

The following is a manuscript of a presentation Dr. Paul Tripp developed called, "Dangerous Calling".



Center for Pastoral Life and Care

OUR MISSION:

*The **Center for Pastoral Life and Care** exists to help pastors experience the transforming work of the Gospel in their own lives, producing greater continuity between public ministry and personal life, and a firmer commitment to personally submit to the ongoing ministry of the Body of Christ.*

Description:

For all of the excitement and privilege of ministry in the local church, it is important to remember that ministry with, to and for the Body of Christ is accompanied by a unique set of obstacles and temptations. Successful, God-honoring, productive ministry in the church is never just a matter of mastering the requisite body of information and possessing the right set of skills. Ministry in the local church, whatever it is, is always shaped by the condition of your heart. What are the issues that are at the heart of ministry struggle and failure? What are the protections that need to be built into the life of everyone who is active in ministry of any kind? How do we assure that the message of the transforming grace of Jesus Christ is not only operating in the lives of those being ministered to, but in the one doing ministry as well?

Session #1:

Title: *The Pastor: Who Do We Think He Is Anyway?*

There are specific ways that we have thought about and related to our pastors that are unbiblical and that isolate the pastor and his family from the normal expectations, protections, and ministries of the body of Christ. Where has our thinking been unbiblical and how can concrete change take place?

Session #2:

Title: *The Pastor: Not Yet Perfect, Still Under Attack*

We know that there is no such thing as a perfect pastor, so we also know that every man in ministry is susceptible to temptation. What are the temptations that are resident to the life and ministry of a pastor and how do we work to build a culture of help around the pastor that promotes realistic expectations, functional honesty, and daily protection? If you are a pastor, this session will help you to examine how you are doing and if you are a fellow leader, this session will help you to determine how you can better relate to and care for your pastor.

[Notes on Paul Tripp, Part 1](#)

Session #1:

Title: *The Pastor: Who Do We Think He Is Anyway?*

February 1, 2010 | By: [Johnathon Bowers](#) | Category: [Conferences](#)

Paul Tripp just delivered two messages at the [pre-conference seminar](#). Here are some notes taken from the first session, "The Pastor: Who Do We Think He Is Anyway?"

I have this experience as I travel around the world. By means of what God has called me to do I am some place almost every weekend. I am usually in great churches. Somewhere on the the weekend, someone on the pastoral staff will grab me, pull me into a room, and unfold for me some kind of mess in their personal life. It's happened again and again. I was on one of those weekends and I was walking in a hallway trying to get a break between sessions. A hand pulled me into the bathroom and there was a pastor in the bathroom weeping and saying, "I need help."

I want to speak today into what I would call "pastoral culture," the real life and heart behind pastoral ministry. I'd like to get into it by discussing my own story.

I was a very angry man. I had no idea I was an angry man. My wife knew it, my children knew it, but I did not see myself that way in any way. I was a pastor. I was known in our region for being particularly skilled in counseling at recognizing angry men. I had no idea that I was marching toward ministry and marital disaster.

Luella, my dear wife, was very perseverant and faithful at coming to me again and again in godly ways and saying, "Paul you've got to deal with this." But I was unwilling to listen. I would say to Luella that I thought her problem was discontent and I would pray for her.

I'm a domestic person. I don't mind doing things around the house. I've traditionally done the cooking around the house, and when Luella would confront me about not loving her, I would wrap myself in my robes of self-righteousness and tell her what a good guy I was. In one instance I told her that at least 95% of the women in our church would love to be married to me. Luella told me she was in the 5%.

There are angry guys in this room. I know who you are and I know where you're going. And few of you know it because you're so busy with the external eyes of ministry. You get up Monday morning and you start up the hill again. You're thinking of the next elder meeting and where you are in next week's sermon, but you haven't watched what is growing and building inside of you.

Let me ask you a question. What man in this room would be comfortable with me playing a public recording of everything you said in your home the last two months? I'm here because I'm a pastor and I am concerned for us. I'm concerned that it's a lot easier for us to go to a conference that celebrates the gospel once again. And I think that's a wonderful thing. But that doesn't replace you having a constant

habit of looking at yourself in the mirror of the word of God and seeing yourself for who you are. Your ministry is never shaped by your knowledge or skill. It's always shaped by your heart.

I was marching toward disaster. I didn't get it. When Luella and I look back on those days, it's almost as though we were looking at a different couple. I was at the end of a weekend much like what we are experiencing today. I attended with my brother Ted. As we were driving home, he asked me to apply what we had heard at the conference to my own life. Ted began to ask me questions. As he did that, it was like God was ripping down curtains. I was seeing myself as I had never seen myself before. God's Spirit was opening up my hard heart. He was giving me eyes to see. And I was broken by what I saw. It was hard for me to grasp that that man was me.

I couldn't wait to get home. I'm a man with a lively sense of humor and I usually enter the house in some kind of goofy way. This time, though, I entered in a very serious way. I told Luella that we needed to talk. I told her that I was ready for the first time to listen to what she had to say. Luella burst into tears. She told me she loved me and began talking for two hours. Through that talk, God began changing my heart.

Months down the road, I was coming down the stairs of our house and as I hit the landing I saw Luella waiting for our children to come home. I came to her, put my hands on her shoulders, and told her as she looked up, "You know, I'm not angry at you anymore." She laughed and cried at the same time.

Pastor, what's going on in your heart? How is that in some way formative in all of the formal aspects of your ministry? Turn with me to [Malachi 2](#). John Piper helped me see the helpfulness of this passage. What I'd like to do is help you examine pastoral culture. It's the world that surrounds a pastor. I'd like to give you some questions we should ask about normal, American, evangelical pastoral culture. In the second hour I want to help you think about temptations that are either resident in pastoral ministry or are intensified by pastoral ministry.

[Malachi 2:1-9](#) —

And now, O priests, this command is for you. If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my name, says the Lord of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will rebuke your offspring, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and you shall be taken away with it. So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says the Lord of hosts. My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name. True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the Lord of hosts, and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you do not keep my ways but show partiality in your instruction.

What a strong passage toward the priests of Israel. Brothers, let's say it: Ministry is war. That war is not fought in programs or finances. It is fought on the turf of your heart. Ministry is war and we need to be equipped and skilled soldiers so that we are not the casualties of that war.

I want to give you four words. The first is "glory." God says in this passage in Malachi, "...if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my name..." We all know for sure that the ultimate goal of any form of ministry is the glory of God. God's zeal is that there would be an ever-growing company of people that surrender every desire and every action to his glory. That's the purpose of ministry. But ministry is a glory war. In ministry, there are subtle glories that compete with the glory of God. It's very easy somewhere in ministry to have a glory shift take place somewhere in your heart and not even know it. It's very easy to shift from a pursuit of the glory of God and his kingdom to begin to serve the glory of self and the glory of the kingdom of self.

How do you serve the kingdom of God in ministry? By doing ministry. How do you serve the kingdom of self in ministry? By doing ministry. The kingdom of self is a costume kingdom that masquerades itself as the kingdom of God.

When is it you find joy in ministry? When is it that you question whether or not you want to be a pastor? Where do you struggle with loving your people? How do you define a good Sunday, a good week, a good year? How much of that has do you with the glory of self: the glory of comfort, the glory of success? Those aren't inherently bad things, but they must not rule your heart.

What gets you up in the morning? What do you want from your leaders? What's your dream for your ministry? What do the moments look like when you question your calling, debate whether you really want to be in ministry at all? What's that about? Are you doing what you do over and over again in the repetitive cycles of pastoral ministry because your heart loves God and his glory? Or are there other glories competing with that and increasingly claiming the allegiance of your heart?

The second word is "word." God says through Malachi, "If you will not listen..." Would you describe yourself as a man who is personally hungry for the word of God? Are you a person with a rich, expectant, needy devotional life? Are you a pastor, as Sinclair Ferguson says, that sits under your own preaching? Has preparation gobbled up your devotional life? Do you sit under the word, do you hunger for the word, is it your meat and drink? If I watched the video of your last six weeks, would I conclude that this is a pastor with a deep, personal hunger for God's word? Not "zealous to prepare". That's not what I'm asking. I'm asking about a deep, personal hunger for the word of God.

The third word is "life." The prophet says, "You've turned aside from the way." Are there places in your life, in your walk before God, where you've let down your guard? You maybe are allowing for yourself attitudes toward your wife that the Bible would define as sin. You allow words and behavior in reaction to your children that do not incarnate the love and grace of Jesus Christ. Maybe watching things on television that you know you shouldn't watch. Having attitudes toward people that you work with in ministry that you should not have. Allowing your heart to carry on some bitterness. Allowing a flash of gossip. Have you allowed things into your life that are outside of the boundaries that God has set for you, not only as his child, but also as a person in ministry?

Fourth word: “compromise.” The last phrase in [Malachi 2:9](#) talks about “partiality in your instruction”. Is there any place in your ministry where you are tempted to be partial in the way you do ministry? Is there any place where you soften the things you say because of the fear of man? Are there people that have your ear in ways that are unhealthy? When you stand up to speak, is there fear of man even in those moments, people you are all too aware of that can cause you to preach in ways you wouldn't if that wasn't going on in your heart? Is there any place where you are compromising in your handling of the word?

The final word is “stumble.” According to the prophet, the failures we have mentioned end in causing many to stumble. Here's the reality that this passage puts in front of us: It is very, very difficult in ministry to give away that which you do not have yourself. Because of that, a willingness, not just to examine the needs of ministry and master as much as I can the theology I teach, but also to always have an eye toward myself and the needs of my own heart as I'm teaching, is very important.

Be honest. How is your heart doing? Men, if I ask your wife to be completely honest and I would ask her to give me five qualities that describe you - being honest - what would the top five be on her list? Gentle? Patient? Kind? Serving? Giving? Loving? Godly? If I asked your children to list the best descriptive words for you, what would they be? How's your heart doing? Ministry is never shaped just by your knowledge and skill. It's always shaped by the true condition of your heart.

I want to spend the rest of this hour together thinking about pastoral culture, the world that surrounds the pastor. There may be places where I irritate you a bit. I think that's okay. Here's the first one. I want us to think about the danger of academizing the faith. Most of us have gotten our way into pastoral ministry through the vehicle of the typical American seminary. I'm not here to say seminaries are horrible places. I value them highly, but I think there are things about that culture that we ought to examine. Something is very dangerous about spending three or four years of your life handling the word of God entirely separate from your own life. There's something about defining maturity and readiness for ministry by the degree to which you can master all the theology and all the history and all the languages that are not supposed to be ends in themselves but are means to an end. There is something that happens when you get comfortable with the word of God being a world of ideas, the word of God being a set of arguments, movements of history, because the word of God is dramatically, dynamically, by sovereign choice, something other than that. I think we do young men moving up into ministry a gross injustice if we allow them to learn to handle the word of God in a way that is entirely detached from who they are and to make them think that readiness for ministry is having a grasp of ideas.

Theological expertise and biblical literacy is not to be confused with godliness. Turn to [Isaiah 55](#). Before we look there, let me share with you a quote from B. B. Warfield. He wrote in *The Religious Life of Theological Students*:

We are frequently told, indeed, that the great danger of the theological student lies precisely in his constant contact with divine things. They may come to seem common to him, because they are customary. As the average man breathes the air and basks in the sunshine without ever a thought that it is God in his goodness who makes his sun to rise on him, though he is evil, and sends rain to him,

though he is unjust; so you may come to handle even the furniture of the sanctuary with never a thought above the gross early materials of which it is made. The words which tell you of God's terrible majesty or of his glorious goodness may come to be mere words to you— Hebrew and Greek words, with etymologies, and inflections, and connections in sentences. The reasonings which establish to you the mysteries of his saving activities may come to be to you mere logical paradigms, with premises and conclusions, fitly framed, no doubt, and triumphantly cogent, but with no further significance to you than their formal logical conclusiveness. God's stately stepping in his redemptive processes may become to you a mere series of facts of history, curiously interplaying to the production of social and religious conditions, and pointing mayhap to an issue which we may shrewdly conjecture: but much like other facts occurring in time and space, which may come to your notice. It is your great danger.

Now let's read [Isaiah 55:9-11](#).

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

If you're preaching this passage, please don't stop there. All of this is wonderful to know. But the question all of this begs is, "What is the purpose of the word of God?" That's what verses 12 and 13 explain.

For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the Lord, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

What's the ultimate goal of the word of God? Worship! The deepest, most life-altering worship we can ever have. Notice the means of that. Look at verse 13. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle." That is a very weird metaphor. Think with me. If you have a little thorn bush and it is rained upon and it is rained upon, what do you get? A bigger thorn bush. But that's not what this passage says. It says that when the rain of God comes down on thorny hearts, what grows there is something entirely different. The purpose of God's word is radical, personal change that results in renewed living to his glory. That's the purpose of the word of God. It's not just theological awareness. All those things have their place, but all of those things are means to a deeper end: that God actually would change the organic content of people's hearts, that selfish people would become sharing people, angry people would become peacemakers, lusts would become pure. God is not satisfied with anything less than that. That is the sovereign purpose of his word. I must never hold forth his word apart from this purpose.

The person that God is after first in your ministry is you. And you must never celebrate the content of the word of God without placing yourself under the implications of that content for personal, ongoing heart and life change.

Guys, where are the thorns still in your own life? Where does that transformation still need to take place? Are you hungry, are you expectant, are you needy? Or are you accustomed to holding God's word at a distance and have thus become comfortable in your life with things you should not be comfortable with? Where is there still a need for ongoing personal transformation?

Second perspective: the temptation of a public/private division in your life. I don't know if you think about this, but if you live in Western culture, we are used to big borders between your public persona and your private life. By the time you are nine years old you learn that there are things you don't talk about and must protect. We live in an incredibly individualized culture. We are very used to living in networks of terminally casual relationships. We are very used to living as fundamentally unknown. What that can promote is this disconnect between public ministry and the actual realities of my private life. Not only do those exist, but no one knows they exist because few people know me.

How many people actually know you? How many people are aware of, concerned about, ministering to, not the public guy of leadership, but to the private man? How many people know what kind of relationship you have with your wife? How many people know what kind of dad you are, the condition of your finances, what you do with the rest of your evening when you leave your study, where you go on your computer? How many people in your life actually step over that boundary between public persona and private life?

Would you say that there is any way in your life that the public man is different than the private man? Is there consistency between public confession, public preaching, public calls to godliness and the way you approach your life, or is there incongruity?

Third perspective: we need to look at pastoral culture from the vantage point of what Scripture says about the body of Christ. If it's true that Christ is the head of his body - and it is - wouldn't that mean that everything else is body? Wouldn't that mean that a pastor does not and should not live above of and separate from the body of Christ? If the body of Christ rises as each joint and ligament does its part, wouldn't that be the same for the pastor? Are you a humble, active member of the body of Christ, or are you living separate from it?

Fourth perspective: I want us to look at pastoral life from the vantage point of the Fall. What was the thing that the serpent was selling there? Was it not these two lies: the lie of autonomy and the lie of self-sufficiency? My right to my own life and that delusional belief that I have everything in myself to do what I want to do. Those lies of autonomy and self-sufficiency, as long as sin is in us, are still present in us. Do you live too much in isolation, too much as a loner? Are there subtle ways as a pastor where you are still buying into those lies of autonomy and self-sufficiency?

Fifth perspective. I would call this "the violence of grace". Look at [Psalm 51](#). There is striking phraseology in verse 8: "Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice."

What is David talking about? Here's what he's talking about: in order to recapture and more fully capture your heart, your Lord will break your bones. There are moments in ministry where you are facing trouble of various sorts and you are tempted to cry out, "Where is the grace of God?" You're in the middle of it. We need to believe in and teach the theology of uncomfortable grace. Could it be that trouble is in ministry not because Satan has brought it but because your Redeemer has brought it and he wants you?

Turn to [Amos 4](#). Amos, the prophet, goes after the leadership in very powerful ways. I want to read from verses 6-11 and leave out one important phrase.

I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in all your places...

I also withheld the rain from you when there were yet three months to the harvest; I would send rain on one city, and send no rain on another city; one field would have rain, and the field on which it did not rain would wither; so two or three cities would wander to another city to drink water, and would not be satisfied; ...

I struck you with blight and mildew; your many gardens and your vineyards, your fig trees and your olive trees the locust devoured; ...

I sent among you a pestilence after the manner of Egypt; I killed your young men with the sword, and carried away your horses, and I made the stench of your camp go up into your nostrils; ...

I overthrew some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah...

Who is talking? God. He is talking to whom? His people. Why would God do these things? Why so much hardship in so many ways? Notice the refrain: "'yet you did not return to me,' declares the LORD."

God is after our hearts. He is after our thoughts, our deepest desires. He will not be satisfied with anything else. Could it be that the difficulties of ministry are the evidence of sweet, perseverant grace? Could it be that what you are thinking is terrible is the best thing that could happen to you? Could it be that I'd rather ministry be easy than for me to be holy? Could it be?

Sixth perspective. Turn if you would to [2 Corinthians 5:14-15](#). I would call this area "the DNA of sin":

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

Jesus came so that those who live would no longer live for themselves. The DNA of sin is selfishness. What sin does is turn me in on myself. Sin makes me all too focused on my wants, my comfort, my pleasure, my success. As long as sin still lives in me, the selfishness that is the DNA of sin is still within me. Pastors, admit it. That is still a struggle for you. I want to drive on roads paid for by citizens who don't use them. I want children saying, "Yes, father, I will go forthwith and obey, for you are my father." I want elders who have a two-word vocabulary: "Great idea." I want the pleasure of evangelizing heavy

givers. I want building programs that take less time than predicted. I want everybody on every Sunday to say, "What a stunning sermon!" I have, I will confess, a man right now in my life that is a challenge for me to love, because he is the constant critic of my preaching. I keep talking to him about other churches. That selfishness is there.

Think with me for a moment. How much of your anger over the last month had anything to do with the kingdom of God? That DNA of sin is still with us.

I could give you ten more of these perspectives, but I won't. My point is this: How could you look at these things I've mentioned and not say, "We are a people in need of great help"? I need every message I will preach. I need transforming grace operating in my life. I try to pray these three things in the morning: 1) "God, I'm a man in desperate need of help today," 2) "I pray that in your grace you would send your helpers my way, and 3) "Lord, please give me the humility to receive the help when it comes."

Is there God-honoring continuity between public ministry and your private life? Have you grown accustomed to holding God's word at a distance from the realities of your own heart? Are you more excited about the ideas of theology than the radical claims that they have on your personhood? Would your children say, "That man in the pulpit is the exact same man at home"? Would your wife say, "That man who preaches Christ incarnates Christ every day in our home, and I'm so thankful for that"?

I would be so bold as to say, "The greatest danger to the church of Christ will not be found outside the church. I would say it's not even the weakening theology of the church. I would say it rests in the heart of the person that stands in the pulpit." God, may there be a brokenness in us. May sweet brokenness sweep the pastorate in this country. May we reach out for help and renewal, so that what we preach and what we live - both together - are a hymn of glory to our Redeemer.

[Notes on Paul Tripp, Part 2](#)

Session #2:

Title: *The Pastor: Not Yet Perfect, Still Under Attack*

February 1, 2010 | By: [Benjamin Jensen](#) | Category: [Conferences](#)

These notes were taken from the second session of today's [pre-conference seminar](#), "The Pastor: Not Yet Perfect, Still Under Attack." (Read the [notes from Part 1.](#))

This side of eternity it's very hard to keep what's truly important in your life. It's hard because sin is idolatrous and there's always inertia away from the Creator toward the creature. Things rise to a level of importance to rule your heart, and what rules your heart influences your behavior.

A few years ago, I was able to purchase a car that I truly enjoyed. People would look at me in that car and say, 'I wish I was that man.' My niece and nephew came to visit from FL to experience a northern, white Christmas. We would take them to Philadelphia Christmas sites and to NYC. There's great food all around. We ate our way through Philadelphia at Christmas. I love how much of the glory of God in creation is edible. We ended the day by taking our family to Starbucks. I did that as a servant to them.

Troy, my nephew, ordered a grande latte with a big brownie. We then piled into the car and made our way home. The street we had to take was Lincoln Dr, which is full of sharp curves the whole length. Somewhere along Lincoln Dr., Troy said one fateful word ... 'sick.' And what came out of his mouth next cannot be described. I think I saw his body getting smaller.

Then I said something that was untrue, "It's ok. I love you more than I love this car." My niece and I cleaned it up at home. I thought that leather doesn't soak much in. I woke up in the middle of the night remembering that my seats were ventilated with little holes. I went down earlier in the morning than is healthy to see my new orange and black seats. It's hard to keep important what's important.

Imagine when you see a nice bagel on the counter in the kitchen at night and think that it will be a perfect breakfast for you tomorrow morning with a nice, hot coffee. You can even take some extra time in the morning. And you go to bed in your own bagelism. And you wake up and take some extra time and come down to the kitchen to find the counter bare, and you say, "Who ate my bagel!?" It's easy to get angry even at the people you love.

This side of eternity, it's very hard to keep what's truly important, important. If this is true in regular life, then it's that much more true in your ministry. This side of eternity, it's very hard to keep what's truly important, important. Secondary things become more important than they are. That elder doesn't always have to agree with you! It's very hard to keep what's truly important, important.

I want to do this: some of you will say, "Paul, I think you're right. There are some disconnects." Some of you have said, "Are you gonna tell us what to do?" So, I'm gonna take some time to do that, and if it takes the rest of the time, then God is sovereign and this is what I was supposed to do here.

Two Texts That Are Important to Pastoral Ministry

[Hebrews 3:12-13](#)

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

If you are aware that there are incongruities in your public and personal life, then seek help. You are not designed to do this thing by yourself. Your ministry is a community project.

See to it that no one has a sinful...unbelieving...hard heart. Pastors, hear this: if you push, poke, and slap your children, those aren't acts of discipline but abuse. You are sinning, so stop it.

You don't live life in big moments. You live life in the utterly mundane. If God doesn't rule your mundane, then he doesn't rule your life. The character of a life is set in 10,000 little moments, not big moments. We begin in those little moments to let down our guard. A little lust, jealousy, or anger in ministry because I haven't gotten the appreciation that's due to me. If you're a believer and do something wrong, your conscience bothers you..that's the work of the Holy Spirit.

You have two options for your unbelief, either go to Jesus and ask for forgiveness or you erect your own justification for what you've done wrong. You say things like: I wasn't lusting, I was appreciating beauty. I yell at my kids like a prophet, 'Thus says the Lord...' I exerted my power because I have leadership gifts.

You are the most influential person in your own life. you talk to yourself more than anyone does. What are you saying to you about you?

I love how Paul talks about self-swindling. Pretense that set themselves up against the sovereignty of God. The danger of self-swindling is that you never tell yourself a bad lie. You live in a fallen world and you have plenty of material. The purpose of these arguments is to make you feel good about that which is not good.

The 3rd word of Hebrew 3:12-13 is about turning away, falling away. This will always lead to further drifts in your life. You lose my anchor. And the final position you find yourself in is hardened by deceitfulness of sin. Those things that used to bother you don't anymore.

There's a theology here: the theology of sinful blindness. Sin blinds. I always see my wife and children's sin. There's a difference between physical blindness and spiritual blindness: the physically blind know that they are blind; they can't see anything. But the spiritually blind are blind to their blindness. And because we buy that we don't think we need a rescuing community.

The writer of Hebrews addresses that. As long as sin still lives inside of you, there will be spiritual blindness and you will need help. The only solution is daily intervention. Not just occasional, but daily, intentionally intrusive, Christ-centered, grace-filled people surrounding me. People that step into my life because I'm scared to death of my blindness.

Christ-centered, because we don't believe in a system, we believe in a Redeemer. Grace-driven, because it's only in grace that I have the courage to step out of myself to say I need help. Quit thinking about losing your job, about what your elders will think. Step into grace, and let it transform you. I think every pastor needs to hold on to this reality: we are a people constantly in need of redemption.

Personal spiritual insight is the product of community. So get help. Step into the community so that you may see yourself with accuracy and receive the continual resources of grace that your Savior died to give you. Don't live in denial, hiding, or fear. Live in hope and courage. Get help.

1 Peter 5:6-10

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

This is good encouragement for us to do what we need to do.

5 directives from this passage:

1) *Know your place.* Humble yourselves under hand of God. Realize it is Christ's truth, gifts, and people. I am only ever an instrument in his redemptive hands. It's not my ministry or church, it's Christ's. Daily pray, 'God keep me aware of my place.' May it not go to my head or change the way I think of my identity. May it not change the zeal of my ministry. How about having 5 people pray that thing for you?

2) *Rest in God's care.* I think there's a tremendous amount of pastoral fear, anxiety, and sleepless nights. Listen, your Lord and Savior rules over all things for the sake of his name. His sovereign will will be done. May we rest in his care.

I'm not talking about ministry laziness but ministry rest. You believe that no one is more concerned about the use of your gifts than the Giver. No one cares more about the progress of the gospel than the One who died to make it a reality. Maybe you're dealing with a lack of success with your programs or fellow leaders. Maybe your ministry is driven by concern and anxiety rather than rest.

3) *Take ministry seriously.* Look what he says: 'Be sober minded, be watchful...' We believe in an enemy. And I can't forget that. I can't make ministry about whether or not I design the right kind of program. No. This is war. I want to take that seriously as I live in the middle of this war in ministry.

4) *Resist no matter what.* "Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world." Why would Peter say that? Misery loves company? No! He's speaking to an evil but seductive lie that comes from an enemy who says you've been singled out in your ministry for suffering.

No. Peter says you're not alone, that there are others. The gospel is an offense. Why would we be surprised when it does lead to suffering? The gospel is good news that's full of bad news. Do not believe that somehow God has forgotten your ministry.

5) *Entrust yourself to God's sanctifying grace.* In the midst of the hardships of ministry and of disappointment, the God of grace is working in your heart to restore and establish you. What seems like the ministry you never wanted may be God's plan for your life.