

## **Accountability Before God – 6/7/2026**

Well, good morning, everyone.

We are... I think...

Well, let's just do that.

Last week, if you were here, Pastor Jeff and Pastor Colleen, our missionaries to Wales, shared here at the church.

And if you don't know who they are, they actually pastored this church for 24 years before my wife and I came and stepped into their shoes.

And then, as all good preachers do, we kicked them out and sent them overseas.

Just wanted to make sure that there was no trouble at all.

And they're doing a great work in Wales.

They've been pastoring a church there.

They have a year left on their visa.

And we would just ask you to be praying for them.

They're looking for a pastor.

It's interesting.

This whole decade has been you guys looking for pastors, huh?

I mean, that's on your sixth year now of working towards that goal.

We just want to be praying for them, both for finding a pastor there as they leave Johnston Chapel and come back home and whatever God has planned for them when they're back here.

And so just be in prayer for that.

And then last time I preached was my anniversary, and I told you I was going home to cook brisket.

I don't know if you remember that or not.

Had never done it.

And I think I was a little bit excited because I was wide awake at 5 a.m.

on Memorial Day.

And the first thought that hit my head was, should I start the fire now?

But anyway, I didn't get up at that moment, but the grill was hot and the brisket was on at 6.15.

So I didn't waste much time.

And it was quite a good day.

I spent the whole day 20 feet from the smoker.

I sat in my lawn chair and I

I sipped tea and I watched this brisket spoke, and it was amazing.

So anyway, I would... Sorry you didn't get the invite, but it was a full brisket, and I think there was four pieces left when we were done.

So it's not like there was much to share.

We did eat it all.

And looking forward to doing that again sometime.

But as we get ready to focus back on our sermon today, we're going to be finishing up Hebrews...

This month.

This month.

This month.

I thought, I actually wrote in my notes, this will be the second to last one.

We'll finish it up next week.

After I wrote it, I don't know.

I don't know.

We'll see.

Typically, as I begin my sermons, I give a rundown of where I was at the last time I spoke.

But I'm going to do that after I read our scripture and pray.

And so this morning, we're going to be in Hebrews chapter 13.

So if you'll open your Bibles there.

I give you two scriptures.

I hope to talk about three, but I end up talking about one.

So, we'll see how this goes this morning.

We're going to be in Hebrews chapter 13.

We're going to start reading in verse 17.

And it says this this morning.

Obey those who rule over you and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls.

As those who must give an account...

Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

Pray for us, for we are confident that we have a good conscience in all things, desiring to live honorably.

I would say this, buckle your seatbelts.

This is going to be a fun one today.

Let's pray this morning.

Father, we thank you, Lord, for your word.

Father, that you gave us Scripture so that we might learn who you are, learn how you have called us to live.

And that we can have an understanding of who you are and who you are to us, Father.

And so, Lord, as we dig into the scripture this morning, God, I pray that you would definitely anoint my mouth, Lord, to speak the words that you would have me to say, Father, and that you would anoint our ears to hear the Holy Spirit speaking to us, Lord, because it's not...

me that wants to be heard today, but it's me that wants to present Scripture as you have asked me to do, and that the Holy Spirit would use it in ways that only He can to do what we can't, to speak to us in our hearts, to make us more like your Son.

And Lord, we thank you for the opportunity to be here in this house this morning.

In Jesus' name, amen.

So I thought about this scripture, and I have been thinking about this passage for probably about a month now.

And it was a joke.

It was a running joke in the office as I started that with the staff.

I told them, hey, you guys read verse 17.

I think I'm going to spend a month on that one passage.

And so they all opened up and read it and they started laughing.

So it's been something that's been on my mind.

And if you have been with us through the book of Hebrews, if you've read the book of Hebrews, there is a lot of difficult passages in this book.

But yet I feel to speak on this may be one of the more difficult ones because

As I began reading it, maybe you're just joining us for the first time.

Maybe you've missed a few of the sermons in Hebrews leading up to this passage of Scripture this morning.

Or if it boils right down to it, you just have trouble with authority.

This Scripture could seem like a punch in the nose today.

And maybe you aren't expecting it.

But verse 17 says,

as I began to think about the history of the church, could look like a command or maybe even a power grab for pastors and leaders.

Because if you read it the way it says, you have to obey and submit to me.

And I'm sure there are plenty of pastors who have used this for less than...

Honorable reasons.

Probably a lot of selfish reasons.

Brother Louie mentioned it in Faith Journeys this morning.

People who are up here not for the right reasons, but are seeking their own power and their own gain.

And so...

as I thought about this scripture those who've done that obviously didn't take the scripture in context so as I opened up this passage I thought I would just give a quick review of the whole chapter to take this passage in context because it fits with what the writer is trying to tell us in chapter 13 and so to make this just a little bit maybe more palatable for us I wanted to give you this quick overview and it's on the board up there if you need to see it verses 1 through 3 start with we are to love the family of God

It continues on saying we are to live holy and content lives in verses 4 through 6.

We are to follow faithful examples of those who have finished their race and gone before us in verses 7 through 9.

It continues on saying we are to identify with Christ in verses 10 through 14.

We spoke about this with the altar and the sacrifice that he made.

And then we are to offer praise and service as sacrifices to God in verses 15 and 16.

And then as it continues, if we are doing all of these in obedience to Christ Jesus our Savior, if we're following this passage, if we're following this chapter,

then this naturally leads us to cooperate with godly leadership whose purpose is to help the body of christ mature into the fullness of jesus christ which is verses seventeen through nineteen and if you will remember

I began this chapter talking about the characteristics of someone who is a part of the unshakable Kingdom which chapter 12 ends with the writer ending chapter 12 talking about this unshakable Kingdom and he he opens up chapter 13 saying these in essence are the characteristics of someone who would be a Christian who submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ they would have these characteristics in their life so that section of chapter 12 starts with this comment and

That we are to not refuse the one who speaks.

If you remember that section in chapter 12.

To not refuse the one who is speaking to us.

So if we accept him who speaks.

to us we will obey Jesus we will love the family of God we will live holy and content lives we will follow faithful examples will identify with Christ will offer praise and service and cooperate with godly leadership in the church they got has planted you that is the natural flow love the chapter so I see four things in our scripture this morning

and I'm probably going to get to three of them, that the writer gives us as a characteristic of someone who is both a believer and for someone who is a leader in the church.

And these are the four things I see.

As believers, we are to obey and submit.

As leaders, we are to guard and we are accountable.

And for both of us, for both leaders and believers...

It's a passage about joy and grief and profitability in that relationship.

And it should be all wrapped up in a nice little bow of prayer.

Prayer is the one thing that allows us to accomplish the roles that God has given us in the church.

So let's begin to look at this passage and work through it.

Verse 17, the first part of that says, Obey those who rule over you and be submissive.

Obey and submit.

These are two concepts that as human beings we kick against and war with our entire life.

They are not easy concepts for us to do.

Nobody likes to be told what to do.

Nobody likes to be told how you have to do it, where you have to do it, when you have to do it, why you have to do it.

And if we were to boil it down to be a little bit more concise, it is dealing with authority.

How many of you love authority?

See, let me ask that question a different way.

How many of you love authority when you have it?

Ah, yeah, that's a totally different thing, isn't it?

We love it when we have it.

No thanks when we don't.

So as I begin speaking about this scripture, I want to start with a story that I actually, it's actually not a story.

It's a conversation.

It's something that actually happened.

And it's a quote from John MacArthur.

I don't know if you know who John MacArthur is, but he has passed on now.

But he was a pastor of a very large church in California.

So I assume most of you know who he is.

If not, that's okay.

Go look him up.

I like John.

But he has these videos that he has put online, and I've seen quite a few of them, where he would do question and answer sessions, where he would just stand up here.

Lord bless the guy.

I don't think I could do it.

And he would just let people ask questions, and he would answer them.

So he got this question in one of these sessions that he was sitting in.

And the question was this.

How much authority does a pastor have in and over the lives of his congregants?

That's a legit question, right?

How much authority do I have in your life?

We'll put it in our setting right here.

And I love John's answer.

Because you know what he says?

None.

Zero.

I have no authority.

My experience, my knowledge, my education, my position, nor my title gives me authority in and over your life.

I have no authority beyond what Scripture says.

Only God's word has authority and I cannot exceed what is written.

Now, if we were to look at this, this might seem at odds with verse 17.

Because verse 17 starts off with obey and submit.

But for me to say, I don't have any authority, you don't have to obey and submit, might seem like I'm countermanding scripture.

But that's not what it is.

Because here's how I see this passage work out.

As pastor of this church and you as members of this church, I have zero authority to make you do anything.

I can't make you come to church.

I can't make you put money in the offering box.

I can't make you sing during worship.

I can't make you shout amen.

I can say shout amen and sit here and wait, but you don't have to.

I can't tell you what kind of car to drive.

I can't tell you where to work.

I can't tell you anything.

I have no authority to tell you how to raise your children.

I have no authority to tell you how to live your life.

I have none that I can make you do.

I can say it.

How many of you are parents?

You just love to give commands.

And how many of you have children who are like, what?

Did you say something?

What?

Not doing that.

I can't make you accept Jesus.

I can't make you read scripture.

I can't make you submit to anything that I say.

So the question begs, what authority do I have then?

See, pastoral authority is not about controlling people.

I'm not here to control you.

Pastoral authority is about truthfully preaching God's word

Protecting the flock, even though they don't want it sometimes.

And calling you to become a more mature Christian in your walk of faith.

That's my duty.

And as senior pastor, I have the authority to fulfill the calling that God has given me in the position that he has given me.

And that's the only control I have.

Ephesians teaches us that he has placed leadership in the church and in ministries for a very specific reason.

And it's not to pad their pockets and to feel powerful and have control over people.

But I'm going to read this passage.

You could follow with me if you want.

It's in Ephesians chapter 4.

It's about eight or nine verses.

I'm not going to read all of them, but I will read a very heavy chunk.

I don't have it on the screen because it's a lot of scripture.

I'm sorry.

But Ephesians chapter four, we're going to start in verse seven.

Paul writing says, speaking of Jesus, but to each one of us, grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gifts.

Therefore, he says, when he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and he gave gifts to men.

We're going to jump down to verse 11.

And it says he himself, Jesus Christ, gave some, underline that word some because it's not everybody, gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and some teachers.

to lord it over you and to make you subject to me and to fulfill my every whim and my every desire, it is yours to do.

That's the Will Parsons King edition.

no I find it interesting the authority that I have is to work for your benefit it's not to work for my benefit verse 12 says here's the duties that he gave those whom he's called it to these positions they are to equip the Saints for the work up the ministry for the edifying up the body of Christ

It's not building me, it's building God's kingdom.

Verse 13, "...the purpose of this equipping is so that we can all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to eventually become a perfect man, to the measure and the stature of the fullness of Christ."

You know what this means?

Job security.

That we should no longer be children tossed to and fro by everything that comes at us and by the trickery of men and the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.

But, going back to me, I am to speak the truth in love that we may grow up in all things into him who is the head, Christ.

For from the whole body joined and knit together by what every joint supplies according to the effective working by which every part does its share causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself.

So my duties as a pastor, the authority I have is to get us to kind of work together in the same place, being equipped so that we can grow.

That's the duty that I have been called to.

So we obey and submit to our leaders so that we can mature into men and women that God is calling us to be for the kingdom work he has for us to do.

And I think I will take this one moment right here.

As a pastor, I'm not a power unto myself.

I have those who I have submitted myself to and obey.

It's not a rough... I mean, I'm not up here running roughshod doing whatever I want, however I want, whenever I want.

See, I'm not excluded from this part of Scripture, even though I'm a pastor.

I still am subject to be obedient and submissive to those whom God has put over my life so that I can be matured and grow into the person that God is calling me to be because I have not yet attained.

I am not perfect in Christ.

I am not the perfect specimen that God needed to pastor a church.

Far, far from it.

So myself included...

is in these passages of Scripture.

See, church leaders are tasked with the welfare of the congregation to promote spiritual prosperity in your life.

It's to be a, for lack of a better term, lighthouse.

Whew, man, the word escaped me.

It's to be a lighthouse saying, hey, this is the way we are to go.

It's a guiding light.

Not that I have attained anything, but saying, hey, this is where Jesus is.

Let's go this direction.

Let's pull this direction.

So if this is done correctly in a church setting, this is how it would work out.

As the pastor, I hear the word of the Lord, and I speak it to you.

And it could be through sermons.

It could be through advice one-on-one.

It could be through counsel.

It could be through small groups.

And then in turn, you choose to obey and submit to said sermons, counsel, advice, whatever it is.

That is being given your direction, not in obedience to me.

But as you search scripture and you say, hey, this is what Jesus is saying.

It is in obedience to Jesus.

It's not because Will Parsons has said it.

It's because Jesus has said it.

If it's done correctly, I hear the word of the Lord.

I share it.

Your response is then obedience, not to will, but to the word of the Lord.

And I know that I've said it.

I'm not perfect in this.

I know.

I know.

But in my first duty in this sermon, to speak truth to you, I want you to know before your head swells that neither are you.

I may not be perfect, but you aren't either.

And so there's this great relationship that we have because it's submitting to one another

through Jesus Christ see this relationship we have as believers and leaders believers are called to obey and submit to godly human I'm human church leadership all church leadership is going to be people people are inherently messed up not perfect gonna do some things wrong

But as believers, we are called to obey and submit to godly human church leadership because God has given those in those positions the responsibility to guide and care for the church.

But I will say this, this submission is not blind obedience.

It is a willing cooperation with leadership as leadership seeks to follow Scripture, protect the church, and promote unity, order, and spiritual growth.

If those things are being done, the ability to obey and submit should be rather easy.

Because if as a pastor I'm doing this correctly, your obedience is not for my gain, your obedience is for your gain and the kingdom of God's gain.

And that's the purpose of leadership.

So God has ordained a system of order, which is obeying and submitting for a reason.

And he has built into it a system of checks and balances called responsibility and accountability.

So moving on to the next one.

You guys are off the hook now.

That wasn't too bad, was it?

All right, good.

Verse 17 continues, and it says, I begin this section...

Actually, I don't even know how I want to do that.

I wish I could express to you, and this is a very honest statement because as most of you know, my father was a pastor.

My father-in-law was a pastor.

I've been in church my whole life.

I've been in family that has been in ministry my whole life.

And there is a different aspect of church when you grow up in it and your family is leadership.

Because it's not...

It's not always as fun as it looks from the outside.

And again, I can't tell you, I can't describe it, I can't express, and I can't allow you to feel the unbearable weight that comes with the calling to be a senior pastor.

I can't even give you anything...

that would compare to it.

I really wish I could.

And I don't know if you've been here for a while, you've probably heard this story, but in April of 2023, I became the pastor here.

And seven days before that transition service took place, I underwent something from God's hand that I wish I could express to you.

It was a burdening from God for this church specifically.

It was, to give you an illustration, it was like I was a mule and God was just laying the weights and the burdens and the responsibility and the accountability and everything that comes with being a senior pastor, I was getting burdened with it.

It was the most solemn experience I have ever had in my human life.

It was more so than marriage, more so than having children.

It was something indescribable.

And having grown up in church, I still can't describe it.

The best thing I could come up with is this.

Look around.

There's a lot of people in this room.

And we're not all here.

And I have to tell you something.

As I was writing this and as I was thinking through this, that week's experience of feelings came back to me.

As a pastor, I will be called to give an account for your souls before God.

You want to know how I felt about that at first?

That's not fair!

I want to be able to say this with the right levity.

Never mind, I can't say it.

It's not fair for me to carry and be held accountable for you.

Just like it's not fair for you to be held accountable for someone else.

Especially in light of what I've just told you in that I have zero authority to make you do one dang thing.

But yet, I will give an account one day.

And you might say, well, why do you have to give an account for me?

I'm my own person.

I'm responsible for me.

It's my choice.

It's my life.

It's my fill in the blank.

Why do you have to give an account for me?

It's the nature of the calling.

Because God said so.

If you don't like it, take it up with Him, I guess.

But at its simplest form, it's to keep me honest in following Jesus.

It's a guardrail to keep me from being selfishly involved in just trying to build my kingdom, to pad my pockets, to get what I want out of you, and no responsibility back.

It's a safeguard so that I can't use and abuse the position that God has given me.

See, in Ephesians, those offices that I mentioned to you, they're basically watchmen on the wall of God's kingdom.

And God has very specific rules for those he calls as watchmen.

So I want to give you an account of that responsibility today.

that God lays on every minister in the book of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel chapter 33 verses seven through nine says this.

He's talking to the prophet.

He says, so you son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel.

Therefore you shall hear a word from my mouth and warn them for me.

That's the job that I have.

I am to preach and speak the word of the Lord that he gives me to speak to you.

And when God says to the wicked, O wicked man, you shall surely die, and you as the watchman do not speak to warn the wicked of his way, that wicked man will die in his iniquity, but his blood...

I will require at your hand.

What?

Nevertheless, if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, this is my authority.

I am to be a mouthpiece and to say what God has said to me.

The rest is on your shoulders.

and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but you have delivered your soul."

It's a great chapter to read.

It goes on to say after this passage,

If a righteous man turns from his righteousness and moves into wickedness and you call it out, his blood will not be on his hand, but he shall surely die from his iniquity.

It goes on to say, if a wicked man hears your warning and turns from his wickedness and becomes a righteous man, you shall deliver your soul from his blood.

See, as a watchman, it is my duty and responsibility to be proclaiming, preaching, and announcing what God says.

And if I should choose to ignore or disobey that word, I bear the responsibility alone.

See, God will require that disobedience at my hand.

I don't understand how that works, guys.

I really don't.

But what it does is it adds to the extreme weight of being called into the ministry.

It's not fun and games all the time.

There is a weight that comes with it that I'll be honest, is unbearable at times.

That is why I can't shy away from difficult portions of Scripture.

That's why I preach books from verse 1, chapter 1, chapter 1, verse 1, to the final amen.

Which means, probably often, I will preach and speak things you don't like.

Guess what?

I don't care.

This part I am going to be selfish about.

I don't want to be held responsible for your stupidity, and I'm not saying anything about it.

So I might be up here, and you might feel like, well, this guy's mean, and he says bad things, and he doesn't make me feel good.

A little bit of human selfishness coming.

I got to deliver me from the weight of your whatever.

I don't know.

Whatever God is calling me.

your heart speaking to you in your soul if I'm not willing to be the mouthpiece God has said in Ezekiel I get to bear that responsibility I get the duty to call out sin I get the duty to point out where things are lacking in your life as far as I can see based upon what God is speaking to me

I get to be the one who calls you to be more like Jesus.

And if I refuse to do so, I bear that guilt alone.

That's a heavy weight.

That's the weight of what ministry is.

That's a weight you can't understand until you step into it and experience it firsthand.

And there are stories of this in the Bible.

Nathan, the prophet in the Old Testament, found himself in this very precarious place in 2 Samuel chapter 12.

If you're familiar with the story, this is the culmination of David and Bathsheba.

David has killed Uriah and has...

Gotten Bathsheba pregnant?

Well, that happened, yeah.

So David had killed Uriah.

And David's sitting on his throne, and Nathan walks in.

Can you imagine the weight that was on Nathan's shoulders, getting ready to go in and call out sin and condemn the very person who had the ability to

If David didn't like what Nathan said, he could have very easily said, Hey, Joab, take him out back and finish that dude off.

If you don't believe it, read Samuel and 1 Kings.

I mean, there's lots of people dying because of stuff they're telling the king.

And he gets to go before David and say, Hey, David, you have sinned before God.

Let me tell you something.

For Nathan, these weren't kind, easy, fun words to deliver.

They were blunt, sharp, hard words.

And I'm not going to read the story to you.

You can go and find it in 2 Samuel 12.

But I was reading a sermon from this gentleman called Pastor Maye.

And he made this quote speaking about David and Nathan in Bathsheba.

And he says, "...as David learned and as we will learn, it isn't the comforting and soothing words that will bring the greatest freedom, protection, and deliverance from our rebellion.

It is those hard words, those words that cut to the heart and separate truth from deception."

That will be necessary to bring us to the realization of truth.

And as I looked at this story, Nathan loved God and therefore had to obey.

But you know what?

He also loved David enough to go in and speak the words of truth that God had given him that David did not like.

So I'll give you a truth this morning.

The difficulty that we assign to obedience and submission is worlds easier than the burden of caring for the souls of those you must give an account for.

The job that I have

I say me, this is not a selfish thing, but it's an extremely difficult place to be in.

And I know I make jokes and I know it's great and it's fun, but it's not always easy.

And if you have leaders that are submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, ministering for all the right reasons,

it is much easier to obey and submit to them.

Because at the end of the day, you understand and know that they have your best interest at heart.

It's not about me.

And that is the burden that Autumn and I carry for this church, because we do it together.

And if you don't believe me, you can ask Pastor Jeff and Colleen.

It's not a singular thing.

My wife and I bear this burden.

And I want you to hear something very clearly this morning.

We bear it willingly for you.

And I get it.

We don't like people that speak hard words to us sometimes.

We don't like people that confront us with the truth that we have to see because of our own stuff that we're going through.

But I will never apologize for being obedient and following what God has asked me to do.

And I guarantee you, if my wife wasn't in the nursery, she'd be standing right here with me.

She will never back down from saying what needs to be said.

Because at the end of the day, I will stand before God, and God will ask me, Hey!

You saw that Matt was involved in that thing, and you just kind of was like, oh.

And he's going to be, what do you have to say for yourself?

Well, God, I was afraid.

They didn't like me anyway, and I just felt like if I said something, they weren't going to listen anyway, so why should I say something?

They were already mad at me.

You think God's going to be like, oh, yeah, man, that's right.

I remember that.

You're right.

Yeah, I forgot about that.

That was a difficult day.

Absolutely not.

Here's another truth that I want to speak to you this morning.

I am in no way here to fleece you.

You have nothing I want.

You have nothing I want.

Except for your friendship.

Your fellowship.

But that won't get in the way of me speaking truth to you.

I have one goal.

I have one goal in being obedient to what God has called me to do.

And that is to see you equipped with Scripture.

So that you can go and do the work that God has called you to do.

The work of the ministry.

Because there's a world out there that is dead in their sin and they are going to hell.

Unless the church stands up and speaks and testifies of the power of Jesus Christ.

My goal is to get you to the point where you can be comfortable enough, equipped to go out into the world and live your testimony and share your testimony and preach Jesus to those who need to hear.

I'm one person.

My wife is one woman.

I can't reach the world.

The reason God put leadership in church is so that you can feel equipped with Scripture and to do the work of the ministry.

Do you know what the work of the ministry is?

Go, make disciples of every nation.

That's not missionary talk.

That's not pastor talk.

That's saint talk.

How many saints do I have in the building today?

If you believe in Jesus Christ, you better raise your hand.

Guess what?

You are tasked with making disciples.

That's the work of the ministry.

It's not this.

It's not preaching.

It's not being a missionary.

It's sharing Jesus with those who need it.

And guess what?

You've all been deputized and are disciple-making people because you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ and you follow Him.

If you follow Him, He has commanded us to make disciples.

See, there's a reason that James says that not many of you should become teachers, because watchmen will be judged with a greater judgment.

That's what that passage is talking about.

There's an accountability that I have to give to God alone.

Those called bear a burden that is unnatural to carry, and if it were not for Jesus, it would be impossible to do.

See, historically in the church at large, the pay is awful, the benefits don't exist, the stress is extremely high, and the work is very difficult.

That's why the ministry chews people up and spits them out, when they try to do something on their own power.

I love what God has called me to.

And I have shared, I have people with Foursquare that often check in on me.

They're supposed to call and say, hey, Will, how you doing?

And I have told them repeatedly, I'm having the most fun I have ever had in my life doing something.

I love this.

I love it.

I believe God created me for this.

Thoroughly enjoy it.

That doesn't mean it's easy.

It doesn't mean there aren't days where I'm like, I quit, God.

My dad, who was a pastor for 30 years, gave me one piece of advice when I took the pastorship.

He said, never quit on Monday.

He said, give it a day.

Just give it a day.

Don't answer your phone.

Don't talk to people.

But the writer continues from there.

I'm almost done, guys.

The writer continues from there in chapter 13, verse 17.

He says, let them do so with joy and not grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this, but we all know what it's like working with people.

It's a very difficult thing to do.

And for whatever reason, it tends to be multiplied in the church, the difficulty of working with people.

And that word grief can be translated as groanings.

So here's the picture that I have in my head, because we all have someone in our life that when we see them coming toward us, we go, oh, not today.

I don't have the patience today, God.

Can I do something else?

Can we...

That's what grief is.

That's groanings.

That's that concept that it has.

These people that come and we're like, Jesus, help me.

Very few of you are like that.

Very, very few.

Romans chapter 12, Paul speaking, he says, don't be that kind of person.

He specifically says, as far as possible on your part, live peaceably with everyone.

And I stared at the unprofitable portion of this for a very long time.

Because it almost seems like it's a punitive statement.

Like, yeah, if you make it difficult for me, it's going to be very unprofitable for you.

Problem is,

Put that scripture back up there.

Can you guys throw that last scripture up there, please?

Problem is, it would be

The scales would be very unbalanced for the unprofitability if we were to look at this on a one-for-one train, typically.

Because it's not a punitive action.

It's not something that I can say, hey, you giving me a bad day, well, it's gonna go bad for you this week.

I'm gonna call you out on Sunday.

It's not an individualistic way of looking at it.

I had to kind of back up from it and look at it from a different view.

And I'm gonna take this statement, it would be unprofitable for you from a church-wide stance, if you will,

So then I coined, I put it together like this.

When a church consistently resists, criticizes, fights, and refuses shepherding, nobody wins.

Leaders become discouraged.

The church, more importantly, loses unity.

And people miss the opportunity to mature and grow spiritually.

Which if you were to put that up to what a pastor is called to do, what I shared earlier, that is the exact opposite of what Ephesians chapter four says as a pastor, teacher, prophet, evangelist is supposed to do.

We're to foster unity, to foster a place where we can grow into the maturity of Christ.

The unprofitability part is whenever this isn't working correctly, everyone loses.

So what do we do with this?

Verse 18 of chapter 13 says we pray.

Pray for your church leaders.

Not only that, pray for your fellow church members.

We're a team.

We're one body.

Paul has a section where he says as a foot, I can't tell you as the hand, shove off.

I don't need you.

Because I do.

Just like the eye can't say to the ear, hey, get lost.

We need each other.

We're interdependent upon each other.

And if we choose to look at this verse and say, well, I'm not going to obey and submit.

I'm going to do whatever I want.

I'm going to run roughshod, go wherever I want, do whatever I want.

You become the beginning of the unprofitability for everyone because you begin to foster disunity.

You begin to foster, you know, fighting spirit, a spirit of turmoil in the church, and then it all goes downhill from there.

So that's the part of unprofitability.

So what we can do is pray.

Pray for yourself.

Say, Lord, if I'm going to be a part of this body, show me how and where and when and why and what I'm to do.

Pray for your leaders, because as we've shared many times, I'm not perfect.

I'm working out my salvation.

I am doing the best that I can.

And will I make mistakes?

You're dang right I will.

But you will too.

It's okay.

We can work with each other.

So in closing this morning, I'm going to pick up and talk about prayer a little bit more next week and go deeper into it.

But we opened up looking at obedience and submission.

And this is something that you and I fight and war with our whole lives because we don't like authority.

We don't like to be told what to do.

But we can...

submit to godly leadership that is walking out their life correctly before God.

Even Jesus learned to be obedient and submit to God.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, when he was facing the cross,

Hebrews 5, verse 8, if you need the passage for it.

He had to submit and be obedient to the will of God in that moment.

How much more do you and I need to be obedient and be submissive when God is calling us to it?

And for those who are called to the ministry, what a heavy burden that is to bear.

See, we are tasked with watching for the souls of men.

And to take it a step further, we are to give an account of our life and our actions and our ability to say what God has given us to say.

So it means that I have to say the hard words.

It means that I have to speak in ways sometimes that will cost friendships.

It'll cost fellowship.

But as a watchman,

I must call out the warning as God has given me direction to.

Or I'm to be held accountable for the blood that will be spilt in being disobedient.

See, each of us are accountable before God to what he has called to.

This just so happens to be my calling.

If we're a part of the body...

To hear the word of the Lord and to obey and to submit to the authority that God has placed over the church.

That's what we are as a part of the body.

We choose to submit and obey the authority that God has put over the church.

Because it's not my choice.

I don't get to do this of my own volition.

I'm not free to run amok.

I too am to be obedient and be submissive.

As leaders, we are to be watchful for the souls of those God has asked us to serve and will give an account one day.

So we are to let them do this with joy.

Every minister said, in Jesus' name.

See, ultimately, Hebrews 13, verse 17 is not calling us to put our trust in leaders.

I'm not asking you to put your trust in me.

It's only through Jesus Christ.

See, it's a calling to trust Jesus, who has given us leaders to care for the church.

As leaders faithfully follow Jesus and believers willingly respond to him, Jesus, the whole body grows and matures into the fullness of Christ.

That's the goal.

That's the reason this scripture is here.

It's so that we can all continue to move forward.

Why don't you stand with me this morning?