His rule through His under shepherds. And a failure at the level of the under shepherd is monumental to put it mildly. If you study the Bible, we're all very aware of the fact that there have always been false teachers. There have always been those who have arisen in any given period, any given place, any given circumstance, any given culture, any religious setting. And they have said that they are the representatives of God. They speak with authority. Time will tell whether they do or not. But in many cases, those who would rise to that position don't deserve it.

That was the case in Israel. The scribes and the Pharisees spoke. They thought they spoke with authority. But even after the Sermon on the Mount, you remember, the people said that Jesus spoke with authority in a way not like the scribes and the Pharisees...If ever we needed people who could speak with authority, we need it now. With a lasting kind of authority, with the credibility that undergirds authority...

I remember Paul Moyer, the anchorman for one of the local network television programs, saying to me one time when he was interviewing me, "Why don't you Christian people police your movement?"...That was after a series of scandals that continue even up to this present time. The Lord Himself has very little tolerance for false spiritual leadership, for those who have taken authority

that they really don't deserve.

And that is precisely the issue in the 23rd chapter of Matthew. It is an issue of confronting those who have put themselves in a position of authority, but don't deserve it...And it's a bit of backhanded way to deal with you graduates tonight, but I think it may serve our purposes well. Because the Lord, in the verses that were read to you a few moments ago, describes why the scribes and the Pharisees had no authority...why they really had forfeited what authority they might have had or wished to claim...And it's very clearly outlined for us...

Jesus spoke to the multitudes and His disciples saying, "The scribes and Pharisees." Now that introduces us to the subjects of His sermon. The Lord didn't pull any punches. He preached a direct sermon at the Jewish leadership. And He goes on to describe why they lack authority. Why they don't have power. Why they can't produce real conviction and genuine change...They, the Pharisees were the legalists. They were the sect of Jewish fundamentalists. The scribes were mostly Pharisees, and they were the experts of that sect. Experts, that is, in the law.

Lumped together, they become the representative coalition of Jewish leaders who took to themselves authority to speak on behalf of God...This message, which the Lord directs to them, is His last public sermon. He gave it in the temple area to the crowd that were there around the leaders. They were there, the scribes and Pharisees were there, but also the people were there. And so they were hearing what He was saying about their leaders. It was a warning to the leaders, first of all. It was a denunciation against the leaders. It turns out, the remainder of the chapter, to be a...a violent diatribe against them, an actual sentence of them to eternal judgment. But it is not just directed at them. It is a warning to the people...not to follow their damning leadership...It is a call in a sort of a reverse form for the people to follow those who are unlike their current leaders.

Now, six things mark these false spiritual leaders. And these six things show us very directly why they had no real authority. Number one, they lacked authenticity. They lacked authenticity. In verse 2, it says, "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses."...

Now, each synagogue, and you remember that Jewish worship was basically conducted on a week-to-week basis in gathering places called synagogues. The sacrificial things occurred at the temple. Those were occasional things. But the routine worship of the people of Israel occurred in local synagogues, and each synagogue had a special chair or a special position of authority known as the seat of Moses, the chair of Moses. In that chair would sit the leading expert in the law. That, by the way, has come down to us even today where we would say that someone in university is the chair of a department. And what we would mean by that would be he would be the leading scholastic in that department. He would be the most expert individual. We have chairs in all of the university systems in the Western world.

The actual word for seat is cathedra, and it means seat of authority. And even the pope speaks ex cathedra, out of the seat of authority. So it is a chair that has authority associated with it. And I think the point that Jesus is making, first of all, as He speaks against them, is that they have put themselves there. That is to say God has not put them there. It's very emphatic in the text. They put themselves there. They are the uncalled, we might say...

Jesus, speaking in Nazareth, in the synagogue, and opening the Word of God and explaining it and speaking truth from the seat of Moses, almost lost His life...because He was going so contrary...to the teachers that were there...The false teachers are always self-appointed experts...without proper training, without proper ordination, without proper calling by God, without proper gifting by God, without proper accountability, without confirmation by the leaders of the church. They take their own authority. They...they seat themselves there.

It isn't anything new. All I need to do is to remind you of some very familiar ground. In the ministry, the Prophet Jeremiah, who writes in the 14th chapter in the 14th verse, "The prophets are prophesying falsehood in my name. I have neither sent them nor commanded them nor spoken to them. They are prophesying to you a false vision, divination, futility, and the deception of their own minds. Therefore, thus, says the Lord concerning the prophets who are prophesying in my name, although it was not I who sent them, yet they keep saying there shall be no sword or famine in the land. By sword and famine, those prophets shall meet their end." They wanna talk about a sword, they'll see a sword.

In the 23rd chapter of Jeremiah, again these self-appointed, uncalled, ungifted...prophets are addressed. Verse 21 of chapter 23, "I did not send these prophets, but they ran. I did not speak to them, but they prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, then they would have announced my words to my people and would have turned them back from their evil way and from the evil of their deeds. I didn't send them. I didn't tell them what to say. They did not speak my word. They do not represent me."...

We have prophets like that today who speak on their own. They don't speak because they're sent by God...In chapter 28 of Jeremiah, Jeremiah said to Hananiah, the prophet, "Listen now, Hananiah, the Lord has not sent you, and you have made this people trust a lie." Verse 17 said, "So Hananiah, the prophet, died in the same in the seventh month." You find the same thing chapter 27 of Jeremiah, chapter 29 of Jeremiah. You find in Isaiah chapter 30 a similar portion of Scripture. And other warnings to the same effect are given in the New Testament on a number of occasions. Even in the instruction given to Timothy by Paul, 1 Timothy 3, and Titus in Titus chapter 1, there is the implicit reality that false leaders must be replaced by those whom God desires in that position. Men must be carefully scrutinized. They must be seen by the church to be gifted. Must be discerned that they are called...they are faithful to the Word and to the Spirit.

I was reading one of many...sad evidences of how little concern there often is for this. In Evanston, Illinois, there's an organization called The Missionaries of the New Truth. They advertise this way. I've seen this ad. "We want you to join our faith as an ordained minister with the rank of doctor of divinity." That's the headline. This is what it says. "We are a fast-growing faith, actively seeking new members who believe as we do - that all men should seek the truth in their own way by any means they deem right. As a minister of our faith, you can set up your own church and apply for exemption from property and other taxes. You can perform marriages and exercise all other ecclesiastical powers, seek draft exemption as one of our working missionaries, should that happen. We can tell you how. Get sizeable cash grants also for doing missionary work for us, and you can get some transportation companies, hotels, and theaters to give you reduced rates. And you can get the whole package for \$100. The ordination is declared to be legal and valid anywhere in this country."...

I think we all understand the true pastor is authentic, don't we? He's called. He's gifted. He's trained. He's ordained. He's set apart. His character, his calling, his gifting confirmed by the church...Quite different than these self-appointed authorities.

Secondly, they not only lacked authority or authenticity, rather. They lacked simplicity. They lacked simplicity. They sat in Moses' seat, the chair of Moses, the place where the law of God ought to have been taught. And, frankly, when they taught the law of God, they were doing what should be done...There should never be anything in the mouth of the man of God but the Word of God. There should never be anything in the mouth of the true prophet but the Word of God. Should never be anything in the mouth of the true preacher but the Word of God. There's really only one valid, binding, compelling message, and that is the Word of God.

Now, that certainly can't be said to be true...for these people. In verse 3, it says, "Therefore, all that they tell you, do and observe. That is when they speak the Word of God. When they genuinely represent the chair of Moses, the law of Moses, the Word of God, do it."...But they didn't stop there. They had so much more than that. Verse 4 indicates that they tied up heavy loads and laid them on men's shoulders. And, as we well know about Judaism, they had managed to develop way beyond the Scripture a codification of laws that were supposed to be binding on everybody...

There were 50 volumes of regulations invented by the scribes and Pharisees...So many of them that they were absolutely impossible for everybody to assimilate, let alone follow...If you look at the Judaism of the day of Jesus, or even the Judaism of Orthodox Judaism today, you find that the Word of God is buried under a pile of extra-Biblical law...and ceremony and ritual and tradition...And buried under it all is the truth, isn't it? Truth of salvation by grace through faith...

Religious leaders of Israel, like many people today, invent their own visions and their own traditions, their own revelations, which exceed the Word of God. You have it in many forms today. You have it

in the book of Mormon, the doctrines and covenants, the pearl of great price. You have it in science and health, the key to the Scriptures. You have it in the writings of Ellen G. White. You have it in the addition of who knows how many visions and revelations and private prophecies that supposedly come to people ad infinitum, ad nauseum. Reams and reams of material suffocating the truth of God's Word.

So I remind you, men, that these men forfeited authority because they lacked, first of all, authenticity. And, secondly, they lacked simplicity. People often will say to me, "How do you handle everything? Your ministry is broad, and it's...it seems to be complex." When the fact of the matter is, my ministry is very, very simple. I do one thing. I teach the Bible. I may be teaching it tonight. I may be teaching it this morning in a church service. I...I may be teaching it to a small group. I may be teaching it in a book. I may be teaching it on a tape. I may be teaching it in its application form in a counseling situation. I may be bringing it to bear on a discussion of theology. But life, for me, is very, very simple. I go into my office every week of my life, and I open one book. It's the book...

And after I've studied that book, I find other books to enrich my insights...That's the simplicity of ministry. We're being told today that you really can't do that. You...you can't reach this generation by just teaching the Bible...It's too simplistic. Well, when you forfeit that, you confuse the ministry. When you bring in psychology or you bring in pragmatics or you bring in whatever other stuff you wanna bring in, your own private insights, your own interpretations, you begin to cover up the truth...

Inevitably, false spiritual leaders are self-appointed and, secondly, inevitably, they go beyond the simplicity of Scripture seeking to make some name for themselves by their own private interpretations. Thirdly, they lack integrity. In verse 3, he says, "When they speak legitimately from the chair of Moses, and they tell you things, do them. But don't do according to their deeds, for they say things and do not do them." I think is something we all fear, isn't it? This...this is the tragedy of all tragedies. We were just in England, and, of course, we heard the terrible, tragic story of the leading evangelical expositor in England who, for well over 20 years, has faithfully expounded Scripture in his church, only to announce recently that he is a homosexual. Been involved in that for a long time. Abandoned his church and go abandon his wife, abandon his children, and go live with a man somewhere in isolation and obscurity. And everybody in the church, very prominent people in the church, very well known people in the church, many, many who had sat under his ministry, who are very astute students of Scripture. Even...he was even Don Carson's pastor, D.A. Carson's pastor and friend for many years. You scratch your head and...and you begin to look back through the years and wonder, "Can I trust anything he said?"...

I suppose when, like the Pharisees, they spoke the word of God. We can accept that. We can hear what they say and accept what they say, but never do according to their deeds. That is the problem with false teachers. They are always corrupt on the inside. They...they are always unable to restrain the flesh. They can mask it publicly, but they can't deal with it privately. So, ultimately, time and truth

go hand in hand. You find out from their fruits what they really are.

The Pharisees and the scribes were covered with masked vice, really. Jesus said, "On the outside...later in the chapter...you're painted white. On the inside, you're full of dead men's bones." They...these kinds of people, these kinds of preachers have a theatrical goodness, a theatrical righteousness that is despicable in the eyes of God. Don't ever, ever let that happen in your life. One small, tiny hypocrisy should be enough to rack your heart toward repentance...

And what he is saying here is, "Do not do according to their deeds. They are phonies. They are hypocrites. They have no integrity. There is no wholesomeness there."...What an indictment that is. It does matter the way you live. These people have no authority. They lack authenticity. They have no call. They lack simplicity. They have no limit. That is, they will go anywhere and everywhere to say whatever, and rather than being confined by Scripture, and they have no integrity. That is, they have no virtue. Their life is not what it ought to be. It doesn't support their message.

Fourthly, he suggests in very strong words that they lack sympathy. They lack sympathy. You can always tell a false teacher. They're generally in it for self-aggrandizement. And so they lack sympathy. They see people as objects to be used to their own ends. And verse 4 says, "They tie up heavy loads and lay them on men's shoulders, but they, themselves, are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger."...

Picture here is of a...of man who has managed to load his beast of burden with an unmercifully heavy weight, assorted burdens just piled and piled and piled on the back of the beast until it can barely move. Well, the...the scribes and the Pharisees were great at this. They...they could come up with the rules. As I said, they had about 50 volumes of them. Rules upon rules and regulations upon regulations, impossible demands that left people hopelessly loaded, feeling guilty, unable to find relief, unable to find comfort, unable to achieve righteousness under this unbelievably heavy burden.

And it says they lay them, but they themselves are unwilling to, actually in the Greek, remove. They don't care. There's no getting under the burden, such as we're enjoined to do by the Apostle Paul. There's no sympathy. There is a heartlessness here. There's an abusiveness here. They use people to push themselves up. They use people to play off of, so that they can appear more righteous. You find example after example of this.

Jesus even came along in Matthew 11 and said, "Listen, you oughta come My way and learn of Me. My yoke is...what?...is easy, and My burden is...is light. You can unload that impossible burden of trying to achieve your own salvation through works."...Jesus had so much sympathy. One of my favorite statements about Jesus is in Matthew chapter 12 and verse 20. It says. "A battered reed He will not break off, and a smoldering wick, He will not extinguish."...

In ancient times, reeds were used for many purposes. But once a reed was bent or battered, it was useless. Shepherds would...would make a little flute-like instrument out of a reed, and they would play soft music on it to while away the hours to calm the sheep. But when the reed either became dry and cracked or soft from the saliva, it would no longer make music, and the shepherd would break it and throw it away. And when a lamp burned down to the end of the wick, and it was just smoldering, as it'll do, and just sending up black smoke without making any light, it was useless. It was pulled out and thrown away, just like the broken reed. The battered reed and the smoldering wick represent people whose lives are fragile, whose lives are broken. People who...who really don't make much sweet music or give off much light. But it says of Jesus, "A battered reed, He will not break off. A smoldering wick, He will not put out." Scribes and Pharisees would see these people as useless. The Romans would have certainly seen them as useless. But Jesus would take them and restore them and rekindle them...

One of the marks of a true man of God, one of the marks of real authority in ministry is sympathy, genuine, tenderhearted, compassionate sympathy for people...The extreme opposite of that is to lead your whole movement into mass suicide, right? Jim Jones or those strange people who all died in San Diego, ostensibly to connect up with a spaceship. And, of course, false teachers manipulate people. They intimidate people with fear and guilt. But the true shepherds have sympathy. They see somebody over burdened, they get under the load. Then they help 'em carry it.

And I say, young...young men, if you want authority in your ministry, you're just not gonna get it because you want it. It'll come because there's authenticity in your calling. It'll be evident to everybody that you're called, that you're prepared. It'll be evident to everybody that you're genuinely set apart by God for ministry. They'll see it in your giftedness...And also your authority will come from your simplicity. There's no confusion in your ministry. There's no...there's no double-mindedness in your ministry. When you stand up and speak, God speaks, because you speak His Word...And they'll see that authority, and that authority will become powerful when they see your integrity. When they see that what you do as a person and how you live your life matches exactly with the way you preach. And your authority will also be strengthened by your sympathy when you get under their burdens and help them carry them.

But these false teachers not only lacked authenticity, simplicity, integrity, and sympathy, they lacked spirituality. They lacked spirituality. Look at verse 5. "They do all their deeds to be noticed by men." Bottom line, nothing was going on on the inside. Everything was going on where? On the outside. They were just doing it to put on a show. That is the absence of spirituality. Everything was for show. Paul talks about that in the last chapter of Galatians. "A fair display of the flesh," that's what they were into. Everything to gratify the earthly appetite. They are flesh dominated frauds...All for show...

There's just no spirituality there. There's nothing in the heart going on. Boy, I'll tell you, that is...that is so tragic. Don't ever let yourself get in a position where everything you're doing is for show. Just putting on a display for the people for self gain. They got very sophisticated at this, according to verse 5. "In order to be noticed by men, they broadened their phylacteries." Phylacteries refers to a custom that had developed among Jews about 400 B.C. It went back to the Old Testament law to take the truth of God, the Shamah, the Lord our God is One, to the...their devotion to monotheism. Their devotion to the one true and living God. And they were commanded to bind that to their heads and bind that to their hands and, of course, that was a spiritual command...But as they became more and more hypocritical, and as it became more and more an outward show, they had to approach it a different way. Four times the law of God said to take the Old Testament commands and bind them on the hand and bind them between the eyes. Well, all that means is let them control your behavior, your conduct, your work. Let them control your thought, thought and action.

And that's the way it was understood until about 400 B.C. When the Jews didn't have any virtue, but they wanted to parade as if they did, so they took little scrolls with the verses that said that on them, rolled 'em up, and stuck 'em in little boxes, and attached the box to their head, to their arm...They covered them with black leather, little straps. And in those boxes are the four sections of Scripture from Exodus and Deuteronomy. They became like magical charms. And more than that, they became sort of public displays of their piety. And some of the Jewish rabbis even went so far as to say God wore one...On the arm, they put on, and the box was marked with a sheen, and the...the head...sort of strap formed a dollop, and the armbands a yoth, and that was supposed to spell Shaddai, the name of God. Boys began wearing those when they were 14 years old. The scribes and Pharisees wore them all the time and enlarged them. Pretty soon they were carrying around a significant box on their heads.

It was just for show. Just for show. And the tassels, it refers to the tassel. Tassels are the borders of their garments. They wore tassels at the foot of the garments, and they did the same thing with those. They lengthened them further and further. Numbers 15 talks about fringes on robes that would mark God's people and remind them who they were. Well, they enlarged those so that everybody could see how committed they were to God and how His law was precious to them and how devoted they were. So here they are, the scribes and Pharisees tripping around with extensive long borders hanging off their garments and little boxes on their heads and on their arms. Feeding, feeding, feeding their proud flesh, because there was no spirituality...

One more virtue sort of wraps up this wonderful passage as we apply it to our own lives. They lacked humility. That should be obvious by now, but that's what occupies the rest of the text down from verses 6 to 12. They lacked humility. They were pompous. They were vain. They were proud. In verse 6, they "love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues." Now the places of honor at a banquet were on the right and the left hand of the host. And you can remember that in the Gospels, that was an issue on occasion, wasn't it? With the disciples wanting to sit on the



right and left hand of Jesus when He sat in his kingdom. They loved the chief seats. There were certain seats at a banquet that were on a raised platform where the famous people went. They were the people who spoke, the speaker's table we would call it. They loved the display. They loved the praise of men. They were climbers.

And they also, it says, loved...to be elevated in the synagogue and to hear respectful greetings in the marketplaces. They loved to be spoken to with honored titles. They really...they really liked that. In fact, there are rabbinic writings that indicate that there were all kinds of elaborate directions as to the place, the rank, and the treatment of Pharisees, and equally elaborate punishments for those who failed to do that. There was the...there was this...a very sophisticated process that you went through when you addressed one of them. They were to be saluted, they said, higher than a king.

And some Jewish writings tell of a debate between God and the academy of rabbis, which a rabbi was called to settle...The mishnossays quote, "It is more punishable to act against the words of the scribes than against the words of the Scripture."...They had an immensely inflated sense of their own importance. They loved titles. And they loved to be called by men, "Rabbi, Rabbi." Superior one in deference to the Dean, the loved to be called great. The loved to be called docera, doctor. Doctor, Doctor, Your Excellency. They loved that. They also loved to be called...teacher or master. They loved to be called father, source of truth. They loved all those titles. And that, of course, is because they lacked humility.

It's always been a curiosity to me, in light of this passage, that the Church of England refers to the Bishop as the Right Reverend Father in God...People with no humility feed on that, piling up phony titles to go with their phony credentials.

Our Lord turns from all this negative to speak to His disciples in contrast. And His disciples are authentic. He called them personally. They are simple in their commitment to the truth of God and nothing more. And they have integrity, in that they live what they preach. And they are sympathetic and compassionate as was their Lord, and they are spiritual, not fleshly. They're dominated by the work of God on the inside, not by externals. And so He calls on them to be humble in verse 8. He says, "Do not be called 'Rabbi.'" Don't let anybody call you that. The you here is emphatic in the Greek. You, don't get into that. Don't seek earthly recognition. Don't seek titles. Don't seek titles of special note and respect as if you were some great person. After all, One is your true Teacher, is that not right? If I know anything, it came from God, did it not? If I know anything, if there's anything that I personally invented, it's a lie or it's unnecessary...

You're all brothers. That's the leveler...Any title that erases equality in the body of Christ is a bad title. We're all brothers...We all sit at the feet of the One true Teacher. Then He says in verse 9, "Do not call anyone on earth your father, for One is your Father. He who is in Heaven." Sanhedrin members, like priests today in the Roman Catholic church, in the Orthodox church, wanted to be called father in

the sense that they were the...they were the ones who provided spiritual life...

Roman Catholics call priests Holy Father for high-ranking ones. He says, "Don't take titles like that. Don't let people think that truth comes from you and life comes from you. You're not the source of truth. There's only one teacher. You're not the source of life. There's only one God who's the source of life."...

And this goes even further. "And do not be called leaders...verse 10...You only have one teacher...verse 8...You only have one Father who's in Heaven...verse 9...You only have one true Leader, one true Master. Gothagutase, one who is in command." You're not in command. Don't call yourself commander. Don't call yourself father. Don't call yourself teacher. You're not the source of all truth. You're not the source of all life, and you're not the source of all direction. God is all of that. You are none of that...You're just brothers. You're equal.

And in verse 11, He says, "The greatest among you shall be your servant." Let God render the final verdict, and the greatest will be your servant. The greater the selfless service, the greater the eternal glory. That's another message. We could talk about servant leadership, and I know you're familiar with it.

Then, finally, He ends it in verse 12. "And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted." In the end, that's where it's gonna come. You spend your time exalting yourself, God'll humble you. You spend your time humbling yourself, God will exalt you...

Just in summing up this brief message to you tonight, no one is a true servant of God apart from authenticity, simplicity, integrity, sympathy, spirituality, and humility. And Jesus is telling the people, because they're there, "Don't follow these men. They don't have true authority. You follow these men, namely, the disciples. You follow those." We can say...we tell the church this today. We can tell people this. "You follow the call. The follow the gifted. You follow those who have been set apart by God. Not those who were self-appointed. Follow those who seek to serve, not to be served. Follow those who are faithful in stewardship to the sacred test of Scripture, not inventing their own ideas. Follow those who are faithful to feed the flock, not fleece the flock. Follow those who seek to manifest the meekness and gentleness of Christ, not abusing the flock. Who seek no honor for themselves, but all honor for Him. Follow those who do not preach what they will not and cannot live, but rather like Jesus will never break a bruised reed or extinguish smoking flax. Those who are tenderhearted and understand that there's a process of learning and growth before everyone can live those things which you teach and live. Find shepherds who know their humility will make them useful, and who know that neither they nor the sheep are their own, but God's. Follow those kinds of men.

And my prayer for you men, of course, is that you would have great authority in your ministry. What marks effective ministry is great authority. That is another way of saying it comes with great power. It comes with great impact. And what makes that impact, lemme tell you right now, is not your homiletics. It's not your clever outline. It's all of these things that we've talked about...

You'd have a hard time in the Sermon on the Mount trying to find a three-point outline and a poem. But you will find One who spoke with authority. And I want you to have a life that really speaks with authority. Authority and power, being synonyms, really. I want your life to be a life of power, and these are the things that make it that. And don't ever forfeit those, for the tradeoff tragically belongs to those who are judged by the Lord in the remainder of this passage.

My prayer for you is that you would be the men that God wants you to be. Let's pray.

Father, we acknowledge, always acknowledge that all we know is what You've told us. We can observe things in the world from a physical perspective. But when it comes to knowing You and knowing Your truth and knowing Your will, we have to turn to Scripture. And when we turn there, we find that everything we need is there. I pray for these men. I pray that...they would have great authority in their ministries, great power in their ministries. Not power born of oratory, not power born of force of personality, not power...produced by some measure of drama...but the power...of a life that is lived in the light of Your truth. Power that comes...from those very things we have discussed. Authenticity, a real call, simplicity, complete and utter commitment to the Word of God, integrity...that they live what they preach, sympathy, that they care deeply, loving their people enough to help them with the load they bear. That their lives would be marked by spirituality. That it would never be for show on the outside, but always evidence of Your work on the inside. And that capstone, humility, that their lives would be marked by humility, seeking no reputation, no titles, no places, other than to stand among the brothers as faithful servants. Someday having been humbled here to be glorified in Your presence. Bless them, Father, we pray. Christ's name. Amen.

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