**Shepherds and Servants**

“Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: Grace too you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (**Philippians 1:1-2**, ESV).

Paul writes to a congregation along with its overseers and deacons. That is, he specifically highlights their elders, pastors (which modern folks commonly misuse to refer to preachers), bishops, overseers, commonly called shepherds. Further, he highlights their deacons, which could be called ministers (a term we often use to refer to preachers because they minister the Word), or perhaps would be better known as servants.

Today is a great day for the Christians who meet on Livingston Avenue. For some years we have been blessed with shepherds leading us and servants ministering to us. These men have worked diligently to help us as a congregation bring glory to God. They have worked faithfully to develop disciples. We have had good men, mature men, godly men serving in these roles. We praise God for His blessing.

Today, we have even more reason to give God praise and thanks. Through His overseeing hand, we are able to appoint new men to these posts today. We are adding one shepherd and several servants. Many churches struggle and toil and never are able to appoint men to these roles. We, however, are able to add to the generous number God has already given us.

Because of this appointment, our assembly today will be somewhat different. Our sermon will be abbreviated (don’t cheer). Then you will be able to witness the appointment of these men to these roles in the congregation. Though it is not a sermon, this appointment is a lesson all on its own.

Consider what **Titus 3:3** says about where these men began their spiritual journey. “For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another” (ESV). This is not a good place. Yet, each of these men, like all of us started their journey from this point. How could men like this become shepherds and servants in a local congregation? I don’t want to diminish the faithfulness of these men to the Lord or their discipline in surrendering to the Lord. However, Paul goes on to explain how any of us escape our slavery to sin. “But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (**Titus 3:4-7**, ESV).

In **I Timothy 3:13**, Paul says those who serve well as deacons, “gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus” (ESV). Surely, something similar could be said of elders as well. As we see these men before us today, gaining a good standing and confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus, understand that this didn’t happen because these men were somehow more awesome than all the other members of this congregation. This happened like every bit of growth all of us have experienced. It happened by God’s grace.

May we be amazed as we see the fruit of God’s grace in these lives. May we be motivated to surrender to His grace even more.