

Servant Overseer

by Erlo Stegen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being a good overseer, which requires self-control, hospitality, and a focus on one's goal.

Duration: 1:09:54

Scripture: Matthew 7:15, Acts 20:28, Acts 20:30-32, 1 Timothy 3:2, 1 Timothy 3:12

Topics: "Spiritual Discipline", "Church Leadership"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker uses a story to illustrate the importance of staying focused on the goal and not being distracted. The story involves a young man who wants to marry the king's daughter but must complete a challenging course. Along the way, he is tempted by a golden shoe that is visible from afar. He becomes obsessed with it and spends time examining it, causing him to run out of time and fail the course. The speaker emphasizes the need for believers to keep watch over themselves and the church, being aware of the distractions and distortions of truth that can arise.

Transcript

Ex 20, verse 28. Keep watch over yourselves, and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, be shepherds of the Church of God, which He bought with His own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and not spare the flock.

Even from your own number, men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard. Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you, night and day, with tears.

Now I commit you to God and to the word of His grace which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. We will read this far. If we could take just one verse singly out of this text, we could choose verse 28 and look at the many different points it contains.

Which says, Keep watch over yourselves, and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, be shepherds of the Church of God, which He bought with His own blood. Let me just touch on a few points there. Firstly, keep watch over yourselves and all the flock which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers of.

Do you see how God emphasizes the importance of watching over yourselves? That's where God starts. There is the possibility that Satan can deceive a person, where a person becomes obsessed with wanting to save others but fails to care for themselves. They don't watch over themselves and it's so dangerous.

If we neglect ourselves, our own relationship with God while we are so concerned about others and we forget to preach to ourselves, Never neglect your own personal relationship and walk with God. Never, in your eagerness to save others, you do more harm than good by your preaching and your going around the world, unless you take care of yourself first. Paul says that the Lord had revealed to him that he was soon to be taken away from the earth.

We don't have time to mention all the places that he had been to and the context of what was happening here and the places where he was, but he felt compelled by the Holy Spirit to be in Jerusalem at Pentecost time. And when he traveled around, he then got to this place where he asked to speak to the elders or the bishops of the Ephesus church, Ephesian church. He said to his colleagues on the team that he was with to get into the ship and to go around the coast.

It was perhaps about 40 miles from one port. It was a way quite far around, but to walk one could take a shortcut of about 20 miles. Remember that recently he had been preaching in a place where he had spoken the whole night and one young man sitting in the windowsill had fallen down below and died and Paul, by the power of God, raised him from the dead.

It was in these areas that this incident happened, that he said to them, You get onto the ship and go around. I will be taking the shortcut. Maybe he needed to rest.

Perhaps in preaching so late he was exhausted. Maybe he needed a time alone with God. And then he says, Now keep watch over yourselves, you overseers.

When you've done that, also the flock. Now what does he mean by saying, You overseers, see to yourselves? Let's read a little bit about what the word of God has to say regarding overseers. The word of God says, The word of God says, I've said before that you should take the Bible and study it, asking God to reveal to you what your role means, you as a wife or as a husband or as a child.

But what does the word teach you? Remember we are on the theme of God over yourselves. You who are overseers over others. In 1 Timothy 3 verse 2 it says, Now the overseer must be above reproach.

It must be a person who is above the accusations of misconduct. Be without reproach. Examine yourself.

Ask yourself, Is there anyone who can point a finger at my life? One who preaches the gospel must be above reproach. You as a Christian, you must be like this because you also are one who oversees others. He must be the husband of but one wife.

Are there those who have many wives? Here it says that it is to be a case of a man having one wife. The Bible says that if you look lustfully after a woman, you have already committed adultery with her. In other words, you have another wife.

And has to be temperate and self-controlled. Now there are many points about this which I can't delve into because I want to complete the message that I have. Do you know what it is to be self-controlled? Are you able to control your own tongue? Or are you a gossip? Or are you a busybody, putting your nose into the affairs of other people and harming the work of the Lord? One who is respectable.

Speaking of uprightness and being straight. Hospitable and one who is able to behave in a good way. One who is hospitable to visitors.

Now that's not easy. Some people say, no, they'll come in and finish our food off. And yet, an overseer should be one who is hospitable, who brings in visitors.

To be hospitable is to be a habit and to be the norm for an overseer. To be hospitable is to be a habit and to be the norm for an overseer. And they couldn't lean on an excuse like we don't have enough food because overseas ministers are paid very well.

And they couldn't lean on an excuse like we don't have enough food because overseas ministers are paid very well. And I give you this tip, you who are Africans, see this in the word of God, study this for this is what the Bible says, be hospitable. And you might find that though you have just a little rice and hardly anything, God is able to bless it and increase it.

Have you grasped that point or do you need it to be repeated? Have you grasped that point or do you need it to be repeated? We limit God's blessings and we are the ones who limit His miraculous power because of our lack of faith. And one sees it in some of the villages in the Lord's region that He wasn't able to work miracles because they lacked faith. And it continues in our text to say, one who is able to teach.

Are you able to teach one who is confused and has gone astray and made insane by the devil that you are able to bring a wise word and something that would be apt and suitable for the person? Not given to drunkenness. Not violent. But gentle.

Not quarrelsome. Not a lover of money. One who manages his own family well.

And who sees that his children obey him with proper respect. Is that understandable to you? Or are you drowsy and you haven't slept last night? I'm just reading this to you. You can see for yourself how much God is speaking to you.

Maybe you say, well I'm not a preacher. What if God says to you on judgment day when you excuse yourself that you weren't a preacher where God says, but I wanted you to preach through your life and through your shining out to others. Verse 5. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church? He needs to know how to control his own family, children.

This has an implication for children of Christian parents too. If you are going off the rails as a child of a Christian family, you are murdering your own parents. Verse 6. He must not be a recent convert or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.

To see how exalted is this calling, how important it is. See also how slippery it can become where if it is a person who is recently converted, they can become conceited and proud and fall. Verse 7. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

If we were to call your colleagues and neighbors, would they have a good testimony about you? Guard yourselves. Watch over yourselves. How you live.

Then there is another verse. Chapter 6 of Timothy. Verse 10 of the same first letter to Timothy chapter 6. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

Some people eager for money have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. To love money. What can a servant of God begin to love money? Loving money is the root of all manner of evil.

It can lead to sexual immorality. It can lead to all sorts of other sins. Some people eager to gain riches have wandered from the faith.

So Paul says that some have even wandered from the faith itself. Where did it begin in the love of money? To love money. You who are a Christian, do you hear what God's word says? That the love of money can take you right off the track.

The pity is that the devil can so harden a person that even this becomes something that cannot penetrate the hard heart. But if a person reaches the point of such hardness that they cannot even hear the word of God itself, then they need to simply be dispelled, removed from the window, excommunicated. If a person reaches the point of such hardness that they cannot even hear the word of God itself, then they need to simply be dispelled, removed from the window, excommunicated.

Do you hear that this is able to take you off the track, the love of money? And Paul says that I have preached with you, I have beseeched you, I have begged you for these three years, day and night, weeping. For Paul had come across some churches where they had fallen into immorality and gossip and witchcraft, even in the churches. A tragic state of affairs, whereas the church should be glorious, full of light, beaming forth its light.

Things are evil in the world today. Now a text says guard over yourselves and then guard over the flock. I have mentioned how Paul said, be on your guard, for you must remember that for these three years, day and night, I have never stopped warning you with tears.

Then he says, keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, for He has put you in that position. That may be a wrong translation, overseer. In actual fact, it's a bishop.

Because overseeing might seem like a manager who's isolated himself in a high position and not part of the flock itself. No, you are part of the flock as well. For an overseer or bishop is not one who is to rule over the church, but he is part of the church itself.

He is from the same source and he is of the same type. He is also of the flock, having been called out of sin, made new by the Holy Spirit and then called to help with the flock. God has made you to be part of the church and then to help oversee, not oversee in the sense of ruling over, but you are simply a part of the same flock, but you are called to help with the church.

And it is the Holy Spirit himself who has called you into this work. He is the one who has put this burden on your heart regarding the souls of others. He has said, look after them, help them, feed them, enlighten them.

And it is God himself who helps you with the right thoughts and with the right ideas to assist people to have wisdom to get through to them. Then God works through you and corrects others through you. What an awesome and what a great responsibility.

Wow to you if you are guilty on judgment day and you haven't been this to the church. We are called to a great work. We are called to a great work.

We are not just called to be a mission just like all other missions where they have a mission school and they have Sunday services. We are not called to be that stereotype, but to be vessels in the hands of the Lord, usable to him. A certain person of a skin color not the same as mine who said, it is not wrong to steal.

It is wrong if you get caught. That is your problem. It is not wrong to lie.

The wrong lies in this, that you are caught. You can cry if you are caught, but if you are not caught, then don't regard it as sin. Now it says here that this is the church of God.

It is not my church. It is not your church. It is God's.

And if you defile the church of God, remember it is not your church. It is his. It belongs to Jesus Christ and he awaits you.

The Germans have a certain road sign where they put vulture signs over dead trees. Implying that if you hunt illegally, you can do it, but you poacher, we are waiting like vultures to catch you. We are waiting like vultures to catch you.

And in the same way, a person at the end of their antics, they get themselves killed. If you want to really show off and be boastful, then do it outside of your car. Don't speed and mess up the lives of others.

That is why we say when you drive, pray and do it earnestly, not just a habitual prayer, but something that means business with God, because an accident can happen, it can so easily happen to you. If it does happen, start asking yourself, did I sincerely pray with my heart? We have been called to live with God, to walk with him, with God himself, and then to be above reproach, being a blessing to those around us. Therefore, be on your guard.

Be careful regarding who you are, as you are in this church. He says, in being shepherds of this church of God, remember that it's not your church, it's not just a church, but belongs to him, bought with his own precious blood. If you meet with a triune God, he will ask you, were you aware, did you reckon with the fact that these people were bought with my own blood? We ought to show the greatest respect and dignity to these people, bought with the very own blood of Christ.

Therefore, Paul says, if I eat meat, and a brother is weak, or who is weak, is stumbled by the meat I eat, let me rather not eat that meat, for my brother was bought by Christ, Christ died for him. Even if you see an Afrikaner, remember he is bought by Christ, Jesus died for him. Or you see a colored person, reckon with it that Jesus died for him.

Or an Indian person, or a Muslim person, reckon with it that Jesus died for him. That person should be precious to you, remember they are bought people. They have been bought not with silver, or gold, or precious things, but with his own blood.

Then Paul says, I now take my leave of you, and I know what will happen after my departure. For some will come in among you, the flock, being savage wolves. That is very sad, painful.

Where a person says, but Lord, will it mean that the work becomes vain? One says, one asks, Lord, does that mean that it is the end of the church when Paul was with it, that all his work was in vain, and that it is just handed over to wolves and hyenas? And Paul says, Some of your own number will rise up in order to drag other people after their own group. You see Satan works in two ways, he attacks from without, and from within. Ought that not to make every member of the church to be one who is sanctified? And make your whole life to be driven with the purpose of the Holy Spirit being in control? Some people, it says, will rise up so that they can drag other disciples after themselves.

O, be wide awake, have your eyes open, do not be foolish in this respect. Driven by their own lusts, they will gather together their own splinter groups, their own groupings, so that they can call that the church of God. O, there's nothing as terrible as the blind leading the blind.

Is there no one who will rise up and speak out and be open and say, don't you see that this person is pushing his own agenda? It's not the work of God, but his own work. Examine your life. Ask, what drives you? Is it your own desires and things are to encircle yourself, it's just for your own selfish desires, or is it around Christ and for him? I saw some lions.

Now, lions hunt buck, deer. A lion doesn't just go into the middle of the herd of buck just to go right to the center of it. The lion is an observer.

It sets its eyes on the herd and then picks out a chosen target. Even a leopard, you'll watch, it'll observe. It aims for a certain target.

It'll look for one that is weaker. Amazing to see the way that the lions hunt. They'll look for the weaker animal, the one that is limping, and then they fix their eyes on that and they go for it.

And then it goes straight for its victim. And then it goes straight for its victim. While the other members of the herd are going this way and that way in front of the lion, they would be prey, but it disregards them for it has fixed its eyes on one prey.

It follows. It follows. Its attention is only on that one animal, its prey, and it goes for that even if there are other animals, even if there are zebra and other wild animals that pass by and are within its reach, it fixes its eyes only on that one.

If the Bible says take care of itself in the Greek, it means fix your eyes on one thing right to the end. Take your eyes, fix your whole attention on that single goal right to the end. The lion taught me that lesson these days.

But you find that people aren't as focused as that hunting lion. Instead, their attention is just blown about by whatever wind drifts their way. If there's a noise, they look in that direction.

You find that they are purposeless. I don't know what it will be like in heaven. I don't know what it will be like in heaven, whether I'll get the opportunity to, but I'd love to be able to shake the hands of Paul, to congratulate him.

Congratulate him for being so single-eyed, for having his fixed purpose, not being distracted right to the end. Not distracted by anything. He said, even if others take along their wives, that's not my intention or I have, it's nothing to do with me.

They are welcome to do it. I have one goal in mind. He never, never took his eyes from that goal.

He taught us by his life what it means to have your eyes fixed on the goal, fixed on the prize. Keeping your mark there, running towards it to win the race, not being sidetracked by anything else. I remember a certain child telling me, when I grow up, I'm going to come to Guasizabantu and I'm going to preach the gospel.

Three or four years later when I met with him, I asked him, now when you are finished with school and that, what are you going to do? He said, I'm going to become a businessman. I said, oh, that's fine. We don't need people in the business of preaching the gospel if they are not single-minded like this boy.

One day they say something, the next day they say something else. And they are double-minded. They don't speak one thing.

They are not known for their masculine manhood. They just play the role of silly women. It has nothing to do with any good woman.

I speak of silly women. What type are you when you pray? What do you pray to be? But Paul, from his conversion and forever after that, since he met with Christ, he never was a cause for tears that others should bewail his condition. Not at all.

Instead he cried for others. Now you know the story and excuse me if I repeat it. There was a king who had a beautiful daughter.

A real princess, dressed appropriately and modestly as well, not like you find women dressing today or girls who show as much of their body as possible or their belly button with a ring in it, know that such people are but dirt. Then a young man wanted to marry the princess. He was also aware that there were many other suitors for young men who are very keen when it comes to marrying and you find that some though have their brains like that of a chimpanzee.

There's only a little bit of it, just here in the front. They marry as well by the way, you're not the only one, you're in good company. The king wondered how he would solve the problem because there were so many young suitors wanting to get the princess.

So he decided upon a plan. He decided on a cross-country course. One could illustrate it with a track going from here to Silverstream, Crownscope and around.

A specific course that a young man would have to run within a specific time to get the hand of his daughter. He said to himself, I'm not going to worry about their looks, whether he's got a long nose or a flat nose, whatever he looks like, as long as he is strong and single-purposed and is able to set himself to the task and accomplish it, whether he's educated or not. A person who can set their eye on the goal and not be sidetracked and get to the goal, to the final destination.

A young man came, said, Your Majesty, I'd like your daughter's hand in marriage. He said, Fine, on condition that you can run this course, say, for instance, going to Crownscope, where there'd be a Silverstream, a person to check that you get there, then to that point, then that point, and you must accomplish it within a certain time frame. But then on a certain plane, he decided to put something that would be visible from afar.

He took a golden shoe, and he put this on just a little hill, and he made it to be evident, this golden shoe, that it would be visible from afar. In some places, there was a steep descent and steep climbs here, it tested a person's strength. When he got to the last plane, he could see from afar something flashing in the sun.

He wondered to himself, as he was running the course, and more and more this began to obsess his mind, what could it be, that thing glittering in the sun? And he got closer and closer to it, but this thing had been put just a little off the track. And when he got close to it, he decided just to take a slight detour to get to this thing flashing in the sun, and when he got there, it was pure gold, a golden shoe, heavy, of great worth, he said to himself. He put his hand inside it, he gazed at it, and wondered where did it come from, whose was it? And for some time, he examined this golden shoe from every angle.

And then, as he was examining this golden shoe, he suddenly remembered that he was running for the hand of the princess. He put down the shoe and continued running as fast as before, but when he got to the destination, it was found that it was that very time which he had spent gazing at the shoe that he was short of for the set time. And the king said, I thought you would make it, but you can't, because you were distracted.

He complained and said, forgive me. Though he begged for forgiveness, and for another chance, the king would hear nothing of it. He said, if you could not keep this purpose in mind, and complete the task, you don't deserve my daughter's hand.

I will not give her hand to yours, and he could never marry her. We are called, we are commissioned, and we are told that we cannot accomplish this task if we do not guard over ourselves, as well as the church, which has been bought by the of Jesus. We are not running for a woman.

We are not running to get the hand of any woman in marriage. We are seeking God, we are running for Him, we are running for Jesus Christ, or will we be found to not be real men, to just be dirt? If you've been sidetracked, if you've ended up in the mire of sin, I tell you today, repent. You must repent.

Turn from your sin, otherwise your future is woeful. And if you don't understand what I'm telling you today on judgment day, may God remind you that I told you today. That's why I say to you, repent, turn from those things today, now.

Let's stand to our feet. Lord, I ask, I pray to you. Lord, I do not ask that you would raise up doctors and professors in our midst.

I don't ask for that today, but that you would raise up Pauls in our midst. Lord, there are so many doctors and professors, but the world continues to degenerate and be corrupted. That is why, Lord, I ask, together with those who are upright of heart, that you would raise up Pauls in our midst, that we would be able to spread the gospel as he did.

Amen. Amen.

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