

Lesson 23 – Shepherding the Flock

1 Peter 5:1-4, **“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”**

One of my favorite activities to do is to sit on my deck at 7:00am, sipping on a cup of coffee, watching “my birds” rush and push each other out of the way to grab the morning seeds that I’ve poured out for them. I love listening to their calls, I love to watch them splash in the birdbath, and I love to watch them scurry back and forth from one place to the other. An insult that people give to one another is to call them a “bird brain”, which I believe is a misplaced insult misleading people to conclude that birds are dumb. I have personally owned many birds in my life, in fact, in my teen years I bred parrots for a number of years. I find birds to be fascinating, they remind me of the creative ability of our Creator every time I see them. One God-given ability that birds have that I find fascinating is their ability to navigate. I remember a story I read about concerning a European Honey Buzzard. If you’re not sure what kind of bird that is, think of an Eagle to put a similar bird in your mind. This particular bird was fitted with a satellite tracking system in Finland, and it was tracked over its migration all the way to a town in South Africa and back again. While tracking its flight back to Finland, in a span of 42 days, this bird flew over 10,000 kilometres at an average of 230 kilometres every day. What I found the most incredible was how this bird flew north in a straight line, with the only exception being when it meant flying over water. It made a right turn in South Sudan (for no reason except God’s design) and turned to the northeast between Ethiopia and Sudan towards the Nile and then followed the water around Israel, Syria, and across Turkey until it reached the exact longitudinal line it was following across the African continent, all the way home to Finland. That is an amazing story of God’s creative design in a brain of a bird. Birds are magnificent creatures.

And then there are sheep. If you spin a sheep in a circle three times, it’s lost. I said that to be funny, but it’s not far from the truth. Sheep are essentially like Erin driving anywhere but in Amherstburg, completely lost. I said that to be funny also, but it’s not far from the truth. It’s very easy for a sheep to become disoriented and lose any ability to decipher where it’s at. By God’s design, He made sheep that way, and we can learn a lot about ourselves from them. Jesus spoke about the lostness of sheep in His parable in Luke 15:3-7, **“So he told them this parable: “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”** These sheep need a shepherd to be watching over them to protect them from the danger of themselves in wandering away, and so do we.

Our likeness to sheep unfortunately doesn’t stop at our proneness to wander. Sheep also spend most of their time eating and drinking, much like...well, anyways. If the sheep wander away, they’ll be essentially helpless to find the food and water that they need to survive. Because sheep are unwise, they’ll eat and drink just about anything, and so they require the shepherds care over them to insure that what their

eating won't make them sick or kill them. This is the shepherding David is talking about in Psalm 23:1-2, **"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters."**

Our proneness to wander, as well as our tendency to over-consume certain things while under-consuming other isn't the only parallel we can draw between humans and sheep, there is our frequent necessity to be cleaned. The wool that sheep have secretes a large volume of oily lanolin that permeates their fleece, so pretty much everything that surrounds them gets tangled up in their wool. The sheep have no ability to reverse this dirtiness, they are at the full mercy of their shepherd to restore them to what they once were. This dependant cleaning they require goes much further than getting that fresh out of the shower feeling, this cleaning is the difference between life and death for them. As sheep produce waste daily, the wool in that region becomes quite sticky and contaminated. If the shepherd were not to frequently clean them, it would lead to serious health problems and eventual death for the sheep. I hope that you were able to draw the parallel here, as we require our Lord Jesus to clean us from the dirtiness of our sins. Without our Good Shepherd Jesus, we would have no ability to clean the filth of sin that tangles itself into the wool of our lives, in which we have no ability to clean ourselves.

But wait, there's more! Sheep are also defenseless against pretty much everything else. When any predator arrives, the only defense mechanism that a sheep has is to run away. Therefore, the only way to protect the sheep is to place someone over the sheep who has both the ability to overtake any would-be predator, and also has a tender-heart to care for and nurture the sheep, enter the shepherd Jesus Christ. We are incapable of wrestling with the spiritual forces of evil in this world, they are no match for our feeble attempts. Not only are we incapable of doing battle with our spiritual adversaries, the only thing that we're encouraged to do in battle with them is resist, a thought that we will unpack in our next (and final) lesson. We have a Shepherd who is present with us, and He is able to protect and defend us.

If you're familiar with the historical account of Jesus feeding the five thousand in Mark 6, then you'll remember that Jesus arrived on the scene by boat where a large crowd had gathered from many places to see Him. How Jesus perceived these people is fitting for this lesson, Mark 6:34, **"When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things."** To flesh that thought out then, Jesus had compassion on the people who were lost, confused, unclean, and vulnerable to attack. They needed a shepherd, and the Great Shepherd was in front of them.

What is critically important for us reading this lesson today, is to ask if we not only agree with this assessment of the life of sheep, but do we agree that we are also 'sheep'? Do we agree with the prophet Isaiah who wrote in Isaiah 53:6, **"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way."** Do you agree with the prophet's universal assessment that every single person is like that sheep that is lost and entangled in the sins of their own waywardness? We will address verse 2 in greater detail in a few minutes (pages), but Peter is in agreement that the congregation of believers in Jesus Christ is the flock of God, and the pastors over that flock are considered to be the shepherds of the flock. Certainly, this side of Heaven, even our shepherds are under the same curse of sin, even our shepherds require the Good Shepherd to shepherd them. But there is a high calling on the lives of pastors to be self-controlled and responsible to lead a life before us of careful obedience to Christ. Are pastors just a different breed of people that we can admire but categorize as 'radicals' for their obedience? Not at all. Our pastors are servants of Christ who desire to see every single one of us like-

mannered sheep to grow up into spiritual maturity. Part of that spiritual maturity is to stay in your lane, recognizing that you are a sheep, in need of Christ. As believers, we need Christ, but we need a good pastor or two in our lives also, wouldn't you agree? As the pressures and trials and persecutions of life come upon us, we will of course pray to our Father in Heaven for comfort, strength and direction. But we also need the earthly shepherding of our pastors who will strategically feed a meal of carefully blended bible verses and passages that will nourish our souls in those moments of great need. God has chosen those men to minister to us in that great and specific ministry. As we dig into our text now from 1 Peter 5:1-4, let's be mindful of the blessing of the two pastors that our Lord has placed above us, and be praying for them even now as we consider their most important ministry.

Verses 1-2 (one word), **“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd.”** Chapter five opens with the word “so”, linking the suffering that those Christians were enduring with the coming exhortation to the elders. An important truth to remember is that the idea of certain members leading the flock of believers is God's prescribed way. The first New Testament mention of the word ‘elder’ is in Acts 11:30, **“And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.”** Beyond that point in the book of Acts, and spread across the rest of the NT, there are some helpful passages that teach us of the duties and qualifications of such men. 1 Timothy 5:17 says, **“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.”** Titus 1 5:9 gives the qualifications in great detail, **“This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”** While 1 Timothy 3 does repeat certain qualifications, it's helpful to freshly consider verses 1-7, **“The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.”**

These are the men that Peter is writing to, and he begins by exhorting them. To exhort someone is perhaps what you might see a coach doing to a player in a game, when he calls the player to the sideline, and he gets right into his ear, and imparts some wisdom to both correct and encourage him to enter back into the game repurposed to take the team to victory. This is the heart of Peter's letter to these elders, he wants to encourage them to lead the believers as they battle and feel the bumps and bruises of suffering, until the chief Shepherd appears and they receive their crown of glory.

It is significant that Peter writes to exhort the elders, noting that there were more than one. In fact, the word elder is never used singularly in the New Testament in reference to church leaders. Yes, John refers to himself as an elder, but when referring to eldership in the local church, that is always plural. In God's

perfect wisdom, He has raised up many within the church that may serve as elders. The plurality of elders helps to spread out the necessary care that godly leadership requires. More elders helps to nourish more people efficiently and ensures that a congregation grows as it should. More elders also helps the local church from falling into doctrinal error, as one man leading alone may draw wrong conclusions and lead the sheep into danger spiritually. It is always a blessing to have men in the church who are well-seasoned in the faith, who hold each other accountable to rightly dividing and applying the Word of God, both through formal teaching and personal application. Another advantage to having a plurality of elders is to keep continuity in the church. Suppose a church where there was only one leader in the church for 45 years, and then he passed away. The next leader would potentially be a great shock to the church when his biblical conclusions were different from his predecessor, which draws upon the wisdom from our last point.

There are many qualification and responsibilities that a shepherd has, as we discussed earlier, but the most important task of the shepherd is to ensure the health of the sheep by feeding them. To draw the analogy back to the Pastor, the Pastor's main objective is to apply the Word of God to bear upon the flock's life, whether that be through his sermons, or his mid-week lesson, or his office in private-counseling, or through the letters that he sends to the people. There are a multitude of ways and times in any given week that a shepherd will feed his sheep, not one sheep eats only one hour per week. The writer of the letter we're going through together was encouraged by the Lord Jesus Himself to feed His sheep. John 21:15-17, **"When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "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, "Tend my sheep." 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 everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."** This feeding is obviously the necessary intake of the Word of God. We learn from Paul's writing to Timothy that false shepherd's feed their sheep with those deceitful words that 'tickle their ears'. 2 Timothy 4:3-4, **"For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths."** People will always have an itch that they will ask the Pastor to scratch. It's not the Pastor's job to make the church comfortable in their sin by giving them a false hope of peace and security while they remain in opposition to God. The job of the Pastor is to impress the Word of God so clearly and often upon the people that they themselves are able to discern the Word. The people ought to become convicted by the Word, and ought to be seeking and saving the lost themselves, bringing conviction from the Word upon others. The maturity of the sheep is tied directly to the shepherd who has brought them up. Did I just say those who are eternally judged can blame the Pastor? Of course not. Every person will stand alone in that judgment. What I am saying is that no person who is matured in Christ can point to themselves as an island, it's never just "Me and God". We can all point to a number of people who have poured their hearts into our spiritual growth and health, and we should all thank the Lord regularly for our Pastors, and their ministry to us. It is right to honour them in that way.

So Peter exhorts the elders among those believers, and he does so from the vantage point of a fellow elder, one who also has this task of caring for the souls that have been placed under him. Then Peter says that he is a 'witness of the sufferings of Christ'. Of course Peter did witness Christ, being himself one

of the twelve that Christ chose to follow Him. The word 'witness' has a twofold meaning: one who personally saw and experienced something, and one who testified to what he saw. There was a large amount of people who personally saw and experienced the miracles, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So many of those people were martyred for their faith in Christ that being a witness for Christ became synonymous with giving up your life for Him. Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 16:24-25, **"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."** Peter was most definitely one of these followers who had lost his life for Christ and suffered much for Him. So his exhortation to the elders receiving this letter to shepherd the flock of God would have been well received considering the source that it came from.

Not only was Peter a fellow elder, and a fellow witness (sufferer himself) of the sufferings of Christ, he goes on to say that he was also a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed. As further motivation to lose their life in service to the Lord, Peter brings to their mind this partaking of future glory. There will be a day when the people of God will receive their reward for their faithful service. There will be a day (soon Lord Jesus) when Christ will return in His glory, destroying sin forever, rewarding His own, and establishing His reign forever. Peter had seen this glory of Jesus first hand, adding to the trustworthiness of the exhortation he was giving. Matthew 17:1-8, **"And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.' When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Rise, and have no fear.' And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only."** The motivation to those fellow elders that they would also one day partake of the glory that is going to be revealed ought to have been very powerful.

Verse 1 sets up the exhortation from Peter, now let's dig into the exhortation itself starting in verse 2, "shepherd the flock of God that is among you." This may perhaps seem to be splitting hairs, but it's important to note that the shepherds aren't shepherding their own flocks, but God's flock. This is an important detail to note because it speaks of ownership. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, **"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."** Remember that Jesus came to redeem us. In other words, Jesus came to buy us out of slavery to sin and into slavery to Himself. He owns us now because He bought us. All of our obedience to Him is therefore an act done out of love and gratitude in worship to the one who bought us. Even the way husbands treat their wives is a picture of the love that Christ has for us in preparing us to be His bride. Ephesians 5:25-30, **"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body."** Jesus considers the feeding of the flock to be very

important. He taught all throughout His ministry, so that He would bring the truths of the Word of God to bear upon the hearts of the people, so that they would repent of the sins and trust in Him to save them. When His earthly ministry was about to be cut off, and His death and resurrection was imminent, Jesus promised His followers that He would not leave them alone, but that He would leave them with the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit's work to convict and apply the truths of the Word of God, bringing them to life in the dead heart of sin. John 16:5-15, **"But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."** Not only did God send us His Holy Spirit, but He also provides us with gifted leaders to minister His word to us, in order to feed His flock and nurture our souls with His Word. Ephesians 4:11-16, **"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."** All of this is done for us out of Christ's love for us. He bought us, and then He provided us with all that is necessary for us. He is preparing us day by day for the moment that we will one day be glorified with Him and to be His bride.

The exhortation to the fellow shepherds then is to shepherd God's flock, but how? Peter tells us in our text in verses 2 and 3, **"Exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock."** Peter's answer of how to shepherd is given both positively and negatively. Positively, he tells them to exercise oversight. This exhortation I believe is quite clear, a shepherd must be present and active with the sheep in order to assess their condition. It's only by this keen observation that the shepherd can know when it is time to feed the sheep, or protect them from wolf in their midst, or even to lead them to the next place. The next example of shepherding with a positive connotation is the second half of verse 3, "being examples to the flock." The shepherd needs to live close to the flock, (not geographically as my Pastor's live a 40 minute drive from my house) but in closeness spiritually and emotionally. I can be fed to a degree by a good John MacArthur sermon in my car on the way to the office, but John MacArthur is not in my life. John MacArthur doesn't have a clue who I am! I know my Pastor's, and they know me. They feed me the Word of God each week, but they also show me how to live out a Tuesday afternoon because I watch them live. Paul took this role of spiritual father, of spiritual guide, and he called upon the people to imitate his life. 1 Corinthians 4:14-16, **"I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have**

countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me.”

Those are the two positive connotations of shepherding the flock that Peter gives, now let’s look at three negative connotations: not compulsory, nor for gain, and not domineering. Let’s take each one in turn. The first as just mentioned in the middle of verse 2, “not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you.” The first point to consider is that the shepherd is not bound by any law to become a shepherd in the first place. The desire to shepherd is stirred up by God in the heart of an individual, and it is confirmed in the hearts of the sheep as they submit to his leadership. There ought to be a spirit of hard work and sacrifice from a shepherd, a spirit of coerced effort from a lazy heart will make a bad shepherd. When a shepherd’s heart is properly motivated, he will shepherd the flock through the thickest and darkest of times because his aim is to lead them to Christ at all costs. Paul spoke about this in 1 Corinthians 9:16-23, **“For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.”**

The zeal to shepherd that Peter is exhorting these fellow shepherds to have, is “as God would have you”. This leadership is according to the will of God. We don’t write our stories, if we did, our lives would likely look much different, and it wouldn’t be for the better. God ordains all sorts of trials to come into our lives to make us more like Jesus, and God has sovereignly placed our leaders into our lives to walk through them with us. Knowing that our shepherds are willingly suffering with us, how can we not glorify God in our submission to their leadership? Hebrews 13:17, **“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”**

The second negative connotation is for shepherds to avoid shepherding for the allurements of money or other material gain. Paul said in Acts 20:33-35, **“I coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”** It almost sounds like it doesn’t need to be said, but a Pastor shouldn’t be materialistic. We see the world around us chasing ‘things’ to satisfy their souls, sheep need a shepherd to exemplify that we find our satisfaction in Christ. Did I just say that Pastors need to live in broken-down shacks and drive rust buckets? Of course not. Quite the opposite of teaching that our Pastors ought to give us an example by living in poverty, I think it’s our responsibility as sheep to ensure that they are properly taken care of financially. The reason that I think that is because the Word of God tells us in 1 Corinthians 9:7-14, **“Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk? Do I say these things on human authority? Does not**

the Law say the same? For it is written in the Law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.” Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, **the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.**” Not only do I believe that our Pastor’s should be compensated well, I think they we should give to them abundantly.

Because certain shepherds do have rather large salaries, there can be stirred up in the heart of a man desiring the ministry to experience that wealth and power. Peter warns against this man who is in ministry exercising shameful gain. A shepherd ought to never use their pulpit, or their influence in the community, to trick the sheep into giving more of their money for their personal gain. Many these days have helped to create poverty in God’s people, lining their own pockets, all in the name of gaining a special blessing for God. In 2 Peter 2:1-3, noting verse 3, he says, **“But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.”** A good shepherd will serve at their own cost, not at the cost of the sheep. The good shepherd will lay down his life for the sheep, he won’t ask the sheep to lay down their lives for him. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:15, **“I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls.”** Money ought to never be a personal motivation for anyone, especially the Pastor who is setting the example with their life. Peter says in verse 2 that the heart’s motivation of a Pastor ought to be to serve the Lord’s flock eagerly.

The final negative connotation of a Shepherd’s service is that they be “not domineering over those in [their] charge.” A shepherd is required to be a man of strength, he must be called to protect the flock from times of danger. He must be courageous in those moments, willing to put himself between the flock and the attacker. He also must be firm in his mind, walking in wisdom and strength as he takes the flock precisely where they need to go to remain both safe, and also nourished and clean. But a shepherd must also be gentle, and caring. There must be a tenderness that cares deeply for the well-being of each individual sheep. All of these traits (and more) must be present in the heart of a Pastor. While the Pastor is surely an authority figure in the church, and must operate as such and be respected as such, he must balance his necessity to be strong with his necessity to be gentle. A shepherd who acts like a ruthless CEO of a company is a shepherd who is dishonouring God. Jesus set the example of servant leadership for us in Matthew 20:25-28, **“But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”** We should also note that Peter says to these shepherds that they are not to domineer over “those in your charge”. In other words, God gave this particular flock of

His to you, they aren't yours, you've been charged to look over them for a season. Let's read Matthew 18:5-14.

Let's close this lesson now by looking at 1 Peter 5:4, "**And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.**" Building upon the truth that shepherds are placed into their temporal ministries over Christ's sheep, Peter calls Jesus the Chief Shepherd in verse 4. We have read Shepherd imagery about Christ since the OT, He's called the Good Shepherd in various places, He's called the Great Shepherd in the book of Hebrews, and Peter has already called Him the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls earlier in 2:25.

Here Peter reminds the shepherds that the Chief Shepherd is coming back, and when He does, they will receive the unfading crown of glory for their service. We win elaborate trophies and medals these days for athletic victories, they won crowns in those days. But this crown won't be made of some earthly material that will eventually rust, or fade, or break, or wilt, this crown will last forever. The reward of eternal glory ought to be all the reason any shepherd needs to serve faithfully. Shepherding the flock is a serious responsibility, and those men will be held to a high accountability for their work. James taught us this James 3:1, "**Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.**" That wasn't his effort to turn away men who ought to be in the ministry, but he was careful to remind them of the high standard of God for the office. It's a tough job to be Pastor, but it is most certainly a rewarding one, both in this life and next. Let us be careful to love our Pastors and honour them as they are worthy. Let's be mindful to pray for them (and their families) daily, and let us be a sheep to them that brings them joy in their labour. Let us serve the Lord alongside of our shepherds, seeking the lost, and making and maturing disciples for Christ, all for the glory and the fame of His name. Amen!