

*1Therefore, 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, 2shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. 4And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

I think I can perhaps dispel the myth of evolution with a single word; sheep. Where did sheep come from. Where do they fit on the evolutionary staircase?

Because if somehow you removed every shepherd on earth, the sheep would be gone in a matter of weeks. All of them.

This passage is about sheep. So our little foundation we'll build on is to familiarize ourselves, since most of us are well removed from the sheep industry, we'll talk for a minute about sheep.

The analogy sheep and shepherds will make perfect sense if we study the characteristics of sheep.

Sheep are valuable. They clothe us and feed us. Every part of the sheep is used for something to benefit humans. They have minimal impact on the environment.

Cow people will tell you they're no good because they tend to rip the grass up roots and all, but that may have more to do with the shepherd moving them to better feeding situations than the sheep themselves.

They eat grass and other plants and leave fertilizer behind. And for that we get meat and wool. A nice trade . . . except, they are completely dependent on human care. It turns out, a lot of care.

They are more intelligent than we give them credit for, but it pleased God to create them, dependent. Helpless. They have almost no self preservation instincts, at all. Few if any defenses.

They have no sense of direction. No homing instincts. They cannot find water on their own, but they must have it. And not just any water. They'll drink bad water and die. They are frightened by fast moving water. They need someone to lead them to good, safe, reasonably quiet drinking sources. It can't be too hot. Or too cold.

Then, they'll die if someone doesn't take them to good pastures. After led to a pasture with water near by, they get a habit going. They can find the water and return to the pastures untended, for a time. But once the food is gone, they're helpless to look anywhere else. That's when they'll pull the stubble up by the roots. They'll eventually eat the dirt. Helpless on their own to go find other sources.

They will wander, head down, eating, and if they get very far away from the rest of the flock, they have no sense of direction. They are lost. They can't get back. When that happens, they go in circles bleating, and will keep that up in a sort of panic, until they die.

Thus the biblical examples. Jesus looked at the crowds gathered near him and said, They are like sheep without a shepherd. Lost sheep. The lost sheep of the house of Israel. Going in circles, bleating pitifully, helpless to find their way

All we like sheep have gone astray, Isaiah says. Jesus is likened to; The good shepherd that counts his sheep and goes out to find the lost one. All of those analogies make sense.

Sheep are defenseless. Nobody pays to watch a sheep fight. They don't fight. They don't have any defenses. If a wolf comes, they huddle together. If you're the lucky sheep in the middle, you may make it a few more days.

And they are filthy. The lanolin that their bodies create permeates the wool with greasy sticky nasty stuff and everything sticks to them. Left unshorn, they can get so heavy with their own wool, they can fall down and never get back up.

When the shepherd finds them in that condition, their circulation and balance is catywompus and if he simply rights them, they'll fall over again, helpless. Sometimes the shepherd has to carry that sheep for up to an hour while they regain some equilibrium.

They have to be kept clean. Their own waste will build up over a few weeks on their backsides and completely plug up the process. They would die if there wasn't someone to solve that nasty dirty problem. Simply get plugged up and perish. They have to be shaved and washed back there monthly.

And they must be fed. If the shepherd doesn't continually lead them to new pastures, their food source is used up and they will starve. They have no capability to find other food. They are indiscriminate eaters. They're just as happy eating poisonous things as they are grass. Thus the shepherd needs to be aware of their surroundings and what it is they are eating.

If their grass is wet, they get diarrhea and compound the other problem with their exit port. If they are under duress, weakened by sickness or injured, they just sort of lose heart and make up their mind to die. Just give up and die.

They are followers. In the sheep industry there is one sheep that is trained to lead all the other sheep to slaughter. Over and over this single castrated male sheep will lead groups of sheep down a ramp, they follow, follow, follow, and then at the bottom of the ramp, a trap door opens and that sheep is taken to do it all over again, while the others are at the slaughtering place. They call that sheep, the Judas sheep.

Sheep will blindly follow to their own death.

Do you get the feeling that perhaps God designed sheep as an object lesson for us? We see that analogy in scripture, over and over and over.

When Peter denied Christ at the trial, and was finally re-united with Him, what did Jesus say? Peter, do you love me? Yes. Feed my sheep. Peter do you love me? Yes, Lord, you know I love you. Feed my

lambs. Peter do you love me? Yes. Feed my sheep.

From that day forward, Peter fed sheep. And here, Peter talks to shepherds, just like him. That's our premise. Sheep, left alone will die. The shepherd is their key to survival. The sheep will thrive with a good shepherd.

Peter has been writing this letter to encourage christians who were under duress. Persecuted. He doesn't want them to give up like sheep do when a predator or injury has taken them down.

And so after 4 chapters of direct encouragement and wisdom, Peter now turns to the shepherds, the elders in all of those places he mentions in 1:1, and he begins his exhortation with the word *Therefore*; Since the sheep are discouraged and pressed down, *therefore*, it's up to the Shepherds and he tells them, *Shepherd the flock of God*.

The sheep are under attack. *Therefore*, the need for good shepherds is critical. In that situation they need their shepherds more than ever.

*I 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*

Exhort is a strong motivation. It's a word that tells us, this is an imperative. This is vitally important. *A tidal wave is coming, therefore I exhort you to get to higher ground*. It isn't a suggestion. Nor is it really a command. Peter doesn't command. It's a highly motivational urging.

In California, we've been listening to people who are officials in the different fire departments in these areas, pleading with them to flee. Evacuate. It's an example of exhortation.

*I exhort the elders among you . . .* He's writing to christians in all of those places mentioned, and by extension, he's writing to all christians everywhere. And wherever there are groups of christians, there are elders, plural, among them.

The word is one of three common words used in the new testament that define leadership in the churches. Elders, Overseers, and Bishops. Paul uses all three words interchangeably in Acts 20. They don't represent 3 different tiers in the hierarchical structure. They're the same thing.

Elder is not a reference to physical age. You could have a 38 year old who has been a faithful serious christian for 25 years who meets the qualifications of elder, and a 65 year old man who's been a christian for 2 years and is kind of a bone head. Not an elder.

Overseer / shepherd is a reference to those who lead, feed, tend, and protect, the flock of God. And the biblical design is not to have a one man show. The model is a plurality of Godly elders. There is safety and accountability sort of built in when there is a team of Godly men feeding and tending the flock.

At this church we have a Board of Directors. And those folks have told me, we are not elders. They don't want that responsibility, and that's OK for a church this size. We're not much bigger than a house church. I said, I will be your elder, and my hope is that with faithful teaching, God will raise up other elders here.

Our board of directors serves more in the capacity of deacons. The requirement for deacons and elders given by Paul to Timothy and Titus are essentially the same, with one important exception. Elders must be "apt to teach". An elder must have the capacity to teach others. The sheep are fed by imparting and teaching the truths of this book.

Now teaching is only part of the job of shepherd. Leading, tending, cleaning up messes, encouragement, love, friendship, confrontation, exhortation, counsel, guidance, and a whole lot of other things I'm not thinking of are part of the shepherds job.

You folks are patient, mostly, because after the teaching part, I'm not really much good at most of the rest. It is what it is. God doesn't send His John MacArthurs to Tonopah Nevada. It could be worse. I've been in too many churches where there's no one to feed the sheep at all. We

can figure this out together when the storms come. Spiritual gifts abound.

Listen again to Peter's introduction to this critical exhortation. This is life or death important. How does Peter approach it? *I 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*

Peter doesn't place himself any higher than any other elder. He says I'm a fellow elder. A fellow undershepherd answering to the Chief Shepherd.

Suppose Jim Galli gathers 10,000 under shepherds at a conference in the Los Angeles arena, and I tell them "I exhort you to shepherd the flock". Get to work men! And they might say, who is this guy? And someone else might say, I did some checking, and Mr. Galli has no recognized official schooling or letters. He's not ordained by anybody, and he has a congregation of 20 or so on a good day.

Peter says, I'm a fellow elder, a fellow shepherd, but I witnessed with my eyes, the sufferings of Jesus, and by extension, the resurrection and ascension into heaven of that same Jesus. He was an eye witness.

But beyond that, Peter was one of three, one of two remaining, who witnessed with their eyes, the very glory that the rest of the world will not see until Jesus returns to this earth in His glorified state.

The lights of the heavens will go out, and the Son of Man will come in all His glory, with 10,000's of His saints.

At the transfiguration, with John and James, Peter witnessed that glory. He has credentials that no other living human could claim except the apostle John. James had been murdered by this time.

Peter says something here that is unique to his experience, but that we will fully experience, and there is a sense that we can experience even now. *a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,*

We will be partakers of the glory. When Jesus comes to call His own people out of this world. When the graves are opened and the dead in Christ will rise, and when those of us, if we are still living are changed, and meet Him in the air, we will see this glory!

That day is coming and we look for it and wait for it. But there is a sense that we are partakers, partners in, sharers in His glory now.

Paul says, unlike the jews who the truth is veiled and hidden from, we are looking at Christ with unveiled faces and doing that is transforming us into who we will be.

Looking into this book, we are partakers of the glory, partners with, sharers in the glory. We are being transformed now, in this life, as we look at the glory of Jesus. Paul says;

*18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.*

This book transforms us. Peter already saw the future glory. We stare at Jesus in this book and see the glory, as in a mirror, someday, face to face.

When Peter says; *I exhort the elders among you*, we should be all ears.

What is his exhortation, based on everything he has already been encouraging these sheep that have been distressed by horrific fiery trials. What does he tell the shepherds to do? *2shepherd the flock of God among you*,

You shepherds, in this time of distress for the flock, perform the work of a shepherd. Now more than ever. The sheep are in distress. The shepherd is more essential than ever. This is crisis time. Take care of these flocks of sheep that you live among, but who actually belong to who? *2shepherd the **flock of God** among you*,

God owns the sheep. The shepherd's stewardship, his responsibility before God, is to take care of the sheep God owns. Pretty awesome stuff.

This word flock is only used 4 times. Twice right in this passage. And in the Greek it's what is called a diminutive. little flock. There's something endearing about that. A wee flock if you were Scottish.

We give special care to tiny children. We are especially careful because we don't want them to fall down stairs, to wander off and get lost, all those things that little ones are especially vulnerable.

And that's how God views His church. You shepherds take care of my little flock. You folks are precious to Him. You need care. You need to be fed this book. More so than ever when the world is closing in around and threatening the little flock.

Peter is saying, now more than ever, you shepherds, see that God's sheep get what they need to thrive. Protection. Feeding. Watering. Care. You kind folks, when you allowed me to fill this pulpit, placed me in the highest calling on earth.

President Trump, we'll give him the benefit of the doubt, does his dead level best to care for who? This country isn't God's flock. You folks are. A shepherd tending the needs of sheep that belong to God is the highest calling on earth. It trumps being president. No pun intended.

If they asked me to be president, I would say, sorry, I've got more important work to do. God has made me a shepherd of His sheep. The country and the world are less important than God's little flock. No wonder I long for a plurality of shepherds.

Now Peter's going to exhort the shepherds on how to be good shepherds.

*2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God;*

Shepherds need to accomplish their name by exercising oversight. I

hate to say it, but it's true. Shepherds need to know where their sheep are, what condition they are in, what their needs are, and what they're doing.

Our culture balks at that. It's ingrained in us Americans, when I go in my house, and shut my door, what I do in there is my business. Only. That's our mindset. Trust me, my first inclination is the same as yours. I don't want to know what you're doing either.

Good oversight means the shepherd is somewhat intimate in his knowledge of how his sheep are faring. That's part of oversight. And Peter says that oversight should be a joy, not a drudge. *2shepherd the flock of God among you, **exercising oversight** not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God*

In the military, and my career was as short as possible, it was a standing joke when the chief petty officer asked for a volunteer. Yeah right. In fact, uncle sam had to compel me to serve at all. I got drafted. It was the last thing I wanted to do and the last place I wanted to be. I was forced. Serve or go to prison. Heavy compulsion to do something I loathed.

Peter says, you shepherds, don't be like Jim was in the military. Forced service, and I did not excel. I did the bare minimum. God is looking for the opposite. People who want to be in His service. People motivated by love who want to feed and tend to the needs of the sheep. Men who want to excel and glorify the Chief Shepherd by selfless service and love.

*and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;* The last guy you want is someone who has an angle to get rich. His motivation is money. And his doctrine is false. He has to tickle ears in order to get the money coffers full.

It's OK to pay the preacher. God honors a flock that is generous. But if that's the guy's motivation . . . there's going to be trouble. Peter gives a warning. We see it all the time. A common blight on the household of God. Preachers who are so self important that of course God will

supply them with a luxury airplane and mansions etc.

*Vs. 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.*

Lording it over the flock is what the world does. That's how dictators operate. That's how factories operate. That's how the military operates. Somebody is in charge and they're firing off the orders. And woe is you if what the tyrant ordered is not done.

We humans have motivational problems, part of our sin nature, part of the fall. We have to have bosses. Management. Incentive. Punishment.

Christ's church doesn't operate that way. I don't have any authority over you. Peter doesn't give orders. I don't give orders. I can show you in this book, what your orders are from the Lord that does in fact own you. The book has authority. I don't. That's as far as it goes. Once I share God's word and exhort you to obedience, my authority is over.

James and John tried to pull a fast one and jockey for top position in the kingdom. It's what the world does. Dog eat dog. Scratch your way to the top of the heap.

They had a really deviant plan. Get their mother to trick Jesus into saying He would put James and John, one on His right and one on His left, in His kingdom. Get in on the ground floor, and get it done in front of anybody else. Like Peter. Somehow we've got to crush Peter and beat him to the top.

When the other disciples found out about that little scheme, they were furious. Furious that they didn't think of it first and crush old James and John. A bunch of cut throats, just like the world. 25 But Jesus called them aside and said,

*“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their superiors exercise authority over them. 26 It shall not be this way among you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be*

*your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave— 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” Mt. 20*

That's how the world gets it done. That is NOT how it gets done in God's Kingdom family. We don't assume the Lord position, we assume the slave one. Like Jesus did when He left heaven behind and came to give His life for us.

That's our example, and we in turn are to lead by example. *nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock*

Jesus is our example. Ppn. 2:3 *Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

That's the example we want to emulate. Selfless for the sheep, to the point of death.

In Ezekiel 34 we have a shepherd analogy, of shepherds that we do not want to be like, a rebuke to evil shepherds. It rings true to what Peter has just told us. These are the shepherds you do not want to be. I don't ever want the Chief Shepherd to say any of these words to me.

Ezekiel 34:4

*"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.*

The bible is clear that judgement is more severe for shepherds who have mistreated and not cared for God's flock. That's a frightening responsibility.

I was listening to John MacArthur speak about this passage and he had a story about a fireman in Northern California who sacrificed everything in order to send his kids to the Master's University and he had taken courses through the mail while he worked as a fireman, so that he could prepare himself to pastor a church with a hundred people.

And John says, why would anyone do that. And I'm thinking to myself, I'll never see a hundred and I might come unraveled if I did. The weight of responsibility for 15 or 20 seems frightening to me. Those are God's sheep. I don't want to mess it up. Please don't send a hundred.

But Peter does have some encouragement for shepherds. It's dirty messy smelly work. And shepherds, largely because they were nowhere to be found, they were out in the hills, and when they did come to town, they stunk, shepherds were at the bottom of the social scale.

Paul says we are the offscouring of the earth. I think his choice of words was apt. Offscouring. That's what the shepherds had to do to keep the sheep alive. Nobody wants offscouring around.

But when it came time to announce the birth of Jesus, guess who the angels announce it to. Shepherds. This world's lowest common denominator are God's choice ones.

And Peter finishes his exhortation with reward.

*4And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

Shepherding God's flock is an awesome responsibility, and an incredible

privilege. I have a hard time thinking of myself as included in this verse. A crown of Glory! Because I worked a few hours each week to try to feed a tiny little flock way out in Tonopah, Nevada.

Paul told his beloved Corinthians, who gave him perhaps more heartache and concern than any other flock of sheep, group of christians, these words;

2 Corinthians 1:24

*Not that we lord it over your faith, but we are fellow workers with you for your joy, because it is by faith that you stand firm.*

Paul saw himself as a fellow worker, with his flock, working towards what? Joy. The knowledge of and obedience to this book, brings exceeding joy. Joy that the world searches every dead end street trying to find. It's in this book, and it's the shepherds job to work along side of you, so that you can have that kind of JOY.

Pray with me that I will be a good and worthy shepherd. Pray for God to raise up other shepherds. Pray that this little flock will thrive and multiply and grow for the glory of the Chief shepherd.