

Let us pray, Lord. Father God, we do appreciate every single soul that has been worshipping you this morning, a priority in their lives. We give ourselves over to you now as your disciples, your children, and we seek the wisdom of your word. We seek the purpose of your word in our lives. And we worship you, Holy God, for what you did so long ago, what you do every single day of our lives and for the promises upon which we stand as Christians. In Jesus' name, we pray that you will take your place as the pastor and the teacher of this church, the elder, the overseer, which we'll discuss today. Lord, thank you so much. Amen. With the opening song today, I want you to listen. We talk a lot here about scripture and the purposes of scripture and so forth. And we're always talking about how scripture is written not to you, but for you, right? It's not written about you. It's written about God. And so when we go into scripture, we learn who God is, the love of God, theology, the study of God, theology. And that's when we can go into all of scripture and see that. Now, reflected in that knowledge of God is who we are being made in His image and likeness. So, Psalm 145 is an interesting song. And as I read through it, I'm going to really emphasize the subjects of the various sentences. And I want you to hear for yourself how this entire Psalm is about God man relationship, God man relationship. There are no other real subjects in this Psalm other than God, man and the relationship thereof. Here's the Psalmist begin. I will exalt you, my God and King, and praise your name forever and ever. I will praise you every day. Yes, I will praise you forever. Great is the Lord. He is most worthy of praise. No one can measure His greatness. Let each generation tell its children of your mighty acts. Let them proclaim your power. I will meditate on your majestic, glorious splendor and your wonderful miracles. Your awe-inspiring deeds will be on every tongue. I will proclaim your greatness. Everyone will share the story of your wonderful goodness. They will sing with joy about your righteousness. The Lord is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all of His creation. All of your works will thank you, Lord, and your faithful followers will praise you. They will speak of the glory of your kingdom. They will give examples of your power. They will tell about your mighty deeds and about the majesty and glory of your reign. For your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. You rule throughout all generations. The Lord always keeps His promises. He is gracious in all He does. The Lord helps the fallen and lifts those bent beneath their loaves. The eyes of all look to you in hope. You give their food as they need it. When you open your hand, you satisfy the hunger and thirst of every living thing. The Lord is righteous in everything He does. He is filled with kindness. The Lord is close to all who call on Him, yes, to all who call on Him in truth. He grants the desires of those who fear Him. He hears their cries for help and rescues them. The Lord protects all of those who love Him, but He destroys the wicked. I will praise the Lord and may everyone on earth bless His holy name forever and ever. That's a beautiful example of Him. I, as the worshiper, it references we as a group of worshippers and it references the generations of worshippers of only God alone. That's one of the most important points of this song. We do not give our worship to anyone, anything, any idol but the Almighty One. And you hear that bouncing back and forth in this song. Take that home with you and have a read on it this evening as well. Oh, we have been six weeks now. You, me, others, we've read through it. We've stopped and gone back. We've looked at it sometimes verse by verse. One day, you look at the entire book all at one time. And I believe that we've been drawn here for a particular reason and that is what you see happening today in not just a post-Christian America but what has devolved into an anti-Christian America. And a lot of the anti-Christian sentiment comes from those under the umbrella of Christendom, particular sects of the so-called Christian Church. There's division. There's theological division and there are elements within Christendom itself that are just fighting one with the other. Heretical elements that will just continually pound Orthodox elements in how racist and homophobic and this and that we all are. And Orthodox elements who live by the word of God and shoot right back. All of which we're taught not necessarily to do. We're called to call out false teaching. But we're not called to do it with every little snippet that we see on social media. If I were to stand here and start preaching other than the Bible, if I were to stand here and start preaching something, I'd say, "You know what? After all these years I've decided this

is just outdated and we need to be more, say the word, inclusive." And then I would expect the men of this church to come up and remove me. That's what we're taught to do. So setting that aside, that is sort of the premise or the foundation upon which I think we've been in 1 Peter so long. Because we are, as they say, Bible believing, standing on the word of God Church. We understand how radically inclusive the gospel of Jesus Christ is. We understand that there are only two types of souls, two types of people in the whole world. Those who are dwelling within the kingdom of God and those who are not. It's radically inclusive. And we need to keep hold of that message. Like I joked with Josh, we have to let anybody in. Yes, absolutely. And the saying is, "God meets you right where you are." Yes, he does. And then the transformative power of his Holy Spirit changes you and transforms you into a child of God. There's what is left out of most of the gospel that is being preached. Peter wants to make this incredibly clear to a church. It's been driven out of Rome and put on the outskirts. And the persecution is now beginning. And so there is the pressure is being turned up. And little did the church know that his teachings in this letter would serve them for generations to come because that persecution was going to be turned up to the nth degree. And here we are on the margins now, right? The Christian Church, the Orthodox Christian Church in America used to be in the center. One of the driving force, the driving ideologies. We've been now over the past few generations relegated to the margins. It's one reason why those who seek to continue to be Christian and be relevant go back to the middle, opening up to every secular idea that there could be. So here we are. And I believe that what we've learned about order and structure and obedience, what we have learned about is, given questions that are asked, is your faith enough now? Will your faith be enough when are all incredibly powerful and relevant for you today? For us today? For congregations like us today? As the message that we preach, the message of love, the message of the gospel, the message of grace and transformation is being adulterated and changed and altered and misused. And those who truly believe in the sanctifying grace of God are being cast aside for the sake of loving ourselves, for the sake of wanting to be our own gods, for the sake of not being willing to follow the order and structure that alone be obedient to a holy God. Chapter 5 sums this up quite well. I want to spend a little bit of time at the beginning because it is relevant to more than just me. It's relevant to every disciple there, that is out there. And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches. I too am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I too will share in his glory what he has revealed to the whole world. As a fellow elder, I appeal to you, care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly, not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example. And when the great shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor. Now that's one of my passages that I've memorized, right? It's a passage that's near and dear to my heart. It's a passage that I have to refer to constantly because I constantly fear away from doing that. But it is also a passage that is open to those who are elders of the faith. That word "elder" is the Greek word "prismeter." It is overseer. It is one who is versed in the word of God and who is an overseer of other people. So it's not distinctly speaking of vocational ministry. It's distinctly speaking of all of you who are well versed in the word of God, know the word of God, and you are an overseer of other people, which is virtually everybody in some context. Obviously, our minds go right away to parents and grandparents, overseers of their children, parents, grandparents, well versed in the word of God, and demonstrating that love, you know, teaching, guiding, directing, overseeing, according to the word and the will of God. We can talk about that in perhaps a Christian school context, or even if you have a faithful Christian such as Jeff in a public school context. There's no reason for him to check his Christianity at the door when he is overseeing in a secular environment. We say it all the time, you may be the only Bible that somebody ever reads. There is a fantastic opportunity. Although you may not be able to do what I'm doing here, there are many ways that elders in the faith demonstrate their faithfulness and their devotion to Christ other than standing and preaching the gospel. You're living it. One of the corny old sayings is "Preach the gospel of Christ, use words if necessary." And there's a lot of truth to that, and Peter talks about that throughout his letter. Live in a way that is demonstrative of your faith, in a

way that people might want to actually ask you a question. All of these people around you hate you, they make fun of you, they call you all kinds of names. Is any of that true? Boom, door open. How come you don't just get angry and violent and fight back? Boom, door open. And the Lord will do that repeatedly as you walk in His will. And that is why we gather together on Sunday, and this is my commitment and my calling, is to help everyone that I come across be steep in the Word of God, to go deeply into the Word of God, to be what we say biblically literate, and to understand what it means when we talk about God's love, God's transformative love. We don't preach half of the gospel, we don't preach half of the message, we don't preach that love is love and God is love, all the different stuff that you hear. We preach what Jesus preached. Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand. Blessed are those who know that they are so poor in spirit, that they are in need of a Savior. That's a great starting point for anyone. And you hear the teaching of Jesus throughout the course of His ministry, that He is the way and the truth and the life, and no one comes to the Father but through Him. And that He's not here at that time to judge the world, but judgment has come through Him, because there's God, there's the truth. He's speaking the truth. And through His death and resurrection, a way is made for every human soul to be saved, to be justified, to be covered by the righteousness of Christ and in relationship to a holy God. So there it is. And those who will believe will dwell in the house of the Lord forever and those who refuse to believe or those who would like to take the words of God, make them their own, believing that they are their own God and doing what they will with them, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. They will be cast into eternity, not only away from God, but in torment. Do you want me to preach something else? Because that's what I read when I read the words of Jesus. Not the words of Paul or some prophet, but when I read the words of Jesus. You'll hear this from me at every funeral that I've ever preached, is that right now, today, my brothers and sisters, you have a choice. And when your heart beats its last, you will not. You know the truth. You have the truth. You hear it. You read it. You pray over it. You discuss it with other people. You do all of those things. And that is what Peter is asking now. Now what he's sharing, I guess, is a bit more well said to the churches. Is your faith enough? We asked that quite a bit here. Is your faith enough? Is your faith enough now when the pressure is beginning? And in generations to come, they'll turn back to this letter under harsh persecution and be asked the same question. Is your faith enough? Is your faith enough? So as an elder in the faith, as a presbyter, as an overseer, I urge you, one overseer to another, please live a life worthy of your calling. Worthy of your calling as a disciple of Christ. Because whether the people that you are overseeing are professing Christians or being raised in the church or completely in a secular environment, or the most devilish people that you've ever met, you're not, you're a disciple of Christ. You're not ever not. You're not ever not. That's correct. You're not ever not a disciple of Christ. You are always an overseer. You are always an elder in the faith. And there's always a context in which you will be the example to others. Always. And you don't have to be 30, 40, 50, 60, etc. How well steeped in the faith are your children? Are our children as a congregation, the ones that we are overseeing, the ones that if you read in the back of that little laminated card, we have committed when you take your vows of membership, although all of that you commit to help oversee the growth and development of everyone in the church, whether you're a 40 year old non-believer and that's your starting point, or whether you're literally born in the church and raised there, and that's your starting point. When you are steeped in the Word of God, when you are able to share, I asked you the other week, if you simply have sat down beside someone and they said, "What is this Gospel of Christ?" How would you answer them? If you can answer them well, then I would submit that you're entering the level of presbyter. You're able to share that with other people and you might be 15, you might be 19, you might be 86. It doesn't matter. So it does speak to those such as myself, for whom vocational ministry is their call, and for whom preaching, they have been gifted to do that preaching and teaching. But it is also, according to that word, for all who are elders of the faith, disciples of Christ who can share the purpose and the meaning and the understanding of the Gospel with others. Those who are steeped in the Word, who can live the Gospel of Christ, even without saying the word. Those who are in natural positions of being overseers of children, grandchildren, etc. And those who may be dispersed around the world. A

missionary that enters in to a completely hostile environment. That missionary is now the overseer, if you will, the spiritual overseer of these lives that have yet to be transformed. And that's what we bring in when we say the doors are open to all. Come and hear. Come and hear the truth. Come and experience the transformative power of God's Holy Spirit. Don't just love yourself. Love Him and love others. That's a pretty diagonally good message. And we can all do that without compromise. Without compromise. Because ultimately when the truth is heard, just as it says in John 3, when the truth is heard, the decision is there. People have seen Christ in you. They know Christ through you. They hear the Word of God through you. Perhaps they read some of the Word of God or you share some of the direct Word of God with them. Here you go. Here's the truth. Regardless of where you are in your life or the sin that you're living in, that you think is just your complete identity, God has another picture in your mind. The picture that He had of you when He formed you in your mother's womb, scripture teaches us. And you can find out what that is by submitting your life to Christ. So there's a lot there, huh? That's a lot of responsibility. Yes, but the good news, if you will, for everything that I just said in light of that responsibility is ultimately, it's not your call. One of the hardest things to learn in vocational ministry is that it's not your call. When I felt, when I was transformed, if you will, I gave my life to Christ, I felt this calling. I knew what we could do. Kelly and I knew where we were heading, what was happening. The most frustrating thing is like not everybody believes this. Like, why don't you, does it make any sense to me? I've experienced this personally and you just look at me like I have three heads. And it's so frustrating. Like, why don't you get this? Boom, boom, boom, boom, you know? Oh, put a funnel in their ear, whatever you need to do. Or somebody that you know, you've been with and you've spoken with and you've read with and you've done all of those things and they're like, nah, no, I still don't get it. Thanks, though. You're like, well, we're like the song that we sang last week. Do thy friends despise for safety? All the people that I once knew is still, that doesn't happen as much now because more people know. But when I became a pastor and I would see old friends or what happens, they say, so what are you doing? And I'm a pastor. And they're like, no, really. What are you doing? That's funny. I'm like, no, this happened. They're like, what? You? Like, yeah, me. And then. Very few of them. Very few of them. Very few. So there you go. I know people are like, that's good. That's good. Let's do more than me. I understand that. I totally get that. All right, so that's why I want to concentrate on the beginning of this, because it is speaking to more than the pastor of your church. And the way that you demonstrate that is given there. You don't lord it over them. I'm so much better than you because I know the word of God and I am saved and you are not. Now, you know, you know that I don't create as your pastor rules and regulations, the way you need to come to church and what you need to wear and how you need to this. No, no, no, none of that. None of that. We have our authority right here. It's not me. And we live by the word of God. The word of God alone. So let's finish off, shall we? It's only right and proper that we finish this chapter now. And because we're going now, I want you to hear this. We've heard this so many times before. Husbands, wives, slaves, mothers, fathers, younger, older. We hear this constant theme, two really big themes. Order, structure, obedience, and suffering for the faith. Is your faith enough? Those are the two giant pillars in 1 Peter. And you hear it again here in the same way you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders and all of you dress yourselves in humility as you relate to one another for God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Amen. So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God and at the right time, he will lift you up in honor. Give all your worries and cares to God for he cares about you. Straightforward. This is a constant theme of Jesus Christ. It's a constant theme of all of the New Testament authors. Submit yourselves one to the other as faithful servants of Christ. It's what we do as husbands and wives. It's what we do as fellow disciples. My life is yours and vice versa. And when you look at the math of this, it is really amazing. I give my life and in return I receive a hundred plus. That's good math. The world would want you to believe submission. Obedience. Horrible. Wicked. It's all rules and submission and obedience and rules and really? No, it's the exact opposite. That's always when you always hear a lie that is straight from hell. You can tell because it is the exact opposite of the Word of God. The exact opposite. The math of congregation is awesome. When you have so many people that are

offering their lives to you, you know what I mean by that? That you can turn to, that will support you, that you are never ever, ever alone. Hard thing to learn for we egotistical human beings. My self-centeredness and my pride. And I still do it. We all still do it. But I've learned more and more to turn that people actually do care and to turn and ask for help spiritually or otherwise. And so we see that here and that's a constant thing throughout scripture. Humble yourselves to the Lord and you're saved, right? Humble yourselves one to the other. Don't, Lord, the fact that you are an elder in the Word of God, speak of the Word of God over people. Submit to them and teach them. Show them. Grow, learn, grow, become, go. That's what we say. So stay alert. Now, you need to stay alert. And we've talked about this because all battles are spiritual. All battles are spiritual. You don't think, when we talk about this foundation, you don't think, say, with the love, the literal hard foundation of this church to crumble, and we just have to disperse and go somewhere else? He would love that. All battles are spiritual. And stay alert. Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him. And be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are. Here is that other big pillar of 1 Peter. Suffering in the faith, for the faith, is your faith enough? As you have been transformed, and as you march in the light, as you are a disciple of Christ, so much of the world is not, and like I said, it's not just that it is non-Christian or post-Christian, it is anti-Christian. What the Spurgeon is saying, how valuable must a human soul be when both God and the devil seek it? Right? And that's what it's all about. You're an image bearer of God. And if Satan can somehow get you to oppose the will of God, somehow get you to speak against the Word of God, speak against our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, you see, hmm, he can destroy you as an image bearer. He can destroy you as an image bearer now because you certainly are not reflecting Christ. And you will be destroyed as an image bearer as Jesus teaches upon your death. That's powerful stuff. Very powerful stuff. That goes back to what I said, like, I want every, I want to save all of you, you know, everybody that I meet. I'm on fire for Jesus. Well, I think we always forget that, right? Fire is good for using represents, what? Judgment. So maybe that's not the best thing to say all the time. But we say, we're on you. Well, I'm going to tell people and others, well, what are you telling them? What you tell them is very important because the truth is very important. So enough said there. Stand firm against opposition to God's will. How do you know it's in opposition to God's will? You know, when you're a disciple, you know that what you're doing is in opposition to God's will. And finally, in his kindness, God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Jesus Christ. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore support and strengthen you. And he will place you on a firm foundation. All power to him forever. Amen. God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Jesus Christ. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore you. You will be raised. You will be raised in your glorified body perfectly in the fit, perfect in the physical and the spiritual. The first of which sample, the first example of which is Jesus Christ. You will be restored. You are spiritually restored and become a child of God. Now, does that eliminate your suffering by no means? Because you are enemies, right? You are soldiers transported by your salvation right behind enemy eyes. And that's how you're going to live your life as a disciple of Christ. But always during this life. You have the wholeness that comes with being in relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The wholeness spiritually, your faith is enough. And you will have the complete wholeness physically and spiritually in the age to come. So after you have been doing suffering for a little while, that's your life. I look back upon my life. Gee whiz, I look back upon the past 13 years. And you say, why am I not just wrapped up in my suffering and all of the bad things that happen? Well, I can tell you why I'm not. Because I'm staying. Because I'm in a relationship with the only God and there's always that. Well, who died? I'm very sad. All of the there's always that stuff. But what about this? This is horrible and trapped. And we deal with that. But there's always my relationship with Christ. It's always there. And that is the foundation upon which that suffering or those bad things bounce off of. It's the rock upon which the waves of this suffering, the waves of this grief, the waves of these bad things, it's the rock upon which those waves break. Absolutely break. That's what makes it whole. It's what makes you whole. It's what makes us whole as a congregation. All power to

Him forever. Amen. Peter goes on and talks about writing the letter with the help of Silas and he talks about other various people. In the end, things and beginnings of the letters are very interesting to read. The postscript for today is going to be in 1 Peter 4, just as a reminder of the two great pillars of 1 Peter that we have been standing upon studying, diving into, living in for the past six weeks. Order, structure and obedience. It's going to make for a great new. It's going to make for a great marriage. It's going to make for a great family. It's going to make for a great Christian business. It's going to make for great congregation. Order, structure, obedience. God is not a God of chaos. He's a God of order. And there is no necessary obedience to be saved. But once we are, because that's grace, right? That's just your submission and that's grace. But once you are a child of God and adopted into the kingdom, will you be obedient to His will? You're supposed to be. That's how the kingdom operates. And suffering in the faith. And is your faith enough? Is your faith the rock upon all the grief and the suffering and the bad things and the mechanisms of the devil? Is your faith the rock upon all of that? Phrase. Solid as a line.