Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Shepherding the Flock, Part 2
Scripture: 1 Peter 5:1-4
Code: 60-47

Tonight as we come to our time in the Word of God, I want you to turn again in your Bible to 1 Peter chapter 5 and I want to read for you verses 1 through 4 which again is the setting for our study, as it was last Lord's day evening.

First Peter chapter 5, beginning at verse 1: "Therefore I exhort the elders among you as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion but voluntarily according to the will of God and not for sorted gain but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those alloted to your charge but proving to be examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."

Now as we noted in our last study of this text, times of persecution in the church call for the best leadership. Peter has just concluded a section in which he has discussed the matter of suffering, tribulation, trials, persecution which these believers were experiencing. And then he turns immediately to discuss the question of leadership because indeed times of trouble, times of difficulty and persecution in the church do demand the most faithful leaders. So here in these four verses he directs his exhortation to leaders in the church. And he directs it to them to be sure that they fulfill their spiritual responsibility.

And I would just say at the outset that those of us who have the role of shepherding in the church must place close attention to this passage. And those of you who are being shepherded must be pay close attention to this passage as well because not only are we to fulfill this as our duty but you are to hold us accountable to do this as part of your responsibility.

Now as we look at these four verses the whole thing begins to unfold to us as to its meaning when we ask four basic questions. The questions are: what, who, how and why...and as those questions are answered this passage begins to open up. Now the main idea to remember is that Peter is talking about the responsibility of shepherding...shepherding. He wants to remind those who are in positions of spiritual leadership that they are responsible before God and before Christ to be faithful shepherds.

Let's look back then at question number one...what...what is he saying? What is he asking of us in this responsibility of shepherding? Well we find it in verses 1 and 2. He says, Therefore, flowing right out of the persecution discussion, since you are in times of difficulty and persecution, it is very

important that the elders among you be exhorted. And so he says, "I exhort the elders among you as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you." What is he asking? He's asking that we shepherd...that is the issue. It's a very narrow issue, it's a very specific issue. He's not saying a lot of things here, he's saying one very simple thing. And if you circle the word "shepherd" in the text you have the main idea of the whole passage. That is the what...what is it that I appeal to you to do? The word "exhort" means to appeal. What is it that I am asking of you who are elders, or pastors, or overseers? What am I asking? I am asking for you to shepherd.

The elders, by the way, as we noted last time, are the spiritual leaders of the church. They are the teachers of the Word of God in the church. They are the pastors and the overseers. They are also called pastor, they are also called bishop. This word elder emphasizes their spiritual responsibility in terms of maturity and the uniqueness of their office. And we discussed that at some length last time.

I would just call your attention also to the fact that he uses elder in the plural sense. Churches were led by a plurality of godly men. And it is very helpful for us to note that that plurality is important. Let me just give you just a brief suggestion about that. Where you have a plurality of elders you have some very important protections. For example, with a plurality of elders or pastors, leaders in the church, it preserves the church against error. You'll remember in 1 Corinthians chapter 14 verse 29 the Apostle Paul writing to the rather chaotic and confused church at Corinth said, "Let the spirit of the prophet be subject to the prophets." What he meant by that was don't let anybody act independently of the group. There is a sense in which no man has the freedom to teach, to lead independent of a plurality of godly men with whom he works alongside whom he studies and teaches and who can bring to bear their own insights on the truth. And where you have a plurality of godly men, you have some insulation against error. It preserves against error.

Secondly, where you have a plurality of godly leaders in a church it preserves against imbalance. The fact of the matter is that in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 Paul said there are varieties of offices, there are varieties of gifts, there are varieties of administrations. And I think it's very important in the church that where there is a plurality of godly men in leadership, there is also by God's design a plurality of capabilities and gifts and administrations. And one of the things that happens in a sort of oneman dominated church is that it gets very out of balance because God does not give all gifts to one individual.

Also, a plurality of godly men in a church preserves against undue elevation of one man. It is very important that one man not be elevated above what is proper. It is very important that you honor those who are over you in the Lord and that you respect them for their works' sake. But an undue elevation can occur where one man dominates completely.

It also, a plurality of leaders, preserves against an evil dominance...an evil dominance. You remember a man in the New Testament by the name of Diotrephes who loved to have the preeminence. A church is a very very good place for a megalomaniac to push himself up to a place of prominence where he can act in very ungodly and wicked ways. It's tragic to think about the fact that many pastors do just that. Where you have one dominant person it is possible that you are not going to have insulation against error, it is possible that you will have imbalance, it is possible that that man becomes unduly elevated and that he becomes dominantly wicked or evil if indeed he turns that way then he will dominate even though he's an evil man.

One other good reason for plurality of leadership in a church is it preserves against discontinuity. One of the things that happens in a church that is dominated by one man is that when that one man is gone there's no continuity in the ministry. There's nobody else who can step in because there's nobody else in leadership at that level. And so I believe that God in his infinite wisdom when he designed the church designed it to have a plurality of leaders, that is why the word elder always appears in the plural, except when making reference to an individual elder...like the elder John. Every time it is used in reference to a local church it is always plural. A plurality of godly men who together discern truth, who together bring balance, who together are honored and respected and who together hold each other accountable for a godly and a pure life and who together provide longterm continuity in the life of the church.

Now it is a serious task to shepherd. This is what Peter is talking about, that it is a very serious task. So serious a task that Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 17 says, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account." We have an accountability to God. I believe that when Jesus said if you don't take care of money, He won't give you the true riches, He was saying if you don't take care of money, He won't give you people, that's the true riches. How are you ever going to be able to handle the souls of men if you can't handle the dollars in your pocket. And if God has found you faithful to some degree in giving you the souls of men, there is an infinitely greater accountability. And James 3:1 says stop being so many teachers because theirs is a greater condemnation.

When you are given oversight and you are given the responsibility to teach, there is an immense accountability. It is a serious serious task. We have to give an account. And that account must be given to God.

Now what is the primary objective of shepherding? The answer is feeding...feeding. That's why when you have in 1 Timothy chapter 3 and Titus chapter 1 the qualifications of an elder and then the qualifications of the deacon, the only difference is the elder is skilled in teaching. There's no difference in the spiritual qualifications. There's no difference in the family qualifications. The difference comes in that the elder is the skilled teacher. He is didaktikos, he is apt to teach, he is skilled in teaching. The primary responsibility of shepherding is to feed. There is a protecting work.

There is a sort of oversight that sort of keeps the flock together, but the primary function for protecting them and keeping them together is to lead them to green pastures and still waters.

Let's go back to John chapter 21 just so that we can kind of get in touch with this a little bit. In Jesus' discussion with Peter here in John 21 where Peter probably learned a lot of the things that are coming out in this section of his epistle, Jesus says to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John...verse 15...do you love Me more than these?" He could mean more than these other disciples love Me, for Peter said, "Even if all others forsake You I never will," and Jesus is saying, "Do you really love Me more than these?" He could be saying, "Do you love Me more than these things, boats, and nets and fish that have made up all of your life?" But Peter says to Him, "Yes, Lord."

All right, if you love Me, you know I've called you to be an Apostle, you know that I love you, He says, so Jesus said to him, "Feed My lambs....feed My lambs." He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love you. He said to him, Shepherd My sheep, or feed My sheep," again the emphasis. He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved because he said to Him the third time do you love Me, and he said to Him, Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep."

Now two times He uses the word bosko which means to feed, specifically to feed. They translate it "tend" in the New American Standard, it actually means to feed. The word "shepherd," poimaino embraces all the rules of shepherding. But two out of three times He says "feed...feed My lambs, the little ones, feed My sheep, the older ones, and shepherd them all." Two out of three times the emphasis is on feeding.

And the role of the shepherd was to lead the sheep to nourishing green pastures. From a spiritual standpoint we are to bring the sheep to the place where they feed on divine truth. The shepherd is not to seek to please, but to seek to feed. He is not to tickle their ears but nourish their souls. He is not to offer light meals of milk, but heavy truths of solid food. That is a shepherd's duty. We primarily are feeders of the sheep. An elder then, an overseer, pastor, whatever you want to use terminology wise, has the primary role of feeding...feeding. That's the task.

Now, the command to shepherd here in 1 Peter chapter 5 carries a sense of urgency with it. The form of the Greek verb indicates that there's an urgency here and as I said, it's the most serious task in the world. Did you hear me say that? It's the most serious task in the world. And it is never defined as an administrative duty, it is always defined as a pastoral spiritual duty. It is not primarily a paper pushing responsibility, it is a teaching responsibility. There is an element of oversight, there is an element of shepherding, but that primarily means giving attention to the needs of the people.

Now if you go back with me for a moment to the Old Testament to Jeremiah chapter 23 it might help to elucidate this. Jeremiah chapter 23, and I just want to read you the first four verses. "There were men who were appointed by God to be shepherds in Israel, they had responsibility." Verse 1 of Jeremiah 23 tells us about them, "Woe...that means damnation, cursing, judgment...to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture." Imagine a shepherd doing that. With all that we learned last week about a shepherd, imagine him doing that. So verse 2, "The Lord God of Israel says concerning the shepherds who are shepherding My people, you have scattered My flock, you have driven them away, you have not attended to them. Behold, I am about to tend to you for the evil of your deeds. Then I Myself shall gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and shall bring them back to their pasture. They will be fruitful and multiply. I will also raise up shepherds over them and they will shepherd them." And the word means to feed them, to care for them. "I will find some shepherds who will do what you have failed to do, namely lead My sheep into pasture where they can be properly fed."

Look at Ezekiel chapter 34 verse 2, "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to those shepherds, Thus says the Lord God, woe, shepherds of Israel, who have been feeding themselves. Should not the shepherds feed the flock? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock." What kind of shepherd is that? You wear their wool, you eat their meat. In other words, you use them, you abuse them, you do not feed them.

Verse 4, "Those who are sickly you have not strengthened. The diseased you have not healed. The broken you have not bound up. The scattered you have not brought back. Nor have you sought for the lost. But with force and with severity you have dominated them. And they were scattered for lack of a shepherd and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. My flock wandered throughout all the mountains and on every high hill and My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth and there was no one to search or seek for them." And God judges them because of it.

"Therefore, you shepherds, hear the Word of the Lord...verse 7...as I live, declares the Lord God, surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd. My shepherds didn't search for My flock but rather the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock. Therefore, you shepherds, hear the Word of The Lord, thus says the Lord God. Behold, I am against the shepherds, I shall demand My sheep from them and make them cease from feeding sheep so the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore but I shall deliver My flock from their mouth that they may not be food for them." I Myself, God says, will search My sheep and seek them out.

The primary responsibility of a shepherd is to feed his sheep and these shepherds were not feeding their sheep, they were not tending their sheep, they were not leading their sheep to protected places.

So Peter says to all of us then and now...shepherd the flock of God. Primarily as I said, that means to feed them. But in order to feed them adequately you have to lead them to green pastures and you have to protect them from evading danger.

Now I want you to notice the motivation behind what Peter said. Peter loads this exhortation with some rich motivation that flows together in verse 1. Would you notice several things? First of all, there is motivation by identification. There is motivation by identification. Please note, "Therefore I exhort the elders among you as your fellow elder." This is a gentle motivator. This is a humble way to express himself. After all, this is Peter, the great Peter, the great Peter who was as intimate with Jesus as anyone who ever lived. And he's writing to some scattered Christians who must revere him profoundly because of who he was. And yet he doesn't pull rank, not at all. He doesn't pull rank. He says I am speaking to you as your fellow elder and you will remember that he had been sufficiently humbled not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, to borrow the words of Paul. And here he shows some sympathy. He is saying...Look, I exhort the elders among you to shepherd as your fellow elder.

In other words, I identify with the difficulty of the task. Sheep are prone not to allow you to shepherd easily. As we saw last time, they have a way of wandering. They have a way of falling over on their back and can't get back on their feet. They have a way of becoming wounded and when they get wounded they might just give up and die and you've got to be there to attend to them. They have a way of collecting in the grease in their wool all the filth and the dirt that's blowing in the breeze and they constantly have to be tended to. They have a way of allowing flies to lay their eggs around their face and in their wool and to be infested with maggots and you've got to continually be going over them and over them and finding how you can make sure this doesn't happen. It's a tremendously difficult task. And so Peter says, "I'm exhorting you as one of you, I understand it...I understand it.

I would have to say that whenever I travel around a country as I have been doing the last couple of weeks and minister to pastors, the thing I think which gives me the most credibility in dealing with them is that I come to them as a fellow shepherd. And I can say to them I know what it's like out there because I'm doing the same thing you're doing. I'm dealing with the sheep the same way you are. I'm having to fight off the same kind of enemies that you are fighting. I'm trying to lead my people to the green pastures, get them to eat and beside the still waters and get them to drink as well. So Peter comes with the motivation of identification...and that's the motivation of modesty, that's the motivation of humility, that's the motivation of sympathy.

He understood what the shepherding challenges were. He understood. And he would identify with them. He doesn't pull rank at this particular point. But with the second motivation he moves a notch up and he says this, "I exhort the elders among you as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ." This then is motivation by authority. This then is motivation by authority. First there was motivation by identification and understanding, now authority. He says I speak to you as a witness of

the sufferings of Christ. You say, "How is that authority?" Simply because he was an eye witness to the passion of his Lord. He was in the garden when Jesus was arrested. He was there at the open tomb when He was raised from the dead. And no one could be an Apostle who hadn't been a firsthand witness, right?, to Christ and His resurrection.

And here I believe he is affirming his apostolic authority. Peter saw the Lord go to the place of prayer. He saw Him arrested. In fact, he took a sword and tried to whack through the whole Roman army. He saw Jesus taken prisoner. He was near Jesus at His trial. You remember, he stood afar off when Jesus was being tried. The New Testament doesn't tell us that he saw the crucifixion. It doesn't say that in the gospels. But it could well be that this is Peter's testimony that indeed he did see it. And he may have been watching it from afar. He says, "I am a witness of the sufferings of Christ." It could have been His sufferings in the garden, it was there that He agonized, sweating great drops of blood. It could have been His suffering in the garden when He was unjustly arrested and mocked. It could have been His suffering in the unjust trial. But also Peter could be saying I was there and I saw the suffering of Christ.

The word "witness" covers two ideas...the word in the Greek you'll be interested to know is the word martyr...martyr. It means one who personally saw and one who personally testifies to what he saw. It's translated the word witness, but it's the Greek word martyr. Why? Because so many people who witnessed for Christ ended up as...what?...martyrs. That...the word came to mean one who is killed for witnessing. He was there and he not only saw the sufferings of Christ but he was called to proclaim them. So a witness is one who saw and one who proclaims what he saw. In Peter's case the term is synonymous with Apostle. He saw the sufferings of Christ, he was commissioned to proclaim the sufferings of Christ, to evangelize, to speak the message.

In Luke 24:45 Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scripture, speaking of the Apostles. And then it says He said to them, "Thus it is written that Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day and that repentance for forgiveness of sin should be preached in His name to all the nations beginning from Jerusalem, you are witnesses of these things and behold I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you...that's the Holy Spirit." And the idea is so that you can witness effectively.

To say I am a martyr of the sufferings of Christ, I am a witness of the sufferings of Christ means I saw it and I've been commissioned to proclaim it. He saw it, he was to proclaim it.

By the way, in Acts 22:15 Paul claims the title witness. He calls himself a witness and he too saw the resurrected Christ and he too was given a commission from God to proclaim the sufferings and the resurrection of the Savior.

So Peter as an eye witness of Christ's sufferings was able to certify that it really occurred, firsthand witness. And he was called to proclaim it as an Apostle. And by the way, Peter dwelt on the sufferings of Christ. That was a major part of his preaching. On the day of Pentecost, later on in Jerusalem he focused on the sufferings of Christ. Why? Because it was so hard for the Jews to accept the fact that their Messiah had to suffer. And even in this epistle do you remember what he said in chapter 1 verse 11? That the prophets predicted the sufferings of Christ. Chapter 1 verse 19 that Christ was a lamb umblemished and spotless and shed His precious blood. Chapter 2 verse 21, Christ also suffered for you. In verse 24 He bore our sins in His body on the cross. By His wounds you were healed. In chapter 3 verse 18 Christ died for sins once for all, the just to the...for the unjust. Chapter 4 verse 1, Christ has suffered in the flesh. Chapter 4 verse 13 he says you share the sufferings of Christ.

Over and over again he talks about the sufferings of Christ because they were so basic to the gospel and so hard to accept to the Jews. So he is exhorting them not only from the humble, modest, sympathetic perspective of one who identifies as himself being an elder, but he also exhorts them from the position of apostolic authority as one who is a firsthand eye witness to the sufferings of Christ and one who is called to proclaim them.

There's a third point of motivation that he includes in his exhortation. He says, "And a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed. A partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed." We'll call this motivation by anticipation motivation by anticipation...or motivation by hope. He is saying I'm exhorting you from the vantage point of a fellow elder who understands. I'm exhorting you as an Apostle who has the authority to exhort you as an eye witness of Christ and one called to preach His gospel. And I am also exhorting you as one who with you will partake of the glory to be revealed. In other words, the promise of eternal reward should be a motivator. The fact that we will some day receive from the hand of Christ a reward for our service should be a motivation...it should be something that moves us that we know we're anticipating what Paul calls the eternal weight of glory. He says along with you I will be a partaker or a sharer in the glory given to Christ after His resurrection, a glory which is not now revealed but it is hidden, it is known only slightly and partially by Christians because it doesn't yet appear what we shall be...says John. But we some day will enter in to the glory of Christ yet to be revealed.

Now when he says I am a partaker of that glory he might even be looking back at the transfiguration. You remember that when the Lord was transfigured on that mountain, Peter had the unique privilege of being there and seeing Him transfigured. In 2 Peter 1 he refers to that. He says, "When He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to him by the majestic glory, This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased," when that happened, back to verse 16, Peter says we were eye witnesses of His majesty.

So Peter is saying, "Look, I am motivated to tell you to shepherd the flock of God as one who is a fellow elder and I understand what you have to do, I understand your calling, I motivate you as an

equal. Furthermore, I want to motivate you as one who is in authority as an Apostle. And then I want to motivate you as one who is a fellow partaker in the eternal glory and the reward that will be revealed in the day we see Jesus Christ which glory I have already seen in part."

So you need to be motivated as a shepherd, a pastor? Do I? One of the things that can motivate me is other faithful pastors who are doing their shepherding work with excellence and commitment and devotion and who set a pattern for me to follow even as an equal. And then I need to be motivated by one over me who speaks for God such as an Apostle, who commands me to do this as one who speaks the very truth of God. And then I need to be motivated to do my shepherding by the eternal reward that shall be mine if I am faithful when I see Him in the glory.

So Peter says shepherd. That's the what. Shepherd. Motivated by sympathy, motivated by the community of others who are doing the same thing, you're not alone. Motivated by authority, those who have the commanding voice of God when they speak. And motivated by the hope of eternal reward, shepherd shepherd.

The next question is who. Who we shepherding? It says it, the flock of God among you. That's obvious, isn't it? The flock of God among you. This should be clear to everyone. But let me see if I can dig in a little bit on this one. This is very very helpful.

Our Lord descended to purchase the church. He purchased it with His own blood, it says in Acts 2. And then He ascended to empower the church. He descended to purchase the church, He ascended to empower the church with His Spirit and gave gifts to men to shepherd His flock. He came into the world, purchased the flock. Went back to heaven, sent the Spirit of God to enable the gifted men to shepherd His flock. Would you please notice we shepherd the flock of God. We don't shepherd our flock, not my flock, not your flock, His flock. Serious responsibility, right? The Lord says, "MacArthur, here's My flock, take care of them. You have one primary duty and that is to feed them. And in order to feed them effectively you're going to have to make sure they don't get lost, they don't get sick, they don't get discouraged, they don't fall over on their back and lie there until they die. You've got to keep them in the green pastures, keep them where the water is fresh. You've got to keep them in the right environment where they're going to feed and grow."

All I have to do is stop for any moment and realize that I'm responsible not for my church and not for my flock but for His church and His flock and realize that it cost Him His blood to purchase the flock to be impressed with the seriousness of my responsibility. And also I am constantly alerted to the fact that my job is to feed the flock, not entertain the flock, but feed the flock.

Now flock appears four times in the New Testament. Twice here in this passage and then in Luke 12:32 and Acts 20:28 and 29. The Greek word is a diminutive. The Greek word means little flock or precious flock. It's kind of a term of endearment. It would be like saying...feed my precious flock, my

precious little flock...as if God is emphasizing their helplessness, their frailty, their smallness. And we know that the gate is narrow and few there be that find it, it is a little flock.

Notice he says feed that little flock of God among you. God only has one flock. And some of it is among you. It is apportioned out among the shepherds. Each shepherd has his part of the little flock. Look at verse 3, you see the phrase "those alloted to your charge," every elder has a portion of God's flock alloted to his charge. Each shepherd has his little flock. Now if you are an elder, pastor, shepherd and you can't even identify your flock, you're in trouble because your calling is to feed the part of God's flock among you, verse 3 says, alloted to your charge. That's why it is so very important that every elder, every pastor, every shepherd know precisely who he has responsibility for. We are called to feed and lead and care for a portion of the flock God has alloted to us. We do it together. It is clear who our flock is.

You know, there are a lot of activities that pastors can get involved in. And I'll tell you, one of the ploys of the devil is to get you doing everything but shepherding the flock. But only one is mandated by God and that is to shepherd the flock...teaching, protecting, warning, loving, guiding. And the part of the flock among you. This is my responsibility. This is the responsibility of the shepherds of this church. And the shepherds of this church even have responsibility for special groups within this church. We must all know who it is that we are to shepherd.

So, what are we to do? We're to shepherd. Who are we to shepherd? The flock of God among us, alloted to our charge. But the question that really we need to address in this passage is how are we to shepherd...how are we to do this? That's the third question, how, verse 2 and 3, "Shepherd the flock of God among you...here's how...exercising oversight." That's simple, exercising oversight. That's the positive. Let's talk about that for a moment.

What does that mean? Well, two Greek words, well the word actually in the verb form episkopeo from which we get episcopal. The Greek word skopeo is the word from which we get scope. When you get on top of something you can see the scope of it. Epi means upon, so it means to get yourself in a position where you're on top of the scope of this thing. That's just the idea of the word, to have scope over. The noun form is used five times of the overseer, sometimes translated bishop. The verb form is used here and it means to take charge of for the primary purpose of feeding, always. Take charge of them for the primary purpose of feeding. That's the first positive note.

The second positive note comes at the end of verse 3, "Proving to be examples to the flock...proving to be examples to the flock." So that's a very interesting combination. On the one hand we're to get the scope over the whole thing which is sort of getting up on top and seeing the big picture. On the other hand, we are to get so into the flock and be so involved in their lives that we become a pattern they can follow. So it is not just leadership from on high, it is leadership from within. That's the balance. And I've often said the single truest quality of spiritual leadership is the power of an

exemplary life. There are a lot of people who get on top and get the big picture and get the scope of it who don't get down within and live the exemplary life.

The shepherd had both tasks. And a shepherd would very often find a high place in the pasture area and he would get up on a rock. Why? To get the scope. He could see what was coming. He could see invading beasts. He could see a sheep wandering away. But before that day was over he would be off that rock and down in the middle of those sheep and he would find the ones that had become infected or the ones that were sick or the ones that had caught some kind of thorn in their face or their foot, the ones who weren't eating well, the ones who were about to give birth and needed special care or even picking up the little lamb who had been born in the pasture that day. It takes both. You have to have the big picture, you have to be involved, that's the balance.

So, Peter says how, the big picture and living among your sheep as an example, that's the positive. What's the negative? How not to shepherd...back to verse 2, "Not under compulsion but voluntarily, according to the will of God." Here Peter gets specifics about some perils of shepherding. Now let me give these to you very quickly. There are some perils in shepherding. Listen carefully. The first peril in shepherding is to begin to do it because you have to do it not because you want to do it.

You say, "Well isn't it always something you want to do?" Most of the time, not always. Sheep can be very stubborn and wayward and unappreciative. And sometimes you struggle. Peter says, "Look, get the big picture, take care of it, get inside and set the example and we all know you don't herd sheep from the rear, right? You lead them from the front and they follow. Be their example. But don't ever do it under compulsion, do it voluntarily because you know it's the will of God.

You say, "What do you mean? Aren't we under compulsion? Didn't Paul say in 1 Corinthians 9:16, Woe is me if I preach not the gospel? Didn't he say the love of Christ compels me, 2 Corinthians 5? Wasn't he under compulsion?" Yes, divine compulsion. Divine calling. Divine compulsion. The moving of the Spirit of God. But what Peter means is we should find the divine compulsion sufficient and not have to be forced to do our work.

Let me tell you something. The ministry is a great place to collect lazy dilatory people. I mean, if you want to do absolutely nothing, you can find some nitch and call it ministry and do nothing. And if you need someone to push you all the time and you're not motivated by the compulsion of the Spirit of God and the call on your life and the urgency of the task and the condition of the church and the needs of the world, if you've got to have more than that to motivate you, you've got a problem...you really do. Peter says, don't you ever get into a situation where somebody's got to come along and push you, where you've got to be forced to do your work of shepherding. Don't you be compelled by pride and don't you be compelled by money or the fear of failure or the pressure of man, or some professional duty, or wanting to achieve esteem in the eyes of people. Don't be in a situation where those around you have to push you to make you perform.

And I'll tell you, you can be very lazy as a pastor, very lazy as an elder and that's sad. And there are a lot of people in the ministry like that. I tell you, there are a lot of people in the ministry who look busy and aren't doing a thing. They're running around from meeting to meeting to meeting and thing to thing to thing and nothing is happening. And they pop on Sunday and give a few sermonettes for Christianettes that they got out of a book somewhere on Saturday and that's it. Peter says you better work voluntarily which means willingly and spontaneously. If there wasn't anybody there to motivate you except the Spirit of God you ought to be so stimulated and so motivated by the call of God, the command of God and the Godgiven task.

Romans 1:15, Paul says, "For my part I am eager to preach." I love that. Nobody had to compel him. Nobody had to come along and say, "Paul, you're really loafing. You're wasting time. What are you doing?" No. Highly motivated. And that's as it should be. Titus 2:14 says that the Lord gave His life for us, this is so good, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify Himself...listen to this...a people for His own possession, zealous for good works. Now how in the world are we going to teach the sheep to be zealous for good works if we're not zealous? People are always telling me to slow down, I always chuckle about that. I guess I don't think I'm going that fast.

Philemon comes to mind and verse...is it 14? Paul says, "Without your consent I didn't want to do anything that your goodness should not be, as it were, by compulsion but by your own free will." He says to Philemon, I don't want to compel you to do what's good, I want to see you do it on your own with regard to this runaway slave, Onesimus. Listen, the ministry is no place for people who have to be pushed to perform. If you're going to shepherd the sheep, you better do it under divine compulsion, not under the compulsion of men. And you do it voluntarily and you do it spontaneously because you know it's the will of God, that's what he says.

Second negative and this is also a very very great temptation to those in ministry, he says, "And not for sorted gain but with eagerness." The first thing that very often trips up men in the ministry is laziness. I tell you, that is a common problem. The second thing that trips up men in the ministry is that they do what they do for money. Sad. He said don't do it for sorted gain. That must never be a motive, never. It's right to pay the shepherd, 1 Corinthians 9:7 to 14 Paul says those, you know, who minister the Word have a right to live by that ministry. First Timothy 5:17 and 18 he says those who preach the Word and teach the Word and lead the sheep and labor in the Word and doctrine are worthy of double pay. The servant is worthy of his hire. But that's never the motive. You don't ever put a price on your ministry. In all the years of my ministry no matter where it was that I minister, people say, "How much do you charge?" And I would never say anything, I'd never want to get in a position where I begin to price myself. I say, "I don't charge anything." It has to be that way. You never want to be motivated by personal financial gain.

First Timothy 3, qualification for an elder, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money. Second Timothy 2 verse 4, no soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of every day life. The one really devoted to serving the Lord is not concerned with the stuff going on in the world. He's not in it for the material benefit. Titus 1:7, again the overseer must not be fond of sorted gain.

Now what do we mean sorted gain? Well it's not just money, it's shameful gain. Now listen, it not only means that you're not to serve for money, but you're not to accumulate money in a shameful way making the ministry not only financially profitable but stealing, shameful gain. That's what he's after. You see, the minister should not be motivated by money, nor should he steal. Let me tell you, it's a tragic thing to realize but we just see one scandal after another, don't we?, of people who have shamefully stolen money out of ministries. There's a lot more than we've ever seen, believe me. You see, that's characteristic of the spiritual phonies. That's characteristic of the false prophets and the false teachers, the false leaders, the charlatans, the frauds who masquerade as if they were the servants of God.

Isaiah 56:11 says this, "And the dogs are greedy, they are not satisfied and they are shepherds who have no understanding, they have all turned to their own way, each one to his unjust gain." The false shepherds are always after the money. And they don't just want what they're paid, they will steal form the till, embezzling, as it were, the church.

Jeremiah 6:13, "From the least of them to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for gain." From the prophet to the priest, boy how sad, when religious leaders get greedy for gain and they steal. It says the same thing in chapter 8 verse 10 of Jeremiah. It's really all over the Scripture. I was thinking of some of the minor prophets in just kind of bringing this point to a conclusion. You can read Micah 3:11, Malachi 1:10, you'll see the same thing. You come into the book of Acts chapter 20 verses 33 and 34, remember what Paul says, we coveted no man's silver, no man's gold and no man's clothing, we didn't go after that at all. We didn't want that, that wasn't our purpose. Paul did absolutely nothing for gain and never pursued sorted gain. In fact, he says to the Corinthians, I love this, he said, "I would most gladly spend and be expended for your souls, even though you love me less for doing it...I'd give away everything I have to reach you, to touch you."

So, Peter says not for sorted gain...like the phonies, the fakes, the charlatans. In his second epistle, 2 Peter 2:3 he describes false prophets as greedy people who exploit you with false words. He says that has no place in the true shepherd's life but rather with eagerness. What does that mean? Just exhilarating joy to be given the privilege of service, blessed with the privilege then one third prohibition. Verse 3, "Nor yet as lording it over those alloted to your charge." Here's a third temptation in the ministry, to be a dominating individual, demagoguery. The word "lording" is a strong word. It takes the word kurios which means Lord, adds kata to it which means down and it intensifies it, it means literally to dominate someone or to completely domineer a situation. It is an autocratical

pressive(?) kind of leadership, leadership by intimidation. He says don't do that, those are the power hungry.

You have these three potential problems for shepherds. One, they grow lazy because there is such freedom in the ministry to control their time and effort. Two, the temptation to move whatever they need to move to gain money. And you know as well as I do that in the early church and from then on the elders and leaders of the church controlled the money. There's always the temptation to illgotten gain and there's always the temptation to power...to dominance, to authority. He says then, don't lord it over those alloted to your charge. And that little phrase again, alloted to your charge, addresses the idea of each shepherd having a sphere of duty alloted to him. The word means something assigned by portion. Whatever that group assigned by portion to you, don't you dominate them in some kind of power struggle, you remember like the Gentiles and it says in Matthew 20 that they dominate, they control you, Matthew 20:25 and 26, dominating you.

There's a place for authority but it's a gentle authority. There's no place for petty tyrants. There's no place for money hungry greedy people. There's no place for the lazy and indolent. So how to shepherd? By spiritual leadership, getting the big picture, by example as you move among the flock and they follow the way you live. Negatively, a life of service free from the need for compulsion, free from greed and illgotten gain and free from abusive domination.

Final question...why? Why? Why should we serve like this? He says in verse 4, "And when the Chief Shepherd appears you will receive the unfading crown of glory."

Why? I'll tell you why, because some day we have to stand before whom? The Chief Shepherd...that's why...that's why. Now we're back to Hebrews 13:17, we have to give an account. This, by the way, to my judgment is one of the most beautiful titles of the Savior, the Chief Shepherd, I love that. Even the Old Testament records that God called Christ "My Shepherd," Isaiah 40 verse 11, Zechariah 13 verse 7. Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd. In John chapter 10 verses 2, 11, 12, 16 He's called the Good Shepherd. In Hebrews 13:20 and 21 He's called the Great Shepherd. Here He's called the Chief Shepherd. He is the Chief Shepherd, He is the Great Shepherd, He is the Good Shepherd.

By the way, you remember back in 1 Peter 2:25 He is called the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls. He's really the shepherd over all other shepherds. And we have to give our account to Him. He is the one to whom I must answer. And I always have to be motivated by the fact that when He appears I will receive the unfading crown of glory. It's not negative, it's positive. Appear means when He is manifest...when He is revealed...that's at His Second Coming. At that time you will receive the unfading crown literally which is eternal glory. It's not the unfading crown which is some crown, it's the unfading crown which is eternal glory. All temporal crowns rust and fade and die, but this is the crown which is eternal glory. Crowns in that day were the mark of victorious achievement. Instead of giving

trophies they gave crowns. And this crown is the eternal glory that never fades. By the way, that term "never fades" in the Greek language is the name of a flower, a flower called an amaranth and they said the amaranth was the flower that never faded. They borrowed that word to use it here. The idea is eternal.

Why are we to serve? Because some day if we serve faithfully we will receive that eternal crown which is eternal glory. The implication would be that we would want that reward to be all that it ought to be for the glory of our Savior. This was very important to Peter, by the way, very important. Chapter 1 verse 4 he talked about our eternal imperishable undefiled inheritance that will not fade away, reserved in heaven for us. In chapter 4 verse 13 he talked about the rejoicing at the revelation of His glory. Peter was looking for the Second Coming, so should we, realizing at that time faithful shepherds will receive from the Chief Shepherd the unfading crown which is eternal glory. And listen, that eternal glory and its full expression will be in relationship to our faithful service here.

What are we to do? We're to shepherd. Who are we to shepherd? The flock of God among us, the ones alloted to our care. How are we to shepherd? We're to lead them, we're to feed them, set the example for them. Why are we to shepherd? Because God has promised in Christ an eternal reward which we will enjoy forever and ever. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we are so enriched again to be reminded of these truths. Make us ever faithful as shepherds, faithful to the Chief Shepherd. We pray, too, Father, that You might bless the sheep as faithful shepherds lead them to green pastures that they might feed and be satisfied and even become like their shepherds who are becoming like the Chief Shepherd, in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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