

Elders - Part 1

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[0 : 00] If you hear a slight rumble in the background, that is not my stomach, it is the generator. You can turn in your Bibles to the book of 1 Timothy, 1 Timothy chapter 3.

We're going to read the first seven verses of 1 Timothy chapter 3. This is the Apostle Paul writing to his young colleague named Timothy, who he is charged to do some work in an ancient church in the city of Ephesus.

And this is what he says in chapter 3 verses 1 to 7. Here is a trustworthy saying. Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task.

Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?

[1 : 20] He must not be a recent convert or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

This is the word of the Lord. Let's pray. Let's ask for God's help as we study this together this morning. Gracious God, we come every single Sunday looking for food, looking for spiritual food, spiritual food to feed us because we need to grow.

As the Apostle Paul repeatedly prays, we need to grow in our knowledge of you, in our knowledge and our understanding of the depth of the love that you have for us in Christ Jesus because that is where our hope is, that is where our joy is, that is where our peace is, that is the foundation of our very existence and we want to grow in that and we grow in that through your word, Lord.

And so this morning, as we study the Bible, won't you open it up to us? Won't you show us truths in it? Won't you make us more like your Son? We ask this for Christ's sake and by the help of the Holy Spirit.

Amen. So we continue in our series called Jesus Loves the Church. We're in part nine of this series, which I hope to kind of take up to the end of the year.

[2 : 40] And now today what I'm going to do is this. I'm going to talk about old, grumpy people. That is, I want to talk about, no, not Dave. I'm not talking about Dave. I'm talking about elders this morning.

That's, I think that's the kind of vision we might have in our heads, right? When we think about traditional church elders is old men who growl at noisy children in the pews before the service and we talk about budgets often.

Or maybe if you grew up in a certain tradition, they're the guys who come to your house once a month to collect the tithe from you. Now, in the past two sermons in this series, what we've done is we've seen two important things about the governance of God's church.

We've seen that God rules this church or God governs this church through Christ. Christ rules the church by His Word and by His Spirit. We saw that a number of weeks ago.

And then last week we saw that Christ in some ways delegates that authority to certain officers or leaders as He gives them the keys of the kingdom. We looked at that in Matthew 16.

[3 : 42] And so today I want to look at how the Bible then describes these officers, these leaders. I want us to look at the office of elder. What is it?

What is required of elders? What do they do? Who should be an elder? Are they supposed to be grumpy old men? Is that like part of the job description? Is it in there somewhere? Now, all those

sorts of questions.

There's some debate in churches today about which officers should kind of still continue in the church. So in the New Testament, if you read through your New Testament, you're going to hear a lot of different terms for church leaders.

You'll read about apostles. You'll read about prophets. You'll read about pastors, elders, bishops, overseers, teachers, evangelists, deacons. Even the generic term leader will come up a lot of times. And so one of the big questions is, well, is the church supposed to have kind of all of these offices still in place today? For example, do we still have apostles and prophets today?

[4 : 42] Now, I'm not going to dive into all the ins and outs of that particular debate or the continuation or lack thereof of apostles and prophets. There are nuanced, complicated considerations that kind of goes a little bit beyond the scope of what we're trying to do today.

But let me just say this as we kind of set the scene to talk particularly about elders. The two officers, and by office I mean individuals who hold some sort of public authority position within the church, ordained and appointed by the church.

The two officers that get the clearest, clearest treatment about their ongoing validity in the local church ministry are the officers of elder and deacon. So when the apostle Paul writes what are called the pastoral letters, that's 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy and the book of Titus, more than any other letters, those books kind of outline governance structures of the early church.

He takes the time in those books to delineate and to describe two particular officers, elder and deacon. He never does that for apostles. He never does it for prophets or for evangelists.

But he gives a lot of time and a lot of attention to the requirements for elders and deacons. And you'll see this kind of played out in the way he engages with the churches. So for example, when you read his letter to the Philippians, the book of Philippians opens with these words, Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God's holy people, here he's addressing the church, all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi together with the elders and the deacons.

[6 : 21] If you read early 2nd century documents, written after the New Testament, you find the same category, elders and deacons coming together in the way they talk about the structuring of the early churches.

And so I think we're on pretty safe ground to say that the two ordinary and perpetual officers, ordinary, perpetual, they keep on going, perpetual officers that should be in place in local churches are those of elder and deacon.

So healthy biblical churches have elders and deacons. You can argue about all the other stuff later, but those things we know we've got to have. And so that's going to be our subject matter for the next kind of three sermons, elders this week and next, and then we'll do one on deacons.

Now let me say something to get you to come back next week. You're all going to come back next week because we're doing two sermons on the issue of elders because next week I want us to look at the rather controversial issue as to whether or not Scripture or why Scripture seems to say that men only should serve as elders.

So if you've ever wondered about that or wondered what we think about that, then come back next week. Try not to let that now cloud everything and that you don't think about anything else today except for that thing, but we'll talk about that next week. And then the following week we'll talk about deacons.

[7 : 35] Now a quick question, why even talk about elders? I mean isn't this like, there's like what, we've got four or five elders in our church, this is a sermon for those people and the rest of you can just kind of switch off now and go to sleep. Why talk about elders?

Obviously you will get to know more about the office, how it functions in the New Testament, so how it should function in the church, in this church. But then, more than that, I think it should help you set your expectations on how you relate to elders in the church, how they're supposed to relate to you.

You get an understanding of what you should be looking for as you nominate and elect elders from the congregation. You get an understanding of what healthy elders look like, when you should and shouldn't raise a concern, when you should send me an email or not send me an email about something an elder has or hasn't done.

And perhaps most importantly, you get an understanding of what you should be praying for, for your elders as they go about the work of fulfilling this calling and serving the church. And so with that in mind, here's where we're going to go this morning.

Two simple points. The first one is a lot longer than the second one, so don't get stressed out. The first one is we're going to do an overview of elders in the New Testament. And in the second section, we're going to narrow in on the character requirements of elders.

[8 : 46] Overview and then the character requirements. So here's the first part. An overview of elders in the New Testament. Four things I want to say here. Number one, elders, bishops or overseers and pastors are all one and the same thing in the New Testament.

So you've got all these different terms that you read about in the New Testament. And the one question that's going to come to your mind is, well, what are these one thing? Are they multiple things? One office, multiple offices? I think that when you take them and you put them side by side, and you look at how they're used, a very clear picture starts to emerge as to how the apostles are using these terms.

So go to our passage in 1 Timothy chapter 3. Keep that open there. Verse 1, Paul says, Here is a trustworthy saying. Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task.

Now there Paul uses the word overseer. It's literally the word bishop. Episkopos is where we get the word bishop from. And he uses this word many, many times in the New Testament to refer to church leaders.

And so now you think, well, okay, we're talking about elders, but this is bishop. As bishop and elder, are those two different things, or are they two different classes of leader? Well, consider this.

[10 : 02] Consider Titus chapter 1, where Paul has another long list setting out the requirements of elders. So here's Titus chapter 1, verse 5. Paul says, So there Paul uses the word elder.

Literally the word presbyter. That's where the word presbyterian comes from. Elder led churches, presbyter. And he lists, if you see there, basically the same requirements as he does for overseers in 1 Timothy chapter 3.

So at face value, it looks like he's talking about one and the same thing. But it's actually even clearer than that, because in verse 7, he switches from referring to these leaders as elders, presbyters, and he calls them bishops, overseers.

Same word that he's got in 1 Timothy chapter 3. So he uses elder and bishop interchangeably in Titus chapter 1. And you see this kind of interchangeability again in the book of Acts.

So during Paul's extensive travels, he comes to Ephesus and he gathers the church leaders to himself. And Acts 20, verse 17 says, From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church.

[11 : 54] That is, he sent for the presbyters to come. That's the word there. And then the rest of the chapter, what he does is he gives this kind of really moving final address, knowing that he might never see these leaders again.

And he's been very instrumental in the life of this church. You might never see these leaders again. And it ends with this charge that he makes to them in Acts chapter 20, verse 28.

And he says this, he says, Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. So now there he uses the word bishop.

So here's what he's basically saying in that long charge. He's saying, You elders, presbyters, keep watch over the flock which the Holy Spirit has made you bishops.

You see that? You can see elder and bishop is one and the same thing. Not two different things, not two different classes of leader. But then, I'm going to confuse you even more now, there's a third term that I think is largely interchangeable with both elder and bishop.

[12 : 58] And that is the term pastor. Pastor, in that final charge that Paul gives there, Paul goes on and he says to the elders, he says to these overseers, he says, Be shepherds of God's church which he bought with his own blood.

So he talks about the task of being an elder as being a shepherd. Now that's pretty key to us because there's only actually one place in the New Testament where the word pastor is used in a kind of office sense.

And that's in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 11. And there the Greek word is literally shepherd. So a pastor is a shepherd. But here in Acts 20, we have Paul telling the elders, the bishops, the presbyters, the bishops to be shepherds of God's flock, the congregation that they serve.

And you find exactly the same thing in 1 Peter chapter 5. Paul writes to the elders in the churches there. I'm sorry, Peter writes to the elders in the churches that he's addressing there. And he says this.

Now listen to this. He says, To the elders among you, to the presbyters among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed. Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them, not because you must, but because you're willing, as God wants you to be.

[14 : 17] Not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve. Not lording it over those entrusted you, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

So he says to elders, I want you elders to be shepherds. That is, I want you to be pastors. I want you to shepherd as kind of under shepherds of the great shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so I think it's very clear. We've done just a marathon through these passages, and there's several others. But I think it's very, very clear that when you put all these texts next to each other, an elder is a bishop, is an overseer, is a pastor, is a shepherd.

They are all basically one and the same thing. They are all referring to the office of elder. And so that's the first thing I want you to see. And it's a really important thing to see about what the New Testament says about elders.

Number two, elders govern in plurality. So how many elders should there be in a church for it to be a legit church? One elder, 20 elders, five elders?

[15 : 24] When Paul arrives in Ephesus in Acts 20, he doesn't send for the bishop, singular, to come and meet with him. He calls for the elders, plural, of the church, singular, in Ephesus, to come and meet with him.

When he tells Titus to appoint elders in the churches in ancient Crete, he tells him to appoint elders, plural, in every town, singular, bearing in mind that at that early stage of the church, there would have likely only been one Christian church in each town, or each ancient town in Crete that had a church.

And this is the consistent pattern that you get over and over again in the New Testament. Every time elders in local churches are mentioned, they are mentioned in the plural. The snapshots that we get in the book of Acts, the snapshots of the church in Jerusalem, the snapshots that we get of the church in Antioch, all appear to be governed by groups of elders.

By my count this week when I was trying to tally it up, there are at least 17 verses in the New Testament that either explicitly or implicitly demonstrate that plural eldership was the norm in the early church.

So the idea of kind of a single pastor, single elder rule over a local church, I think is sorely lacking in the New Testament. Dan Wallace is a leading New Testament scholar.

[16 : 44] I think he's from Dallas Seminary. I don't think he's a, he's not a Presbyterian as far as I know, but he says this, he says, the early church had, I believe, multiple elders. The pastor would have been counted among them, but was not over them.

The case for plurality of elders can be argued along biblical, historical, theological, and pragmatic lines. The argument from scripture is in fact so strong that most commentators today assume it. Even if you kind of go and you look at early church, the very earliest Christian documents written after the New Testament, you find the same pattern.

Plurality of leadership. You find the Bishop of Rome, Jerome, in the fourth century, lamenting in some ways the situation where they have single bishops ruling over churches and saying, hey guys, you need to remember that actually in the early church, we used to be ruled by what he calls a senate of the elders, a plurality of elders.

So that's the second thing we see in the New Testament. Churches are governed by a plurality of elders. Number three, there seems to be a distinction between two types of elders.

So while there is, I think, clearly parity among elders and pastors in the governance of a local church, and it really is a single office, there does seem to be a distinction.

[18 : 01] So there's a point later on in the book of 1 Timothy where Paul discusses the possibility of remuneration for elders, and he makes this particular statement, 1 Timothy 5 verse 17.

He says, The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. And so from there, that text, it sounds like two categories of elders, right?

All the elders govern, but some of the elders are specifically set aside for the work of preaching and teaching. Now we know from the list of qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 that we read at the beginning of

the service, all the elders need to be able to teach and defend the faith, but it does seem like some of the elders are especially set aside for the ministry of preaching.

And so historically what you've seen in churches like historic Presbyterian and Reformed churches, is they've distinguished between the minister who preaches the word and administers the sacraments, which they felt were the sacraments of the visible word of God.

So the minister administers the word, preaching, and sacraments. They felt there was a distinction between that person, that elder, and the elders who govern the church.

[19 : 18] Both the minister and the elders govern in parity, in terms of authority, but the minister is set aside. He's especially called and trained to preach the word, to administer the sacraments in a way that the other elders are not.

So in our church here at the Union Chapel, like most Presbyterian churches, we've kind of kept this historical and biblical distinction. So we have what we call teaching elders and ruling elders. That word rule just comes from the old King James to govern.

It's a historical hangover. But teaching elders and ruling elders. Teaching elders who preach and teach the word, administer the sacraments. Ruling elders who give themselves to the governance of the church. Our teaching elders are often, though not always, our kind of staff or paid elders, whereas our ruling elders are usually our lay elders representing the ordinary person.

Now this distinction is actually pretty important. You think, well, who cares about this? It's important because it ensures that when the elders gather in their elders' meetings, in local churches, and even in kind of regional presbytery meetings, among numerous Presbyterian churches, the ordinary person, the lay person is always represented.

Not just the clergy, not just the kind of professional ministers. Because there's always lay elders in those gatherings. That's the third thing. There's a distinction.

[20 : 37] Fourth thing, almost done here, and this is heavy going. Alongside governing, the primary task of elders is to defend, teach and defend the faith.

So you say, okay, well, you've talked about who these guys are. Exactly what do they do? I suppose at one level it's kind of implicit in the language of overseer, that the elders give governing oversight to the church.

But what does that look like? Are they supposed to be like church CEOs, church managers? The answer to that question comes when we look at all the lists, the list of requirements for elders in our passage in 1 Timothy 3 and then also Titus 1.

And when you look at those lists, you notice that there's actually only one skill that an elder is supposed to have. One skill an elder is supposed to have. Look at verse 2, 1 Timothy 3, verse 2. Paul says, Able to teach is the only skill that's listed in that list.

[21 : 44] According to Bible, the only skill at least that an elder explicitly has to have is the skill of teaching. Not management skills, not marketing skills, not vision casting skills, not HR skills, teaching skill.

That doesn't mean elders don't do and shouldn't do some of those other things and do them well when they do them, but it does mean that they govern the church in a particular way. That is, they govern by teaching the word.

And if you think back to our previous sermons, that makes complete sense. It should make complete sense because we've seen that Christ rules the church by his word. That's how he does it, through that delegated preaching and teaching of the elders.

So when you look to elect elders in the congregation, you're not looking for men with the best management skills in the world. You certainly don't want them to be inept and incompetent in those areas. Trust me, please don't elect people who are incompetent in those areas.

But that's not primarily what you're looking for. What you're looking for is this. Does he know his Bible? Does he have a good grasp of theology?

[22 : 52] More than that, can he defend sound theology? I say that because in Titus, Paul actually expands. He double-clicks on that skill of teaching.

Titus 1.9, he must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it is taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. Paul says a similar thing in Acts 20.

So he not only needs to be able to kind of positively teach the faith, but he needs to be able to defend the faith. There is a constant, constant theme in the New Testament.

You cannot miss this if you're reading consistently through the New Testament, where the apostles point out that people teaching false theology are going to rise up from within congregations, within churches, and also from outside of congregations.

And so elders need to be prepared to defend the clear teachings of Scripture, of the gospel, against those false teachers. In that final address, Acts chapter 20, these are Paul's final words to the Ephesian elders.

[23 : 52] Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. And why? Well, because I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.

Even from your own number, men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard. Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

And you know what? That is exactly what happened in Ephesus. False teachers rose up amongst the elders in Ephesus and did great damage to the church.

And we know that because Paul actually writes one Timothy in part to instruct his younger colleague Timothy to deal with these false elders in the church of Ephesus.

That's why you've got this detailed outline of elders in chapter 3. It's why Paul singles out the skill of teaching the word as a prerequisite for eldership. Elders must defend the biblical gospel and biblical truth against attack.

[25 : 00] So let's sum this up. Four things we see about elders in the New Testament. Number one, elders, bishops, overseers, pastors are all one in the same office. Number two, elders govern in plurality.

Number three, there appears to be a distinction between two types of elders, what we would call ruling and teaching elders. And number four, elders govern by teaching the word. Got it?

Nailed down. Good. Now you know in kind of broad brush strokes what you're looking for in your elders. What standard you should expect from them. What standard you should hold them to.

What you should be looking for when you elect new elders. What you should pray for your elders.

That they would serve faithfully in teaching and defending the gospel. But there's more that we can say of what is required for elders.

We can talk about character. Because that's what the Bible does. The Bible talks about character.

So here's the second point. Come back to me. Come back with me to 1 Timothy 3.

[26 : 01] I want to read this section again, these seven verses. Listen to what's in these seven verses. Verse 2 actually. Now the overseer is to be above reproach.

Faithful to his wife. Temperate. Self-controlled. Respectable. Hospitable. Able to teach. Not given to drunkenness. Not violent, but gentle. Not quarrelsome. Not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him.

And he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church? He must not be a recent convert. Or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.

He must also have a good reputation with outsiders so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. Here is actually the very, very first thing that you should notice about the requirements for elders.

All of the requirements, except for one, are character requirements. Do you see that? We just saw the one exception that they must be able to teach.

[27 : 08] But that's the only skill that's listed. The rest is character, character, character, character, character, character, character, character. Look at it. So bracketing, the beginning and the end of the list is this requirement to be above reproach and have a good reputation with outsiders.

That's on either end of the list there. That is, when you look at elders, you should see integrity. You should see consistency of character. Even the outside world, to some measure, should be able to see that of the elders, even if they don't agree with the theology of the church.

Elders should be faithful in their marriages. So in a world of broken marriages, in a world of sexual scandals and infidelity, elders should kind of buck that trend and display enduring love and faithfulness towards their spouses.

They should be temperate, self-controlled, respectable, not losing their cool, not kind of flipping off the lid under a mild provocation. They should be hospitable, opening their homes, their lives to others.

The original word there for hospitable means to welcome the outsider or the foreigner, to befriend them, to befriend the outsider or the foreigner, to include them. They shouldn't be given to drunkenness.

[28 : 20] The original word there is something like one who looks longingly at wine. It's not that elders can't consume alcohol in moderation.

It's that they can't be dominated by alcohol to the point of overconsumption and drunkenness. They shouldn't be violent or quarrelsome. Instead, they should be gentle, compassionate, empathetic. They shouldn't be lovers of money. They shouldn't be consumed by greed or use their place as elders for financial gain. They should manage their own homes well, raising their children in a God-honoring way.

And they mustn't be a recent convert. And that seems like it makes a lot of practical sense, because how can they be expected to shepherd and care for people, Christians, if they haven't walked some distance the road of discipleship?

So you can see there. It's all character, character, character, character, character. Now here is the most remarkable thing about this list.

[29 : 33] And I got this particular. It's not my own insight. I got this insight from the great New Testament scholar Don Carson. Here's the most fascinating, the most provocative, the most challenging and remarkable thing about this list.

Are you ready? The most remarkable thing about this list is just how incredibly unremarkable it is. There is nothing special here.

These are all just basic character requirements that all Christians are called to in numerous other passages in the Bible. I can find a passage for every single one of these requirements for ordinary Christians.

There's nothing special here. This is ordinary Christian character. The elders are not being asked to do something that other Christians aren't also already called to. I mean, just think about the logic of this for a moment.

Think about it. An elder must manage his household well. Does that mean that ordinary Christians can kind of just let their families go to pot? An elder must not be given to drunkenness. But ordinary Christians, they can go get smashed and bubble us on the weekend.

[30 : 35] This is basic Christian character. And that is the whole point. An elder is to be an exemplar of Christian character.

The existence of the office of elder in the Bible is not just a challenge to those of you who might aspire to becoming elders. It is a challenge to every single one of you. It is the challenge of basic Christianity.

It is the challenge to grow in being above reproach. Grow in gentleness. Grow in self-control. Grow in hospitality. To rid yourself of drunkenness and violence and quarrelsomeness. It is the call to be Christ-like.

In fact, that is exactly what the Apostle Peter will say to elders. So listen to those words again from 1 Peter chapter 5. Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them, not because you must, but because you are willing.

As God wants you to be. Not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve. Not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

[31 : 48] So elders, as they shepherd, are supposed to be examples to the flock, he says. But what example are they themselves following? These shepherds, what example are they supposed to follow?

Well, they follow the example of the chief shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ. The challenge of eldership really is the challenge of Christ-likeness. Elders model Christ to the congregation so that the congregation can then in turn display Christ-likeness.

It's that simple. So you want to know what good shepherding looks like then? Well, you look to Christ. Look to the cross. There you have the one who is blameless and above reproach, taking on himself the sins of all those who fail to live lives above reproach.

You and me. Look at Christ's self-control as the crowds hurl insults upon him. He never retaliates in violence. Instead, in gentle compassion, he prays, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

There at the cross, we actually see the greatest ever act of hospitality. As our Lord welcomes the undeserving outsider in, into his family, takes us in.

[33 : 08] Through his own shed blood, he takes his enemies and he turns them into friends. That's hospitality. He's our chief shepherd who fights off the wolves of sin and death by giving up his own life for his flock.

He's the true elder. He's the true overseer. He's the true head of the church. We elders and congregation members alike, we can only reflect that glorious grace as he has poured it out on us. And we do that by, in response to this grace, living the life he has set down for us to follow that the elders are supposed to exemplify. Now, as you can imagine, as a pastor, to prepare a sermon on the requirements of eldership is quite personally challenging.

It's a very, very convicting experience. It's like scrutinizing your life under a microscope all week long as you're sitting with your books. You sit there and you pour over commentaries of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus chapter 1 and you read all these different character requirements.

And you read what they actually mean in the Greek and the extent of how far they go. And you sit and you read all this and you think, sure. Am I that person? Should I hand him my resignation after prepping this sermon?

[34 : 21] Can I be that person? Do I display that quality of life? I mean, this week, in some ways, was a week of intense moral introspection.

But when you understand that those requirements are there for elders so that elders will be exemplars for the congregation, well, then it means that we're all in this together. We all need to do that moral introspection.

it's not just myself or Philip or Sean or Trevor or Wesley or Dave it's not only us who need to put our lives under the microscope it's all of us it's all of us who are called to live blamelessly and so as I did my study this week I was just so so very very grateful for the chief shepherd of the sheep who lays down his life to make his flock blameless only when we already know that by faith that we have been made blameless through the life death and resurrection of Jesus what we have then the power and the motivation to pursue blameless lives in the present I know there's been a lot of heavy lifting this morning jumping around passages all of the Bible and I hope you've got a vision of what eldership is but more than that I hope you've got a vision of what Christ our chief shepherd has done for us let's pray together