

Introduction to Titus

Titus

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, January 13, 2019

I want to invite you to turn in your Bibles to the Book of Titus. This morning we are starting a brand new series on the Book of Titus.

So if you want to turn there with me, and as you're doing that, just to get us thinking about the book, studies have shown that each year in Canada and the United States three times as many churches close as open; three times as many. This means that the whole look of the country is changing. As time goes on, the spiritual direction of Canada is going in reverse. Whereas Canada used to be a "Christian" nation, a nation made up of mostly Christians, with large numbers of people going to church, all of that is changing now. And things are going in the opposite direction. In certain provinces like Quebec, churches are closing to the tune of one per week, and they are selling something like 40 buildings per year, which is incredible. Every time you turn around, a church is closing. Everywhere you look, another one is shutting down, and it is being turned into a restaurant or record store or a funeral home.

In a church in Stratford Ontario, they turned it into a risqué dance hall where the women wear provocative clothing. They desecrated it and made it a joke. But all of this is to say that it is changing the look of the country. Because like it was in the States, many of the towns in Canada were originally built around churches. Wherever they built the town, the people would put a church in the center of it. You would have your courthouse, the police station and the church to say, "This is what we stand for. This is who we are." But all of that is changing now. Now the town is being built around a dance hall. Now it is being built around something else.

Several years ago, Mark Noll, a history professor at Notre Dame spoke at the American Society of Church History on the topic of "Whatever Happened to Christian Canada?" His lecture has been published into a book, if you want to read it. I got it for a Christmas Present. It is called "Whatever Happened to Christian Canada". He said that Canada used to be a largely Christian nation with churches on every corner. But, that has changed and he gave several reasons for it.

For one thing, he said that it is not very popular to be a Christian anymore in Canada. It is not the norm. So, people are leaving the church over that. Now there is a price to pay for following Christ here. Now you can be persecuted in some circles for hate speech or bigotry, so people want nothing to do with us. It is turning them away. It isn't what they signed up for.

Noll also said that many Canadian churches have embraced the values of the secular society, making them look just like the world; making them look just like the boys' or girls' club down the street. We don't like to talk about sin and death and judgement anymore. We don't want to talk about the cross and salvation and the empty tomb, because that is "intolerant". It offends people. So we talk just like the world does making people wonder: "Why should I go then? If the church talks just like the world does, what's the point? If I can get the same thing at the boys' or girls' club up the street, why bother?"

Noll also said that with the influx of other religions in Canada, with Islam and Hinduism and other things on the rise, the church is being crowded out. It is being lost in the shuffle. We could look at reasons for this. There are a lot of reasons why the church is dying in this country. But I think it is safe to say that we all feel the impact of it. We all know what this is like.

I told you last week that I have been in Canada for about two years now. January 17 will be my two-year anniversary. And I meet people all the time who tell me that they used to go to church. That is what they tell me. I hear it all the time. They don't tell me where they go, they tell me where they used to go. They don't tell me where they attend, they tell me where they used to attend. I tell them I am a pastor.

And that is what we talk about to the point that it makes you wonder: Does anybody still go anymore? Are there any Christians left in this country? With churches closing and becoming dance halls, with pastors refusing to talk about sin anymore, it makes you wonder: where is it all going to end? What is going to happen to Canada? Or maybe a more direct question is: what is going to happen to us? How do we keep our church from closing down? I am sure you have asked that before. If you haven't, you should have. How do we keep from going the way of the all of these others? How do we build a church that lasts?

Several years ago, in Atlanta Georgia, an article was posted in the Yellow Pages for the Church of God Grill. It was a famous chicken place downtown that was doing well. It piqued the interest of a local pastor who called to ask about it, to ask how they got the name. And they told him, "We had a little gospel church here, and we started serving chicken to the people who came. But they didn't like the gospel as much as the chicken, so we closed the church and turned it into a restaurant." I don't know about you, but I don't want that to happen here. I don't want to turn this into a restaurant. I don't want to stop preaching the gospel so we can serve chicken. I want to build something that will last.

So how do we do that? Where can we go to show us the way? We can turn to the Book of Titus. Paul wrote this book to show us how to build a church that lasts. He wrote it to show us how to build a church that will stand the test of time.

Just to give you a little background about this book, Titus is one of the last things that Paul ever wrote in the Bible. It contained some of his last words in Scripture. You can tell this by where it is placed in your Bibles. Some of you may know this, but the books in the Bible are divided up according to genre. They are divided up according to style or writing. So for instance, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are all placed together because they are the History Books. They give us the New Testament history. Then you come to the letters, the letters of Paul, Peter, James, John and Jude. They are all placed together as well. And Paul's letters are grouped into two categories: the letters to churches and the letters to individual people. Paul wrote letters to whole churches, to churches in Rome and to the church in Corinth and Galatia. Then he wrote letters to individuals, to Timothy, Titus and Philemon. These are all grouped together in your Bibles.

The interesting thing about these individual letters is that they were written towards the end of Paul's life. They were written when he was an old man. If you read these letters, you can see him calling himself "the aged" and talking about being poured out like a drink offering. He didn't do

that anywhere else in his writings. He didn't say that anywhere else. He says "the time of my departure has come," and I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course." This sounds like the words of a dying man. They sound like his final thoughts.

He also wrote letters to pastors. This is important because it shows you what he thought about at this point. He thought about the church. He thought about the body of Christ. All of them were written to pastors, except for Philemon. This is why Martin Luther said, "Titus is a short epistle, [it only contains 700 words or so in the original Greek] but it is a model of Christian doctrine in which is included all that is necessary for a Christian to know and live by." That is quite a statement. But Luther said that "It's all in here. Titus contains everything you need to know and live by. Nothing is left out of this book," because it was written to a pastor. I don't know if you know this, but pastors deal with everything in the job. Nothing is out of bounds. Another author said, "This letter covers everything. It tells us what effects the grace of God should have on our whole life." There you see it again. Titus covers our whole life. It covers everything, because it was written to a pastor. This is what pastors do, we deal with everything. When my phone rings, I never know what I am about to hear on the other line. The person could be calling about anything: finances, marriage, parenting, relationships, conflict, temptation, all of it comes up in the course of conversation. My job deals with all of it. And Titus' job was the same way. He was in the same line of work. So Paul wrote this letter to address that. "It tells us what effects the grace of God should have on our whole life."

He also talks about things that affect the church like, who can lead, and what kind of qualifications they should have. That is a big deal, isn't it? So goes the leader, so goes the people. So goes the shepherd, so goes the sheep. "So choose your leaders wisely," Paul says. "Be careful who you put into office." And he tells him how to do that. He talks about how to handle difficult situations like people who cause division and those who teach heresy. He tells us what true godliness looks like and how to promote it with people. He goes over the gospel again to make sure Titus remembers it – to make sure he doesn't forget. Paul covers everything in here. Titus is a very practical book. It is very hands on.

This is important, because we are at a very hands on stage in the life of our church. We are at a very practical moment, because we are coming up on our third year together, or our fourth year (depending on how you look at it). Our church conducted its first services in the basement of Stan and Lisa Stewart's home in the fall of 2015. So that is when we started, if you want to put a date on it. So I guess we are coming up on our fourth year as a church. We have been together for a while. And, as I showed you last week, we have done so much in that time. We have not been idle.

Just to mention a few things that we didn't talk about last week, on June 13, 2016, the church was officially incorporated. We received our status as a charitable institution, which was a big step for us. We became officially known as Grace Fellowship Church Chilliwack on that day. At the same time, you partnered with Grace Advance to help with the church planting process. You reached out to them for help and support. This led you to search for a pastor. You had several men come out to candidate. And in the fall of 2016, you called me to come. I remember when I first spoke to the Calling Committee they said, "We like your resume." I laughed and said, I don't like my resume. It looks painful to me. It has been a tough time." They said, "Yes, but we

want to know how you handled it.” So we talked about that. We had several meetings. And you asked me to come. Then we put together a membership process. We wrote up a covenant, and we had our first members join the church. We started several ministries. Then with your consent, about a year and a half ago, we formed an Advisory Council, so I wouldn’t have to make decisions alone, so this wouldn’t be a one-man show. We put together a team of men to help advise me and share the load.

Now, it is time for us to take the next step. Now it is time to go to the next phase of our journey together. The question is: what is it? What do we do now? We have done so much together. The Lord has been so faithful. We want to experience even more of His faithfulness, amen? We don’t want to stop here, so what do we do now? The Book of Titus tells us. It spells it out for us right here. It was written to a church in the same place as us. It was written to people who were asking the same questions.

To say this another way, God did not leave us without a map. I don’t know if you have ever tried to go somewhere without a map, but it can be dangerous. You could end up anywhere. Depending on whatever road you pick, depending on which path you take, you could get lost. A lot of churches are experiencing that today. They are lost. Like I just said, some of them look just like the world, because they are not following the map. They aren’t doing what God has told them to do in His Word. We don’t want to make that mistake here. We don’t want to lose our way. We want to follow the map. And to do that, we are going to look at the Book of Titus. I want to introduce you to it this morning.

So if you are taking notes this morning, our outline is pretty simple. I want to give you three introductions to the Book of Titus. That is our outline for today. That is what it is all about: three introductions to the Book of Titus. We have just finished the Gospel of John. Before that we did the Book of Romans and 1 Peter, which were excellent books. We learned a lot. But not it’s time to get real practical. Now it’s time for the rubber to meet the road. And to do that, we are going to look at the Book of Titus. And this morning I want to give you three introductions to this book.

The first one is: an introduction to the author. Let me start off by giving you an introduction to the author. We have said a little bit about him already. But, the ancients would often sign their names at the front of a letter so you would know who was addressing you. We sign ours at the end, but they signed this at the front, because letters were wrapped up in scrolls back then. So you couldn’t just go to the bottom of it to see who wrote it. It would take too long. You would have to unwind the whole thing. So for convenience sake, they put their name at the front of the scroll. And you see that here with this book.

If you read in verse 1 it starts out by saying, “Paul.” That is the author’s name right there: “Paul.” Paul wrote 13 letters in the New Testament, more than any other author. They all start out this way, with his name, “Paul.” This is interesting because the word “Paul” means “little”. It means “small one”. That is a strange way to start a letter – it is very odd. Some think he got that name because of his size. This could be the case, because we all know that big things come in small packages. (I say that because I am small. I can relate to Paul.) Or it could be because he thought

little of himself. His life was not about him anymore, it was about Christ. His ministry was not about him, so he named himself accordingly.

He also gave us his credentials at the start of the letters. He told us how he was qualified to write this. If you read on in verse 1 he says, “Paul, a bond-servant [of slave – the word could literally be translated ‘slave’] of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ.” These were his credentials. That is why he was qualified to write this. He was a servant or a slave of God. And he says that he was an Apostle. The word “apostle” here means “a messenger” or “a spokesman”. It refers to “someone who was sent on a mission”. Specifically, it referred to someone who was sent by Jesus to start His church. It was someone who was sent by Him to lay the foundation. Ephesians 2:20 says the church was “built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets.” That is what this is referring to. The church was built on their teaching, or their words, that were written in the New Testament. Jesus told Peter in Matthew 16 that, “You are Peter and upon this rock I will build My church.” That indirectly applied all of them. They were the rock that the church was built upon. That was their office. I am not an Apostle today. That is not what I do. The pastors and elders you see today are not Apostles either. No one is today, because the church has already been built. The foundation has been laid.

This also means that Paul had authority for what he said here. What he wrote had power. Paul wasn’t giving us suggestions when he wrote the Book of Titus. He was giving us God’s commands. He wasn’t giving us his own personal opinion about those things, he is giving us the words of Jesus Himself. He was His Apostle. Paul was writing a personal letter to Titus, but it wasn’t just personal. This was for everyone.

And I want to stop here for a moment and say that I don’t think most people get this today, do they? They don’t think the Bible is an authority on this subject. They don’t think this is for everyone, because they think the church is just a free-for-all. They think it is all up for grabs. When you talk to people, you hear things like, “It doesn’t matter how you do it. It doesn’t matter how you start a church, as long as you are sincere. As long as you do it with all your heart, God will approve. He will be okay with it.” Or they say, “It doesn’t matter as long as you preach the gospel. As long as you tell people about Jesus, the rest is up to you.” Let me ask you: is that what you read here? Is that what this says? Does Paul give his name and then say, “You can do whatever you want?” Does he say “Paul, a bond-slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ...Dear Titus, as long as you tell people about Jesus, the rest is up to you?” No, he doesn’t say that. He says this is how you do church. This is what it is supposed to look like.

This means that if you want God’s blessing on your church, you had better pay attention. If you want to build a church that lasts, you had better do what He says. I just told you about the number of churches that fail in Canada, but a major reason they fail is because of this. There are other reasons too. This isn’t the only one. Many of them simply don’t do what God says. They don’t obey Scripture. They think it is a free-for-all. They think it is all up for grabs. While I had trouble nailing down the numbers in Canada, it has been said that something like 80% of church plants in the United States fail. 80%. And, a lot of them fail for this reason. They have no Biblical basis for what they are doing. Somebody just got mad at somebody, and they started a church over it. Somebody just disagreed over the music or the bulletins or the carpet. Somebody just got upset or something and off they went. God never told us to do that. He never told us to

start a church just because somebody got mad at somebody. He never told us to do it just because of the colour of the carpet. He told us to build it on His Word. He told us to build it on the teaching of the Apostles. And if we want Him to bless our church, if we want it to last, we had better do what He said.

An employer once had an employee who would show up late for work and not do what he was asked to do. He was very lazy. He was unreliable and complained, until he went off and joined the Marines. He got enlisted in the Army. After several years of that, he went back and he was a changed person. He was entirely different. And the employer asked him, “What happened to you?” And the young man said, “I have learned the meaning of the word, ‘now’. I have learned how to obey.” My friends, I think we need to learn that in the church today. We need to learn the meaning of the word “now”. We need to learn how to obey the Word of God. God told us how to set up the church right here. There is no mystery to it. We just need to do what He says. We need to obey.

This leads us to a second introduction to the Book of Titus and that is: an introduction to the audience of the letter. First, Paul introduces us to the author, and he tells us that he was a bond-servant of God and an Apostle of Jesus Christ. He is Jesus’ messenger, which means that his words have authority. They have power, and we need to follow them. But that leads to a second introduction that he gives us. And that is an introduction to the audience of the letter. He tells us who this was written to. You can learn a lot about a letter by studying who it was written to, by understanding the time and circumstances with which they lived. With that in mind, flying through a lot here, Paul writes in verses 1-4,

1 Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, 2 in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago, 3 but at the proper time manifested, even His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior, 4 To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

I will go through the other verses next week, but that last verse tells you who this was written to. It was written to, “Titus, my true child in a common faith”.

The name “Titus” comes from the Greek word “Titan,” which means “great one” or “the giant”. This is funny because it means that you have Paul, “the little one” writing a letter to Titus, “the great one”. The dwarf is telling the giant what to do. I think that is funny. But Titus lived up to his name. He had a big part to play in the early church.

He appears 13 times in the New Testament. Nine of those appearances are found in the Book of 2 Corinthians, a very difficult church. 2 Corinthians 8 says that Paul sent him there to pick up one of the collections the Corinthians had made. So you could just imagine how hard that was (he collected their offering and took it to Jerusalem) - one of the meanest churches in the New Testament. Then 2 Corinthians 7 says that he carried Paul’s sorrowful letter to them, where he confronted them and called them out on their sin. Titus was in the middle of that as well. He was the bearer of bad news.

Galatians 2 says that Titus went with Paul to the Jerusalem Council to show them that a Gentile could be saved. If you remember in the council, in Acts 15, the Apostles were arguing about what to do with the Gentiles who were coming to faith in Christ. Could they join the church or not? So Paul brought one of them to the Council. He brought Titus, and he stood him in front of everybody and said, "See for yourself. Why don't you ask him if he is saved?" But Titus did that sort of thing in the Early Church. He went from one bad situation to another. And because of this, Paul had the greatest respect for him.

In several passages he called him "my brother in the faith" and "my partner". He calls him "my fellow worker". And in this letter, in verse 4, Paul calls him "my true child", because that is what Titus meant to him. He was like a son to Paul.

And the lesson we can learn from this is that it takes all kinds of people to serve the church, doesn't it? It takes all kinds of gifts. I told you last week that the Lord has given all of us gifts to use in serving the church. He has given us all kinds of abilities. And Titus is a great example of that. He demonstrates it right here, because Titus had the gift of "awkwardness", if we might call it that. He had the ability to fly into an awkward situation and smooth it out, make it better. Some people step into awkward situations and they make it worse; they blow it up. But not this guy. He had the opposite effect.

To say it another way, he could control his anger. Titus never let his emotions get the better of him. In one of his books that our ladies read some time ago, Alexander Smith Strauch said,

Some Christian people today who would never curse, steal, miss a prayer meeting, think nothing of getting angry toward anyone who disagrees with them...They feel perfectly justified in sending hate mail or spreading venom via the Internet.

One of the most important Biblical principles for handling conflict [and building the church] is to keep your anger in check. Most disputes wouldn't be nearly as unpleasant and unprofitable if people did not lose control of their tempers and say harsh and irrational things to one another. It makes problem solving far more difficult than it has to be...It destroys the church...It razes it to the ground.

Nothing can destroy a church faster than a bitter and angry spirit.

You guys have seen this. Church planting is hard work, isn't it? It is not easy. There are plenty of opportunities to get mad at people. There are plenty of opportunities to lose it. You are going to have people misunderstand you, ask you the same thing 20 times. That is pretty common in a church plant. It happens all the time. Miscommunication is common. You are going to have people disagree with you and not see you eye to eye. You are going to have people join that you may not like or they may not like you. Some people are just going to rub you the wrong way. They will just get on your nerves. If you get angry over that, you are going to destroy this thing. If you get impatient, mad at them, you are going to destroy the church. It has been said that anger doesn't solve anything, but it destroys everything. It will ruin everything you have. It has also been said that wars always have a reason but never a good one. We need to remember that. There

is never a good reason to fight or hate people in the church. We need to learn how to make peace like Titus did. We need to pray for the gift of awkwardness.

All of this leads to one more introduction for the Book of Titus which I want to go through quickly with you. I want to bring all of this together. Just to over the first two, we have seen an introduction to the author and the author is Paul, “a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ”. We have also seen an introduction to the audience. The audience is Titus, “the great one” or “the titan”. He was a man with a great name and a great role to play in the church. He made peace. He helped people get along with each other. This is essential because all of that brings us to our third introduction. And with this one, we will bring it all together and talk about our next step as a church. A third introduction to the Book of Titus is the setting of this Book. After showing us the author and the audience, Paul introduces us to the setting of this book, or where it occurs. It occurs in a pretty contentious place. It occurs in a hostile location. If you look in verse 5 Paul says, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you”. That is the reason Paul wrote this letter to Titus. That is the point of this book, “to set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city.” And this is where it occurs – on the island of Crete.

Crete was an island located just off the coast of Greece in the Mediterranean Sea. It was actually the meeting point of three continents: Europe, Asia and Africa. So it was an important place. A lot of traffic went through there. It was big. It was a very large island. It is 156 miles long and 35 miles wide. Just by way of comparison, Vancouver Island is 290 miles long and 65 miles wide. So it is a little smaller than that, but it is still a good size. And because of this, it was very influential in the Ancient World. Because a lot of things were said to have happened there, a lot of superstitious things.

For instance, they believed that Zeus (the great god of the Greeks) was born on the island. I don't know how a god could be born. That doesn't make much sense to me. If he is immortal, how could he be born? But that is what they said. Crete was the birthplace of Zeus. And the famous story of the minotaur and the labyrinth took place there. Some of you remember that from your history books. It is the story of a creature with the head of a bull and the body of a man who would eat anybody who couldn't get out of his maze or labyrinth. He would devour them. That took place in Crete as well, so did the story of Icarus. The young man who made a pair of wings out of wax and he flew too close to the sun and they melted. We could on an on, but all of that took place on the island. All of it came from here.

As a result of all of that, Crete got a bad reputation for being an island of liars, for being a place where people deceived you. It was said that there three evil C's in the Ancient World – Cretans, Cilicians and Cappadocians, and Crete was at the top of the list. They were the worst. One Roman historian named Polybius said, “The Cretans on account of their innate greed, live in a constant state of ware with each other, and you will hardly find anyone anywhere more deceitful than a Cretan.” Yet this is where the Lord planted a church. This is where He started a work of God. This is where Titus was told to go to “set things in order”.

That phrase “set things in order” is one word in Greek, *orthos*, from which we get the word “orthodontist”. It means “to straighten things out”. It was Titus' job to straighten things out in

Crete – like an orthodontist would straighten teeth. It was his job to smooth things over, which means that God was not through with these people, amen? He was not through with this island. He still had hope for the people of Crete. He still thought a church could survive there.

This also means that if the church could survive in Crete, it could survive in Canada. If God thought they could do this then, He believes we can do this now. This is what He expects of us.

When I first came to Grace Fellowship Church, my role was very much the same as Titus', which is why I chose this book to study. You guys didn't have their reputation. Chilliwack is not one of the three evil C's of British Columbia – Chilliwack, Coquitlam and Celowna...I think it's Kelowna actually. But the church was already started there, that is my point. The circumstances were the same. So it wasn't my job to start anything, just to keep it going. It wasn't my job to change everything, just to smooth it out and guide it along, because you guys were doing great. You were doing so many things well.

One of the ways I want to continue to do that, to guide things along in our church this year, is laid out here for us in verse 5. Paul says, "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city..." "This is part of the straightening process" Paul says. "This is how you are to smooth things out. Appoint elders. Put men in place who are qualified to lead the church." He tells us what that looks like in verses 6-9. He gives us qualifications there, and we are going to look at that in the weeks to come. I want to walk through these verses slowly with you so you can see what they say. "This is how you lead the church," Paul says. "This is how you guide it along. Choose the right leaders. Choose men who are above reproach," all of the things that are listed in here. Let me just say that this is the next step in our journey as a church. This is the next phase. We want to do what Paul says here. We want to appoint elders. We have put together an Advisory Council to help me make decisions so this wasn't a one-man show. But that is not the same thing as an elder board. I hope we have made that clear. It was never intended to be permanent. We want to move on to the next thing, and the next thing is this. In order to get this, I want to propose the following plan to you.

First, we need to finish the elder training process. As many of you know, in January of last year, the Advisory Council started a training process to discuss the office of elders and what all that entails. Not all of the men on the Council will be elders, some will, and some won't. But, we started a process to talk about what that looks like. I walked them through the Biblical qualifications that you see here in Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3 to see if any of them meet those qualifications, to see if they are ready. Then, I also put them in positions where they could show you if they meet these qualifications. You are part of this training process. We need your input on this. So through leading the Care & Discipleship Groups and teaching and counselling and discipling you one-on-one, they have been given time to demonstrate that. They are going to be your elders, so you need to affirm them. You need to see whether they are a good fit for this.

This leads us to the next step after the training process is done. And that is to institute new Bylaws. Before I was brought on as the first elder of Grace Fellowship Church, the church hired Lyndon Unger to write an extensive set of Bylaws that are 70 pages in length. They are well thought out. Lyndon did a great job. At the time they were written, we were not ready to implement them, because they were built on the office of elders. They were built around a

Council of men like this, and we didn't have that yet. So we had to adopt a short set that was only 12 pages in length. To make that change, to put these two things together (the elders and the Bylaws), with your support as a congregation, we would like to adopt the new Bylaws at a congregational meeting in March. We would like to make them our own, because the new Bylaws give us a process for appointing elders. They tell us how to do that. As of right now, we don't really have a process for that. There are no guidelines to follow. But the new Bylaws give us one, so we would like to adopt them then. Currently, they are being prepared to go to the law office that our church employs to make sure that everything is in accordance with the law. Once they are done, we will send them to you. We will set up some time to discuss them together if you have any questions or concerns. We might do that after church on a Sunday. I will let you know closer to the time.

Then once the Bylaws are in place, we will introduce the candidates for eldership. Once the new Bylaws have been approved by you, we will introduce the men who will put their names forward for eldership. At that point, you will have the opportunity to interact with them and ask questions before we put them in office. As I said, there is a process for that in the new Bylaws, so we will follow that.

All of this is to say that these are exciting times for us here at Grace Fellowship Church. It is an exciting time in our journey together. We have come so far. The Lord has allowed us to do so much and stay united. It is my prayer that that will continue in the days ahead. It is my prayer that as we obey His Word and do what He says here that we will stay united and it will bring us closer together and help us to build a church that lasts.

In 1904, a large statue was built in the Andes Mountains on the border between Argentina and Chile to unite the two countries together. It was a statue of Jesus called "Christ of the Andes". It was large and well received, until it was discovered that Jesus' face was turned towards Argentina, and His back was turned towards Chile, which infuriated the Chilean people. They were enraged until a newspaper reporter wisely said, "It is okay, my brothers. Be at peace for the Argentinean people need His attention more than we do." The point is that that statue was meant for both countries, whichever way He was facing. Jesus was there for both of them. It united them, and the same goes for us, amen? Jesus unites us. He is the One who brings us together as a church so we can last, so we can stand the test of time. As we take these next steps together, I pray that He will help us to do just that. Let's pray.