

# The Role of the Elders

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[ 0 : 00 ] You're listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill, Tennessee. To learn more about us, visit our website at [gracereformed.org](http://gracereformed.org).

And now, today's sermon. It's refreshing at times when we go through books of the Bible because they cannot be accused on picking topics that I want to talk about.

This is probably one that I would often ignore because who wants to talk about themselves in front of a congregation? But this is where Peter has us today. And it's going to be hard for us to understand Peter's instructions because we're so distant from the context and the landscape from which Peter is writing.

Peter's instructions to the church are definitely universal. They will apply not only to his congregations that he's writing to, but to ours as well. But I want us to help not only feel the pressure, but breathe in the heaviness of the letter because I think it'll help us understand just how weighty of a topic Peter is giving the congregation.

So if we walk in their shoes and we can see their pair of you of what's before them in life, then the instructions, I think, have a weightier context.

[ 1 : 17 ] They have a supplemental list to our faith that is just more than helpful guides. These churches that he's writing to, these are new congregations.

They're going to be very similar to ours. Maybe anywhere from three to seven years old. Some of them may be 10 years old. And they're congregations that have been on the move.

They have just left Rome and they're on the outskirts of Rome because of the persecution that they were facing in their faith. And as they live in these outer regions, they went from living in a life that's hard in general because life is complicated.

But then they have the added suffering because they have decided to serve only one God and King, and that is Christ. But thankfully, this letter that Peter provides, God doesn't leave these little churches, these infant churches, without instructions and how they can be helped.

And not only for wisdom's sake, but be able to tap into something that we talked about last week, which is the supernatural power of the Spirit that works within his means, works within his church.

[ 2 : 27 ] This is why Paul can make such a bold promise to the churches he was writing to in Colossians. He says that if they function as they should, if they follow the plan of God, that they will grow with a growth that is from God.

Not a growth from their own power and their own strength. But if they implement God's word, they will feel a growth that only comes from his power. However, we've already faced this in Peter and multiple times throughout Scripture, Satan and his forces, the kingdom of darkness, they want nothing more than to keep the church for the last 2,000 years, to keep the church from being the powerhouse that it can be, to being its source of joy and hope in the explosion of the gospel.

So we have faced that, not only in this letter, but I think we've faced it in our own church. And this is kind of where it leads us to today.

So Peter's coming towards the end of his letter. He's given them so much. He starts with their hope, which is beyond their circumstances. The warning, it says, to you it has been granted that you would suffer.

Then he talks about the function of the church, how it is that they are to act. And now he moves towards the leaders of the church. And what is hard about when we think about what the church is doing, what are the elders doing, what are we discipling people in, today it feels more like if it's a closer to self-help mentalities or some kind of a psychotherapy to help people with their problems.

[ 4 : 0 6 ] Instead, Peter is not addressing it in this way. He looks at it as more of how to live with inside of a war zone under the constant attack of the advancement of the enemy.

This is why he uses phrases like, Satan is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. So what means does God choose to lead, guide, prepare, and disciple the church?

God chose, according to Peter, he chose elders, men, qualified, tested, and put in place to be the overseers and commissioned by God himself.

These are not self-appointments. These are commissions by God and his word. I think it's important to understand that every elder that's in a church, if it's a biblical church and the church is applying God's word appropriately, is never self-appointed.

Therefore, you can say it's a divine appointment. It's a sovereignly divine appointment for these men. And what are we doing? What are these elders to be doing?

[ 5 : 0 8 ] Well, they are not chosen based upon popularity, business savvy, social status, and wealth. Because when you are chosen based upon that, then how you function changes.

But if you're chosen based upon the qualities that Peter's going to set forward here in a minute, then the functions change for us. Elders are ordained instruments to be God's holy men, to instruct the church, protect the church, and care for them.

When men are properly trained and commissioned and used by God, then the Spirit's power is definitely there amongst the congregation to advance the mission of the kingdom. We're not going to look at all of the passages, but Jesus, Peter, Paul, and Hebrews all speak about the mission of the elders and what it is that they're supposed to be partaking in.

But the role of elders in modern churches, I think it's changed. Elders are not shepherds. They end up becoming motivational speakers, event planners, marriage therapists, and budget committees.

We want them to become really the cruise directors of our life. Make church entertaining and fun and provide some kind of a social calendar for me.

[ 6 : 3 1 ] Protectors of our souls? No, I don't need you to do that. I can do that on my own. I just need you to take care of the social aspects. Teach me the way of Christ?

Well, why would I need you to do that? Disciple me? Why would I need you to do that? I can do that on myself, on my own time, with my word and Dr. Google. We've got it. Now, by the way, I'm not against you using Google.

At times, I've emailed you back and have literally told you, you should probably Google search that before you email me next time. A lot of the church today is filled with immature, spiritually anemic Christians wanting so bad to grow, but all they're being offered is entertainment.

Wanting to be fed, but instead they're offered spiritual disciplines of the flesh. Wanting to be a part of something bigger than their life, but all they're offered is some kind of life advancement.

So, in this section, verses 1 through 5, Peter is preparing the church for what they're about to face. And he turns to the elders in front of the congregation to explain to them how everything is written in chapters 1 through 4 is now going to work.

[ 7 : 58 ] Definitely, these instructions are for the elders. He addresses them. But it comes with the implications of the congregation, because these instructions aren't pulled aside and just given to the elders, but they're supposed to be read in front of the congregation.

Therefore, the flock is going to have their role inside these instructions. So, in today's context, we seem to see how horrible this has gone wrong.

Trust me. I was even having this conversation with my wife. Everyone can feel the moment when you start talking about church leadership. I don't even need you to raise your hands.

Every single person in here has seen it done wrong or have had bad experiences themselves. And we'll address this a little bit later. And Peter provides for us help.

But this morning, let's allow Peter to give us the proper view of the church and the proper view of the role of a leader called an elder so that his kingdom, Christ's kingdom, might be advanced.

[ 8 : 58 ] So, this morning, we're going to look at five instructions that Peter has given for the church and the elders. Now, that's a big outline. But the first two are the longest.

And the last three are going to take me like a minute each. So, no worries. But I think you'll see how the points come from the text. Let's start with a very important subject.

Number one, the role of the elders. This is a title that is often given to the elders. They are to be shepherds. They are to be shepherds.

You'll notice he says that we are to shepherd what? The flock of God that is among us. I'm not a shepherd of all sheep. I'm not responsible for those who are around the world.

I'm not even responsible for those who are in this town. I'm responsible for who God has put in front of us because this is how it should be seen. Often people ask me, why don't you address certain theologies?

[ 9 : 59 ] Or why don't you address other religions? Well, if I started to do that, I would never end because the list is enormous. But what I am called to do is shepherd my own flock.

And whatever is hurting us, whatever the elders see that we need to address, we will. But we first see that our responsibility is to you. I think I don't talk about this very often, but I don't travel hardly at all.

And the reason for it is that I have to ask myself, is the benefit worth me being gone? I don't like being gone. I don't want to be away from my family. And I don't want to be away from you. And so I often turn down a lot of speaking engagements just because, well, God called me to shepherd you and not other congregations.

But not only this, I don't want to just become a talking head where I just show up on Sundays and I'm here to give you data from the Bible that might help you. That's not what a shepherd is. A shepherd is among the sheep.

He's a part of them. He knows them. We as elders try our best to spend time with you, to care for you and pray with you and weep with you and laugh because this is our responsibility.

[ 11 : 03 ] But shepherds also, what do they do? We feed. This is the primary job of a shepherd is to feed the sheep. And so we must take the time to prepare our hearts and our minds to do this.

We're also called to pray, to call upon the shepherd. We're under shepherds. The shepherd to give us the strength and guidance. And then we're also to teach and disciple the church.

And so this is the role of the elders. This is why the title has so much inside of it. When it says shepherd the flock of God, the title itself gives the implication that we are not just to be giving data.

We're not just teachers. We're not just preachers, but we're shepherds. And I think it's a good title. But within this role, there's lots of responsibilities, which is point two.

So there's the role of the elder, which is to shepherd. And then the responsibility of the elders. Look at that. We're already on point two. See, I told you we're going just fine. That's why I always struggle to give outlines because when you have a big one, people are like, oh boy, this is a long one today.

[ 12 : 07 ] Appreciate that. Whoever that was, thank you. The responsibility of the elders. If you'll read verse two, it says to shepherd the flock of God that is among us, exercising oversight.

The responsibility of the elders is to exercise oversight. This is a common instruction. You can turn with me to Acts chapter 20. This is a common instruction in the New Testament for elders.

They are not only to feed and to care for, but they're also, to watch over the flock to protect them from what is influencing these outside influences.

And the instructions are pretty pointed. If you look at Acts chapter 20 and verse 28, Paul is speaking to these young churches, these young pastors. And he says in verse 28, so Acts 20, 28, pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.

Take care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. And know that after my departure, fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

[ 13 : 22 ] And from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them. Oversight would include, as Paul is saying here, this carefully considering what is being digested in our church.

What are we consuming? What are we thinking of? Or what are we allowing to be taught? As shepherds lead their sheep to pastures to eat, but they're also there to watch to make sure that the sheep themselves don't become food for wolves.

This is a terrifying thing to think about as an elder. Turn with me to Hebrews chapter 13. It's terrifying because of the responsibility that is placed upon us. It would be easier for me if my number one responsibility was just to stand up here and give you biblical data every week.

No stress, no gray hair. It would be awesome. But that is not a shepherd. That's just a talking head. The writer of Hebrews knew the dangers that were facing the church as well.

And this attacks of the kingdom of darkness. So he writes in such a way to give us a perspective of how is it we're going to function and make it through these types of attacks.

[ 14 : 39 ] And so listen to how intensely the writer of Hebrews. So Hebrews 13, look at verse 17. Hebrews 13 and verse 17. It's a little bit reversed from Peter.

He's going to address the congregation instead. He says, That is the most terrifying verse in all of the Bible for me.

Right there. That I'm going to have to give an account for the way in which I protected your soul. You see, this is more than just me giving you helpful instructions.

But every word that proceeds out of my mouth, I need to make sure that it's for the sake of your understanding of Christ and the protection of your soul. And all the elders feel this.

We feel it. We talk about you. We had a four and a half hour meeting last week. The entire meeting was walking through the congregation and thinking about who it is that we can help and where people are at and how do we love them.

- [ 15 : 50 ] Because we feel responsible not to give you biblical data, which we do, to disciple you. But we feel responsible for your soul. That you are cared for and that you are protected.
- If it were not, though, for the power of Christ upon us as elders, upon me, I would run like a little scared kid from this job.
- No way am I going to take on this responsibility if it is to be done in my own strength. This is why I love when he says, and if you go back, you don't have to turn there.
- I'll just quote it to you. But in Acts 20, when he says, pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you an overseer. It is comforting to me to know that the Holy Spirit is involved in this work of caring for the souls that he has appointed us to do this.
- This is not by our own appointment. So we too must rely on the power of grace in our lives as elders. We also must be trained for this. We can't not just take this in our own strength and our own wisdom.
- [ 16 : 53 ] We must be commissioned by Christ and his church. And so there's really two parts. What are the responsibilities? The responsibility of the elders is to exercise oversight. But I would say underneath that is also discipleship.
- Our job is to be discipling you and teaching you how to trust and follow Christ. Jesus is the one who instituted the church after he left.
- So the nation of Israel is no more. He's breaking us up into smaller groups of people that we might spread around the entire world. And somehow, in some way, we've turned this upside down.
- And we now encourage people not to seek Christ in his communities called the church, the local bodies, underneath the elders rule. But instead, we encourage people to disciple themselves.
- People seek to increase their knowledge and understanding of their faith through things like personal study. Which is the opposite of what a sheep and a disciple is.
- [ 17 : 59 ] Sheep grow and are cared for by the shepherd. That's one image that the New Testament uses. But also the concept of a disciple. A disciple is one who is led in the path of a teacher.
- They are taught the ways of so that they might follow in the discipline of the master. A couple of passages. I'm about to read a bunch of these off.
- You might just want to write them down. I just wanted you to see that this is how the New Testament helps us understand the role of the elders as discipling the church.
- Look at, these are just a few. 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 13. It says this. Follow the pattern of sound words that you have heard from me in faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.
- So Peter, or Paul, is giving it to Timothy. And he's telling Timothy, this is what you're going to do as well. As you have followed the teachings of me, you're going to pass this on. This is 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 1.
- [ 18 : 53 ] You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses and trust of faithful men who will be able to reach others also.
- This is why we have leadership development classes. This is why we have Grace Academy. This is why we train elders. All of the elders are teaching classes. They're the ones doing counseling. They're the ones discipling.
- They lead home groups. Why? Because we feel the weight that our responsibility is to not just cast oversight as protectors, but we're developing theology.

Colossians 1.28 says this. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom. Listen, what's the end result? That we may present everyone mature in Christ.

So Paul puts the weight on these teachers saying that your responsibility is to make sure that you are discipling and training people in the Lord. So that the end result is that the congregation is mature in Christ.

[ 19 : 54 ] Probably one last one that's famous that I use all the time, which is Ephesians 4, verses 11 and following. It says this. And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ until we all attain the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood to the measures of the statutes and the fullness of Christ.

So all of this is wrapped up underneath the teaching and the preaching of the leaders of the congregation. So there's a clear pattern where the elders are preparing the church for ministry. Teaching them and discipling them in the ways of Christ while they feed them and while they protect them.

Now this is not in any way, shape, or form to discourage one's own personal pursuit. Sometimes people hear it's an either or. It's never an either or.

It's always a both and. As a matter of fact, I think the stronger we grow in Christ, the more equipped we will be in knowing how to decipher and know God's word and then share God's word.

Later on in the passages, Paul and Peter both say, you older ladies should be training the younger women. And you older men should be training the younger men. Why?

[ 21 : 11 ] Because they have been discipled and trained in the ways of Christ. And so eventually, we all gain benefits from the knowledge that we have. But it starts somewhere. This is what Paul tells the perspective of the church in Thessalonica.

I mean, there's just so much about this in scripture. I do want to go back to something when I said it's not a both and. There's a priority that is placed of understanding that someone is new in the faith.

Whether they're a child or they're an adult, they're new in the faith. And the Bible is designed in such a way that it must be taught because it is complicated. The gospel is simple. But the word of God, even Peter's like, man, sometimes Paul writes things and I don't even get it.

They're hard. Because it's true. The weightiness of the spiritual life is at times very complicated. This is why we are told we will never reach the depth of knowing Jesus.

Ever. Which gets me pretty excited when I think about teaching the Bible. I know some of you are teachers and you get stuck with a certain part of history or English or math.

[ 22 : 18 ] And there's like only so much you could go into, right? It's like I've hit my max. I've hit my pinnacle. And when I think about what I get to teach, the well only gets bigger and deeper the more we get into it.

Which is exciting. But for those of us who have to do this, this is what he says in 1 Thessalonians 5, 12 and 13. We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.

And esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And what is it that we are laboring over as elders? Those of us who are overseeing.

I will give you some time to turn here. Turn to Acts chapter 3 or Acts chapter 6 verse 3. I think it would be good for you to see this. The role that the elders have been given is that they are to be students of the word.

They are to be praying constantly, working in their own faith with each other. So that there's an outpour of it for the benefit of the congregation. So the church is very young in Acts chapter 6.

[ 23 : 26 ] And just like this church, I remember when we started, Gary was there. A lot of you were there. Brandon and we were, the Smiths. We were, if you had two feet and you were above the age of three, you helped out.

You set up chairs and you took them down. Right? But as the church got bigger, it got harder and harder for me to do both. Prepare for sermons, counsel, meet with people, and be a part of the setup team.

This is exactly what's happening in the church of Acts. And so they're having a problem where the elders are becoming overwhelmed with all the responsibilities that are having in these small churches that are growing. And so there came a moment where the work needed to be divided so that the spiritual work would be protected.

And so the instructions came to them. This is verse 3. It says, Therefore, brothers, so Acts 6 and verse 3. Therefore, brothers, pick among, pick, sorry, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the spirit and wisdom, whom will appoint to this duty, the duty of being a deacon.

But we will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. So there is an emphasis. There's a clear divide between what the elders are supposed to be focusing their attention on.

[ 24 : 39 ] And you can see it throughout all of these passages. Now, I understand this is a terrifying thing to think about, that I am to submit myself for the soul care and discipleship and the training of my heart and ministry to another person.

It's terrifying to think about. Yeah. We, you know, and I know some of us have even had this thought, we didn't say it out loud. Like, I might be interested in submitting to elders if they're good enough teachers.

But if they're not, then I'll probably have to look elsewhere, online or do it myself to make sure the job is done sufficient. This is why there is a double command in scripture.

Elders are to do their role in discipling the congregation. And the congregation is to submit to the elders, but both are held accountable. We are not without accountability.

We are not without responsibility. Just as Peter tells us earlier in chapter 2, that we have a civil responsibility to the leaders that are above us, whether they are good or bad. And in this context, in Peter's writing, these civil leaders are evil.

[ 25 : 51 ] They're killing their families and friends. And yet he says, submit to them as unto the Lord. So as imperfect as our civil leaders are, so are the elders, imperfect men who are weak.

Yet, they are to be qualified. Qualified in what? This is 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 15. Peter, Paul says it this way.

He says, do your best to present yourselves to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. I don't quote the King James very often, but I'm going to here because I just love the way in which they wrote this.

It really kind of hits it right out of heart. It says this, study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

That is the weight. We should never put a man in the place of an elder if he cannot be in this pulpit without a shame, knowing.

[ 26 : 58 ] I don't know everything about scripture, but the one thing I do know is I can rightly divide it. And I can proclaim it to you. They do not have to have a PhD. This is why Paul says they can't be a novice.

This is why it's also important that elders are not appointed unless the congregation and the other leaders can observe the character of this man's life, his knowledge, his capacity, his ability to teach and proclaim.

So the church is always instructed to have more than one elder for their own protection. You should know this question, and I love it when congregants ask me this. Who shepherds you?

Do you know I'm a sheep? I can sound like one if I need to to convince you of that. I'm a sheep. I need to be shepherded. Curtis is a sheep.

He needs to be shepherded. These men, Eric and Ben, they do everything that these texts have said, not only to you, but to me as well.

[ 28 : 00 ] I need to have oversight. I need to be cared for. I need to be confronted. I need to be convicted. I need to be prayed for. Because the weight in which this responsibility brings is terrifying.

This idea of submission is not as if you have to submit to me and there's nothing for the elders and there's nothing for us to do. We are called to submit to each other and to you as well.

It's not that somehow I have a special designation. It's just that I've been called to a unique role that God's going to use in these men as well. I found this quote when I was working through this, trying to help my mind come around this idea of submission.

I found this quote really helpful in a commentary. He said this, Submission focuses not on personality but on position. We need to see authority over us not acting on their own but as an instrument in the hand of God.

Submission is an act of faith. We are trusting God to direct us in our lives and to work out His purposes in His time. After all, there is a danger in submitting to others.

[ 29 : 10 ] They might take advantage of us. But not if we trust God and if we are submitted to one another. A person who is truly yielded to God and who wants to serve his fellow Christians would never even think of taking advantage of someone else, saved or unsaved.

I think there's a powerful point in that we're submitting because we trust God. But at our church, we would never, and I would encourage you if you've ever gone through our membership class, you know this.

We never tell anyone to submit blindly. You should never submit blindly to anything. Ever. It's not wise. This is why we promote our confession of faith. This is why we want you to understand where are the leaders going to guide and direct you in our theology.

And this leads us to our third point. Really the rapport of the elders. So we've talked about what is their role, what is their responsibility, and what is the rapport. So this is what Peter goes into.

How is it that we should govern our hearts and protect ourselves as we fall into this role of being elders and protecting the church through this war time in the spiritual war?

[ 30 : 20 ] He says this in verse 2, if we keep reading. He said that we're the shepherd showing oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly as God would have you.

Other translations would say, not out of duty. This isn't just a job is what they're saying. It's a holy commissioning of the king.

Many of you will show up tomorrow because you are obligated to do it if you want to get your paycheck. He says this is different. You don't treat it this way. You should not see it in this way.

As God would have us, we would do this out of love and affection, not of fear and compulsion, not as a duty. And then he says this, not for shameful gain, but eagerly.



It is true that there are men who, and at times even women, who take this job because they see it as a paycheck. I'm good at speaking. I can keep people's attention. I can get a lot of people to gather in a room, which means there's a lot of income, which means that my paycheck will be good.

- [ 31 : 29 ] And Peter rebukes those who would pursue ministry in this way. And I think identifying people who you can see, they're not really shepherds. They're just here to draw a crowd. They're here for the money.

Then verse 3, not domineering over those in your charge, but being an example to the flock. Which means we have to be an example of what does it mean to submit and be shepherded and be cared for.

I know the translations would say for not domineering, not lording over. Not lording over the flock. Here's a definition.

It says this, it means to exercise dominion over, bring under one's power, bring into subjection, to become a master, gain dominion or to subdue.

Subdue. I've been in ministries like this. I've seen them where it's heavy-handed domination. This is not what shepherds, according to Christ, do.

- [ 32 : 31 ] Men who want to have control and authority, you can spot them a mile away. This is why we have a two-year process, even our own church, to give us time to observe. Why does this person want to be an elder?

Do they like authority? Do they like being in control? Do they like telling people what to do? Do they like to serve? Do they like to shepherd? Do they like to care?

Do they like to be a part of people's lives and pray with them and cry with them and comfort them? That's a shepherd. So why would an elder take such a heavy and difficult role?

Why would they do this? Well, this leads us to verse 5 in our fourth point. The reward of the elders. Yes, I got all R's in there. Sometimes I laugh at myself.

And I do it to keep you awake. The reward of the elders. And maybe you'll remember the outline later this week. I know they all started with R's. The ridiculousness.

- [ 33 : 34 ] Oh, I can't remember. Sorry. 1 Peter chapter 5 verse 4 says this. And when the chief shepherd. Ah, there he is. Our shepherd. When the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Elders who properly understand who they're serving and for what reward. The reward is. It's Christ. We get the joy of leading you to be with Christ.

Christ. There is no greater reward than that. I don't need anything else. By the way, I don't think you could put a dollar amount on my job. I've done this job when I had three jobs and the church paid me nothing.

And now the church pays me full time. So if you want to do this job based on money, you should seriously get a different career. What is the reward? Why would I do this? Because I really believe in the mission.

And I believe in our king. And these elders do. It is hard work. We meet twice a month for hours. That's just so we can figure out how to shepherd you. But then we're also meeting with you and praying for you and preparing sermons, preparing lectures.

- [ 34 : 41 ] Curtis taught this week. He's going to be teaching next week. You've got Eric who's leading a class. And Ben who's going to start doing the baptism classes. I mean, it's amazing what these men are doing. That's on top of their full time jobs and families.

I'm thankful for these men who labor along with me. And we all are encouraged that we're not trying to build some massive kingdom or some massive church so that we can pat ourselves on the back.

We just want to make sure that you who show up here are cared for. When thinking about the spiritual war we face, one of the best ways to slow down the advancement of the gospel and the coming judgment for those who've rebelled against the king is either to take out the elders or to put the wrong men into place.

This is what Peter's concerned with. Pastors are constantly under attack. I have so many pastors that I talk with throughout the week who have failed throughout of ministry or they're just exhausted because of how hard it is.

This is a hard job. I'm not telling you this so I can get your sympathy. I'm telling you this so you understand the reality. There are more men leaving ministry than going into ministry because it is that hard.

[ 36 : 16 ] When the enemy takes out a pastor, it's not just that one man that's affected. It's his family and anyone he was ministering to.

I personally know of people who have never gone back to church after watching their pastor fail. Many walk away because of the pain and hurt.

So how can you help the elders of GRC? How can you encourage and strengthen us as we carry this load willfully and gladly and with joy and training other men to come and do and carry the weight with us?

What can you do for us? Pray for us. And I mean it. Seriously. I believe in the supernatural gift of God's prayer towards his people.

That when we turn our hearts to depend upon him, he uses it to strengthen our hearts and our souls. Pray for our love for Christ and his kingdom. Check on us.

[ 37 : 16 ] We're not untouchable. I know you might think this, but we're not sinless. Care for our families.

Take care of our wives. We have to carry weight and burdens of the entire congregation at times we cannot tell them because it's not appropriate. And they can feel the weight as well.

The spiritual burden we carry at times is a weight that is very hard to describe. But we are happy to do it. We are happy to do it. I never want to become some public speaker where there's distance between me and you.

Because then this job is now useless to me. The point of it is that I might literally know that I'm caring for your souls. And the elders feel this as well. We want to fulfill our calling because we love our king.

But there is an enemy who is actively trying to take us out. And I think we've felt this in our young church throughout the years. So how does Peter tie all of this together? How does he protect not only the congregants, but how does he protect the elders?

[ 38 : 27 ] This is refreshing. This is verse 5. This goes to the relationship with the elders. There's your last R. Your relationship with the elders.

Likewise, you who are younger be subject to the elders. You know why Peter put that in there?

Because up in this point, you probably weren't paying attention if you're younger in the faith. Or even younger in age. So he directly goes, and you who think you've got it all figured out.

A.K.A. 15 year old. You need to pay attention as well. It is funny. He just says, likewise, in case you don't think I'm talking about you, young person.

Be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you. So, that would include me. And the elders. And the congregants. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another.

[ 39 : 29 ] For God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. The only way this works, the only way it works, is if all of us realize we are sinners in need of God's mercy and grace.

If you're visiting here and you're like, man, there was like verses and prayers and songs and confessions. Grace, grace, grace, grace. We tried to warn you, the name of the church is Grace. Reform Church.

Reforming the law out of you and bringing you into grace. The only way that we could submit and confess our sins and disciple and grow and forsake our old ways.

And pursue that which is holy. And pursue that which is benefiting. And honoring to the Lord. The only way that we could do that is if we all see ourselves in equal need of God's grace.

I do not stand up here because I have achieved anything. I stand up here because I'm under His grace and His mercy. I, at one point, was disciplined and cared for.

[ 40 : 30 ] I was trained. This is then my responsibility to hand off to you. But we do it not in a place where we look down and we judge. I have been in contexts where the grace of God is a tip of the hat.

We mention it. But the church just feels like a place of just weight. Constant judgment. When we're looking at each other and we're never truly being kind. There's no humility.

I don't ever want to be in a context like that again. Peter wraps it all up and he says, I love how he says this. He says, clothe yourself in it.

It means everything about you is covered by humility. By the way, what is humility? It's to think that others are more significant than yourself.

It's not to be meek and weak. Walking around as if, you know, we've got nothing to live for. Humility is to understand I have a power that is stronger than anything in the world that lives within me.

[ 41 : 33 ] I don't need to prove myself to anyone. And I don't need to take advantage of you. I don't need to make you look lower than me so I look higher. See, pride does this. Pride pushes down people.

And we point out each other's sins. Look how you have failed. So I can step up on top of you and show how I am significantly more than you are. Humility says, oh no, walk over me.

As a matter of fact, I will be the doormat. I will be the thing that lifts you up to Jesus. And if I can lift you one more inch to him. And if we're all fighting for the bottom. Then there is no reason to boast.

So what does Peter say at the beginning? He says, men, elders, you're the example of humility.

You want to know why I talk about grace and mercy so much? Because I feel like an idiot at times being your elder. I do. I laugh.

[ 42 : 34 ] When you sit down in my office and you ask me for help. I'm like, what? You don't think I struggle with that? How about we figure it out together? And if you get it figured out, you come over and help me. All right?

That sounds good to me. I love how Peter presents this to the church. What I love about our church is that we are free to confess our sins and our failures and our weakness.

Not so that we can excuse them. And not so we can stay in them. But we confess them because we want relief from them. We want to be stronger in our faith. We want to be stronger in our obedience.

We want to see the kingdom of God advance. And we understand that our pride and our sin get in the way. So how is it that we remain humble? We remain humble by constantly looking at the gospel.

And the gospel is the constant reminder that there is no reason for anybody to boast ever. What does Ephesians say? Your faith and your repentance, the entire life that you have, was gifted to you by Christ so that you would never boast.

[ 43 : 32 ] So the fact that I'm standing here today and I have this knowledge and I have the capacity to speak to you spiritually in a way, you should not be impressed by what I have accomplished.

Because Paul says it this way. Jesus who began a good work in you is the one who will complete it to the end. So when we get to heaven, who gets all the praise and the glory and the honor? They're not standing around the throne saying, good job, John.

No, we're all the voices turned. All the voices are turned to Christ. I have nothing that you should be impressed with. The elders, I know them. You definitely don't need to be impressed with them.

Just imagine what our community will continue to look like if we can learn to submit to each other and understand that spiritual growth and health and comfort and crying and rejoicing all happens together.

And those of us who are strong will learn to carry and disciple those who are weak so that we all might mature together in Christ. This does not work if we isolate ourselves out from under the church.

[ 44 : 43 ] It's hard to shepherd people who do not show up. And it's hard to be cared for by you if I'm not around you.

So may we never get ashamed of grace. May we never stop talking about it. And may we understand it is always our source and our power. For this life.

Let's pray. Father, I'm thankful that I don't stand here alone. But I've got three brothers who, well, I trust them with my life. I trust this church with my life.

There's nowhere else I would rather be at this moment than with my family here. It is such an honor to be underneath you, Christ. And to be able to be loved by them.

To live with them. To rejoice. Even the small voices that I hear in here. The new life you've brought our church. And I think about those who are on the other side.

[ 45 : 42 ] Who are retired. And are now caring for us. As sweet, special saints. Lord, we just, we ask that you would continue to guide and protect us in Christ's name.

Amen. Thanks for listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill, Tennessee. Where everyone is in equal need of grace.

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