

The Gracious Rule of God via Christ via Presbyteries

Isaiah 9:6-7, Matt 28:18-20, Hebrews 13:17

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Introduction:

As we are looking at ordaining new elders and are receiving nominations,

- I thought I'd break from our regular series in Mark to speak on the government of the church.
- Today, I want to answer the question, **How does God wish to rule over His people today?**
- I will be taking you to many different passages as we go along today.

Since we have already had our Scripture reading from Isaiah 9:6-7, Matthew 28:18-20, and Hebrews 13:17, we will jump right into our subject...

- Again, "How does God wish to rule over His people today?"

I. First, what do I mean by "rule over His people?"

A. After all, God rules over everything, doesn't He?

1. He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, He is the only Lawgiver, and He is the Judge of both angels and men... all must answer to Him.
 - Hebrews teaches us that it is appointed unto us to die, and that after that comes the judgment.
2. He is also sovereign, working all things according to the council of His own will (Eph 1:11), doing whatever He pleases in all of heaven and earth (Ps 115:3).
3. In this sense, there is nothing that is not under His rule.

TRANS> But that is not what I am talking about this morning when I speak of Him *ruling over His people*.

B. I am talking to you this morning about what we might call *His gracious rule over His church*.

1. It is the rule that God promised to have over Abraham in Gen 17:7 when He said that He would be Abraham's God:
 - **"I will establish my covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you."**
 - This is obviously much more than His rule over all of His creatures.
 - This is personal rule over His people, over His elect, over His church, over those who are in a special covenant relationship with Him.
2. This is a restoration of a relationship with us as His people and with Him as our God.
 - We were cut off from God as our God by the fall—by our own rebellion in our first father Adam—so that Scripture testifies in Romans 5:12:
 - **...through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—**

- So when God comes and establishes His covenant with His people, it is the restoration of this relationship that is in view.
 - And of course in a restored relationship with God—being His people means that He rules over us as our God and cares for us as His people.
 - Jesus used God’s statement to Moses that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were dead and buried) to prove that there would be a resurrection...
 - because God is not the God of the dead, but of the living (Lu 20:38).
 - If He is our God, it means that He will restore us body and spirit and will be our God forever—it is an everlasting covenant.
3. The wonderful promise, **“I will be your God and you will be my people,”** or its equivalent is used from Genesis to Revelation to describe this restored relationship to God as our Lord.
- We have just seen it in God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 17:7...
 - It appears in Exodus 6:7 when God brings His people out of Egypt and says: **“I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.”**
 - 1 Chronicles 17:22 says of God: **For You have made Your people Israel Your very own people forever; and You, LORD, have become their God.**
 - In Jeremiah 30:22, the LORD says: **“You shall be My people, And I will be your God.”**
 - It appears in Ezekiel 36:28 when the LORD is restoring His people and says to them: **“Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.”**
 - 2 Corinthians 6:16 says: **And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.”**
 - And in Hebrews 8:10, the LORD says: **“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”**
 - And at the end of the Bible, we have Revelation 21:3 where John says: **And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.”**
 - You can see from this small sampling, (many more examples could be given) that this is a very important promise to God’s people from Genesis to Revelation.
 - It is not made to everyone, but to those chosen by free grace, not through any merit of their own, to be His people.
 - A cause for much thanksgiving!

TRANS> But now we must move on so that I can show you how God wishes to rule over His people.

- This is something we have been looking at in the Gospel of Mark lately...

II. God rules over His people through the mediation of Jesus Christ, His Son.

- A. After the relationship of the human race with God was broken by our rebellion,
- God promised to His people that He would give us a Son who would rule over those He appointed to salvation.
1. One place this promise is given is Isaiah 9:6-7 where the prophet says: **For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.**
- This shows us that God establishes a kingdom with this Son who is born to us, ruling over us forever through Him.
 - Instead of God who is spirit ruling over us directly, He promises this Son who will be born of us to administer His rule.
 - The idea is that we will go to God through Him and that He will bring God and His gracious rule to us.
 - It is clear from this passage that this Son who is born is Himself God, for He is called by divine names... Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.
 - The LORD affirms that the Son born to us is God in Micah 5:2 when He says that from Bethlehem **shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.**
2. As God from eternity born man, He is the mediator given to bring God's rule to us.
- 1 Timothy 2:5 describes Him as the one Mediator between God and man.
 - He is the one who connects God and fallen human beings—being Himself both God and man.
3. It is, therefore, only through Him, that we can be restored to God's rule.
- As He Himself told us in John 14:6, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”**
 - Apart from Him, we are still in desperate rebellion, cut off, and condemned.
 - John the Baptist describes Him as **“The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”**
 - He became the sacrifice for our sins.
 - Without His sacrifice, and our faith in it, there is no way for us to be cleansed from our sins.
 - That is why we are baptised in His name, and that is why, at the Lord's Supper, He tells us that His blood is the blood of the New Covenant by which we have remission, or forgiveness, of our sins.
 - Hebrews 10:12-14 says of Him: **But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. ¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.**
 - Therefore, unless we come to Him in faith, we cannot be reconciled to God as our God, but are still cut off from Him.
 - God does not rule over us as our God apart from Him...but...

- B. All those who come to Him to be reconciled to God are restored to God's rule through Him.
1. Jesus describes cleansing by Him and obedience to Him as the two main characteristics of our restored relationship to God through Him in Matt 28:18-20.
 - This is after His resurrection, but before He ascends up into heaven.
 - He meets with His disciples and He says (again, in Matt 28:18-20): **“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen.**
 - a. You will notice first of all that as risen Mediator, He has been given all authority in heaven and earth.
 - As the Son of God, He had all authority already, but now He has authority as Mediator to do what He describes here—to make the nations disciples to God.
 - b. You see that they are baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
 - Baptism signifies cleansing from sin, so Jesus is declaring that He has authority to cleanse us from our sin... as we have already seen.
 - c. But more pertinent to our subject today about God ruling over us, you see that Jesus also instructs His apostles to teach those who are baptised to observe all things He has commanded them.
 - In other words, He has given commands to His apostles and they are to convey these commandments to us.
 - He is going to heaven to reign, and He left them here with His commandments to give His commandments to us!
 - They are His agents to command us in His ways.
 - He even said to them in Luke 10:16: **“He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me.”**
 2. His apostles were very faithful in conveying His commandments to us.
 - We know from Acts and from the epistles that they went around teaching and preaching the gospel, and establishing churches according to His will.
 - And they said things like this: **1 Cor 11:23: For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread...**
 - And things like this: **Php 4:9: The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.**
 - Notice that it was not only what they said but also what they did that was to be followed.
 - In 2 Thess 2:15, Paul said: **Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.**
 - The traditions of men are not to be followed, but the traditions of the apostles are from Christ and are to be followed.

TRANS> But how does the LORD make known to us, (we who live today,) what the apostles did and taught so that we might follow it today?

C. He makes His will known to us through the Scriptures.

1. 2 Timothy was one of the last epistles that Paul wrote, and in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 he said: **All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

- This makes it clear that we have everything we need to know in Scripture.
 - The word *thoroughly furnished* was a word used for providing the things you needed for a ship going to sea—you had to have everything you needed because when you are at sea, you can't go to Walmart to get some sunscreen.
 - We don't need new revelation about church government—we need to follow what we have already been given in the scriptures.
- It is important to know that when the apostles wrote, they knew that they were writing Scripture that was inspired by God.
 - In one of his earliest letters, Paul said, **1Th 2:13: For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.**

2. When we turn to Scripture, we can be sure that we have a true guide for our faith and practice from the living Lord.

- We are to test everything we do by the Scripture.
- When some of the Corinthians, claiming to speak as prophets, said things that were contrary to what Paul had taught them, he said,
 - **1Co 14:37: If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.**
- What a grand thing it is to have the Scriptures to guide us in all that we believe and do. Our Lord has been very good to us.
 - When the church has drifted, it gives a basis from which to judge.
 - The Spirit does not ever guide us contrary to the Holy Scriptures, He enables us to understand and follow the Scriptures.

TRANS> Now we are ready to get to our main point.

- How does Christ wish to exercise His rule (to govern us) today in the world?

III. The government that He has appointed is government by presbyteries.

A few considerations...

- I don't mean that a church must be called 'Presbyterian'... there are many churches like the United Reformed Church or the Free Church of Scotland that have presbyterian government but do not have the name 'Presbyterian' in them.
- I also do not mean that everything we are to do is dictated in Scripture,
 - There are aspects of government that are common to other societies... such as what constitutes a quorum for a meeting, that we are free to decide and what we decide about these things can be modified.
- But our Lord, through His apostles, has revealed the basic structure of church government that we *are* all to follow...
 - And it is government by presbyteries.

A. What is a presbytery?

1. A presbytery is a group of elders (the Greek word for elder is *presbuteros*) who rule under Christ in the church.
 - Let me be clear that I am using the word *presbytery* in a broader way than we do in the ARP. The way I am using it is:
 - what we refer to as the local session of elders is the presbytery (or body of elders) of the local church...
 - what we refer to as the presbytery (exclusively) is the presbytery (or body of elders) of the regional church...
 - and what we refer to as the synod is the presbytery (or body of elders) of the North American church.
2. I am using the word *presbytery* simply as a plurality of elders whether it is two or three in a local congregation or a general assembly or synod made up of elders from different nations.
 - It is all one and the same in essence—a group of elders overseeing the church as Christ’s servants and under-shepherds.

B. Now let me show you how Paul established presbyteries in every church, thereby establishing a pattern of church government for us to follow...

1. When he and Barnabas went on their first missionary journey, they went from one city to another preaching the gospel—the good news that Messiah had come.
 - They ordinarily started out preaching in the synagogue where there was already a presbytery (elders) that ruled on the local level.
 - Usually, the result was that some in the congregation believed and some rejected the gospel...and Paul and Barnabas were sometimes forced to leave town...
 - Some of the ones who believed were already elders and there were those who received the gift of prophecy to help these fledgling churches.
 - Nevertheless, we see that Paul and Barnabas went back to each church to make sure that each congregation had a presbytery (a body of elders) to govern them.
 - Look at they did in Acts 14:21-23: **They returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” ²³ So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.**
2. This was Paul’s ongoing practice from his first missionary journey to his last.
 - Years later, we learn that he sent Titus to Crete to set up this same kind of government by presbyters (elders) in every city.
 - Listen to what he says to Titus in 1:5: **For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—**
 - He refers to the absence of elders in every city as something that is lacking... a deficiency that needs to be rectified.

3. Clearly, the government that the apostles established and that the Holy Spirit has recorded for us in Scripture is government by presbyters.
 - I trust that you can see that this is so.
 - And as we saw before, the apostles were sent to do only what Christ had commanded.
 - We are to follow the pattern that they established for us in this.
- C. The Holy Spirit has even seen fit to record for us in the Bible which persons in the church are qualified to serve in the office of overseer or ruler in the church.
1. This is spelled out for us right here in Titus.
 - First of all, they must be *elders*—mature men—who serve.
 - In Titus 1:6-9: **If a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. ⁷ For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, ⁸ but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, ⁹ holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.**
 2. The Spirit has given us this information in the Scriptures to guide us in selecting elders to govern in our churches (more about that next week).
 - Notice that He calls the men who serve *bishops*—that is the word *episcopoi* which means *overseers*.
 - That is their task—to be an overseer in the church.
 - They are also called *shepherds*, *those that rule*, *they that admonish you*;
 - And congregations are commanded *to obey them* and *to submit to them in the Lord* and *to highly esteem them for the sake of their work*.
 - Hebrews 13:17 shows that they have real authority and responsibility in the church when it says: **Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.**
 - You can see from this that theirs is a position of authority and responsibility.
- D. It is helpful to understand that the whole idea of government by presbyters was not something that God introduced in the New Testament.
1. It was actually something that He continued from the Old Testament.
 - The elders are mentioned over and over as rulers of the Jews, both over the local assembly (synagogue) as well as over the entire assembly (they had the Sanhedrin, the seventy elders).
 - a. We see an example of local presbyteries of the Jews in Luke 7:3-5 where a centurion sends the elders of the Jews from the local synagogue to ask Jesus to come and heal his servant—the presbyters commend the centurion to Jesus as one who **loves our nation and has built us a synagogue.**
 - b. And of course you have the elders and chief priests that met as an assembly to consider what to do with Jesus. For example, in Mark 15:1, it says: **Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate.**
 - They did the wrong thing, but the form of government was from Moses.

2. The only difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament, as far as government, was that:
 - The elders in the OT church served with *priests and scribes*; whereas in the New Testament, they serve with *ministers of the word*, whether apostles, or evangelists (like Timothy), or prophets, or pastors, or teachers.
 - Eph 4:11-16 speaks of all of these *ministers of the word* as those who equip the saints and do the work of the ministry.
 - In 2 Tim 2:2, Paul declared that there was to be an ongoing succession of *ministers of the word* to preach: **And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.**
 - Like the apostles, they are, in fact, fellow elders or presbyters—
 - Peter calls himself a fellow elder in 1 Peter 5:1—so elders that labour in the word and elders that rule make up the presbytery at each level.
 - This New Testament distinction in the presbytery between teaching elders and ruling elders is alluded to in 1 Tim 4:17 where it says: **Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.**
 - So a presbytery has both ruling elders and elders who are ministers of the word serving together.

TRANS> There is much more that could be said about this...

- E. But let me show you also that, (as it was in the Old Testament), the elders not only form a presbytery (or session) at the local church level, but also at the regional level (like our Canadian Presbytery) and the national or international level (like our General Synod in the ARP).
 - I must say I was surprised at how clear this is in the Scripture when it was first shown to me—it is something that is often missed.
 1. Take a look at the presbytery at Ephesus.
 - Acts 19:9 tells us that Paul taught disciples daily in the school of Tyrannus for two years at Ephesus. Verse 10 says: **And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.**
 - This would suggest that the church at Ephesus was made up of many congregations in the region... it was what we would call a presbytery.
 - This becomes certain later on when Paul is passing near Ephesus and calls for a meeting of the Presbytery of Ephesus at Miletus... the meeting is described in Acts 20:17: **From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.**
 - Now notice how Paul speaks to them.
 - You can tell by the way Paul speaks to them that this was not two or three men from a single congregation—these were elders from lots of congregations who had the responsibility of overseeing those who taught the word among them:
 - Acts 20:28-30: **“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 For I know**

this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”

- These are elders from all the churches in the region presiding as a presbytery over those that taught within the bounds of their presbytery... charged with keeping watch over who preaches in their churches.
 - That is why in our churches we do not have the local congregation, but the regional presbytery take responsibility for ordaining ministers of the gospel.
 - A larger body made up of multiple *ministers of the word* and *elders* is much more suited to this responsibility.
 - It is their task to ordain ministers of the word and to discipline them as needed.
2. We see regional presbyteries like this at Corinth, Antioch, and especially at Jerusalem.
- Let's look at the church at Jerusalem as another clear example.
 - They had membership in the tens of thousands, but they met in homes.
 - They were one regional presbytery (like the Canadian Presbytery or like Ephesus) with oversight over many congregations, each with their own local presbyteries or sessions.
 - When Paul goes there in Acts 21, he meets with the elders at Jerusalem (the presbytery) and they tell him of how there are myriads that believe.
 - They give Paul instruction about how he is to conduct himself among them.
 - Acts 21:17-20: **And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. ¹⁸ On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰ And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, “You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law.”**
 - And then they go on to instruct him about how they want him to conduct himself to avoid causing unnecessary offense to the Jews...
 - The point is, the elders serve with authority not only over their local congregations, but also together as a presbytery over multiple congregations in their region.
3. But there are also even larger colleges of elders that serve with authority over the whole church, like the Sanhedrin of the Jews having elder representatives from all over.
- a. In Acts 15, such an assembly gathers at Jerusalem with elder representatives that Paul and Barnabas took with them from places like Syria and Antioch to determine whether or not the Gentiles need to be circumcised.
 - Even though there were apostles at this time, they follow the practice of meeting together with elders (showing that the OT government was to continue in the NT), to determine matters that concern the whole church.
 - In Acts 15:6, it says: **Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.**

- b. And then the decision that is made by this presbytery or general assembly or council is binding on all the churches:
 - Acts 16:4 says: **And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem**, showing that they had authority over all the churches.
- c. Ideally, we would have one general assembly over the entire church, but as it was in the OT when the kingdom was divided, so it is for us—only worse.
 - We are terribly divided.
 - Still, we need to do the best we can to follow the pattern of government that Christ has appointed.
 - One of the very things that divides us is our failure to follow the government that Christ clearly appointed for us by the apostles.
 - Early on, ambitious men started to depart from the traditions of the apostles and to pattern the church's government after that of the Roman Empire...with prelates (individuals in authority) claiming authority that God gave to presbyteries (colleges of elders) at every level...
 - Individual priests over congregations, bishops over regional churches, and eventually the pope over the entire church become the norm.
 - This was a gross perversion, but at the reformation, the reformers returned to the Scriptures and to Presbyterian government.
 - And then today, we have those who want more of a democratic government... they don't like having men who rule.
 - Instead of having elders that rule, they have rule by democracy where the congregation votes to make decisions about such things as who should be a member or who should be disciplined.
 - Yet, scripture has given this task to the presbytery made up of teaching elders and ruling elders... they are those who rule among us and they are those who are to be obeyed in the LORD.
 - They are the ones who are given authority to oversee.

IV. So what should you do with this information about church government?

- A. First of all, you should see that you place yourself under the government that Christ appointed.
 - 1. If He has ordained government by presbyteries, you need to place yourself under such government.
 - Hebrews 13:17 is very clear: **Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.**
 - If you reject those that Christ has appointed to rule for Him on earth in the church, you are rejecting His authority.
 - When our LORD sends persons and gives them authority to act in His name, you defy Him if you reject them.
 - That is the reason we, in the ARP, do not allow persons who are not under the authority of elders to come to the Lord's Supper...
 - They are rebelling against the authority of Jesus Christ.

2. Of course the elders are not to lord it over you.
 - In 1 Peter 5:2-4, the elders are instructed with these words: **Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;** ³ **nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;** ⁴ **and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.**
 - Elders have no authority to make their own rules, but only to enforce what Christ has appointed in His word by church discipline.
 - In Christ, we have true communion with Him by His Spirit, and if the elders are acting contrary to God's Word or adding to it,
 - they forfeit their authority over us at that point and can be ignored.
 3. But unless that is the case, they are to be honoured and obeyed.
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 says: **And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,** ¹³ **and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.**
- B. The second thing you should do, regarding elders, is to pray for them.
1. First, pray that God would raise up faithful elders among us and that we would be able to identify them.
 - We saw how the apostles laboured to appoint them in every church.
 - I'll have more to say about how we are to go about that in the future.
 - It is also good for you, if you are a man, to desire to serve the LORD and His people as an elder, and to seek to be qualified for such service.
 - 1 Timothy 3:1 says: **This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.**
 2. Secondly, pray for those that are already elders.
 - Pray that they would have wisdom and would represent Christ well in their leadership, truly caring for the flock over which they have been made overseers.
 - And pray that the LORD will protect them from the wicked one.
- C. The third thing you should do is to give thanks to Christ for the elders that He has placed over you.
1. It is so kind of Him to provide oversight to us... living men that He raises up to guard the church from error (as we saw in Ephesians 20) and to watch over our souls (as we saw in Heb 13:17).
 2. The elders of the church are His gift to us—a part of His gracious care to keep us flourishing and growing as His people.
 - Our Lord Jesus dearly loves us, and has provided all that we need to continue in His grace.
 - He has given His life on the cross, His Spirit in our hearts, His word to guide us, and elders to watch over us in this world.

Conclusion: All praise is due to our gracious God.

- We had broken away from Him in our fall and rebellion, but He has restored us under His dominion and authority by grace.
- Let us live gratefully and happily under His rule, in all the ways that He has established it... in Christ, in His word, and in the presbytery.