

Elders In Exile

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 May 2026

Preacher: Jared Blankenship

[0 : 00] And in God's providence, we've come to a text this morning that deals directly with the role of elders in the church and the congregation's responsibility to follow their lead.

! Now, we know the Bible teaches us that all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable, and it's profitable for different things. But, of course, we also understand that particular text might be more or less impactful given various seasons of your life.

For example, we may always profit from a passage that gives us the promise of God's provision, right? But it's in those seasons when we are really desperate for God's provision that those texts become maybe a little bit more impactful to us than what they are in times of feasting and prosperity, right?

And here we are at a significant season in our church's life where this text not only demands our attention and demands our meditation, as all texts do, but especially in a season when we are all praying for and desiring to see faithful elders recognized and installed in the church, this particular text should carry a weight right now that it might not would carry at other times in our church's life. So let's read it together, 1 Peter 5, the first five verses. Peter writes, Not for shameful gain, but eagerly.

[1 : 58] Not domineering over or dominating those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another. For God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Amen. Well, perhaps the first question that we need to ask when we consider this particular text is, why is Peter addressing the role of elders at all?

And how are churches to relate to them? Why does he even care to bring that up? And of course, the answer to that is fairly obvious, isn't it? It's not exactly surprising that he would do this at some point in the letter.

All of 1 Peter is really focused in on the Christian life as a kind of exile that is replete with sufferings and discouragements that tempt us to fall away from the faith.

[3 : 12] And yet, God gifts his people, his good gifts toward his people include the community of the local church and of faithful spiritual leaders in the local church that he sets apart in order to care for our souls.

Do you see that and how it would fit in this letter? Here are Christians who are struggling and they're trying to thrive as God's people in the world. And here is God who gifts us as a gracious gift, the local church.

A community of other Christians who we might say suffer with us, suffer along with us in this life. And as part of that church community, he sets apart some of those people to have a special interest in caring for our souls.

It's essential that those leaders rightly care for God's people. It's essential that those congregations appropriately submit to them and faithfully follow their lead as they faithfully fulfill the task that has been given to them.

And that the relationship between a church and its leaders be marked by mutual love and mutual humility, mutual trust is critical to thriving in exile.

[4 : 41] And that's by God's design. What Peter gives us here is assumed in the community of God's people in the New Testament. So we understand is that it doesn't take very much thinking to realize, okay, why Peter would even bring this up.

But there's another question that maybe is a little bit more difficult to answer. And it's why does he bring it up here? Of all the places that he could bring this up in the letter, why is he actually saying it

here?

Is it that there is a clear distinction between the previous section and this one? Is he moving on to completely new thought where he's just decided to pick up kind of maybe arbitrarily the issue of elders and congregations following them?

Is it just that? I don't think that it is. Remember what he's just written. Alluding to prophetic patterns in the Old Testament, Peter has just told us that now is the time for God's judgment to begin with the household of God, which we understand in 1 Peter to be the church.

Big C church, which obviously would include little C church, local churches, right? He just told us that, that now is the time, that the end of all things is at hand.

[6 : 00] Therefore, what they're facing in the fiery trial that tests them, that proving ground and purifying ground that comes from God, is this judgment that is coming that begins at God's house.

Now, if you go to a passage like Ezekiel 9, 4 to 6, which I gave you last week, which is almost certainly in Peter's mind as he's writing this particular part of the letter, you'll see that the judgment of God's house begins with the elders of God's people.

So God says through Ezekiel, he's going to send his instrument of judgment. That judgment will begin at his house, right? There's going to be a mark of those who stand righteous before the Lord, and then those who are unrighteous before the Lord will not receive that mark.

But they're all enduring the judgment in some respect. And when that instrument of judgment actually comes to the house of God, it begins with the elders who stand before the Lord, and they minister for the Lord, and they care for his people.

Now, this text then is the logical step forward in this progression that Peter is presenting and that he's alluding to.

[7 : 17] Judgment begins with God's people. And that judgment that begins with God's people will naturally begin with those whom God has set apart to lead his people.

And so naturally flowing out of that last text, Peter now turns to the elders of the church, and he says, Listen, there's some things that I need to exhort you to do because you're a part of this.

It's going to start with you. And so let me help you remember some things. Of course, the whole section here at the end of the letter, it's aimed at perseverance, isn't it?

It's aimed at enduring all the way to the end. Therefore, the judgment of elders is going to come, and Peter says, Now, I want to exhort you on some matters as you persevere in this work, help you remember what you've been called to do and how you might glorify the Lord in it.

So that's why it's here. Not surprised that it's in the letter, but that's why it's at this part of the letter. Peter is noting the reality of God's judgment. He's recognizing the essential role of elders in the church.

[8 : 27] So he exhorts them to remain faithful to the task. Then he comforts them with the hope of Christ's return and the glory that they will share with him.

Which brings us to another question. Who is this text for? Is this just for those people who are serving as elders or those who would aspire to serve as elders at some point in their Christian life? Well, no, I don't think that it is. It's not just for those who serve or aspire to serve. Notice the very first phrase, what Peter says. I exhort the elders among you.

Who's the direct audience in that sentence? It's not yet the elders. He's going to get there in the next couple of verses. It's the you. Who's the you? It's the whole church. It's the whole church. He's addressing the whole church. The whole church needs to be aware of what he's writing to those who lead them. It's written for the edification of the entire congregation for churches must rightly understand the role of pastors.

[9 : 38] They need to rightly understand what qualifies men to serve as an elder in the church. And then they need to rightly understand how to relate to those leaders that they call to lead them.

So I have two objectives with that in mind. One objective this morning is I want to challenge the men in our church. I want to challenge you to aspire to what Peter describes here.

If not the office, the character that's described here for those who are worthy to fill it. The reality is that very few of us will probably have the opportunity to actually hold this office.

But all of us should view it as an honorable task. All of us should have a kind of willingness to do it if called upon to do it.

All of us should pursue the character that is necessary for those who lead. So my first objective today is to challenge the men of our church to think deeply about this and to aspire to it.

[10:51] Because the bottom line is that our church needs faithful men who will actually desire to care for the souls of the people in this congregation.

That's objective number one. So you men, listen up. Objective number two. I want to encourage our whole church. And I wish that on this day, this is in the Lord's providence, of course.

But I wish on this day more of our church family would have been able to be here to hear this. But I want to encourage our congregation to think well about the kind of men we should call to serve as elders.

We need to understand what the task actually is. Because there's a lot of confusion about that. Maybe not necessarily in our church, but out there in the Christian world, there's a lot of confusion about that. We need to understand this well.

What are we actually looking for when it comes time to call men to serve in this way? And then we need to think deeply about what our relationship is to them once we call them. What is our responsibility to them?

[11:57] And what does it mean to follow them once we ask them to lead us? Those are the objectives, okay? First thing I want you to see here is I want you to see the qualities of faithful elders.

The quality of faithful elders. So on one hand, I want the men in our church to look at these qualities and say, okay, I want to pursue that kind of life. Even if I've never called upon to fill the office, I want to pursue this kind of life.

I want the whole church to look at this passage and say, okay, when it's time to call men to serve, this is what we're looking for. This is what we will call them to do, okay?

The qualities here. Now, the New Testament scriptures, maybe you'll remember from some of our studies in this last year, it uses three different words interchangeably to refer to the office of pastor in the church.

Remember, there's elder, there's shepherd or pastor, right? It's the same term. We just say it different ways. And then there is overseer, right?

[12:57] Shepherd, shepherd or pastor, overseer, elder. Peter actually uses all three of these terms just in these first two verses. Did you pick up on that? I exhort the elders among you to shepherd the flock of God, giving oversight.

That's intentional. He's using these words the way the apostles were interchanging them all throughout the New Testament. So we understand with that, he isn't just talking about or addressing the aged men in the church.

Elders in this case is just not men who have reached a certain age. Neither is he speaking of different offices in the church. This is one office, and the different terms that he's using represent the various functions of that one office.

And Peter is clearly thinking that way. They are elders because they have a spiritual maturity that is relative to the people that they serve, right?

That's the point of elders. It's not that they've reached a certain age. It's that they possess a kind of spiritual maturity relative to their congregation that will actually allow them to lead well and to be a faithful example to the people that are around them, right?

[14:18] So that's why they're elders. They are shepherds because their task is to care for God's flock. That's the task.

They are overseers because spiritual care requires a kind of oversight and authority over the people and the ministries of the church.

And of course, as you'll see, as in every other instance in the New Testament, Peter uses the plural form of elders, suggesting that there were multiple men in each church working together to lead and care for the people.

Now, Peter approaches this different than Paul. If you reflect on Paul in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, Peter's doing something a little bit different. He's not giving an exhaustive list of character traits or qualifications.

We can go to those texts to see that. That's not exactly what he's doing here. He's addressing those current elders directly. He's exhorting them to pursue three essential qualities of faithful pastoral ministry.

[15:29] And he's doing it with tremendous care. Notice he's doing it as a peer. I'm exhorting you. That's a little bit different.

Not quite as strong as demanding of you or commanding you. So though Peter has the authority as an apostle to make those demands, that's not his approach here.

He's practicing what he's preaching here in these later verses as he addresses the elders. And he says, I'm coming to you as a fellow elder, as one of the men who's in the throes of it with you, who's not only a witness of the sufferings of Christ, but there's an implication here of he is a fellow sufferer with Christ, just as those men would have been fellow sufferers with Christ.

He's a partaker. In other words, I'm with you in this, and I'm exhorting you. I'm encouraging you. I'm trying to persuade you to go at this task a particular way as one who's trying to do it with you.

And he gives us these three essential qualities which help us to understand the role. Three things. The first one is this. Faithful elders are mindful of God's call.

[16:37] They are mindful of God's call. It's the first part of verse 2. Peter says, here's what you need to do, men. Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight.

Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight. That's their call. That's what they've been called to do. And they're mindful of that call.

Now, I think there's a lot of Christians who get confused about the exact purpose of pastoral ministry. And what that does is it leads men to aspire to something that isn't actually what God has intended the office to be.

And not only that, it leads churches to evaluate men on the basis of something that God hasn't actually said to evaluate. And we get confused about it.

And we set wrong expectations and we evaluate on the wrong criteria. Peter's exhortation helps us get it right. So if we're going to redefine this definition of what does a pastor do?

[17:46] What is a pastor? What is an elder in a church? I would say it this way. Elders are faithful men set apart by God through the congregation.

That's important. I'll come back to that in a second. Set apart by God through the congregation to watch over the souls of the people under their care. Elders are faithful men, right?

They're Christians. They're faithful. They're godly. They meet all the character qualifications that Paul outlines in Timothy and Titus. They're faithful.

They're set apart by God, meaning there is a calling that God puts on their life, but that calling is revealed through the ministry of the local church. In other words, an elder is not somebody who just tells you they're one.

It's not somebody who just decides they're going to come into our church and say, Hey, I just want you to know God has called me to be an elder and you just need to receive that from me. No, that's not how this works, is it?

[18:49] We understand there's a congregational dynamic to this in God's design. God puts an internal call on their lives and then the congregation recognizes that call and actually calls them outwardly, externally, to serve in that way.

So they're faithful men set apart by God through the congregation to do what? To care for our souls. To watch over the souls of God's people.

Now notice the language Peter is using here. They're shepherds. They're shepherds. It's a word picture, isn't it? What do you think of when you think of a shepherd?

Imagine a painting. If you're going to have a painting of a shepherd in your house, what would it look like? It's going to be around a lot of sheep probably outdoors. Maybe he's fulfilling a particular task.

It's going to be a picture of care, of concern, of responsibility. But what exactly is it that shepherds care for? Shepherds don't care for primarily a business, do they?

[19:56] They care for sheep. They care for people. But then the sheep for which they care don't actually belong to them. It's not their possession, which means the flock isn't theirs, which means their responsibility isn't to do it just however they want to do it.

It's God's flock, Peter says. God entrusts to these faithful men a portion of his flock. Shepherd the flock that is among you.

That's the local church. God says, I'm going to call you, I'm going to equip you, and I'm going to trust you to take this group of people that belong to me and care for them as mine.

And how is it that they shepherd God's flock? Peter says, by giving oversight. Shepherd the flock of God by giving oversight, exercising oversight.

And how do they do that? Shepherds literally watch over the sheep. They feed them. They nurse their wounds.

[21 : 11] They lead them to good pasture. They protect them from predators. They might even have to protect them from each other.

Protect them from themselves. That's how they give oversight. They don't lord over their sheep. They watch over their sheep.

Now, this is important because this is where the confusion comes in so often, isn't it? Some men aspire to the office of elder because they see it primarily as a decision-making role, and they would like to have their voice heard.

That may not necessarily be out of a place of pride, but maybe it's a place of competency, and they think, well, these are the people who make the decisions for the church. Therefore, I'd like to be a part of that.

I think I've got some good things that could bring to the table. But that's not what shepherds are primarily responsible to do. It's a piece of it, but it's not the primary thing. Many churches may even evaluate men based on their charisma or based on their business acumen because they think the office is fundamentally about organizational leadership and development.

[22 : 25] And there's no question that's a piece of it, but it's not the focus of it. If you think that the real work of eldering and the real work of pastoral ministry happens at the moment that those elders get together for their elders meeting and start to deliberate on whatever it is they need to deliberate, if you think that's where the real work of eldering happens, you've got it backwards.

That's not actually where it happens. The real work of pastoral ministry happens when they leave that meeting and they disperse themselves among the flock of God and they begin to exercise oversight in giving spiritual care and caring for the souls of the people that God has entrusted to them.

That's the call. That's the focus. That's what they do. God calls on elders to care for the souls of his people.

Organizational leadership is a piece of it, but the call is to care for souls. And listen, church, we need men whose goal is not to build a business or govern an organization, but to help us thrive in exile.

Isn't that what this whole thing is about? It's about getting to heaven. It's about thriving on your way there. It's about remembering the gospel of Jesus. It's about living a life that's holy before the Lord so that the Lord might bless us, so that we might remain faithful and not be in despair and discouraged.

[23 : 57] And God says, here, I'm going to give you a gift. I'm going to raise up some men in your congregation. And what their role is, is to walk with you and lead you to heaven. It's to lead you to Jesus, the chief shepherd.

That's what they do. We need men who want to do that. We need men who will take on that responsibility, who will shepherd our souls. And when we consider men for the task, the first thing on our minds doesn't need to be, well, how good are they at their business work?

Look, you can have a group of men that don't have a lot of qualifications in terms of business, and you know what they can do when it's time to make a business decision? Invite another member of the church who is good at it to come and give them counsel.

Problem solved, right? That's not what we're looking for. When we're considering it, you know what you need to consider? Who can I trust to sit down and counsel with me when my marriage is falling apart?

I don't need a businessman to help me then. I need a pastor to help me then. I need somebody who's going to teach me the Bible, who's competent enough to help me understand it, who's competent enough to help me grow deeper in my discipleship, who's really their goal for my life is that I might love Jesus more, and that I might know his grace more.

[25 : 26] I want to look for men like that. We want to consider men who are going to encourage us in the gospel so that we don't despair in our suffering and be overwhelmed to the extent that we leave the faith.

We want men who are going to feed us and protect us and watch over us. Faithful elders understand that that's the task. Faithful elders understand the call, and they're mindful to fulfill it for the glory of God and for the good of his people.

There's a second quality here, and we'll get faster through it, but there's a second quality here. Faithful elders have a heart for the work. They have a heart for the work. Now, go back to verses 2 and 3. Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight. And then he gives us three more of these contrasting negations, or not this, but that statements. Right? Do you see it there? Not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you. Not for shameful gain, but eagerly. Not dominating those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. [26 : 40] Faithful elders, this is all about a description of having a heart for ministry. It's having a heart for God's people. Faithful elders have a heart to do the work despite the many difficulties and sacrifices that it demands.

And it does come with a measure of difficulty and hardship, and it does require a level of sacrifice in order to do it well. Let's just walk through these three statements. Faithful elders fill the office willingly.

Willingly. Not under compulsion. Those who serve as elders, in other words, must not do so merely out of a sense of duty.

That's certainly a part of it. It's not wrong to want to fulfill your duty well. But that can't be the basis of why they serve. It's not about duty. But with a willing heart that actually loves God's people.

And here's the thing. There may be men in our church, throughout our church's life, who meet all the qualifications for eldership. They've got the character. And perhaps they have all the gifts that we think would be useful for serving the church well.

[27 : 49] But if they don't desire the work, they will not ultimately serve the church well. They won't be good elders. They won't be good pastors.

They won't be good pastors. That's why Paul says to Timothy, whoever desires the office of overseer, desires a noble task. That's a noble thing to desire. In other words, that desire is essential for the office.

It would be better to call a faithful man with a willing heart whose gifts are still developing than a gifted man who must be coerced to do it.

This is not the kind of role that you want to strong-arm somebody into doing. Because when the task becomes a burden, and it always becomes a burden at some point, you want men who are willing to press on for your good because their heart is to serve God's people well.

Second, he says, Not for shameful gain, he says, but eagerly.

[29 : 09] Do you see the difference in the contrast there? Not for shameful gain. Notice he's not saying that gain is a problem. It's a shameful gain set against an eagerness simply to do the work.

There are places where the scriptures commend and urge churches to honor their leaders and provide for their needs as they're able. What Peter condemns is using the office of elder as a means of personal gain rather than out of an eagerness to really just care for God's people. That personal gain may look like a lot of different things. And Peter says, that's not the purpose here. Don't do it for that reason. Do it because you just love the church. And then the third thing, he says, Faithful elders have a heart to lead rather than to drive.

You see the last thing. Don't domineer over them. My job in this church is not to tell you what to do. Not in the sense of being an authoritarian in your life. That's not my job. That's not my place.

Counsel? Yes. Exhort? Yes.

[30 : 22] Correct when necessary? Absolutely. But it's not to govern your life. That's not my job. I wouldn't do it well. It's not any elder's job.

What's our job? It's to lead from the front, isn't it? It's to be an example of faithfulness and then encourage the church to follow that lead.

I heard Herschel York tell a story recently about a trip when he had gone to Israel. He was seeing all the sights and they were traveling from place to place one day and he noticed a man that was driving some sheep in a particular place.

And he thought it was interesting the way the man was going about it. And he said he had two long rods and basically he was behind the sheep, however many it was, and he was using these rods to kind of corral them and push them forward into the direction that he wanted them to go.

And he was failing miserably at it. Like they weren't listening. They weren't doing what he wanted.

And he thought that this was odd. So he asked his tour guide about it. He said, why is that shepherd doing it like that?

[31 : 25] What's happening there? And the tour guide said, oh, that's not a shepherd. He said a shepherd would never actually lead the sheep that way. He said, that's the butcher. Butcher's taking them to the slaughterhouse.

There's a difference in those two things, isn't there? There are a lot of guys, they're qualified well. They got some good things about them. Maybe they have a strong form of leadership that's effective in certain environments.

But when you come in and you're just trying to drive people, you're trying to lord over them, you're not going to be very effective in your ministry, are you? Faithful elders aren't like that. One of their qualities is that they lead from the front.

In other words, they say, watch what I do. Now you do it. Right? Watch how I love my wife. Now you love your wife that way. Watch how I care for my kids and teach them and discipline them and nurture them.

Now you do it. Watch how I read my Bible. Now you do it. Watch how I evangelize to lost people. Now you do it. That's what shepherding is. That's the quality that we're looking for.

[32 : 25] So faithful elders have a heart for the work. Third, faithful elders are motivated by God's reward. They're motivated by God's reward.

This is verse 4, isn't it? And when the chief shepherd appears, of course, who is that? It's the Lord Jesus, isn't it? When the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Now remember, what are elders? They're just faithful sheep who have been given a unique responsibility in the church.

The fact is that they suffer and struggle in all the same ways that every other Christian does. They are also in exile. And they deal with all the issues of exile like everyone else.

In some cases, the ire of the world may be aimed specifically at them just because of the role that they have in the congregation. So what is Peter doing here?

[33 : 28] He's encouraging them. He's bringing comfort to them by reminding them first that they too have a shepherd. The chief shepherd who is watching over their souls, who's caring for their souls, who is soon to return in all his glory.

And when he returns, it's the same promise that he's been going over time and time again in this letter. When he returns, the chief shepherd, you will receive your reward. And what is this reward? It's not something different for pastors than it is for everyone else. It's actually the same. It's the same reward he's been encouraging us throughout the letter. Their motivation to persevere in the faith.

Their motivation to persevere in obedience relative to their call, fulfilling the task in faithfulness.

What should motivate them is not shameful gain. What should motivate them is not power to lord over people.

What should motivate them is not the pride that comes along with a sense of duty and fulfillment of that duty. What should motivate them is the fact that Jesus is coming back. And when he comes back, they get to be with him and they get to live in his glory and share in his glory.

[34 : 41] It's the same as in the previous text at the end of chapter four. The coming glory that will be experienced at the revelation of Jesus Christ is the thing that should push them forward.

In other words, whatever role God gives you in this world and among his people, the motivation to trust him and to keep doing good remains the same.

And for pastors, that means persevering in the work that they've been called to do, even when it's hard. And even when it contributes perhaps maybe even to more suffering.

So that's the qualities of faithful elders. You with me? Let's do the final thing. He moves here in verse five to the qualities of a healthy church.

The qualities of a healthy church. Now, he doesn't leave the discussion before he addresses the relationship between the elders and the people for whom they care. In verse five, he turns his attention away from the elders now back to the congregation.

[35 : 46] Let's read it. Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another.

Why, Peter? He quotes a proverb here, Proverbs 30. For God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Two things stick out here.

What are the qualities of a healthy church collectively now? Well, number one, healthy churches follow those whom they call to lead. They follow those that they call to lead.

Now, that sounds like it should be pretty straightforward, right? It's amazing how many times it doesn't happen in churches. Now, let's think about this first phrase. Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders.

There's various options for who Peter might be addressing with this word younger. It could be that he's addressing those who are younger in the faith. It could even be that he's addressing those who are younger in age because of a particular proclivity we have in our youth to have a little extra pride. [36 : 59] It could be one of those options. But I don't think that's it. I think most likely he's using younger here just simply as a contrast to the term elder. In other words, if elders is what we call those who fill the office of pastor in the church, then younger would be those who do not fill the office of pastor in the church, at least in the way he's using his language here.

And his instruction is that they be subject to the elders, which is a word we've grown accustomed to in this letter, isn't it? Remember what he said back in chapter 3, chapters 2 and 3.

Christian citizens are to be subject to their rulers, right? Christian slaves, he said, are to be subject to their masters under the Lord. Christian wives are to be subject to their husbands.

He's dealing with authority and submission here in all the rightful ways, right? Not in abusive ways, but in all the rightful ways. And he brings that same terminology here. Why? He's just speaking of the relationship of authority and submission in the local church.

And the essence of the exhortation is this. Healthy congregations not only recognize and call faithful men to serve, but they willingly and joyfully follow the men that they call.

[38 : 21] Do you see how that works? In so far as your elders do not lead away from God's truth, the responsibility of the congregation is to submit to their authority.

Listen to their counsel. Follow their teaching. Trust their leadership. Not blindly, but in so far as it aligns with what the Bible teaches Christians to be and elders to be.

We get this instruction in Hebrews as well, don't we? The writer of Hebrews in chapter 13 says, To remember your leaders. Those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate them.

Follow them. Listen to them. He continues. Obey your leaders and submit to them. Why? Because they're keeping watch over your souls. As those who will give an account to the Lord and let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

How would an elder serve without joy and groaning? Well, there could be a lot of reasons, but in relationship to his relationship to the church, it would be a joyless task.

[39 : 36] If a church called you, but didn't trust you. Called you, but wouldn't listen to you. Called you, but won't follow your teaching.

What do healthy churches do? They recognize faithful men. They call them to serve, and then they say, Now we'll follow you. As long as you're leading us to Jesus, we're going to follow you.

Second thing. Healthy churches clothe themselves in humility before God. This is how they follow, right? This is also how elders lead.

From the top down, healthy churches are clothed in humility. It takes humility for elders to lead with willingness and eagerness and without domination.

It takes humility not to insist upon your own way, but to work well with other faithful elders as together you shepherd the church of God. It takes humility for congregations to trust and to follow fallible men who are not perfect and not are equally gifted in every way and sometimes do things that have negative consequences, right?

[40 : 59] It takes humility to follow those men. It takes humility to trust people. But without humility, the church cannot survive, let alone thrive in exile.

Why? Peter tells us. Because God sets his face against the proud, but he pours out his grace on the humble.

You know, what our greatest enemy in our church will be is not financial hardship. It won't be the sexual revolution.

It won't be the growth and issues that are going to come along with artificial intelligence. It won't be war.

All those things will be problems. That won't be the greatest enemy. The greatest enemy for our church will be pride. Because when we start to exist in pride, that's when God turns his face away.

[42 : 04] That's when we get the opposition of God. And I don't want the opposition of God. I want to please the Lord. I want to glorify the Lord in our church.

And I know you do too. How will our church thrive then? By wrapping ourselves in humility. The way that we live with one another. And the way that we relate to our leaders. And the way that our leaders relate to us.

Now let's finish it up. Remember, what is the overall aim of the end of this letter? It's perseverance, isn't it? He's teaching us how to get to the end.

But perseverance, we understand, is a community project. We need the community of the local church to help us endure to the end. And one of God's good gifts to his people is faithful elders. Who understand their call and serve with a willing heart. And live for the glory that is to come. Another of God's good gifts is a healthy congregation that identifies faithful men.

[43 : 08] And then joyfully follows their lead. So what does that mean for us? It means we need men who will aspire to the task and see it as an honorable calling.

An honorable task. Men who will follow in the steps of the chief shepherd. Who loves his church and laid down his life for his sheep.

We need those kind of men leading our church. Who would give themselves for our church. Even if they never fill the office themselves, we need men who pursue a life that is worthy of the office. Even if they're never called to do it. And it means that as a congregation, we need to recognize such men. If I understand the Bible correctly, they are gifts from God.

And he gifts them to all his churches. Which means our job is to recognize that. Recognize them. And then encourage them to pursue it.

[44 : 15] And then train them to do it well. And then call them to fill the office. And then after we've done all of that, we need to say, now we trust you.

And we're going to follow where you lead us. And we're going to trust you to care for our souls and lead us to heaven. And lead us to Jesus. Keeping his gospel ever before us as we await his return.