

Authority: Elders

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[0:00] Well, good morning. Let me ask you to take your copy of God's Word and turn to Hebrews chapter 13. Last week, we began a short series, Lord willing, four weeks worth of a study of biblical authority.

! We spent a little bit of time setting the stage for that and thinking about the authority of the family. And this week, we're going to pick up the authority of the church in two halves.

Today, we're going to talk about the authority of elders of the leaders of the church and next week of the congregation. So, anytime, let's issue this warning again, we do theology systematically. We must be careful that we don't take bits and pieces of the scripture and bend it to our opinion, our assumptions, our traditions.

But rather that we are honest with it as we pull its teaching together. What does the Bible say about any particular matter can be really important, but we must do it carefully.

[1:12] And so, I just want to say to you, please be discerning as we think together this morning. Many of you are members of this church and you know that our normal habit is verse-by-verse exposition.

I'll spare you all the reasons why we like to do that normally, but some of you are guests. You may be here just this singular Sunday and you'll go back to your church or you'll go someplace else to look for a church.

And I just want you to hear again, be careful as the Bible is being taught in a systematic form rather than verse-by-verse. Both can be done faithfully, but be extra careful when it's being done topically. Our look at the authority of elders will be brief this morning with two simple reasons. Number one, the authority of elders is limited.

Its demarcations are relatively narrow. So, as I announced the topic, if you thought I was going to stand up here and browbeat you about the authority of elders this morning, I'm not.

[2:15] It's pretty limited authority, but I think it's important that we understand that authority. Secondly, we have four men who have been nominated and installed to the office of elder by this congregation who have been faithfully serving you for some months now.

And we've yet to formally install in our public gathering those four men. So, what a good time to do that as we think about the authority of elders.

So, we're going to do that at the conclusion of the sermon this morning, and I want to allow time for this important moment in the life of our church. So, we'll get right into it.

Last week, I made eight assertions. Now, I didn't make them in quite that tidy of a format, but there were eight things that I thought we needed to restate and have our minds set on before we move on to the authority of elders.

So, here they are. Eight assertions made last week. I won't take the time to prove these all from you, to you from the scripture, but they are there. And if you weren't here last week, I would encourage you to go back and listen to that sermon.

[3:23] Number one, God's authority is innate. It's from him. Nobody grants him authority. Authority belongs to him because he is God, and his authority is final.

So, it's absolute. It's the highest authority. And if anything less than this was true, then God would not be God. It's part of who he is.

Creator, we are creation. On your bulletin this morning on the back, John Wilson was an early American preacher said, God's power is unlimited.

God's power is unlimited. His wisdom infinite. His authority is supreme. His freedom absolute. And he may both do what he will himself and appoint what he will have us to do.

So, God's authority is innate and it is final. Secondly, God's authority is necessarily good because he is good.

[4:27] One of the doctrines of God that I love is called the simplicity of God, which isn't to say he's simple in our typical thinking of that word, but it's just to say that he is who he is all the time.

He's not fickle like we are, but he is everything that he is at all times. He doesn't change at all. He's simple. So, he's good.

God is good. The scripture states this again and again and again for us. So, therefore, his authority is necessarily good. And the things that he's commanded and the way that he's ordered the world is good.

And we do well to lean into that, to recognize it, to be humble and go, well, what does the Lord say about this topic or that topic? Thirdly, humankind has an authority problem.

So, the very core of our sin nature is that we have an authority problem. We ourselves want to be in charge. We want to put off any and all authority.

[5:31] That's part of our very core, but also there's some reason for it, isn't there? We've all seen authority abused. You may have felt it firsthand, close to you, authority misdirected or misapplied, but we can observe it all around us all the time.

And let's get into a conversation about politics. And we'll see, oh, can we trust anybody who is in authority? And so, it's good for us to think about it and to say, okay, well, there is authority not to be trusted, but what kind of authority has God ordered?

And therefore, what kind of authority should be trusted? Fourthly, we are delegated authority, and by we I mean mankind, this delegated authority that always has limits and is always subservient to the one who delegated it.

So, delegated authority by God himself, and therefore meant to work within the parameters that God has laid over that authority. Fifth, when a person or institution takes up a responsibility not granted to them, or exercises an authority granted to them in a way not granted to them, it's at best ineffective, it's at best ineffective, it's at best ineffective, it's at best ineffective, it is at worst abusive. You may notice, if you're a guest this morning, that families are with their children. There are children in this room with their families. There are many children across the hall with their families.

[7:30] And we don't think that that specifically is commanded in the Bible, but we do know that parents are commanded to raise their children in the fear and instruction of the Lord.

So, as a church, we want to be careful about how we position ourselves to not say it's a particular person's responsibility, a children's pastor, for example, to teach that to your children.

We don't want to reduce fathers to merely chauffeurs, but we want them to take up that responsibility in their home. So, we want to think about how do we, as a church whole, support that work and not take that responsibility from a parent who's willing to give it away, right?

That's an example of how, at best, ineffective in the raising of children to fear the Lord.

Sixth, the aim of exercising authority in submissions to God's good authority is for the sake of protecting the vulnerable, strengthening our communities, and promoting human flourishing.

[8:39] And I borrowed that from the subtitle from Jonathan Lehman's book, Authority, which I still haven't read the entirety of. I've read more of it, and it's becoming more and more commendable. I think I'm going to say, yes, just read this book.

It's been helpful in my thinking. It's aimed at good, right? God's design for authority is aimed at the good of people, protect the vulnerable, strengthen our communities, and promote human flourishing.

Seventh, God delegates his authority through three institutions and six positions. Those three institutions I shared with you at some length, the family, the church, and the government.

We see those in the scripture. The family, first and foremost, the church. God's people called together. We see this Old Testament, his people, and then New Testament, the church, and the government of various kinds.

And within those institutions, there are positions. So within the family, there's husband and parent. There's authority given to the husband, and there's authority given to parents.

[9:47] There's authority given to elders in the church, and there's authority given to the congregation as a whole, which includes elders also. And the government, there's various offices, king, governors, judges.

I was thinking about this one this week. It's got my head spinning a little bit for the Sunday we'll spend on the government. There's also, in our form of government, the office of citizen. That's an interesting thing to consider.

And then there's extra institutional position in the scripture of employer or boss or manager, unless, of course, you're employed by the church or the government.

And those two positions can cross over in that case. So three institutions and six positions.

And within these three institutions, this is number eight, and six positions, there's granted two types of authority. Number one, there's the authority of coercion, or you could think of it as the authority of command.

[10:52] The power to make someone do something by force. And within each of those institutions, there's a position that does that. We see that tied to a tool in the scripture.

So the family, we have the rod. And parents exercise that with their children. In the church, we have the keys. And the congregation exercises the keys through the final step of church discipline, in which somebody's put out of the church because they've shown themselves not to be a Christian.

And then in the government, we see the power of the sword, right? To punish wrongdoers for breaking the laws of that particular government, right?

So that's the authority of coercion or command, right? The right of corrective discipline. But we also see the authority of persuasion or counsel.

The power to convince someone to do something. When we see this given to the husband, to the elder in the church, right?

[12:01] We can only call this authority or power if it has some bearing on you, right? Otherwise, it's not authority at all. Unlike the advice you might receive from a friend, take it or leave it, the authority of counsel has weight.

It is an authority. It is a power. Let me give you the example of husbands, which we talked a bit about last week. Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 22.

Paul here says, Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. So we see a command, right? You ought to submit to this leadership in your life.

Therefore, your husband has an authority. But we don't see a tool, an operative tool given for corrective discipline to the husband. And in that text, if we go on, we can see there's a way that the husband is meant to lead his wife.

A type of submission that falls in line with this kind of leadership. Verse 25 says, Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

[13:11] Gave his very life for the sake of her life. So there's an example. The husband has this power of persuasion to work to convince his wife to follow the truth.

And then she, bearing on her conscience, because he's leading her, should submit to that leadership. Elders have that same type of authority as we'll see in today's text.

So today's text is just three verses. Hebrews chapter 13, verse 7. And then Hebrews chapter 13, verse 17 and 18.

I'll read those all together. Hebrews 13, 7 and then 17 and 18. The author of Hebrews writes, Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God.

Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account.

[14:19] Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience desiring to act honorably in all things.

Now, our church believes that the most biblically faithful form of polity or governance, and I don't mean to disparage and cast any shade on any other form of polity, but we believe that the most biblically faithful form of governance in the church is what is often called elder-led congregationalism.

It puts a lot of emphasis on the congregation as a whole having authority, but elders giving leadership to that authority.

And I intend to unpack this position further next week. This whole series was brought about because many of you asked for me to talk about congregationalism. Like, we're not sure. We totally wrap our minds around what it is.

Will you show us from the scripture? So we're going to do that at length next week. But you can see from this title of this position, and more importantly from today's text, that God intends for there to be some measure of leadership in the church.

[15:35] In both of those passages, Hebrews 13, verse 7, and then verse 17, we see the phrase, your leaders.

We're to remember and consider and imitate and obey and submit to them. The author of Hebrews, we're not exactly sure who it is, includes himself in this number, I believe, when he says in verse 18, pray for us.

So we're to pray for our leaders. Men meant to lead. Who are your leaders?

If you are a member of this church, then your leaders are those men that you deemed qualified to inhabit the office of elder. You have leaders.

This is my go-to text for anybody who doesn't believe in church membership. Because I say, who are your leaders? You can't just arbitrarily decide that somebody is your leader.

[16:37] Why? Because they're going to give an account for your soul. I know exactly who soul I'm giving an account for, at least this morning. But their name's on a list.

I'm thankful for that. It helps me. Not only to absolve myself of some of your nonsense, but also, who ought I press?

Who do I need to most be praying for? Who do I need to have in mind as I preach? There's people. There's souls. I'm going to give an account for.

The elders of this church will give an account for. And if you're not a member of this church, please know I'll be happy for your name to be added to this list. We want to care for your soul.

So you should have leaders. The author of Hebrews assumes that this is true. He seems to know who these men are. He speaks quite highly of them, doesn't he? He says, you should remember and consider and imitate and obey and submit to and pray for your leaders.

[17:48] What is this authority that's given, though? They're leaders. How is it that they're meant to lead? And we get some idea of that in these two words in verse 17, obey and submit.

I think our minds mesh together into a single idea, but they're nuanced in what they mean. And I want to show you that this morning. The Greek word here translated obey carries the idea of the word, has that idea of making yourself available to be persuaded by your leaders.

Remember the kind of leaders that are being talked about here. We're remembering them back in verse 7. Those who spoke to you the word of God.

Who said to you things, authoritative things, from God's word. And not only that, but verse 7 says that we have to think about the outcome of their way of life.

Not only have they told you things that are true from God's word, but they've lived their lives according to that word. And they are worth imitating. Their faith ought to be imitated.

[19:05] So, these are men worth submitting or obeying, making yourself available to their persuasion. This is a kind of authority that's often called referent authority.

And that just means from every point of reference. As you look at this individual's life, you could say, yeah, there's things to be learned there. They're pace setting for me.

They're out ahead of me. They are leading me. Obey that leadership, the author of Hebrews says. Notice some of the qualifications for elder found in Titus chapter 1.

I'll pick up about halfway through. There he says, an overseer as God's steward must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain.

But hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also rebuke those who contradict it.

[20:18] Doesn't this sound like a man worth listening to? Worth being persuaded by? Remember your leaders.

Consider the outcome of their way of life. Imitate their faith. Obey your leaders. Be persuaded by them.

And then we see the word submit. Now this Greek verb is found only here in the New Testament. But it is often used in extra-biblical Greek literature.

The author of Hebrews takes up this word because it connotes obedience to a person in a position of authority. Such as a colonel taking orders from a general.

I don't know if generals ever actually talk to colonels, but this is the example that popped into my head. This is the type of authority known as, commonly talked about, positional authority.

[21:17] So see the author of Hebrews is, he's like ramping it up a little bit. He's saying not only because they're worth listening to. They ought to be listened to. You can observe their lives.

You know that they're growing in holiness. You know that they're setting the pace for you. You know that they're the ones that are speaking to you the word of God. But also, there's a divine appointing, right?

That these men are qualified for the task. And if you're a member of this church, I hope that you carefully consider it as we go through the process of considering men that serve our church in this role.

Are they qualified for the task? And as the church has gone through the process, considering them and installing them, I take it as God's divine work in their lives.

There are eight of us right now, and we don't always agree on everything. That might shock you. We have two meetings a month, at least. And we spend a lot of time talking through decisions that we should make.

[22:18] And guess what? I don't always win the day. Sometimes I feel like I should win the day. But I trust that the men at that table are of God's choosing.

That they went through the process of our church appointing these men to that role. And so, when they don't agree with me, I made my case, I take that as God's word. And I settle into it.

I go, okay then. Then this is the way we press on and move forward. You see? Even I submit positionally to the elders of our church.

And it's good for me to do so. So, obey and submit. Both to the office itself, the position, but also to the earning of that.

To the leadership that's been given and shown in the life of our church. And church, I want you to know at this point, I'm grateful that this is just generally true of this church.

[23:17] I have no rebuke for you this morning. I say keep on doing what you're doing. We have had troubles in the past. There's no one right now in this building that is causing any grief in my life at all.

You guys are all wonderful and supportive. And I'm very thankful for you. And I like to hang out with other pastors. It's good to spend time with men that do the same work that you do.

I get you. It's just easier to communicate sometimes. You don't feel like you have to hedge every comment that you make about the difficulty of your job. Things of that nature. But I have to admit also, I kind of like hearing how tough some pastors have it.

Because it makes me so thankful for you guys. I forget sometimes just how grateful I should be. So, just press on. Keep going.

Keep doing the things that you're doing as a church. Why should you remember, consider, imitate, obey, and submit to your elders?

[24:21] Well, as I've said, firstly, they have faithful lives worth imitating. Should have faithful lives worth imitating. Not perfect lives.

Not a single one of us would make that case. I think it's appropriate to think of elders as elder brothers. elders, right? Who lead by example.

Especially in a congregation that's predominantly young people. You'll notice we have some young elders. I don't like the word elder for myself, particularly. But it seems to be the most biblical word. So we use it all the same. This week, I will turn 44. And I keep waiting for my hair to go gray. And it just doesn't seem like it's going to happen. But in the meantime, I'll gladly think of myself as an elder brother leading an example.

And not only in holiness, although we should be setting the pace for holiness, but also in repentance. We ought to be the ones who most clearly represent the gospel of Jesus Christ for you. [25:29] Elders are at their very best when their lives display the gospel. And it's easy, right? And I will admit to my shame across the past 15 years, how many times I've become so performance-oriented in my leadership of you.

Thinking that if I accomplish such and such, if I can just preach better sermons, God will be more pleased with me. Which is not the gospel at all. God is pleased with me because of the completed work of Christ on my behalf.

Amen. Amen. Which gives me room, not to be a slouch. Should I want to preach better sermons? Of course I should. But it also gives me room to make mistakes. And to say that I'm sorry. And to still have standing with my God. And therefore, such a motivation to serve you. So, elders are not perfect. Don't look for perfection.

If you think there's a leader out there that is perfect, it's because you only listen to them on YouTube. You don't live close enough to them to see that there are cracks in everybody's bridge. [26:38] But we ought to be giving leadership to you in holiness and in repentance. Our gospel belief should be so firm as we press on with you in this life.

So, lives of faith worth imitating. But also, the author of Hebrews says, they are keeping watch over your souls.

Right? Obey and submit for they are keeping watch over your souls. As those who have to give an account. The job of elders is to look over your soul.

And in this church, I can say with great confidence, I won't speak of myself, but I will speak of the other men who help lead this church. Their concern as we lead this church is only for your souls. To the glory of our God. God has such heart for you all. We have two different kinds of meetings as we meet together as elders. One of those meetings is for things that are more administrative in nature.

[27:48] Plans for scheduling. What are we going to preach next? We're having those kinds of conversations together. And interestingly, I asked our elders last time we met, Hey, which is your favorite of the types of meetings we have?

And three of us liked that one, and I was one of them. Kind of administrative-y, plan-y kind of meeting. The rest, much preferred, are other kind of meeting.

And I say this, I'll tell you who likes the planning meeting more, besides myself. But to these men's credit, we have a meeting where we simply go through the member role and we pray for members of our church.

Are there counseling concerns? Do we need to help each other in any way? Situations that we all need to be made aware of. And we pray, and we pray, and we pray, and we pray.

There are men with full-time jobs who volunteer a significant amount of their time to come together and pray for your soul. You should obey and submit to your leaders.

[28:52] Four, they are keeping watch over your souls. We know, we bear the weight of giving an account for how we care for you.

Paul, when he's leaving the Ephesian elders and knows that he's not going to see them again, says many wonderful things. But in Acts chapter 20 and verse 28, he says, Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock.

He picks up the shepherding language of caring carefully for the sheep. And then he goes on, he says, In which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

We know how precious you are because Christ died for you. Your soul matters to him, and therefore, it matters to us.

As undershepherds of the great shepherd. It's a labor. We love you and want to serve you to the glory of Christ because we care.

[30:06] Now, to what extent is the author of Hebrews expecting his hearers to obey and submit to their leaders? Certainly not outside the bounds of the Bible. I hope that this can be assumed.

You ever have a person claiming to be a leader in the church tell you to do something that's not biblical? Don't do it. They've outstepped the demarcation of their role.

But if he only intends to have them obey and submit to the Bible, why not just say that? Wouldn't it make sense for him just to say, obey and submit to the Bible?

He could even say, obey and submit to the Bible as your leaders teach it to you. But he doesn't. He says, obey and submit to your leaders, for they are keeping watch of your soul.

And I think this is because there are matters of application of the Bible, gray areas that require careful navigation, and decisions that just must be made.

[31:10] Right? But a dear friend who's an elder at a church that I would deem a healthy church, and I asked him one time, I said, do you ever feel like people come to you looking for particular advice?

And if they don't get the particular advice that they're looking for, then they just reject everything that you have to say. And he said, this is an older man, and he said kind of through squinted eyes, he said, Nathan, I think sometimes people just tolerate us.

It's a heartbreaking thing to hear this seasoned pastor say, I think sometimes people just tolerate us. There's careful applications of the Scripture, right?

Matters of wisdom, ways that you're going to have to take what God has given us and apply it to the specifics of your life. Gray areas that require navigation, decisions that just have to be made.

My dad once told me a funny story, and I may get this wrong, so dad, I apologize if I get the story wrong. You can correct me later. I'll come back and apologize and retell it if that's the case. Dad worked in church planting in the state of Arizona for a lot of years, some number.

[32:26] He'll remind me of later. And told me of a church that had decided that it was time to re-roof the church. This was the days when colored shingles had become popular for some reason.

And this was also the days when hunter green and maroon were popular colors. And this church could not agree on how they ought to shingle the roof, and it became contentious.

And there was division going on in the church. And the pastor started noticing people sitting on one side of the aisle and the other side of the aisle based on their opinion of the roof color. And so, he just ordered the roof and he shingled one half of it in the maroon tile and one half of it in the green tile and resigned that Sunday.

I think I'd do the same. Stuff that doesn't matter. Frankly, the pastor shouldn't have been involved with it at all, but stuff that just doesn't matter. Just decisions have to be made sometimes.

Listen to Paul, 1 Timothy chapter 3. The saying is trustworthy. If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

[33:53] He must manage his own household well with all dignity, keeping his children submissive. For if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

There's some application of management of a household that comes over to the management of a church, which certainly has something to do with souls. It's talking about submission of children in this case, but also includes some of the practical matters of the church.

And church, you have taken up the task of installing eight, I commend to you, qualified men who are close to all of this, who take the time to think about it and talk about it and are concerned about the greater good of every soul in this congregation.

And we just have to make little decisions sometimes. A simple example that I'll give you. We still currently have this screen behind me on the wall, but there's nothing on it.

Well, there's nothing wrong with using a projector. It's fine. It can even be convenient. This projector was starting to die, and projectors were really expensive.

[35:08] I don't know if you know that or not. This is the third projector that we've had. They're costly. And so we just started to think, I don't know, do we really want to replace the projector?

And I gave an emphatic no. And I think there's some great good to you holding a book in your hand. I think there's a great good for us having a collection of songs that have been passed down. I think there's a great good in you being able to take that bulletin home with you and study it. We are trying to think about the long-term good the life of this church already.

So we're thinking, a little thing like that, the projector's going to go out. What do we do? Oh no, the projector. How do we best serve the souls of this congregation with that decision?

And so we made it, and we didn't ask anybody's opinion about it. The eight of us made that decision together, and we're working for your good. I want you to know, nobody complained about it to me, so I'm not using it as an example for that reason.

[36:14] But when you think, man, it's hard to hold on to this book and this bulletin and this kid and this giant metal water bottle. Guys are all about to die of thirst, I think.

Just think, this is for our good, right? This is an obey and submit point because someone is thinking about how this will long term serve me. So, I think those matters particularly of prudence, which is another word for careful wisdom, matters of prudence, what should I do, how do I respond to, brother, I think you shouldn't take that job, I don't know that you should go there, those things should be heated, particularly heated from your elders and matters of preference.

So, we're talking about starting a Sunday evening gathering, right? We're not asking permission to do it, we're not expecting everybody to be there, we're just going to do it and we're going to ask a lot of people but we're going to pick a time at some point.

So, let's say we say six o'clock and you go, ah, 5.30 would have been so much better, right? I'd love to hear that, but we might not change it and if you want to come, you just should come at six o'clock or don't come at all and just don't complain about it, right?

Trying to navigate the greater good for everybody. So, matters of prudence and matters of preference, right? It's good to just submit to the leadership of those you've asked to give you leadership.

[37:54] So, in conclusion, let me give you some quick applications. I want to give four applications for the congregation and I want to give four applications for our elders and these just really briefly straight from our text.

Number one, remember, consider and imitate your leaders. Don't lose sight of the fact that God has appointed men in our church to give leadership in your lives.

It'll be of value to you to submit yourself to that authority. It's an authority that's there for your good. Secondly, obey and submit to your elders in matters of prudence and preference.

I already spoke to that and I'd be happy to speak with you more if you'd like to hear some more examples. Again, I think that it's generally true of this congregation that this is the case.

Thirdly, seek your advantage by supporting joy-filled leadership. Notice what he said. Don't give an opportunity.

[38:55] Don't make it hard for your leaders to lead you with joy. I don't think it's your fault if we don't have joy. I think joy is a thing that we have to take up and meditate and fight for, but you can make it really difficult to join not with groaning because that's no advantage to you, so seek your advantage by supporting joy-filled leadership which obeys and submits in those matters of prudence and preference.

It doesn't demand thousands of hours of conversation about little things that aren't that important in the end. Be encouraging. Be thankful as you guys are.

Always assume the best of your leaders. Assume that they are keeping watch over your souls and come with those kinds of questions which we always welcome.

So seek your advantage by supporting joy-filled leadership. And lastly, pray for your leaders. Your leaders need your prayers.

And I have felt over the years just the weight of serving a church, the type of work that I do vocationally.

[40:14] You also have men who have jobs and they do it as a volunteer. They're giving extra time. They take time away from their wives and their children to serve you.

There are attacks that come on our families as leaders in the church. Pray. Pray for your leaders. We are open to the same kind of temptation you experience.

Continue to lift us up in prayer. Now for our elders. So just quickly, men. Number one, live lives worth imitating. There's this charge given to the church that they ought to consider and imitate our lives and therefore we ought to live lives worth imitation.

We ought to be faithful to the scripture. We ought to rely on the grace of God. When we screw up, we ought to be so quick to repent that we would even give an example in repentance. Live lives worth imitation.

Secondly, keep watch over the souls entrusted to you. Men, as you already do, press on this.

Continue to do this good work. God has granted us a people that we might serve for our eternal joy.

[41:27] Please continue doing this. Thirdly, fight for joy in your leadership. I have been apt at times, and I need to hear this again and again and again, I've been apt to say people are making me groan and that's just not true.

They can create the temptation for me to groan in my leadership, but they don't make me groan.

But there's times that I've got to fight for joy. I've got to remember my Savior, why he's called me, the people that he shed his own blood for, and therefore what a joy to serve such a Savior.

So fight for joy in your leadership. And then fourthly, have confident, clear consciences concerning your leadership.

You see that closing, the author of Hebrews says that he's confident, their consciences are clear concerning all things. So have confident, clear consciences about our motivation for the leadership of the church.

Let's pray together.