

A Portrait of a Faithful Pastor's Heart

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2 Peter 1:12-15
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So while pastor John is here, as you know, we're going through the gospel of John and that study has been just encouraging, incredible and we're going to pick that up at the end of July when he returns. And in the meantime, I've been taking us through a study in second Peter, and I think I may have misspoken earlier somewhere where this is the end of the series. It's not. We're going to go through the whole book, but this is the end of the sermon that we have been studying in second Peter 1. So, we're going to continue that today. And hopefully what you've seen and I know what I have experienced in this study is just a rich study of God's love and care and doctrinal truth. And Peter in his final letter, his final communication as apostle, his last communication to his church, his churches really throughout Asian Minor, in his final will and testament, he pours out his heart. Now, it's his last because he is about to be put to death. He knows this and so he uses his final letter to accomplish a couple of things. He wants to make his desire for his churches clear, and that is the protection of the church against false teachers and from false doctrine and lies about Jesus that we're spreading. And so, he does that by encouraging his churches to continually know and practice the truth, to be established in the truth. And as we saw a few times ago, this letter was not merely written to that original audience, it was given to those churches that he was shepherding. But based on what we know from the first line, the line of this letter says this, this letter is written to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours. Now, how does that happen? He clarifies by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

And so we learned that Peter's audience here is an exclusive audience. But it's not exclusive because of status or because of accomplishment or some sort of achievement of faith, but rather because of Christ. And so if you are a Christian, if you are born again because of the righteousness of Christ repenting of your sins and trusting in Christ for your salvation, then you friend have obtained a faith of equal standing with Peter. You see, Peter though he was an apostle was nothing special, he was not saved by some other mode, he was saved by repentance and faith in Christ. And so therefore, if you are in a faith of equal standing, this letter was written directly to you and we'll see that expressed today in our text. So as we continue in second Peter 1, which if you were new with us and got a blue Bible from the ushers, that's on page 1120, we're going to see an epic conclusion to Peter's final sermon. Peter was in jail unable to preach this sermon to his original audience. So instead, using his final communication, his final letter, he chooses to open this letter with a personal greeting and then followed by his final sermon. And this sermon has taught us a lot. We've learned that God has given us everything that we need for life and godliness all found in the pages of the Bible. We've learned that God has given us his precious and very great promises granted to those of us who are in Christ and cemented in the work of Christ never to be removed, including by the way, becoming partakers of the divine nature, meaning the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the heart of the believer. He keeps us, he teaches us, he sanctifies us, he comforts us and he helps us along the way of our walk.

We have learned also of these virtuous qualities that we must put on as supplements of our faith so as to live a life of righteousness and witness for the gospel. And last time we learned why it is good to practice these qualities as God gave us his purposes for them in our lives. And those purposes, by the way, are to keep us as an effective witness for the gospel. You can't effectively witness the gospel when you're living contrary to it, so it keeps us effective. These supplements give us a sure footing in our faith, an assurance of God's work in our lives as we see it practiced every day. And Peter wanted to remind us of the rich rewards that are waiting for us in heaven through a life of faithfulness as we use our mission to walk in the good works that God established from beforehand that we might walk in them, again, not to earn salvation, but to reflect it and to earn reward.

And so now, as we concluded Peter's opening sermon, we see kind of the substance and style shift and tone in a pretty notable way and Peter is going to take things in a personal direction. He's going to express for us what the heart of a true shepherd looks like. See, Peter's not just filling a role or doing a job or a task or clocking in punching a clock, he is instead fulfilling a mission. And this is a mission given to him by his Lord, by his king. And he takes that seriously and he wants to express to you dear reader and recipient of this letter and possessor of a faith of equal standing with his, what is it that a faithful pastor does and desires to do to accomplish his life in ministry.

And so as we get to our text for today, Peter closes out his sermon with a kind of a personal expression from his heart and from which we see three expressions that paint a portrait of a faithful pastor's heart. You see those in your outline. And these will give us godly examples for all pastors to follow as well as for all Christians to know so that you know what God has called your pastor to be and to do with his mission. So with that purpose, we're going to read together second, Peter 1:12-15. If you're able, please stand with me for the reading of God's word. If you're new with us, we stand at a reverence for God's word because they are the most important words that you will hear today.

So, 2 Peter 1:12 to 15, say this. "Therefore, I intend always to remind you of these qualities though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right as long as I am in this body to stir you up by way of reminder since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon as the Lord, Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure, you may be able at any time to recall these things." That is God's word, you may be seated.

As you are, please pray with me for our time in study. Father, we are in need of your wisdom. We have been so richly blessed with the truth from your word and yet we lean on you and rely on you for the truth to be taught to our hearts. I pray for everyone in this room that you would teach them what you need them to know what you desire them to know from this passage and that we would leave this place today knowing that we are more like Jesus because of our obedience to this text than we were before we came and may be glorified in our efforts, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

So, as you recall from previous times together, Peter has been calling his readers to live a life of submission to Jesus as both Lord and Savior in their lives. Now that's not in any way to earn or to augment their salvation or to complete their salvation. In fact, God is the only one who does that and could do that, but we reflect our salvation. We who are in Christ do not live lives that

belong to us. In fact, Paul in Ephesians 4:1 says this, "I therefore a prisoner of the Lord urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called."

And so I asked the question last week, do you realize that you have a calling? Did you realize that? Have other churches taught you that? That it's not just, hey, come be part of the club or hey, you can take Jesus' salvation and once you believe you're in and your good forever? That's a minimized take on the truth and it's not the full truth. The full truth is when we embrace Christ, we embrace him as Lord and Savior, and that we have a calling, a mission, an ambassadorship to fulfill. And in the demonstration of our faith, through these virtues that we saw in verses 5-7, we prove to a watching world the power of the Holy Spirit to transform a dead spiritual being into an alive obedient and productive spiritual being. And we see these virtues in verses 5-7, these qualities and they were virtue and knowledge and self-control and steadfastness and godliness and brotherly affection and selfless love. And in the practice of these things, what we see is God granting us assurance of our faith because we are living according to the mission that he has called us to. And so that sense of being right with God is constant, when we live contrary to that, that's when it disappears. God also promises us a sure footing in our faith in walking this way, that we're confident to walk in a way that will not embarrass Christ or destroy our witness. And he also has given us a blessed reminder of all of the precious and very great promises that are granted to those who are in Christ. And so now as we turn from these rich theological truths to Peter's kind of personal expression of a portrait of a faithful pastor's heart, we see point #1) in verse 12.

If you have your outline, those are inside the program, that note sheet. It's going to be found point #1) Peter's example here given to us is ***Peter's Tenacious Heart, his tenacious heart***. It takes a very tenacious person to say what he is about to say. And he begins again in verse 12 with the word, therefore, meaning that we have to understand what came before this passage in order to get the full context. Anytime you're studying the Bible and you see the word therefore, just ask the question what is the, therefore? If you're reading a whole book in order, it's real easy. If you airdrop into a passage and it starts with therefore, you got, okay, I got to go back a little bit and figure out what's been said in order to get the full context. And so we ask that question and Peter in truth is referencing his whole sermon, but he's focusing in on the practice of these qualities. Well, how do you know that pastor? I'm not that smart. It's right here in the text. Therefore, I intend always to remind you of these qualities. See, the Bible always answers its own questions. And here's Peter's first quality of a tenacious heart and the heart of a pastor, and that is a heart of intent. Heart of intent.

And the word intentionality has been watered down and abused in recent years and you've probably heard that you just need to live with intentionality, you just need to be intentional. Well, what does that mean? Intentional in what? How? It's like me asking you the question, do you have? Do I have what? Finish the sentence and then I'll answer you. And intentionality is the same way. I can't just say I'm intentional, intentional in what? And so that's what we need to understand here. And this idea of intent is this idea of a lingering effect or somebody being constantly about the business of seeing the results come to fruition. And so when Peter says I intend always to remind you, he's telling you of his mission to remind you of something. And he's actually speaking about a future action, and I think this is fascinating, a future action, by the way, that has perpetual or continual consequences. So what he's writing he says will have a future effect and what I believe he is referring to is exactly what he's doing in writing down this sermon and exactly what the Holy Spirit is doing in preserving this word forever in the book of 2

Peter. Because with Peter's intent of being about the business of perpetual reminder, the spirit accomplishes that through the preservation of this sermon in his word and we Christians are beneficiaries of that.

You see, if Peter had been out of prison, if he had been able to give this sermon in person, he's at home, comfortable, wakes up on a Sunday morning, walks to church... Pardon me, I bit my tongue. Walks to church and he gives this sermon to his church. It would vanish into the annals of history like every other sermon that he's ever given that was not recorded in scripture. Do you realize that? You ever think about that? We have thousands of sermons from the apostles that we will never hear because they were not for us, but this one survived. And so we ask the question why? And Peter's purpose as a shepherd then to always for all future perpetually remind his readers of these things is accomplished because the Holy Spirit preserved this sermon in this letter. And I think that's pretty remarkable, that Peter's actions of saying, "I will always remind you. I'm about to die, I'll be gone, but I will always remind you," is him writing this down for you and for me. And so Peter's heart of intent is driven to the act of reminding his readers to be doers of the word and by implication also to be knowers of the word, because we cannot do what we do not know. And it's a sad state of affairs in the American church.

A recent Gallup poll shows that a record low of American adults and a record low of American evangelical adults hold the Bible to be authoritative, a record low hold the Bible to be inspired. Many say it's inspired kind of like God kind of whispered along and said, "Here, here's an idea, run with it." That's kind of what they think inspiration means. But they don't think it's an inherent, authoritative or sufficient. Despite what Peter has already taught us in 2 Peter 1:3 that his divine power has granted to us all things pertaining to life and godliness, how? Through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, that is through his word, has given us everything we need, all sufficient, all powerful, inherent, authoritative in our lives. And despite all that, a majority of American professing evangelicals, and I mean like a dramatic majority, like over 80% do not believe the Bible is all we need for our faith, nor do they believe it's even divine. It's simply kind of just touched by God, that little bit of inspiration and then men kind of ran with it. And we wonder why the church in America is floundering in its mission, why it's constantly looking for a different mission.

But we do not wonder why Peter spent his final breaths telling his audience that he would make every possible lasting effort to always forever remind them of these things. That is his intent and that is what a heart of intentionality should look like in a pastor, intending to fulfill the mission given by God always. And a heart of intent is expounded on and exposed in the next phrase as a heart of shepherding. Because Peter says here, therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities though you know them, you know them. And this assumes that Peter being a pastor and a faithful pastor is showing us what a true pastor's mission is, which is to teach his church the truth, as did Paul, as did Timothy, as did Titus, as did Apollos, as did James, as did all the other pastors in the early church. Peter taught his people the truth. And so, Peter using kind of a classic form of rhetoric here, if you've ever studied rhetoric, uses a very kind approach. He doesn't say, "I intend to tell you always what to do." That would be considered uncouth in the ancient world. It would've been more gracious to say, "I intend always to remind you of what you already know." And so that's what he does. He assumes that they had already been taught and he's just reminding them. Now for the original recipients, those churches that he was shepherding, that would've been true. They would've known this because Peter would've drilled these things into them over and over and over on how to be righteous and productive Christians in their walk.

However, I believe he uses this classical rhetorical device for you and for me. Peter is not here to lecture you or to shame you. He is here to shepherd you. He's going to assume by the way that you're already being faithful to Jesus, that you know these things and he's just going to gently remind you of these things.

And so, the question then, Christian, to ask yourself is, do you know them? Have you been faithful? Have you disciplined yourself to know God's word to know and practice these qualities as we discussed last time, both knowing intellectually and knowing in practice how to demonstrate them as a virtuous follower of Christ, or have you been absent on the battlefield? Have you been neglecting your duties as a follower of Jesus? Do you find yourself distant from God not sure how to love him, how to understand him, how to know his wisdom? My friend, God has good news for you and he gives us the answer on how to find those things. James 1:5 says, if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God. That's step one right there. Let's go to God and ask who by the way it says, who gives generously to all. And then he yells at you, no, without reproach, without reproach and it will be given to him. Do you see what it says there? God says, "I got it. Please, I'll give it to you. Just come and ask." And so that's where it begins. If you've been failing in your mission and not knowing how to love God, go ask, and then we can always speak God's words back to himself.

Psalm 51 David's words, God's words, we pray them back to the Lord because they're perfect and they express clearly what our heart needs. "Have mercy on me, O God according to your steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions, wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin, for I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me against you and you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment." Going to verse 6, "Behold you delight in truth in the inward being and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness. Let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart O, God and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold within me a willing spirit." Do you want to see what the results of that look like? The next verse, "Then I will teach transgressors your ways and sinners will return to you."

See, even in failing to uphold your mission as David did, he fell into a deep pattern of sin in his life and he said that the kind of the partner Psalm to this and Psalm 32, when I concealed my sin, it was like my energy drained away, it was like your hand was heavy upon me and my bones wasted away like the heat of summer. We can understand that analogy. And he says the only way is to go and ask to be restored and in doing so, he accomplishes his mission. And that's what Peter's words are doing, reminding you of these things even if you haven't been faithful in returning to the Lord will still have accomplished their mission. He's not saying this to hold you to some unattainable standard or to shame you. He's simply calling you as a shepherd, a shepherd who calls lost sheep back into the pasture for safety. And that leads us to the third quality of Peter's tenacious heart, because a shepherd doesn't just shepherd for no reason, he shepherds in truth, and so Peter shows us a heart of truth. He says, therefore, I intend always to remind you of these things though you know them and are established in the truth. Now notice how Peter doesn't say you are established in the 10 ways to make your life better, in the five methods that I have taught you that only I have that then you'll be good. He doesn't say any of that. He doesn't

even say I promise you blessing and riches and comfort. He says you are established in the truth and that is your compass. And Peter's aim here and his tenacious heart is to always remind his readers that their foundation of their faith, their anchor in truth is the person and work of Jesus Christ in their lives and nothing else is more foundational or necessary than that. And he knew the reminder that he needed to give them was this and not like, hey, chin up, I know I'm going to die, everything's going to be fine. You're going to be okay, God will... He's giving them actual instruction. This is shepherding. It's not platitudes, it's shepherding. And so rather, he's telling them what they need to do. Practice these things, know and practice the truth that you have from his word and you will honor Christ and you will be protected, by the way, even when I'm gone, he says.

And that friends, is the heart of a faithful pastor, a heart that points people constantly and steadfastly and immovably to Jesus and to his word, forgetting everything else, every other mission, not deviating knowing that the end is coming because that end is coming for all of us. And we don't think about it often, we should. Jonathan Edwards encourages us to everyday resolved to think about my death. Why? Because after death comes the judgment. We want to use our lives to glorify God, not to earn salvation, to earn reward and to be able to stand before God in a right conscience and say, I use my life for your glory to the best of my ability. And pastors must know this too. And we must keep that in the forefront of our minds. And we must have the next quality as an expression of a faithful pastor's heart, as an expression of our heart as well.

And Peter gives us that example in point #2) and that's *Peter's Fearless Heart*. We see that expressed in the next two verses. Peter was facing certain death, painful death, persecuting death and yet he doesn't cry out for mercy and plead for intervention and say, please write letters and petition for my life. No, instead, he demonstrates what a fearless heart looks like. And the first quality of a fearless heart is that he's going to continue in his mission and that is a heart of provocation. And you see that in verse 13. He says, "I think it right as long as I'm in this body to stir you up by way of reminder." You see, a heart that is unclouded by fear is a heart that is absolutely crystal clear on its mission. I love how he says this, I think it's right as long as I'm in the body, long as I'm here. It's kind of funny. He's not like, oh goodness, I'm so scared I'm going to die, please. He's just like, I'm fearless. Philippians 1:21, he knows what Paul knows. For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. So if I live, I'm just going to keep on the mission. And if I die, I get to go be with Jesus, big deal, that's better. And Paul kind of argues with himself. You see that in Philippians 1 where he is like, yeah, I'm torn. I kind of want to go, I want to stay. I want to stay for your sake, but I want to go and be with Jesus. And so whatever he brings about, I'll just keep doing my mission until I'm gone. I love that. And so Peter in the same vein with the same mindset, obvious because of his lack of fear provokes, I think it right as long as I'm in this body to stir you up. It's like I'm going to keep poking you and reminding you just gently, not hard pokes, but like, I'm just going to remind you constantly do these things. He's provoking you reader, you to know and love and serve Jesus with your whole heart, to fulfill your mission so that as we saw last time, when you enter into his kingdom, you can be richly rewarded for your faithful life.

But Peter's fearless heart is not just the heart of provocation, it is also a heart of faith. Verse 14 shows us. He says, "Since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon as the Lord, Jesus Christ made clear to me." Now we don't know how Jesus made it clear to him whether it was personal revelation or he told him when he was still with him in life you're going to die at some

point. Well, we all know he is going to die at some point, but when he was going to die, but we don't know that. But what we know is he believed him. And he said, because of my perfect life, death, and resurrection, you will enter into glory with me. And so he had faith. He's not saying emperor, give me anything to sign, I'll recant. I just want to live. A heart of disbelief would've walked away from this, would've given up because you don't die in disbelief for no reason. You don't give your life for something that you don't believe in. That would demonstrate distrust in Christ, but he demonstrated instead fearlessness and a trust in the faith that was granted to him and the promises through the blood of Christ and his life, death and resurrection to pay the penalty for his sins.

And he sets an example for us not just of what true Christians look like, but what faithful pastors look like, that when put to the ultimate test, he did not fail. He did not say, you know what? I'll just shift my mission a little bit as long as I'm not persecuted. You know what? I'll kind of give the people what they want and then nobody's going to come after me for it. He was in prison by the way, not for... He wasn't told to recant Jesus, he was told to add to his worship of the emperor. You can still worship Jesus, just burn a little incense and say a prayer to the divine emperor. And he said, no, Jesus alone gets my worship, he's the only one worthy. And so they threw him in prison. He stood the ultimate test unlike by the way, when he was younger, remember? Eve of Jesus' crucifixion, denies Jesus three times, saved his own neck. And what did Jesus do? God being rich in mercy to Peter, he allowed him to be restored. He restored him personally. He saved him. He allowed him then to use his life in ministry to be spent as a faithful martyr and witness for the gospel and God preserved Peter's testimony of faithfulness and boldness and fearlessness in the pages of this letter for all of us to see.

I just hit the iPad and now I lost my place. I love when that happens. But in truth, wasn't it gracious of God to do that? Because he could have given up on Peter. He's like, oh, you're going to deny me before men? I'm done with you. But that's not how God operates. When he says you're mine before the foundation of the world, that's not going to change. And God demonstrates his faithfulness to Peter by doing that. He cleansed Peter, he restored him and he allowed Peter to give us this example of a faithful pastor's heart. There's one more expression that we see of a faithful pastor's heart in verse 15. We see ***Peter demonstrate His Relentless Heart***. Okay, Peter is about to prove to you that the life and mission of a pastor is to never be one of do as I say, not as I do or a life of selfish ambition, or by the way, any mission contrary to this one, or even deviating from this one. Remember in verse 5 when Peter called upon you, Christian, to make every effort to fulfill these virtues? Well, if that doesn't sound familiar, it's about to. In verse 15, Peter gives the example of himself and he says, "And I will make every effort so that after my departure, you may be able at any time to recall these things." And Peter shows us that a faithful pastor's heart will always be a heart of example, examples. You see, Peter's example for us is to leave a legacy of making every effort. And this very literally means to spend oneself, to exert, to hasten something to its completion, to give all effort to something. And again, future aspect, right? This is the idea that his legacy is going to last forever, encoded into these words in 2 Peter. He's going to leave a legacy showing that even with his final words, he's giving every effort in order, by the way, to bring about a desired result, not for himself, but for the honor of Christ and for the good of the church and faithfulness to Jesus.

You see, faithful pastors don't invent their own mission or their own goals and say, as long as I accomplish these. They don't care about their own good. They do not care about building an empire. They do not care about personal fame. The only thing they care about and the only thing

they should care about is being faithful to Jesus and fulfilling the mission given to them by God. You want to know if your pastor is worth listening to? Ask these questions. Does he point me to Jesus faithfully the way the word points me to Jesus? Does he remind me to be faithful to God and to his word? Does he know God's word even? Does he know it the way that God intended it to be used? Does he call me to be more like Jesus every day? Does he remind me to make every effort? Or does he kind of just tell me everything's fine, tell me what I want to hear, make me feel comfortable, create a different vision for the church, something that's more culturally appropriate? No. Peter gives us a perfect example of what a faithful pastor's heart looks like at the end of his mission, leaving a legacy of faithfulness to Jesus' call for his ministry, not his own.

There's one more expression for us to see and that is a faithful pastor's heart is a heart of purpose. Peter here gives us his purpose, that is his mission, his goal, his life's work, his life's aim, and that is to point people to Christ through a life of Christ like obedience. Again, that perpetual lasting verbiage, that future language is his mindset. And he does this so that after he is gone, not caring about his own death, not caring about his own legacy, but a legacy left behind about Jesus and about his truth. Again, living intentionally, living with purpose is meaningless without the right intention and the right purpose and a faithful pastor like Peter will give you a demonstration of what that purpose and intention is and should be. And for us as pastors, it is in order to leave a faithful life behind for you to see as you progress in your sanctification and eventually end up one day standing before Jesus, that you were able to look like, we are able to look. Paul said, follow me as I follow Christ and only as I follow Christ, by the way that faithful pastors have followed in their footsteps doing the same thing, follow me as I follow Christ. And so Peter expresses for us his purpose in the end of verse 15 so clear and so simple. So that after my departure, by the way, that's such a little after thought, by the way, after I'm gone. He's not like, when I'm gone, make sure that my legacy survives, make sure that you build a monument and sing songs about me and mention all of my sermons. No, he says, after I'm gone, you may be able at any time to recall Jesus' words, the truth, his word, and that's his legacy.

Friends, this is the heart of a faithful pastor to spend and to be spent to remind you of God's unchanging and faithful and powerful and life transforming word, to give you confidence in Christ and in the work of the Holy Spirit in your life to transform you into a life of righteousness and holiness before God, to demonstrate to you, to prove to you, to implore to you, to obey the truth found in God's word, to convince you to have confidence in the word of God for all things pertaining to life in godliness and not look for wisdom in this world, to believe Peter's words about Jesus, about God's promises to you, about life, living a life of faithfulness and holiness, about identifying and knowing, and marking and ridding yourself of false teachers and about putting your faith in Jesus Christ to fulfill every last promise that he has made to you, including the completion of your salvation, redemption. And in doing so, any pastor who does that is living a life of divine purpose, a life that sets an example for Christians to follow, a life of faithfulness to Jesus, a life given to provoke you to faithfulness, a life cemented in the truth of God's word, a life spent shepherding God's people and a life lived with the intent of always and always reminding you of these things. And that friends, is what a faithful pastor looks like.

Well, Peter has done his job. He's run his race. He's fulfilled his mission. He was crucified upside down and the Lord promoted him to glory. And he taught us what the heart of a faithful pastor looks like. He taught us what a bold and courageous, unwavering faith in the face of persecution and death results in and he has left for us an example of how to live as a faithful shepherd of God's word, as well as for you, how to know if your pastors are being faithful to the mission that Jesus

gave them. It's not a secret nor do we get to invent it as we go along. We have entered into a covenant relationship with our church members where we say we will fulfill the mission God gave us and you fulfill the mission God gave you, and we have to hold each other accountable to those things. Don't ever allow your pastors to deviate from that mission or tolerate it if they do. What is their mission then? To make every effort, every effort so that after we are gone, so that you don't rely on us as men, you rely on the word of God, you may be able to at any time recall these things, these virtues, these promises, these calls to obedience so that you can honor Christ and be protected in your walk.

So the question is, will you? Will you heed the apostle's call for faithfulness? Will you live out his legacy of always being willing to be reminded of these things? Will you accept pastoral calls for wisdom and sometimes rebuke or reproach for obedience to God's word, for faithfulness? Because we're not doing it for our own gain, we're doing it for your good. Sometimes shepherding means correction. And will you always hold your pastors to the same standard of ministry that the apostles laid down was our mission and not drag us off, or try to drag us off onto some other mission? Will you follow us into the mission that Christ gave us? These are questions for you to ponder this week.

Michael Reeves, brilliant theologian says this. The knowledge of Christ is given to us, not simply to slosh around in our heads and not simply to puff us up, or certainly not to puff us up, but to transform our heart and our character. The ultimate end of all of our knowing is that we might love Jesus and become more like him.

And so you may need to ask yourself, do I even know Jesus? Have I ever submitted my heart to him? I can't obey who I do not follow. And if I am dead in my sins, I cannot act alive in Christ. Have I submitted my heart and bowed my knee to Jesus as Lord and savior? Have I repented of my sins and sought the righteousness of Christ to pay the penalty for my crimes against God's holiness? Unless you think I'm adding to the gospel, all I got to do is belief, Romans 10:9, that if we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord. That means folks, that whole life demonstrates that our knee is bowed before God, before Christ as our Lord and our master and our king, we're in submission to him and his will and his will is found in his word. By the way, part two of that and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. Why is that one necessary? Why they throw that one in? When's the last time you saw someone raised from the dead? Your friends, your family, anyone? No. It's foolish to think a dead person can come back to life or it's miraculous. And so the idea that you actually truthfully believe in and hold to and adhere to a miraculous truth is something only God can give you. So that's the evidence. If you confess with your mouth Jesus' Lord and believe in your heart, God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. You will be saved. My friend, if you cannot answer these questions that I've asked in the affirmative, Jesus wants you to know that he stands at the door and knocks. He stands ready to forgive you and to cleanse you of your sin, to restore you and to reconcile you to God in his righteousness. And you can do so today, if you would but repent and believe. Place your faith in Christ for your salvation. Please don't leave here today without asking this question, without talking to me or without talking to any of the Christians in this room. We can all share our faith with you, we all want to, we're all excited to. Nobody's going to look at you and scorn. We've not earned to attain to some status. We're nobodies. Paul said God chose the base things of the world, the worst of the worst to shame the wisdom of this world so that when God wins in the end, he gets all the glory, not us. We would love to see you come to a saving knowledge of Christ today. Today is the day, scripture says, of salvation. Tomorrow is never promised. Give

your life to Christ today and find his grace and mercy and blessing and all of God's people in the room would say to that, amen.

Let's pray. Father, what an incredible morning and afternoon of studying your word. We're so thankful that it's not a mystery Lord how we come to salvation, that how we are to obey you, what your expectations are that you so graciously and lovingly and shepherding carry us along in our spiritual growth. Your aim is to make us more like Jesus, not to steal our joy, but to increase it, not to demand, recompense out of us, Christ paid for that already, but only to bless your family and to grow us in wisdom and stature so that we can represent you in this world better and call more sinners to repentance and faith in Christ. Lord, may that happen today and may you be glorified in our church. We ask in Christ's name. Amen.