Shepherding in Suffering

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[0:00] 1 Peter chapter 5. We'll be starting in verse 1 and reading through verse 5.

1 Peter chapter 5 verse 1. 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 a shameful gain, but eagerly.
Not dominioning 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.
Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another. For God opposes the proud, but give grace to the humble.
[1:10] Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. In 1911, there were two separate groups of people that embarked on what, at that point, was an incredible mission.

And that was to reach the South Pole for the first time. And there were two groups that I mentioned. The first group was led by the Norwegian explorer, Roald Amundsen.
And that group was spectacularly successful, mainly due to the leadership of the Norwegian explorer. And he had planned meticulously for the trip.
So he researched the habits of Eskimos and learned that they use dogs for pulling the sleds in the cold climate.
Because the dogs don't have sweat glands and they're very resilient in the cold. So they used dogs to, and so using, looking at that idea, he said, okay, we're going to have sleds that are going to be pulled by dogs.
[2:29] And we're going to have these foods and supplies deployed at appropriate junctures throughout the journey so that they don't have to carry everything themselves. And so all of that, you know, went flawlessly.

And the biggest problem that they ran into was one man who had an infected tooth and had to have his tooth extracted. That was the biggest problem they had on their trip. The second group was led by Robert Scott, a British naval officer.
They, however, was an example in contrast. Instead of using sleds that are pulled by dogs, they decided they were going to use mortared sleds.
And then they were going to have ponies pull the sleds instead, help the motors, get the motors some rest and have the ponies pull. Ponies don't do very well in the cold. So all of them ended up dying, having to be, the rest of them having to be killed.
And the mortars also don't do very well in the cold. So they stopped working five days into the trip. In addition to that, they didn't have good equipment. So a lot of people got frostbites.
[3:32] And people started, you know, having gangrenous feet. They can't, it took hours to just put the shoes on and things like that. So a lot of things were going wrong. And finally, this group also made it to the South Pole.

But month, over a month after, this first group got there. And the people, five people that got there didn't even make it back. They all died on their way back. Because, and we only know about them because they left, they were writing in their diaries in their final hours.
So this study, in contrast, shows the importance of leadership, especially when the journey is perilous. Because the more perilous the journey, good leadership is essential. And that's exactly why, after talking last week, Peter telling us that we are now in the judgment of God.
God's people are being, in the, experiencing the judgment of God. Being separated from unbelievers by means of the persecution and suffering that they endure at the hands of unbelievers. And for this reason, it's going to be difficult for Christians to make it to the end of their journey.

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It's going to be difficult for Christians to persevere to the end. It's with difficulty, it says, scarcely believers will be saved, it said in that passage in 1 Peter. But that's why Peter continues with so, in verse 1 here.
[4:46] In order to ensure that the church perseveres to the end, Peter's giving here specific instructions on the way the church is going to get there.

How the church is going to persevere. And the relationship between the elders and the church members is an essential part of that. Namely, I think he teaches us this, that the elders humbly shepherd and the people humbly follow the members together under the lordship of Christ.
I think that's what he's trying to teach us. And I'm going to first highlight the role of the shepherds and then the role of the sheep and then the chief shepherd. So that's the outline that I'm going to follow as I preach to you from this passage.
So 1 Peter addresses the shepherds. Turn with me to verses 1 to 2. So in the context of suffering, the shepherds have an even more imperative charge to shepherd God's people, the elders.
So verses 1 to 2, it begins with the exhortation to elders. And you see here the three terms that are used generally to refer to the leaders of the church. First, it says elders, right?
[6:01] And then second, it tells the elders to shepherd the flock of God. So that's another word for pastor, a shepherd, pastor. And then third, it says exercise oversight, right, in verse 2. And oversight is the word that sometimes gets translated as bishop, right?

So you see here pastor, bishop, elder, right? The three terms. And they're used interchangeably throughout the New Testament. So you see that, for example, in Acts 20, 28, where Paul says, Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit made you overseers. Now he's talking to the elders to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. So we see here and in 1 Peter, our passage, that the elders are the pastors, the shepherds, and they are the bishops.
And that's why in our church and in our denomination, we don't have separate offices of pastors and then elders and then bishops like some churches and denominations do. We believe that they're all interchangeable titles that highlight different aspects of a single office, of the same office. There is significant conceptual overlap because it's all referring to the same office. But the term elder specifically highlights mature and wise teaching, right?
[7:10] So if you look at the history of the Jews as God's people, they had men who were heads of households that gathered at the gates of the city and made decisions and leadership decisions for the community, right?

And the church, when it came up in the New Testament, took over this pattern. And so that they also had elders who were mature and to become leaders of the church.
Now, it's very easy to confuse this to think that, oh, maybe then elders are just older people in the church, right? Because the word can also mean that. But I don't think that that's what Peter is intending to say to us here for several reasons.
And first is if it's simply a matter of how old the people are, right, then it immediately raises the question of how old do you have to be, right? And Peter doesn't anywhere answer that question, nor does anybody else in the Bible, right?
If that were indeed the case, if being elder just means being older, they should tell you how old they're supposed to be. But they don't. They don't deal with that. And the second issue is that the apostles tell people to appoint elders.
[8:17] So Paul tells Titus in chapter 1, verse 5, to appoint elders in every town. And then if you're supposed to appoint elders, I mean, if you become an elder simply by virtue of being old, then you don't need to appoint them because they're already elders.

They're already old, right? So it's the fact that you need to be appointed points to a specific office. It's a recognized official office, right? And then lastly, Paul and others give qualifications for elders, right?
Once again, if being an elder means being an older person in the church, then there doesn't need to be qualifications, right? Age itself is the sole qualification, right? So all of these, I think, point to the fact that Peter is here referring to people who were generally older in age, but those who more specifically were mature and wise in their faith.
And because of that, were recognized and appointed to serve in the church as leaders. So those are the elders. And I grew up in a Korean church, and my dad is also a pastor of a Korean church.

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So I kind of saw some of the abuses of this. And the reason why is this is because when Christianity first went into Korea, they didn't contextualize this idea of elders very well.
[9:29] So instead of following the biblical qualifications for elders, they simply followed their confusion practice of just respecting elders and letting them make decisions and rule the community.

So simply by being older, they became elders of the church. And because of that, a lot of Korean churches, you find a lot of posturing and bickering, power grabbing, because not all the elders are actually mature and wise believers, right?
And so that's the importance of this. And this is not to deny that, generally speaking, maturity comes with age. It does, right? Generally speaking. But the truth is there are foolish old people as there are wise young people.
And that's why I think God gives qualifications and tells people and appoints elders in this way. So it's notable, I think, in verse 1 that Peter identifies himself also as a fellow elder, right?
If you look at verse 1 again. 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. Now this is significant, especially if you think about the history of the church and some people who teach that Peter is the first, really, leader of the whole church and that there was a succession of apostolic succession where there's one, supposed to be one leader over the whole church.
[10:44] Now if that's the case, then Peter certainly doesn't give any clue or hint of that in this passage. Rather than emphasizing his superiority or his special place in the household of God, he emphasized rather the shared responsibility.

He says, I'm a fellow elder, right? In fact, in the Greek itself, the two nouns, the elder and the witness, are governed by the same article and they're joined by a conjunction that really puts the idea of fellow to govern not just the elder but also the witness.
So he's saying, I'm a fellow elder, I'm a fellow witness along with you, and I'm a partaker along with you in the glory that is going to be revealed, right? So Peter's highlighting, no, we're in this together. I'm an elder with you. I'm serving with you. I'm a believer along with you and I'm going to partake in the glory that will be revealed when Christ returns. So he's not speaking from a place of superior authority, but rather from shared authority, responsibility that they share.
And that highlights another important aspect of eldership, right? And that's that elders, when used in the Bible to refer to the office in the church, it always appears in the plural, right? There's always more than one elder.
[11:51] And that's for the sake of accountability and mutuality and partnership. And that's why in our church as well, we're working hard toward plurality of elders. So, in fact, I'm the only ordained elder at this point, pastor at this point.

But Taron, I believe, in the next week or two is going to be ordained by Hope Fellowship Church, which is the church in North Cambridge that's sending him and his family out to join us. And we also have other gifted men like Steve and Matt Hawkins who feel that God has called them to pastoral ministry and are working toward being ordained, right?
And so we're working toward that as a church. And so in verse 2, Peter tells these elders of the church to shepherd the flock of God that is among you.
So now that's the second term. So the elder refers to mature and wise teaching. And secondly, the elders are supposed to shepherd, right? They're supposed to be shepherds or pastors. And shepherding, the idea of pastoring the flock, highlights specifically provision, provident care, and protection, right?
So you provide for and you probably care for and you protect the sheep, right? So to put it another way, the shepherds are supposed to graze the flock. They feed the flock with God's word.
[13:08] They're supposed to guide the sheep, especially if they bring the lost stray sheep back and they guide the ones that are in the flock, herd them in the right direction. They also guard the sheep from predators, from those who would seek to attack and harm the flock, right?

And it's not surprising that Peter himself is drawn to this metaphor of a shepherd because after he betrayed Christ, after he denied Christ three times at his crucifixion, later when Christ rises from the dead and comes to Peter to reinstate him, he uses the metaphor of the shepherd.
He tells him to feed his lambs, tend his sheep, and feed his sheep. So I'm sure this was a very poignant metaphor for him. So he turns to this metaphor. There was a Scottish theologian named

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George Adam Smith who traveled to what was then Palestine in the 19th century.
And he published a book called The Atlas of the Historical Geography of the Holy Land, which is still used to this day in some places as a standard reference book. And in it he writes about the shepherd because it's such a prominent image throughout the Bible and throughout the history of Palestine and Israel.
And this is what he says. On some high moor, across which at night the hyannis howl, when you meet him, sleepless, farsighted, weather-beaten, leaning on his staff and looking out over his scattered sheep, every one of them on his heart, you understand why the shepherd of Judea sprang to the front in his people's history, why they gave his name to their king and made him the symbol of providence, why Christ took him as a type of self-sacrifice.
[14:45] That's what this image of a shepherd conveys. The elder, the mature and wise citizen, the shepherd provides for, privately cares for and protects the sheep even at the cost of his own life. That's what it means to shepherd.

And the third, the term overseer, that's the term that comes, exercising oversight, highlights leadership and authority of the elders. They're supposed to have authority over the church, have oversight and responsibility ultimately for the church.
And Peter gives three specific directions in verses 2 to 3 about how exactly the elders have to exercise oversight. He says, first, not under compulsion, but willingly as God would have you.
See, the elders are, the reason why they might sometimes be served under compulsion is because they're not volunteers necessarily. They're called and they're appointed, right? So not everybody that just says, I want to be a pastor can become a pastor because the church has to affirm them and ordain them and recognize their call.
And because of that, sometimes there are pastors who might serve reluctantly or under compulsion. But he says, no, don't serve under compulsion, but willingly as God would have you.
[15:54] And it doesn't mean that, the fact that they serve willingly doesn't mean that they serve according to their will, but they're supposed to serve according to God's will. Because it says, as God would have you. They exercise authority as those who themselves are also under authority.

They have oversight in the church only insofar as they are servants of God himself, right? That's what it means to have oversight. That's the first thing. And the second, Peter qualifies what it's supposed to look like for elders to exercise oversight.
Not for shameful gain, but eagerly. So the church started compensating their elders really early on. You see this even in the Bible itself. 1 Timothy 5, 17 to 18 says, let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.
For the scripture says, you shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain, and the laborer deserves his wages, right? So already there's practice of compensating the elders through the money the people gave and pulled in together.
And consequently, there were some people who abused that privilege, right? Some elders who abused that privilege used the gospel for shameful gain, right? And that's why in chapter 2, verse 3 of his second epistle, Peter, he warns about those who in their greed exploit you with false words, right?
[17:10] Paul also warns of people who, in 1 Timothy 6, those who imagine that godliness is a means of gain, right? And then he stipulates in the qualifications for elders that an elder must not be a lover of money.

And this might, you might not have experienced this yourself personally, but this happens in a lot of churches. And God forbid that it happens in our church. But be wary of pastors who enrich themselves through the ministry, right?
Because there are pastors who preach from their pulpits week in and week out that the gospel promises, not hope in the midst of suffering, in the midst of hardship, but that the gospel promises health, wealth, and prosperity, right?
And they twist verses like 2 Corinthians 8, 9, which says, For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.
They twist that to mean that, oh, Christ died so that you could be rich. When Christ, when the verse is not talking about that at all, but rather talking about being sacrificially generous as Christ was toward us, right?

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[18:13] Even if that means hurting our own financial prospects. And they twist verses like Mark 10, 29 to 30, where Christ promises to his disciples who leave their family and household and wealth to serve him and follow him, that God promises even greater riches and more family.

And here again, Christ is referring to the spiritual family and the abundance that God promises us, but rather these bridges will twist that to mean that no, if you give to God, then he's gonna give you more and more money.
Therefore give more and more money to the church, give more and more money to me, and then God will reward you and give you more. And they say these things. This is a real quote.
He says, Jesus had a nice house, a big house. Jesus was handling big money. He even wore designer clothes. This is a quote from a real sermon. Another person says in her book, this is another pastor, give $10 and receive $1,000.
Give $1,000 and receive $100,000. In short, Mark 10, 30 is a very good deal, she writes in her book. So people give and give and give to these pastors and discover that while their financial lot hasn't improved, all of a sudden these pastors have personal jets and mansions.
[19:26] And that's an example of fleecing the flock. That's not an example of feeding the flock. And that's something that we need to be wary of pastors. That's manipulation, not exhortation to give.

That's shameful gain that Peter is talking about. That's not honorable compensation. And they will face God's great judgment in the end. So the elders are to exercise oversight, not for shameful gain, but eagerly.
And I think that's why it's kind of funny, but there's kind of an unspoken rule among pastors. I think it's kind of a code of conduct somewhat. No one talks about it. No one taught me this. But when you go to preach, guest preach at another church, you never ask whether there's going to be an honorarium.
So I've never asked. I just go and preach. And if there is one, I'm like, oh, hey, that's great. And that's kind of the same with anybody who came to churches. I serve that. No one asked about that. And I think that's in order to cultivate the sense that, no, this is not an entitlement.
Rather, we do it willingly. We serve not for shameful gain. And when God gives, there's gratitude. It's a privilege and honor, not something that we're entitled to, even though Paul does teach that we should give to the elders, provide for the elders who work hard.
[20:37] So that's the second thing. And so the elders are to exercise oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, not for shameful gain, but eagerly. And then finally, as verse three says, the elders are to exercise oversight, not domineering over those in their, in their charge, but being examples to the flock.

So not domineering, but being examples to the flock. Because Peter knows, as well as anybody, that all forms of authority come with the risk of abuse. And therefore, Peter says, it's careful to add that qualification.
The pastoral oversight means, it means leading by example, rather than domineering, right? And the word that's used here to be, those in their charge, those in the charge of the elders, the word charge here refers, in throughout the Bible, to a particular share or portion that God sovereignly distributes or gives to people.
So it, it has in the background, God's sovereign election, his, his choosing of, of these people. So the idea behind that then, is that this particular group of people that Peter is speaking to, has been entrusted to, put in the charge of, this specific group of elders.
That means, this specific group of people, Trinity Cambridge Church, has been entrusted to, got places in the charge of, this specific group of elders, that God's provided for us. That's a staggering thing to think about.
[21:54] That, that we're not here by mistake, and that's such a perspective changing truth, because then none of you sitting here, is here by mistake, if you're, if you're a member, or seeking to be a member of Trinity Cambridge Church. But you're here rather, by God's sovereign plan, his direction.

And how much more than the elders, should they serve willingly and eagerly, being examples to the flock, not domineering, right? It's God's sacred trust, to these elders, this specific, this specific group of people.

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So, that's how Peter addresses the shepherds, but he doesn't stop there. He also turns to the sheep, because the sheep, also have a corresponding responsibility, to everything that the shepherds are supposed to do.
So, he says in verse 5, look with me there, likewise, just like he gave the command to the shepherds, likewise, you, who are younger, be subject to the elders.
Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another. For God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Once again, the word younger here, could also be misunderstood, simply refer to those who are younger in age.
[22:58] But there's actually another Greek word, that would have been used, that should have been used, if that's simply what is in view. Rather, it's referring to a newer, or new, kind of, it's referring to those who are younger in faith, rather than those who are simply younger in age, right?

So, that's why it corresponds to the word elder. So, the younger here simply means everybody else, who, for some reason, for, not, do not have, for one reason or another, the spiritual seniority, and the commensure standing, that qualifies them to be elders.
So, basically, everybody, all the members of the church, qualify in this category of younger. And he tells these younger, he tells the members of the church, be subject to the elders.
That's a hard command, right? Be subject to the elders, and, I feel kind of, awkward preaching about this, because I am one of the elders and pastors, but I'm just simply trying to be faithful to what God's, word has here.
And actually, this is a helpful illustration. There's a book, there's a New York Times bestseller, leadership book, called 21 Laws of Irrefutable Leadership. All of you guys have probably heard of it, if you've read anything in leadership literature.
[24:04] And in it, the author, John Maxwell, says that the church is probably the most leadership intensive enterprise in all of society. And that's because there is no positional leadership in the church, right?

So, the elders and pastors, they have authority, but they don't have any positional leverage over the people that they serve, right? So, for example, an employer could simply say, well, if you don't do that, I'm going to fire you.
Or, if you don't do this, listen to me, then you're going to get paid less, right? The pastors don't have any kind of positional leverage like that, right? Because it's because it's a volunteer society. It's a volunteer community.
And because of that, he says, it's the most leadership intensive enterprise in society. And if that's the case, then it's all the more important that as the elders try to lead willingly, as they try to exercise oversight, that the sheep, the flock that God has entrusted to them, they have to be subject to the elders.
If there's no willing participation and following from them, there can be no effective leadership, right? Because if in the church can grow and the church elders can effectively lead, only insofar as all of you, all the members of the church are going to serve and follow Christ under the leadership of the elders, right?
[25:17] So that's the right. It's the call to the sheep is just as important as a call to the shepherd. There's a way to responsibility on, on all of us as God's people. And, and this kind of mutuality and interdependence, right?

It can't happen, however, apart from a really important Christian virtue, what people might describe as the most important, even of Christian virtue, and that is humility.
So in verse five, Peter says, clothe yourselves, all of you with humility toward one another. For God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble, right? Because Greco-Roman culture denigrated humility as a lowly mentality of a slave.
In fact, I think our culture increasingly agrees with that assessment because we see in society, at least those who are aggressive, those who are prideful, those who will defend for themselves, those who promote themselves.
They're the ones that advance in society. That's what, and that's, that's why we think, okay, humility is for the losers. It's for the people who are disposed to the will of others. That's why we are tempted to think in a society, but rather the church is not supposed to follow in the ways of the world, but we're to be in an alternate society.
[26:21] And here, humility is the rule, right? It's, it's not the exception. And there's a particularly illuminating passage about humility in a C. S. Lewis's book, mirror Christianity. And usually I don't

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quote passages this long, but this one's worth reading in full.

So if you want to pay attention closely, I'll read it. He says, today, I come to that part of Christian morals where they differ most sharply from all other morals. There is one vice of which no man in the world is free, which everyone loathes when he sees it in someone else.
And of which hardly any people except Christians ever imagined that they are guilty of themselves. I have heard people admit that they are bad tempered or that they cannot keep their heads about girls or drink, or even that they are cowards.
But I do not think I have ever heard anyone who was not a Christian, accused himself of this vice. And at the same time, I very seldom met anyone who was not a Christian who showed the slightest mercy to it in others.
There's no fault that makes a man more unpopular and no fault, which we are more unconscious of in ourselves. And the more we have it ourselves, the more we dislike it in others. The vice I am talking of is pride or self-conceit.
[27:28] And the virtue opposite to it in Christian morals is called humility. According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil is pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that are mere flea bites in comparison.

It was through pride that the devil became the devil. Pride leads to every other vice. It is the complete anti-God state of mind. Does this seem to you exaggerated? Because if so, think it over.
I pointed out a moment ago that the more pride one had, the more one disliked pride in others. In fact, if you want to find out how proud you are, the easiest way is to ask yourself, how much do I dislike you when other people snub me, or refuse to take any notice of me, or shove their oar in, or patronize me, or show off?
The point is that each person's pride is in competition with everyone else's pride. It is because I want it to be the big noise at the party, that I am so annoyed at someone else being the big noise.
Now what you want to get clear is that pride is essentially competitive.
It's competitive by its very nature, while the other vices are competitive only, so to speak, by accident. Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man.
[28:38] We say that people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better-looking than others. If everyone else became equally rich, or clever, or good-looking, there would be nothing to be proud about.

It is the comparison that makes you proud. The pleasure of being above the rest, once the element of competition has gone, pride has gone. This is why I say that pride is essentially competitive in a way that other vices are not.
Greed may drive men into competition if there is not enough to go around, but the proud man, even when he has got more than he can possibly want, will try to get still more, just to assert his power.
Nearly all those evils in the world that people put down to greed or selfishness are really far more the result of pride. This is why humility is so frequently enjoined in the Bible, because humility is vital to the church's survival and thriving.
Because pride, by its essential nature, is competitive. It destroys community. It destroys interdependence that was supposed to be brought into the functioning of the church. And in the same way, and that's why Peter tells us, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another.
[29:50] It's supposed to be an intimate part of who we are, something that we never take off, something that we always put on in our interaction dealing with others. And because pride is also the complete anti-God state of mind, it fundamentally undermines our relationship with God.

And that's why it says, God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. It's the fearful thought, I think, God opposing us himself. And that's because, really, to become a Christian, in essence, is to humble ourselves, right?
It's to say that, no, I can't save myself. No, I'm not good enough to be in the presence of God. But no, I humble myself and say that, no, it is Christ that makes the way for me to be with God.
It's Christ that makes the way, even though I'm unworthy, so that I can be in the presence of God.
The very essence of Christianity is humility. It's a declaration of faith. It's a declaration of dependence.
That's what it means to become a Christian, is to say in faith, that no, I can't save myself. I need Christ to save me, right? And that's why this, this Peter enjoys humility, in particular, as he has a

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relationship between the elders exercising oversight, and the sheep subjecting themselves willingly to the church, right?
[31:01] Humility must, must permeate all of those interactions, and relationship, or this community will fall apart. But if you think about it, isn't that such a wonderful picture of humility, a wonderful picture of community, right?

The elders humbly shepherd, and the people humbly follow. But if you are of this skeptical nature, you might say at this point, well, that's very idealistic, but I don't think that's very feasible.
In fact, I've never seen it. Well, if you are, I want to say that, I would like to assure you that Scripture teaches us, not only that this community is possible, but in fact, the Scripture commands us to have this kind of community, right?
And the reason why this kind of community is possible, when it's not possible anywhere else, not possible anywhere else in society, in the world, but it's possible in the church, it's because of the chief shepherd, right?
Who has called both the sheep and the shepherd into, into this relationship. And that's why in verse four, it says, And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory, right?
[32:09] So the chief shepherd really, the word literally means the chief shepherd. So if the flock is too large to be cared for by one shepherd, you have a shepherd over all the shepherds. That's what the chief shepherd is. And that chief shepherd is Christ.

And because the chief shepherd, the elders cannot shepherd God's people and exercise oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, not for shameful gain, but eagerly, not domineering, but being examples, because if the elders are under shepherds, right?
If they're shepherds who are under the chief shepherd, then ultimately they're not masters, but they're servants, right? They're servants of Christ. And that's why they can serve without being domineering, but they can be examples, because they recognize that ultimately they're also just sheep to God, right?
God's the ultimate, Christ is the ultimate shepherd. In the same way, they also recognize that all their authority is not inherent, not intrinsic to who they are, but it's derived from Christ. They have authority only insofar as they're obeying Christ and preaching Christ and following Christ.
That's the right authority of the elders. And the goal ultimately of the under shepherds, right? Is not to build the church to themselves, not to make the sheep follow them, right?
[33:18] Or to appreciate them, but to make the sheep follow Christ and to love Christ, because they're just under shepherds. They're not the ultimate shepherds. And that's what frees the shepherds from this undue burden, right?

Because sometimes pastors are under crushing burdens because they think of the sheep as belonging to them and not to Christ. And so because of that, they fall into despair or dejected when the sheep leave, right?
Or they leave to go to another church, or it just doesn't, the church doesn't seem to grow, right? And that leads to despair or discouragement because they think that they're ultimately their sheep. But Peter tells us here that the reward is not in the here and now.
The sheep themselves are not the reward of the under shepherds, but rather when the chief shepherd appears, that's when they will receive the unfading crown of glory, right? The shepherds do not serve for the sake of the reward here and now, but to receive that unfading crown of glory when the chief shepherd appears, right?
So the glory is not in the size of the flock in the here and now, but rather in the glory that they will receive when Christ returns and rewards them for their labor. And this is something that you guys are going to have to remind me and the other elders, right?
[34:29] When we go into a public launch, right? Because when we go into public launch next month, who knows? God could add a lot of people quickly or God could add very few people, right? After the church. But regardless, this passage teaches us that God sovereignly puts in charge of the, puts, it puts these particular group of elders in charge, a particular group of elders that he has sovereignly elected and chosen.

And that is a cause for such comfort for pastors and elders. And that's the reason why we can be not territorial, or not, you know, selfish or, or possessive of people in the church, because we know that ultimately they don't belong to us.

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They belong to God. We're just under shepherd, right? And similarly, the sheep also, then the people, the members of the church also ultimately recognize that they belong to the chief shepherd and not to the shepherds, not to the under shepherds.
But because they understand the elders, under shepherds are doing Christ bidding ultimately, that they're trying to lead them to Christ, not to themselves, that they happily and humbly subject themselves to the leadership of the elders.
And they can do this without fear, because they too know that God sovereignly put this group, particular group of people in charge, entrusted them to this particular group of elders.
[35:44] In Ezekiel 34, there's a pointed passage where God condemns the leaders of Israel by comparing them to false shepherds.

I think this passage is in the background of this passage. And this is what God says to the leaders of Israel. He says, Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves, should not shepherds feed the sheep?
You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them.
So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. And then later in that same passage, God promises, Behold, I, I myself, God speaking, will search for my sheep and will seek them out.
I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel.
[36:56] I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep. I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy.

I will feed them in justice. God had promised that he himself will shepherd the sheep because he saw that his sheep were not taken care of, that they were broken, that they were hurting, and that they had no way to atone for their own sins than to find their way back to God.
So he said he had promised that he will do it himself to shepherd his people, and that's precisely what he did when he sent his son, Jesus Christ, to be the good shepherd who lays down his life so that we, all of us, who had no way to return to God, can be saved.
Christ died to break the power of sin and to pay the penalty of sin on our behalf so we can be restored to God to whom we belong. And this sheep shepherd that came to save us will return.
And when he returns, he will receive all the sheep to himself, and he will reward the under-shepherds for their labor. And that's why the elders shepherd, humbly shepherd God's people, and the people humbly follow, together under the lordship of Christ.
[38:11] When I was studying at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, I had a favorite professor named Gary Parrott, and I'll close with this, and he shared something with me that really stuck with me through the years, and he was referring to this idea that Christ is the chief shepherd and we're just under-shepherds.

And he encouraged me and the other students to think of ourselves, not simply as shepherds, but as sheepdogs, right? That the pastors of the church, you're sheepdogs, right?
And that has really stuck with me because it means a lot to me. Yeah, I'm just a sheepdog, and God's trying to lead God's sheep to him, who's the chief shepherd, who's the true shepherd.
And this vignette is helpful to think about because the sheepdog will firmly, though not aggressively or violently, you know, jump on and bark at, you know, sheep to make sure they don't go out of line and to stray into dangerous territory, right?
And sometimes that might hurt because that could be a rebuke or an exhortation, but that's nothing compared to the dangers that lie when you leave the flock, when you leave the herd, right?
[39:26] And so the sheep humbly listen, right? They heed. The warnings and exhortations of the sheepdogs. And the sheepdogs, right, obviously are not seeking to make the sheep follow them.

They don't know where they're going. They follow the shepherd. They follow the instruction of the shepherd. They do everything at the shepherd's bidding because he's their ultimate lord and master as well.

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And the sheepdogs will also fight off predators, right? They'll fight wolves or hyannas, even if it means their own death or injury, right, at the bidding of the shepherd.
And knowing this, the sheep are responsive to the call of the sheepdogs because they know that ultimately they're following the commands of the sheep shepherd, right? And all of this, the sheepdogs are only able to serve.
We, the pastors and undershepherds are only able to serve because we know that it's God's grace that called us and that sustained us, right? It's, it's, we, if we were, if it were ultimately up to us, if we were ultimately responsible for God's people of safely guarding them and protecting them and bringing them in safe passage to God and heaven, that would be a crushing responsibility, right? [40:40] They would not be able to do it. We would not be able to do it. But we know that it is God who perseveres as people. And it's God who sovereignly chose and called us and entrusted these people to us. That's why the pastors are able to serve.

And in the same way, the people of the church, right? It would be, that, that would be a crushing responsibility of the pastors, but for the people, it would be cruel to tell them, be subject to the elders. Fallible, sinful, imperfect elders.
Be subject to them. That would be cruel if it was not God himself, if it were not God himself who sovereignly elected this particular group of elders, this particular group of people and members and had a promise to lead them and promised to build this church.
That's why we're able to function together as a church and as a leader of the church because of what Christ has done and what Christ has promised. So take a moment now, if you would, to reflect on that, what God might be calling you to and what God might be calling us to as a church.
and what God might be calling you to

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