

Growing in Holiness

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Date: 21 January 2024

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[0 : 00] Well, Stephen Malingall has been leading us through studies in the book of Leviticus, and we're going to turn there now in our Bibles.

If you don't have a Bible, if you need one, there's lots of them just outside the door there. Don't be shy. Pop out and grab one, and you'll be able to read along with us.

We're going to be reading together Leviticus chapter 21, and we're looking at chapter 22 as well. Well, we'll read just a few verses at the end, and you can read over some of the rest of it, perhaps during the offering time.

But we come to Leviticus chapter 21, and we're reading from verse 1. And the Lord said to Moses, speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them, no one shall make himself unclean for the dead among his people, except for his closest relatives, his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, his brother, or his virgin sister who is near to him because she's no husband.

For her, he may make himself unclean. He shall not make himself unclean as a husband among his people, and so profane himself.

[1 : 23] They shall not make bald patches on their heads, nor shave off the edges of their beards, nor make any cuts on their body. They shall be holy to their God, not profaning the name of their God.

For they offer the Lord's food offerings, the bread of their God. Therefore, they shall be holy. They shall not marry a prostitute or a woman who's been defiled, neither shall they marry a woman divorced from her husband.

For the priest is holy to his God. You shall sanctify him, for he offers the bread of your God. He shall be holy to you. For I, the Lord who sanctify you, am holy.

And the daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by whoring, profanes her father. She shall be burned with fire. The priest who is chief among his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil is poured, and who has been consecrated to wear the garments, shall not let the hair of his head hang loose, nor tear his clothes.

He shall not go in to any dead bodies, nor make himself unclean, even for his father or for his mother. He shall not go out of the sanctuary, lest he profane the sanctuary of his God.

[2 : 42] For the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is on him. I am the Lord. And he shall take to wife in her virginity, a widow or a divorced woman, or a woman who's been defiled, or a prostitute.

These he shall not marry. But he shall take as his wife a virgin of his own people, that he may not profane his offspring among his people. For I am the Lord who sanctifies him.

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to Aaron, saying, None of your offspring throughout their generations who has a blemish may approach to offer the bread of his God.

But no one who has a blemish shall draw near. A man blind or lame or one who has a mutilated face or a limb too long, or a man who has an injured foot or an injured hand or a hunchback or a dwarf or a man with a defect in his sight or an itching disease or scabs or crushed testicles.

No man of the offspring of Aaron and the priest who has a blemish shall come near to offer the Lord's food offerings. Since he has a blemish, he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God.

[3 : 54] He may eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy and of the holy things, but he shall not go through the veil or approach the altar, because he has a blemish, that he may not profane my sanctuaries.

For I am the Lord who sanctifies them. So Moses spoke to Aaron and to his sons and to all the people of Israel.

And verse 22 goes on, giving a lot of detail about offerings and so on. But it's all summed up at the end in verses 31 to 33, which we'll read, So you shall keep my commandments and do them.

I am the Lord. And you shall not profane my holy name, that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel. I am the Lord who sanctifies you.

Who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I am the Lord. Amen. And may God bless to us his word.

[5 : 11] Well, good morning, everyone. Please do keep your Bibles open at Leviticus 21 and 22, as we spend some time together here this morning. Over these past few weeks, as we've been going through these chapters on holiness in Leviticus, the Lord has been shaping his people into his likeness.

He has redeemed them to be his. So they are to bear his mark of ownership in all they do. From the bedroom to the workplace, to the field, to the court, all of Israel's life is to be shaped into something that revealed who God was.

And that they belong to him, him alone. In chapters 18 and 20, the people were to be sexually pure, holding marriage and honor.

And in chapter 19, where holiness meant loving people, loving your neighbor, even as you love yourself. And in these chapters we're in this morning, the Lord continues to shape his people in holiness.

That's the chief concern of this passage, that the Lord will sanctify his people, set them apart for him, grow them in holiness to himself.

[6 : 29] And he is telling them that if you are to grow into this holy nation that he wants them to be, they need good leadership. Their leaders are to be holy.

We are to preach the whole gospel and instruct the people towards spiritual maturity. Because we don't each individually make our own way towards holiness, but are shepherded and led there by those who have been entrusted with our care.

That's how the Lord will sanctify his people, grow them in holiness. Because he is the great sanctifier of his people. He is the one who will grow his people in holiness through right worship of himself.

And so it follows that those leading that worship should be people who treat the Lord with reverence. Not profaning him. Not treating him as common. Making him just like the other gods of the nations around them.

But treating him as holy. Honoring God and submitting to him in their personal lives, as well as their public teaching. But before we get into the text, it's worth addressing how we'll be applying this today, as much of this will be directed towards our leaders, those set aside, those ordained for ministry.

[7 : 51] And in part, to those who have spiritual responsibility in other ways, such as leading ministries or leading growth groups. The line from priest to minister is not a direct one, as they fulfill slightly different roles.

The priest, for example, was the mediator for the people, representing them before the Lord in their sacrifices and offerings. And of course, that aspect of their ministry has been fulfilled in Christ.

He is our mediator. So that is not passed on to ministers today in the same way. However, their role as the teachers of the Lord's people goes on. As Leviticus chapter 10, verses 11 and 12, we don't need to turn there, puts it like this.

It says they were to distinguish between the holy and the common, and to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the Lord has spoken to them by Moses. While we want to be very clear that our ministers are not priests, as the mediator role has been fulfilled in Christ alone, some priestly duties remain.

That role of teaching and instructing the Lord's people continues. That role of bringing the word to them is principally done by our leaders. So we'll be carefully applying these instructions to our leaders as they shepherd the flock spiritually to instruct and teach the people of God.

[9 : 11] So let's look at our passage. First, we'll look at verses 1 to 16 of chapter 21, where we see that character matters.

God's leader, character matters. In this section, there are a series of laws about the conduct of priests, particularly around their personal lives in the areas of sex and death.

And in it, they're held to a higher standard of holiness than that of the average Israelite, as they bear more responsibility for the people. Verses 1 to 9 are addressed to all priests, saying that they are to steer clear of mourning rituals, apart from their closest relatives.

You can see that in the second half of verse 1. No one shall make himself unclean for the dead among his people, except for his closest relatives, his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, his brother, or his virgin sister.

And this points back to the clean and unclean laws in chapters 11 to 15, where touching any dead body, any sign of death, rendered a person unclean, unable to enter the tabernacle in worship.

[10 : 21] And that's a particular issue for the priests, as their whole calling was to work in the tabernacle, presenting offerings to the Lord, interceding on behalf of the people.

So if they were to become unclean, their utterly crucial role of mediator would not be done, wouldn't be fulfilled. That's why, apart from their closest relatives, they were to abstain from being in contact with dead bodies.

So the normal ways of expressing grief culturally, they weren't available to them, because they had a higher calling to serve the Lord. Verse 6, they had the privilege of serving the Lord, so they were to be set apart for that.

It wasn't just a 9 to 5 job for them that they could sign in and sign out of, but a calling, a vocation, a life, which they were set apart for. So, their personal lives outside the tabernacle mattered.

That's why there are then these laws about who they could marry. Verse 7, not a prostitute, or a woman of disrepute, or a divorcee. There was a higher standard for them than for the rest of their Israelites.

[11 : 32] They were set apart for this life, so weren't to be compromised or distracted by questioning of their family and of their reputation. Then, verses 10 to 15 are addressed to Aaron, the high priest.

When it comes to Aaron, he, the high priest, was held to an even higher standard than that of the rest of the priests. Verses 10 to 12 cover mourning rituals again, which Aaron knew very well by this point.

In chapter 10, his two sons, Nadab and Abihu, sinned against the Lord, and Aaron was not permitted to come into contact with their bodies once they had been killed because the high priest could not defile himself with death.

He was the one who had closest access to God's presence, so was most at risk of being consumed by him if he came close while unclean. His role of mediation is so utterly crucial to Israel's relationship with the Lord that it couldn't be diverted from.

That was to be his sole focus in life. Then, verses 13 to 15 cover the wife he has to find. It's put in the positive first. She must be a virgin, and end of verse 14, she must be an Israelite, not from outside the covenant community.

[12 : 48] And this is here to protect the high priestly line, as that was a hereditary role passed from father to son throughout the generations. Ensuring that the high priest married a virgin meant that the high priestly line could not be questioned.

There was no argument about who the successor would be, and that role would continue to be respected and function in the way the Lord intended it to. Worship of him would continue.

The priests were held to a high standard, and the high priests to an even higher standard, so that they could go on fulfilling their calling, their service, without question or distraction. And the Lord was ensuring that proper worship of him was going on throughout the generations.

And what this section is teaching us is that there is a rightness to holding our leaders to a higher standard, as their personal lives matter.

We live in a world where our politicians in particular say that things that happen in their personal life doesn't matter, that it's utterly disconnected from their ability to lead, that cheating on their wife doesn't impact their ability to be honest with the nation, or their own lawbreaking doesn't disqualify them from being those making the law.

[14 : 02] We want our leaders to have integrity in the way they live. That's true in the world, but it's especially true in the church. Because if our leaders are those, and, well, sometimes they are, who are willing to treat the people closest to them poorly, even betraying or cheating on them, then surely that will impact how they are as leaders.

Because we are whole, undivided people who don't have one section of ourselves for work and the other for personal. And so the people we look to for leadership and those we put forward for ministry should be those who treat the Lord as sanctified.

Not necessarily the one with the brain the size of a small country, not necessarily the one who outwardly looks the most impressive. But the type of men we should be putting forward for ministry should be those who evidently love and fear the Lord, whose personal lives show that they submit to him and follow his ways.

They live in holiness, they're generous, they're honest, they're loving. They don't leave a trail of messy relationships behind and they don't have a lax attitude to following God's law, but they honor him, clearly showing that they serve him alone.

They are holy, meaning they love the Lord and they love people. They're not hidden away in their study all week, so deep in theology that they are utterly inaccessible to normal human beings.

[15 : 27] But they are loving people as well as working hard at the word. Because character matters. Even more so than teaching ability, character matters.

That's why James said, not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. Those who have the privilege of teaching God's people, particularly from the front, but also in other ministries like growth groups or teaching people, have the privilege and responsibility of handling the word of God with his flock.

So it's right that we are held to a higher standard so that it does not bring the gospel we preach into disrepute. And that's why if you are leading a ministry and are living in sin, you may be asked to step back from that ministry for a while until repentance and restoration have taken place.

We need to guard the leaders of God so that the people of God will not be led into sin themselves. And just to be very clear here, this passage is not here so that the church has a stick to beat ministers with, pouring over every inch of their lives with a fine-tooth comb.

Their personal lives are important, but that does not mean that every area of their life is to be under the microscope of every church member. No one would become or remain a minister if that were the case.

[16 : 54] And it would create a very unpleasant church to belong to. Because every minister is still a sinner in need of God's grace and restoration. But, there is to be a decency about them.

There is to be above reproach in their way of living because character matters. If the flock of God is to grow in holiness and live out the gospel, we have to have leaders who do it too.

Leaders who have evidently given their whole lives to the Lord and who have shown that faith by loving his people, by loving and serving the church. Secondly, we'll see from verses 16 to 24 that God's leaders preach the fullness of salvation.

God's leaders preach the fullness of salvation. Now, this is a very unusual section. I'm sure that when it was read, he thought that or maybe even wished that it wasn't there. It doesn't quite pass the bar of the 2010 Equalities Act of the UK Parliament.

And these verses could be used as a discouragement to those with physical blemishes, some of which we would call disabilities, if you were to utterly mistreat this passage.

[18 : 03] But instead, this small section is holding out the great hope of full bodily redemption, which surely those whose bodies bear the effects of the fall long for more. This section that we're in is holding out the great hope of full bodily redemption, which of course, those who bear the marks of the fall feel more keenly than anyone else.

So this is not here to crush those with blemishes or disabilities as we may call them, but console them and lift their eyes to the wonderful hope of the gospel and the full salvation that Christ delivers.

So in this law, we see the fullness of salvation displayed as the priests played their role in dramatizing as an acted parable the bodily redemption we will enjoy when Christ returns.

verse 17 states that none of your offspring throughout their generations who has a blemish may approach to offer the bread of his God.

No priest was allowed to enter to approach to draw near to the tent of meeting if they had a physical blemish. Then the passage goes on to list all the different physical blemishes that would render that priest unable to make this particular offering.

[19 : 18] And this isn't a comprehensive list. It doesn't list every physical blemish but it's giving Israel the map of how they are to apply this. And the emphasis is on drawing near to the Lord's presence in the tabernacle.

That's a repeated phrase in this section. Approach, draw near, come near. It's saying something about what it means to be in God's presence in his house.

And to understand what's going on here we'll see three aspects of this practice that gives dignity and hope to those with physical blemishes or disabilities. Firstly, that's that priest with blemishes remained priests.

They were not denied the status as Israel's representatives and mediators but they could still function in almost all of the priestly duties. And verse 22, they were still provided by the Lord in the same way that their peers were.

They still had bread from their father's table. given provision by him on an equal footing to every other priest. They weren't demoted to a second-rate priesthood but were lifted up as servants of the King of Heaven teaching and instructing the Israelites on how to live life in God's blessing.

[20 : 33] Secondly, they were far more honoured than those with disabilities in the ancient world. In pagan cultures, there is plenty of evidence to show us that babies with disabilities were routinely killed.

thought of as less valuable than other babies. And if you think that practice has ended, well, take a look at the abortion rates for babies identified with Down syndrome in the womb.

90% of them are killed. Their lives are, in our law, in black and white, deemed acceptable of killing right up to term, not worthy of the same protection as others.

But in the Bible, they are given the dignity of being Israel's representatives, honoured, set apart as holy to the Lord, lifted up among the 12 tribes of Israel. The Lord's people should always be those who have a voice for lives which are deemed less valuable by our society.

And ancient Israel was a surprising trailblazer in that. And thirdly, they played their part in dramatising the fullness of salvation. Now, to understand this, we need a little bit of tabernacle theology.

[21 : 41] The tabernacle, the tent of meeting in which God's presence rested, was like a miniature version of the Garden of Eden. It was full of images that pointed towards God's royal garden.

For example, it had a lampstand which reminded everyone of the tree of life. It had branches that flowed out and cups that were shaped like flower petals, always in bloom, beaming out light.

There were columns of acacia wood that looked like grand trees as the Lord's presence walked among them. And the veil which separated the tabernacle from the outside world was decorated with cherubim guarding the entrance.

The tabernacle was a visual reminder of Eden, but as well as looking back, it was looking forward too. The most holy place, the Holy of Holies, is described in similar dimensions to the New Jerusalem of Revelation.

There are only two cubes in the Bible, the most holy place and the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven to earth. There's a deliberate allusion to the most holy place when the New Jerusalem is described.

[22 : 54] And so as the priests interacted with the Lord in this, they were modeling the created goodness and unblemished nature of humanity in Eden, functioning as like a type of Adam, representing him, while also looking forward to their full redemption and the new creation.

In dramatic form, they were picturing the full redemption of our bodies in their work in the tabernacle because the Lord will not only redeem our souls, but our bodies also.

So as the priests with physical blemishes submitted to this, to having a slightly restricted role, they were contributing to the visual theology of the tabernacle, teaching the people as it presented the ideal of man in God's presence, being fully healed and sanctified by the Lord, unblemished.

That's why in verse 23, it says that their presence there would profane or make common the Lord's sanctuaries. Because the tabernacle was an otherworldly thing, pointing forward to the full salvation that the Lord promises he will deliver, where physical blemishes will be no more.

And surely the people who look forward to that most are those with physical blemishes that make life harder or more painful than most have it. Don't you long for the time when our bodies, along with our souls, will be redeemed?

[24 : 19] When our bodies will finally do as it was always meant to do? When the bones no longer creak? When we are not prone to breaking? I'm only in my 30s and I'm already counting the days, brothers and sisters.

So instead of this being a cruel shutting out to people with physical disabilities, this is a sign of hope that one day they would draw near to the Lord with perfectly healed bodies along with perfectly sanctified souls.

The salvation the Lord offers is full, making everything about us right and whole. And it is the responsibility of God's leaders to preach that gospel because the Lord is not only interested in restoring one nation or many people but the entire cosmos.

The scope of his salvation is nothing less than the entire created order, including the bodies of those who love him. We get a great example of this in the prophet Isaiah as he preaches of this, particularly in reference to those who were eunuchs, which is mentioned in the physical blemishes of Leviticus.

Isaiah preached this, he said, to the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls, see, they're going to be drawn near, brought in, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters.

[25 : 47] I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. The Lord has always held out the hope of full bodily redemption when we dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

That's why the tabernacle was presenting this idealized picture of life within God's presence. And so it's the responsibility of the leader to teach the fullness of the gospel.

Just as Israel's leaders were displaying the wholeness of salvation as they took part in their service in the tabernacle, the leaders of God are to continue to preach the fullness of the gospel, the whole counsel of God.

And we as his people shouldn't settle for any less than that. That's a great privilege for the preacher that they are not preaching of a gospel which is only saving people in part, but in whole.

They have far more to look forward to as the Lord reorders and restores his people and his whole creation. But if, also, there is a great responsibility for the preacher to preach the whole gospel unflinchingly.

[26 : 55] For to see the fullness of that salvation, the fullness of the word must be preached. If the Lord is going to shape everything about us into his holy people, then the full Christian life with its implications must be preached.

And to make a whole Christian, you need a whole Bible. The salvation the Lord brings is fully orb'd. And so his leaders in the word are to reach into every nook and cranny of our existence, even when it's uncomfortable, bending and shaping it into holiness.

The holiness that loves the Lord and loves our neighbor. Next, we'll see that God's leaders shepherd the flock in holiness. That's in chapter 22, verses 1 to 30.

And we're going to be covering a lot of ground quickly here, so we'll just take a few broad brushstrokes. In essence, this section teaches that the leaders are to abide by God's law and they are to instruct the people to do the same.

These verses are all considering the offerings that the people brought before the Lord. Verses 1 to 16 focus on the food that the priests were portioned from the offerings that they were given as their provision for the Lord.

[28 : 06] And the first half of that, verses 1 to 9, say very simply that if the priests were to become unclean in any way, then they could not eat of anything that had been offered to the Lord. You can see that from verse 3.

If any one of all your offspring throughout your generations approaches the holy things that the people of Israel dedicate to the Lord, while he has an uncleanness, that person shall be cut off from my presence.

The punishment for ignoring this was severe. cut off from God's presence. Verse 9 states that they would bear their sin and die for it. The priests were to treat what the Lord made holy with respect, not approaching the Lord while unclean, unfit to be in his presence.

Verses 10 to 16, however, speak about eating the holy things offered to the Lord. These are the portions of food that were dedicated to the priests after offerings such as the grain offering or the peace offering.

And from that, a portion was always allotted to the priests as their due, their provision to keep them set apart for the work the Lord had given them. They weren't to be distracted by any other job but wholly set apart for their work which is why they were provided for in this way.

[29 : 23] These verses state that only those within the direct household of the priest may eat of the holy things. Second half of verse 11, anyone born in the priest's house may eat of his food. The priest was to have enough food to provide for his family and if anyone took from his portion, verse 14, he is to pay it back with interest, an extra 20%.

The priests were not there to be mistreated or taken advantage of but respected as men the Lord had set apart for his service which the people were blessed through.

Verses 17 to 30 then remind the people that the offerings they bring were to be as the Lord had instructed, as the Lord had commanded. They weren't to bring blemished animals into his presence but only the best as only the best is fit for the Lord's table.

If you were to offer up anything that has a physical blemish you would not be accepted in worship. And the point of these instructions is that the priests, it was their role to maintain good order in the worship of Israel.

They were spiritually responsible for the people so it was their job to ensure that the people were offering what the Lord commanded. and approached him the way he showed was the only way to approach him.

[30 : 38] And surely that is the same job that God's shepherds of the flock have today. They are to be the ones who instruct the people in right worship of the Lord as they live it out themselves.

So we are to be a people who support to, support, and submit to our leaders. We are not to leave them with no food on the table but ensure that they are well provided for.

For the scripture says, you shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain and the labourer deserves his wages. We should make sure that our ministers are supported in this way and we are to submit to their teaching.

just as the priests were to teach Israel what was acceptable to the Lord as they grew in holiness, our leaders are doing the same with us as all of us learn what is acceptable when we offer up our whole selves to him as living sacrifices which is our spiritual worship as Paul reminds us in Romans.

Each of us as we come to the word week by week are to take the posture of humility learning what it means to live as God's holy people from those who preach to us. The word preached to us is not here to entertain us but to shape us into those who are holy and acceptable to the Lord because the word is here to shape our whole life not just scratch an intellectual itch.

[32 : 05] So just as each Israelite had to humble themselves before the word so do we. The word is to be our guide our teacher and our friend in Christ and he has blessed the church with men who deliver that word to us.

That's what we saw in Ephesians 4 a couple of weeks ago with Phil. The Lord Jesus has blessed his church with pastor teachers who are shepherding the flock of God equipping all of us for the work of ministry.

So let us continue to be humbled by the word of God by hearing and doing the word as it's preached to us not arrogantly not above the word and above the preacher but with hearts of humility listening to the word of the Lord as he softens our hearts and remakes us in his image as each of us is a new creation in Christ.

Our last point which we'll finish with very briefly is from the closing section in verses 31 to 33 where we'll see that God sanctifies his people through his leader's work. God sanctifies his people through his leader's work.

Let's read from verse 31. Look there with me as the Lord gives a final charge to his priests and to all his people. So you shall keep my commandments and do them.

[33 : 26] I am the Lord and you you the priests you shall not profane my holy name that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel.

I am the Lord who sanctifies you who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I am the Lord. This is not unrelated to what has preceded but is the summary of what comes before.

The Lord is not saying that the work of the priests is all smoke and mirrors and he's really doing it himself. Instead he's saying that through this work through the priest's devotion to him their preaching of the full gospel and their shepherding of the flock the people will grow in holiness.

Verse 32 through the priests not treating the Lord as common not profaning his name not treating it like dirt the people of Israel will be sanctified. They are his people who he has brought to himself out of the land of Egypt that they will be his so that they will walk in a manner worthy of the gospel that they would live out their calling as those saved by the Lord.

And for that to happen they need good leaders who will lead rightly in that. Israel needed the priests to ensure that the law was taught that the Lord's gracious provision of these sacrifices for sins was ordered properly so their relationship with him would continue and they would grow in holiness.

[34 : 54] So they would continue to love the Lord with all their heart soul mind and strength and love their neighbours themselves. they needed the priests to lead them rightly in that people who were set apart for that task.

Israel's history is marked with priests who were faithful who led the people in right worship of the Lord but it is also marked with many priests who did not respect the Lord who profaned his name made it common as though he was just some other pagan god and the people always followed in their path the prophets regularly criticised the priests for their sin which seeps through into the people of God.

There was a direct correlation between the faithfulness of the leaders and the faithfulness of the people and similarly it is through faithful pastoring faithful leading of God's people today that his flock will grow up into mature sheep who are set apart for him totally devoted to the Lord.

Every church ends up looking a bit like their leaders both for good and bad it is inevitable. They are our chief influencers and we are being shaped by them as we sit under the word preached to us every week.

So we should commit ourselves to praying for them to upholding our leaders as they dedicate themselves to their set apart work of serving the Lord in this way. The Lord wanted all the congregation to hear this passage.

[36 : 25] This wasn't just a secret little section to be read for the priests alone but all Israel was to have this read among them. We have responsibility in this as church.

We can't just point our finger at leaders and say that everything falls on them. So pray that your leaders love their wives. Pray that they bring their children up in the fear and love of the Lord.

Pray that they are generous and honest. Pray that they don't stray into sin but are battling against it day by day. And when they do stray pray that they repent towards the Lord in humility.

Pray that they don't shrink back from preaching the fullness of the gospel but teach the wholeness of salvation for all people. And pray that they have the boldness to tell us when we are in the wrong when offerings that we give are unacceptable to the Lord when our lives need shaped and corrected rightly.

And remember that through this through the Lord shaping his shepherds to love him more that we are being sanctified through this so we are to thank the Lord for them and to submit to his word.

[37 : 35] For I am the Lord who sanctifies you who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I am the Lord. Let's pray.

our Father God, we thank you that you have not left us alone in our walk of faith but that you have given us leaders who teach us the way.

Please protect them in holiness guarding them from the evil one. Let them not be ashamed of your word but give them boldness to preach the fullness of the gospel to all and help all of us to grow in holiness by listening to them and submitting to them as all of us learn what it means to treat you as holy.

In Jesus' name. Amen.