

Eph 3:14-21 - Rooted, Grounded, and Growing in Love

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: 21 May 2017

Preacher: Guest: Justin McGuire

[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Amen. Thank you all. I love that song. It's a reminder that the calling of God on Peter's life that we celebrate today is a unique one. It's also one that many aspects of are for all of us too.

Not just for the preacher, but for all of us following Christ to make his name great. What a great joy that we get to be a part of that together.

We are celebrating Peter's ordination here in just a few minutes. Part of that celebration is getting to invite a pastor who's a friend of yours to come and open God's word for us.

Peter obviously didn't know many. He picked someone who's been to Oxford, Mississippi and Columbia, South Carolina. So apparently the pickings were slim. We're sorry about that.

[1 : 04] But that's not the only places Justin has lived. He also overlapped with us in seminary in St. Louis. So he and his wife Missy are friends of me and Christy.

But he and Peter go back to Maryland. None of those other terrible places where Justin served on staff at that church with Peter. And so they're friends. And we're so excited.

As much as I would like to give Justin a hard time for his football history, he's a great pastor and a great friend. And I'm delighted for you to get to hear God's word from him this morning. Thank you, Justin.

Thanks, Paul. Appreciate it. I invite you to open your copy of God's word if you have one to Ephesians chapter 3.

Ephesians 3. And in just a moment, I'll read verses 14 through 21. Ephesians 3, 14 through 21. And before diving in, I do just want to say that I am deeply humbled by and thankful for the opportunity to preach this morning.

[2 : 15] As Will alluded, Peter and I go back to around 2010. That's when I was called out of seminary to serve as an assistant pastor at Providence Presbyterian Church in Salisbury, Maryland, which is where Peter and Emily were members.

And it's the church in which Peter also spent many of his formative years along with his family there. And when I got there, Peter was a part-time, if memory serves, volunteer youth director.

And so I got to know him a little bit in that relationship. And after about a year, Peter was hired to be the full-time youth director there, which meant that the door to his study was about eight feet away from the door to my study.

And so I feel for those of you who have to work in close proximity with Peter for reasons that perhaps have already become obvious.

And if they haven't, I assure you they will. There's nothing like having the doorknob to your study tied to the doorknob of the closet across the hall so that you can't get out of your own study, among many other things.

[3 : 19] And after about a year of that, Peter in his full-time capacity, I talked him into going to seminary because I just couldn't take it anymore. And so he and Emily moved to St. Louis.

No, he and Emily made the very prayerful decision to go to Covenant Seminary in St. Louis to pursue training for further ministry. And that was a decision that I, and more importantly, the leadership of the church, were happy to affirm and are excited to see how the Lord has led since then and has faithfully brought you to this point this morning.

Peter, after getting over the initial elation of being invited to preach this service, my attention quickly turned to the text that I would be preaching from.

And that decision took all of about two seconds because it was merely a matter of asking, what is the text that has most profoundly impacted me personally and pastorally since my own ordination to the ministry?

And I can say without reservation and without hesitation that it's Ephesians 3, beginning at verse 14, where the apostle Paul writes, and God's word says, For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory, he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

[4 : 52] That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth.

And to know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever.

Amen. This is God's holy word. May he add his blessing to the reading and the preaching of it. I invite you to pray with me as we open his word together. Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we come and we ask that by your Spirit you'd use the reading and the preaching of your word to convince and to convert anyone here who might not know you this morning.

We pray that you would use your word in the lives of your kids to build them up in holiness and comfort through our faith in your Son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

Amen. Well, the context of this passage will help us to see why it's such an appropriate text for an occasion like this one this morning.

[6 : 15] We're at the end of Ephesians chapter 3. Paul has spent these first three chapters extolling all of the glories of God's grace toward his people in the gospel of his Son, Jesus Christ.

The way that he has sovereignly loved them, his electing grace toward them, his adoption of them, the riches that are theirs by virtue of their union with his Son, Jesus, and on and on we could go.

And in the verse immediately following our passage this morning, Paul turns his attention to how God's people are to live their lives in light of God's grace toward them in the gospel.

The way that he says it is he's going to tell them how to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which they've been called. And he devotes his attention to that throughout the end of his letter.

And after focusing on God's grace in that way, again, he tells them how they're to live lives of obedience by doing, you know, really pretty easy things like maintaining unity in the body and speaking the truth in love and living lives of holiness and righteousness.

[7 : 22] Being angry but not sinning. Not stealing but working honestly and sharing generously. Speaking graciously to those you interact with.

Forgiving others as Christ has forgiven you. Being sexually pure. Being content and not covetous of other people.

Making the best use of the time that God has afforded you. Men, loving your wives as Christ loved the church. Wives, respecting your husbands.

Parents, diligently training up your children in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord. And then how to be a diligent prayer warrior in Ephesians 6 as he closes out the letter.

Just easy stuff like that. Are you kidding me? How do you begin to do those things faithfully?

[8 : 22] In some of those cases, how do you begin to even want to do some of those things faithfully? To put a bit finer point on it this morning for you, Peter, in light of your calling to the ministry, how are you going to live up to just this one vow that you're going to take in a few moments?

To engage, to be a faithful and diligent minister of the gospel in the exercise of all your duties as a Christian and as a minister. Whether personal or relational, private or public.

And to endeavor to adorn the profession of the gospel in your manner of life. And to walk with exemplary piety before the flock. And for the rest of y'all, how are y'all going to faithfully receive the word of truth with meekness from Peter's mouth and encourage him in his labors and assist him in his endeavors?

What's the secret to walking in a manner worthy of your respective callings? Well, the secret is in Ephesians 1 through 3. More specifically though, what do you need?

What do you need in order to do what sounds so very daunting? And what you need is what Paul prays for you in our passage this morning.

[9 : 42] That in verse 16, according to the riches of God's glory, he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

That you, being rooted and grounded in love. And we'll pause right there for just a moment. Now some of that could potentially be confusing. Because Paul has already affirmed back in chapter 1 that these people have already been sealed with his promised Holy Spirit. But you'll notice there that he's not praying that they be granted the Holy Spirit. He prays for them and by extension prays for you and me that through the Holy Spirit who's already in them, that they would be given strength in their inner being. And then our Bibles say, So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. What's interesting about that is that in the original language, the words so that aren't there.

[10 : 41] Not there. Not there at all. And so the way that it literally reads is, Strengthen with power through his spirit in your inner being, Christ to dwell or Christ dwelling in your hearts through faith.

So it's not that Christ dwelling in your heart through faith is the result of the spirit's strengthening of you, but rather that the spirit dwelling in your inner being with power and Christ in your heart through faith are one and the same reality.

That the spirit is the spirit of Christ. The spirit of God's son, as Paul describes in Galatians 4. The spirit is the one who applies to you the redemption purchased by Christ. Christ by working that faith in you. And thereby unites you to Christ in your effectual calling, as you remember, I'm sure, from the shorter catechism.

He unites you to the Christ who's the source of all the strength that you need. And what's the result of that, does Paul say? That those who the spirit has united to Christ by faith have been, as Paul says, rooted and grounded in love.

[11 : 55] You've been rooted and you've been grounded in love. Y'all have been rooted and grounded in love.

It's the language of planting and of building. And what Paul is saying here is that the foundation that stabilizes you and the soil from which you derive nourishment as you individually and collectively grow into all that God wants you to be in Christ is God's great love for you.

So what do you need to know to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called? You need to know, brother, and y'all need to know beyond the shadow of a doubt, that your heavenly Father loves you.

That if he could say nothing else, I think he would cup your collective faces in his tender fatherly hands and look into your eyes and he would say, I love you.

And that's what he wants you to know. That's the fuel and that's the foundation of all your obedience to him. And without that, you have little hope of walking worthy of your calling.

[13 : 18] Will mentioned earlier my affiliation with the University of South Carolina and your bulletin mentions that I played football there. That's sort of true. I was a walk-on on the football team for the four years I was there, which means I practiced a lot.

I played somewhat sparingly. And it's kind of pretty this morning. The implications of the gospel are being played out before your very eyes. I mean, Paul was right when he said, here there is not Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, game cock, tiger, tide, war eagle.

Well, we're all one in Christ. It's a beautiful thing. A very beautiful thing. But anyway, I was on the football team there. Coach Lou Holtz was our coach.

And one of the things that he incessantly drove into us was the necessity to always be in what he called a football position. Okay, that's your feet slightly wider than shoulder width, your knees over your toes, your butt down, your back arch, your head and shoulders back, your eyes up.

That was the foundation, that that was the position from which you could best deliver a blow. And that was the position from which you could best receive a blow. And one day I got reminded of that the hard way.

[14 : 34] I was playing fullback in a practice, in a short yardage and goal line situation. And my target was right off the tight end's backside. And as soon as I got there, there was supposed to be a linebacker waiting to meet me there.

And I was supposed to kick him out. Well, the ball gets snapped. And for one reason or another, I got off track. May have been because the tight end didn't seal his block well enough. More likely because I'm just not terribly athletic to begin with.

One way or another, when I arrived at the point of contact, I was not in a football position. I did not have the proper foundation underneath me. And the linebacker was there. And he blew me up. I mean, I think the first thing that hit the ground was probably my big numbers. And once they did, to the great delight of the defense and to many other onlookers, the first two words out of this linebacker's mouth were, football position.

A not so subtle reminder that I was not ready for that because I was not in a football position. I did not have the proper foundation beneath me.

[15:40] And so I couldn't do what I had been called upon to do. Walking in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called requires you remembering that you have been rooted and you have been grounded in love.

It's a fact of who you are because of your union with Jesus. But sometimes we forget it. And we have to remember that. You have to remember that.

That you have been rooted and you have been grounded in love. Not in guilt. As though by some debtor's ethic you could somehow repay the debt of love that you owe the Father.

Not in fear. As though he may one day reject you or he may withhold love from you because you haven't performed up to his standards but you have been rooted and you have been grounded in his great love for you.

A love that is guaranteed by your union with Christ and by the working of the Spirit in you. And as a brief but important aside to those of you who are here this morning who haven't yet trusted in Christ those riches are all on offer to you as well.

[16:50] If you'll turn from your sin if you'll turn to Christ and you'll place your faith in him and plead forgiveness from him and pledge allegiance to him you'll be united to him by his Spirit.

And you too will know the riches of being rooted and grounded and the love that the Apostle Paul speaks of here. That's who you are. But you have to remember it. And often you'll be tempted to doubt it.

And perhaps never more so than when you sin. That's when Satan most likes to as we sang a little while earlier tempt you to despair. When you sin you can question the love that's there.

The reality is that you are just as rooted and grounded in God's love when you sin as at any other time. And there's a Puritan who's helped me to remember this.

A guy named Thomas Goodwin. He wrote a little book called The Heart of Christ. And in it he says these scandalous words. Your very sins move him more to pity than to anger.

[17:51] Yea, his pity is increased the more toward you even as the heart of a father is toward a child that has some loathsome disease. His hatred shall all fall and that only upon the sin to free you of it by its ruin and destruction.

And this as much when you lie under sin as under any other affliction therefore fear not. What shall separate us from the love of God in which you've been rooted and grounded?

Nothing. Nothing can separate you from that love. His vast unmeasured boundless love for you is the only thing that will sufficiently stabilize you and satiate you as you seek to walk in a manner worthy of your calling and as y'all seek to walk in a manner worthy of your respective calling.

So know that that love is yours in Christ and know that that's true and that's what you are rooted and you're grounded in. And as good as that news is it gets even better in the middle of verse 17 that you he says being rooted and grounded in love may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

So not only does God the Father love you but Christ loves you. Not only does Christ love you but the Spirit is the one who strengthens you to know of that love and by whom that love is poured into your heart.

[19:36] And not only does God love you that way Father, Son and Holy Spirit but he wants you to know more of that love every single day. You see because this prayer that's in Ephesians 3 is inspired by God we know that it's not just Paul's personal sentiments that he's praying for this particular congregation though it's certainly no less than that because it's inspired by God we can know that it actually reflects God's desires for his own people.

It reflects God's desire for you that he wants you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being as it says in verse 16 and that strength is in verse 18 for you to be able to comprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

Now listen we praise God that a weak faith can lay hold of a strong Christ for the salvation of sinners. And I'm sure as you remember from your recent readings of the confession that this saving faith is different in degrees weak or strong.

And one of the things this text makes clear is that God doesn't want our faith to remain weak. He wants it to grow. He wants it to strengthen by the power of his Holy Spirit so that our conviction that he loves us will deepen so that we'll believe it more and more that we are loved.

Because here's the truth to the extent that you believe that Christ loves you you will abandon yourself to his will and to his word and to his ways.

[21 : 23] To the degree that you doubt Christ's love for you you will withhold affection and allegiance and obedience to him.

That's why Paul prays that you would know more and more and more of his love for you. It's why old cold-blooded John Calvin could say something like this that the love of Christ is held out to us as the subject which ought to occupy our daily and nightly meditations and in which we ought to be wholly plunged.

He who is in possession of this alone has enough. He's effectively saying you can't think too much about how much Christ loves you.

You can't meditate on that truth enough. You can't pray for it enough. No matter how hard you try in this life even with the strengthening help of the Holy Spirit there is no way that you'll be able to scale its sky-surpassing heights.

There's no way you'll be able to plumb its fathomless depths. No way you'll be able to reach to its widest widths. No way that you'll be able to run to its limitless lengths. It's inexhaustible. Paul says it surpasses knowledge and yet he says I want you to know it.

[22 : 35] How can you know what surpasses knowledge? Well in the ultimate sense you can't on this side of the world but you can do what Paul does in this passage. You can pray.

I guess this might be the first point of application for you Peter that you pray even as Paul does that God would give you strength to know how much he loves you. this is a three by five card and I keep a stack of these and at the top of each one is the name of someone for whom I pray regularly and you've got one in that stack.

This one isn't yours. This is mine. It just says me at the very top and the very first prayer request on there when I get around to praying for myself is this. It says enable me to know how much you love me.

enable me to know how much you love me. Peter that's worth praying every single day. Not God help me to love you more and still less not God help me to do better but God help me to know how much you love me which will then enable me to love you more and then enable me to go and do better.

Knowing how much Christ loves you is what will enable you in the course of your ministry to be appropriately gentle with yourself when you fail to meet your own or others expectations.

[24 : 11] Knowing how much Christ loves you is what will best enable you to love Emily. Knowing how much Christ loves you is what will best enable you to love Charlie and Hosea and Miles and Whit.

Knowing how much Christ loves you is what will best enable you to love your students and their families and this congregation. Knowing how much Christ loves you is what will enable you to receive the criticisms that will come without hating either yourself or your critics.

Knowing how much Christ loves you is what will best enable you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called. So pray it for yourself that daily God would give you to know more and more how very much he loves you.

The second thing I would say is don't just pray it for yourself pray it for your people. Pray it for your students, their families and for this congregation. It's exactly what Paul did for these Ephesians that God would give them an ever deepening apprehension of his love for them.

not only is there no danger in doing that, it's actually a detriment to them if they don't know how much God loves them in Christ.

[25 : 29] Because again to the degree that these people doubt God's love for them, their obedience to him is going to be short-circuited. So pray for them that they would be given strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and the length and the height and the depth of the love of Christ for them third thing I would say is this don't just pray it for yourself preach it to yourself mine not just this text of scripture but all of the other texts of scripture which repeatedly remind you and me how much God loves us in Christ I don't think there's any truth that Satan more likes to call into question than this one I don't think there's anything about which he more likes to say did God really say to which you and I and we need to be able to respond by saying yes he really said for example that the mountains may depart and the hills be removed but my steadfast love shall not depart from you and my covenant of peace shall not be removed says the

Lord who has compassion on you yes he really did say I have loved you with an everlasting love yes he really did say I so loved you that I gave my son for you so that by believing in him you might not perish but have everlasting life yes Satan he really did say that so you can go to you can get on somewhere he said it preach that to yourself remind yourself of that regularly and then preach it to your people preach it to your family preach it to your students and their families as you have opportunity preach it to this congregation here a preacher that we both know and love and respect Dr. Brian Chappell writes this about this passage he says when Christian leaders see this wonderful truth of scripture our calling becomes very clear it is our duty our privilege our delight to engender in those that we want to grow in grace and holiness and ever greater love for Christ how do we do this we engender love the way that the apostle does we proclaim how great is Christ love for us preach that that's what will do your people good it's what will best enable them to walk worthy of their calling despite the claims of some to the contrary despite what many have said throughout the ages and what specifically some said to John

Bunyan as he was in the Bedford jail for 12 years for his refusal to conform to the dictates of the church of England the story is well known but it's also well worth repeating that there were those in prison with Bunyan who told him you can't keep assuring God's people of his love and his mercy and his grace toward them if you do that they'll do whatever they want to which Bunyan very wisely replied no no that's not true of God's people you keep reminding God's people of his love for them and assuring them of his grace toward them and his mercy toward them and then they'll do whatever he wants and then you and and then y'all collectively will begin to be all that God desires you to be in Christ or as the apostle Paul describes it be filled with all the fullness of God in closing there's a great quote that's painted on the wall of your offices in there saw it last night and I would encourage you to ponder it as often as you pass by it from C.S.

Lewis who said this to be loved by God not merely pitied but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father his son it seems impossible a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain but it is so and because our thoughts can hardly sustain it and your hearts can hardly sustain it as you seek to walk in a manner worthy of your respective callings may God give you strength to comprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God and may the deep love of Jesus be to you the love of every love the best may it be to you an ocean vast of blessing and may it be to you a haven sweet of rest let's pray together gracious God and heavenly father how grateful we are for all that you've done for us in Christ we thank you that you don't call us to obedience without first rooting us and grounding us in your great love for us in Christ that we might be sufficiently sustained and nourished and strengthened for the task that you call us to please impress these truths indelibly on Peter's heart as he enters into the ministry that you've called him to please impress it indelibly on the hearts of all the saints here at Southwood Presbyterian Church for your great glory and then father do far more abundantly than all that we could ask or think according to the power that's at work within us and to you be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus both now and forever more amen amen thank you Justin as we move into the ordination portion of this service I want to introduce to you the commission of Providence Presbytery that is here to ordain Peter we are a church that is not alone but connected to many others and our presbytery our geographical grouping of churches is the one where your pastors are members the ones we're accountable to the men who are here this morning are teaching elder Ron Brady who's honorably retired teaching elder William Plott from Valley Presbyterian Church and three ruling elders from

[32 : 12] Southwood along with me ruling elder Todd Gandy ruling elder George Mayer and ruling elder Ray Shepard I want to tell you how seriously the presbytery feels about a man being called to steward the mysteries of God to minister God's word to God's people that's a big deal presbytery examined Peter in all these areas his testimony and call to the ministry his personal character and family management his knowledge of Greek and Hebrew his knowledge of Bible content of theology of the sacraments of church history of PCA history book of church order theological paper an exegetical paper on a particular passage a sermon having examined him on all of those things the presbytery enthusiastically and unanimously approved

Peter and God's call in his life to be a steward of the mysteries of God his call to the gospel ministry and so it's our great privilege on behalf of the presbytery to celebrate this ordination with you Peter if you'll come stand up front and session of Southwood if you will come as well and sit on the front row teaching elder plot is going to come and ask both of you some questions it's great to be here today to celebrate with you Peter this is a culmination of your calling seminary training ordination exams this will be your final and easiest exam in fact

I'm going to give you the answers I do I will I have and if all else fails just say Jesus this is going to be your easiest exam but your most important as the words have been already alluded to this morning this is a weighty moment in your life and I have the joy and pleasure of asking you these questions so consider them deeply as we go through them Peter do you believe the scriptures of the Old and New Testament as originally given to be the inerrant word of God the only infallible rule of faith and practice do you sincerely receive and adopt the confession of faith and the catechisms of this church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the holy scriptures and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any of the fundamentals of this system of doctrine you will on your own initiative make known to your presbytery the change which has taken place in your view since the assumption of this ordination vow do you approve of the form of government and discipline of the presbyterian church in

America in conformity with the general principles of biblical polity do you promise subjection to your brethren and the Lord have you been induced as far as you know your own heart to seek the office of the holy ministry from the love of God and sincere desire to promote his glory in the gospel of his son do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel and the purity and peace and unity of the church whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account and finally do you engage to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your duties as a Christian and minister of the gospel whether personal or relational private or public and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the gospel in your manner of life and to walk with exemplary piety before the flock of which

God has made you an overseer great well you may be seated for a moment I'm going to ask the members of the session to just stand where you are Peter is being called as an assistant pastor and there's a unique relationship between the session and assistant pastors and so these questions will go to the session and through you to the whole congregation but your session is going to respond to these questions I'm not giving you guys the answers this morning all right here are the questions do you the session of this church continue to profess your readiness to receive Peter render as assistant pastor do you promise to receive the word of truth from his mouth with meekness and love do you promise to encourage him in his labors and to assist his endeavors for your instruction and spiritual edification do you engage to continue to him while he is your pastor that competent worldly maintenance which you have promised and to furnish him with whatever you may see needful for the honor of religion and for his comfort among you amen all right

[38 : 06] I'm going to ask Peter to come before us and kneel and I'm going to invite all the ruling and teaching elders who may be present here this morning to come down and lay hands on Peter let's pray father we praise you and give you thanksgiving for your faithfulness to us this day time after time you have extended your hand of mercy and grace to your people and have placed a unique and purposeful calling on those you've called we are especially grateful for how you have brought Peter to this day of his ordination to ministry we thank you father for all the godly men and women you brought into Peter's life and utilize them to be instruments that have influenced and led

Peter to you thank you for drawing him and opening his heart to a relationship with you and giving him the desire to point others to you and Lord we pray that his ministry would stay true to you his teaching would be true to your word and that he would have discernment to teach and instruct and he would remain sensitive to the Holy Spirit and remain teachable to those he ministers with and we

pray also that his ministry would that you would give him a vision for his ministry and that he would encourage those who know you and have a genuine love for the lost hearted and may we his church family love Peter well as well as Emily and their boys Charlie Hosea Miles and Whit may you create a desire in the hearts of those that would volunteer to join him in ministry pray that may you use him as he ministers to the families of this church father youth ministry can be a tough and laborious battleground for the hearts of those growing from dependence to independence give Peter the wisdom strength and courage to lead listen and love those that you bring through the doors of this church father we know that we have an enemy that seeks to destroy us and sever the relationship those we love may you protect Peter and watch over him with your righteous right hand pray for Peter and Emily and their marriage and pray that they would continue to look to you as their source of strength seeking your guidance for themselves their marriage and as parents be gracious to their household blessing their time together and lastly father we thank you for this time of blessing as we lay hands on with your spirit blessing Peter and his ministry from this day forward and we ask this in Christ's name amen this takes a little while as they're finishing up let me formally declare what has happened here today

I now pronounce and declare that Peter Rinder has been regularly elected ordained and installed pastor of this congregation agreeable to the word of God and according to the constitution of the Presbyterian church in America and that as such he is entitled to all support encouragement honor and obedience in the Lord in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost amen amen we have the privilege this morning of charging Peter and the session briefly the kids are coming in to be a part of this with us we're so glad that y'all are here as well. I will charge Peter and ruling elder Todd Gandy will charge the session and through them the congregation in just a moment. Peter, it's such a delight to get to celebrate your ordination, your calling by God that is confirmed today by God's people, His church. I have one charge for you, but I'm not going to tell you what it is until the end. Justin kind of gave it away already. First, I want you to stand up. Pretend you're being examined by Presbytery again. This is going to be fun, right? I have one question. Can you tell me the significance of the number 2,632? That's a great answer. If I told you that it was not a biblical number, but from the sports world, would that help at all? 2,632. Impressive. 2,632 consecutive games played by Orioles shortstop Cal Ripken over 16 seasons. It wasn't a state that you're from, so it was kind of easy. But every game he was there. It's called the Iron Man for his consistent faithfulness, showing up game after game after game. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4 that the calling you receive today is steward of the mysteries of God. And he says there that you're called not to be famous, that's not the word he uses, not to make a name for Peter, render, but to be faithful, to make the name of God great. You're dependent on Him and it's His name you're exalting. Paul says it's required of stewards that they be found faithful over and over depending on and pointing to their Savior, called to be faithful to their Master. We later find out not just for 2,632 games, but all the way to death. As a steward, you're called to pour out God's love upon people over and over and over. Preaching, counseling, teaching, praying. But your calling as a steward doesn't eclipse your other callings, where you must also continue pouring out God's love upon people. You're called to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. There's a big task. You're called to love your neighbor as yourself, even your enemies. You're called to love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. Emily didn't marry a pastor, but now she's married to one. She has loved, sacrificed for, and supported you. Love her and through that your boys and your parents. You're to love them.

Then in your new calling as a shepherd, you're called to love the flock of God among you. This flock and any other flock God puts in your care. All these people here today.

[46 : 18] I love that part of your calling to youth ministry in this season that God has called you to was your knowing very simply that students are real people. You've said that to me. That we all need Jesus.

We all need to hear of His love in the gospel and so students and their parents need to, just like all the rest of us, all of us are real people who need that in our lives. Young and old, all these people love them all the time faithfully. That would exhaust even Cal Ripken. But that's the calling. Even, Paul says, to be poured out as a drink offering for the sake of those you love. So my charge for you is this. Never stop drinking deeply of God's love.

Justin and I didn't talk about it. I just think it's what God teaches you you need as a pastor. Never stop drinking deeply of God's love. In His word, learn the grander dimensions of it.

The breadth and width and height and depth. In repentance, experience the freedom of it. In relationship with others, taste the sweetness of it. In meditation upon the person and work of Jesus, behold the fullest extent of it for you.

[47 : 45] God's love will never run out. So never stop drinking deeply of it. It will make you humble, grateful, worshipful, loving, and it will make you faithful.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how long and wide and high and deep is the love of Christ.

And to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Amen. Amen. So my charge is to the session, and really to you, the congregation of Southwood.

And this is based on this verse out of 1 Timothy 2, verses 1 to 4. Therefore, I exhort, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and come to knowledge of truth. Session of Southwood, you have called Peter Render to be an assistant pastor at Southwood Presbyterian Church.

[49 : 22] He is well trained. He has been examined well. But he is also a husband to Emily, a father to Charlie, Hosea, Miles, and Witt. And for this reason, we need him to be more than just a pastor.

Eugene Peterson tweeted out this week, If succeeding as a pastor means failing as a parent, you've already failed as a pastor. And so our job as a session of Southwood is to make sure he's successful in both.

To make sure he has an environment where he can be successful as a parent, as a husband, as a father, and as a pastor. And so what can we do as a session and help him do that?

And so I have three things to charge you with today. And the first one is, is that we are to pray for Peter and his family. And we are to pray diligently, humbly, and with a strong desire that he is successful in what he does here.

That he lives out the calling that is on his life well here at Southwood. Peter, as a youth pastor, often is the first person to get a call. And those calls don't come at convenient times.

[50 : 37] They come in the middle of the night. They come in the middle of meetings. And it's usually a youth in crisis. And he needs our prayers to do the job that has been placed before him.

He needs a strong group of people behind him. So will you, my challenge to you this morning is will you pray for him? Will you pray for Emily? And will you pray that God continues to work a mighty way through him and with him?

Second thing I want you to do is I challenge you to be patient with Peter. Peter's a young pastor. Peter's going to make mistakes. Be patient.

Allow him to learn. Allow him to grow. Allow him to become the man that God desires him to be. But not instantly, but over time. There's a great picture found in the Gospel of Luke.

And Jesus is teaching in the synagogues when a crippled woman enters in there and he heals her. The Pharisees were upset. You know why? Because he healed her on the Sabbath.

[51 : 41] But listen how the story ends. And when he said this, all of his opponents were humiliated. But the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

And so I ask you, Session at Southwood, focus on being delighted in the work of the Gospel that Peter is doing here at Southwood. And less on the things that may be different or that may be something you haven't seen before.

But focus on the good that you see in his work. And so I challenge you to pray for Peter and Emily and to be patient as Peter leads the ministry's issues. And finally, I challenge you to participate.

To be engaged in the ministry that Peter has been called to. Peter needs your participation. He doesn't work as an island. He works in community.

And so we need to lock arms with him. We need to be the first ones to raise our hands when he needs volunteers. He needs you to participate when he calls.

[52 : 47] He also needs you to participate without being asked. To come alongside and allow him to be successful in what he's here to do. I think he has the hardest job in the church.

Ministering to our children and to our youth. Keeping them safe. Loving them through the Gospel. Loving them during one of the most difficult and challenging times in their lives.

Keeping them safe from the evils of this world. And so here I challenge you, Session of Southwood and Congregation of Southwood, to pray, to be patient, and to participate.

Let me close us in prayer. Father God, you are good. And I thank you for who you are. I thank you for working in the life of Peter and bringing him to be a minister of your Gospel.

Bringing him to this church. Now will you empower him to do what only you can do. To preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And to show the world that there is a better way.

[54 : 00] Through Christ. Father, I pray for this church that we may glorify you in what we say and do. And I thank you for meeting with us this morning. In Christ's name. Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.