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Charge: Shepherd The Church Of God

We're going to turn to 1 Peter 5 today. So if you'll turn there quickly we want to take note of a few things and then you're going to feel like you're in a Bible drill because I'm going to take you all over the Old and New Testament. 1 Peter 5 is one of the classic passages to elders. Virtually every study done on church eldership will have this passage listed very early on. We've saved it for the end of our class. And for good reason. I want you to understand that being an elder is very serious business. And this is the passage that shows it the strongest. If you notice, verse 1 he's addressing the elders and in verse 2 his charge to them is to "shepherd the flock of God," which he then describes with a view to the sobering verse 4, "And when the Chief Shepherd appears." In other words elders are not the Chief Shepherd, they are under the Chief Shepherd and they're going to be evaluated for how well they took care of His sheep. They're not our sheep, they're His and what we are is the men He hired to take care of His sheep for awhile. So for some reason He's not around to shepherd them but He's going to return to shepherd them and when He does there's an evaluation of how we did. But this is the motif, it's the Shepherd/Sheep motif and what I want to do is run through what the OT taught about this motif because it may surprise you to know that NT eldership is not a NT invention, it grew out of the OT and you're going to find as we go through the OT that what the NT says about elders and their qualifications comes directly out of the OT. There's nothing new in 1 Tim 3 or Tit 2 about elders. It's OT wisdom.

Now Genesis 46:33 we learn that the 12 sons of Jacob were all shepherds and those 12 sons are going to be the patriarchs of the 12 tribes of Israel. So these twelve tribes are going to go down to Egypt as a shepherd people. And the Egyptians loathed shepherds so they wouldn't assimilate with them. Remember they had a little space for them in Goshen, it was more of a

quarantined area. They didn't want to have anything to do with shepherds. So this was a shepherding people and if you believe in divine providence, as I do, then you see that God gave the nation Israel the occupation of shepherd so they would learn to shepherd the nations, to lead them in the knowledge of God, to guide them into righteousness. And there were certain Israelites in Gen 48:15 and 49:24 who recognized that God was their shepherd, that He led them through life, that He guided them into all righteousness. And so very early in Scripture we learn that God is a Shepherd and that He led and guided the nation Israel who was to lead and guide the nations into the knowledge of God and righteousness.

Now as the nation Israel was growing there was in Exodus 2:17 a man named Moses. And this man had a strong gift of shepherding because when he saw the seven daughters of Jethro trying to draw water and the other shepherds driving them off he stepped in and drove them off. And so very early you see that God raises up good shepherds like Moses and these men are saviors, they rescue the afflicted and of course there are bad shepherds. So the good shepherd/bad shepherd motif is going to be developed down through history because we live in a fallen world and therefore it gets back to our diagram that we live in a when good and evil are mixed. So Moses is a picture of a good shepherd and a good shepherd saves people while bad shepherds oppress and hurt people. Then Moses is going to die and the question in Numbers 27:15-17 is, if Moses shepherds the people of God, if he carries the staff, and he dies, then who is going to shepherd? And we learn that if the people do not have a shepherd then they will be scattered and so Joshua is chosen. And they took him and they laid hands on him and commissioned him. So there's the laying on of hands; I told you this was not a NT institution. This was an OT practice and here we have one shepherd, Moses, commissioning the next shepherd, Joshua. This is where that formal laying on of hands ceremony is rooted. Then Joshua led the nation in the conquest which lasted about 40 years and as the land was settled the various tribes were apportioned certain real estate in the Promised Land and the tribes started forming factions and having problems. God says in 1 Chron 17:6 that He raised up judges from time to time to shepherd the people. So we have God as a Shepherd and we have God appointing men like Moses, Joshua and the Judges as shepherds over His flock. And the point of these passages is that God recognizes that His people need leadership so He graciously provides leadership.

And then in 1 Chron 17:7 we learn that the shepherding role comes to rest on one dynasty in the kingdom, the dynasty of David and David was pre-eminently a shepherd. He was taken from the pasture, from following sheep, to be leader over God's people Israel. In 2 Chron 11:2 all twelve tribes recognize that even during Saul's reign as king it was David who was leading them in and out, it was David who was shepherding them. And so he is made king over all twelve tribes and the kingdom is consolidated. And yet David recognizes in Psalm 23:1 that "The Lord is my shepherd," all great shepherds recognize this. And they take the very principles that the Lord shepherds them with and apply those principles to shepherd others with. And David was a fantastic shepherd. Ps 78:70-72 says that David shepherded according to the integrity of his heart and he guided them with skillful hands. Yet David, in Ps 28:9, recognized that he himself was a sinner and that he was not perfectly fit to shepherd God's flock and so he prayed, Lord "be their shepherd also, and carry them forever." What David was recognizing, under divine inspiration, is that there is the necessity of a human shepherd, a man who will shepherd other men, but that as wonderful a shepherd as David was, He wasn't perfect, God was, and so no mere human could shepherd God's people correctly. And so as David writes the Holy Spirit writes beyond David to a greater than David, to a Shepherd who is both God and man.

Now that became quite apparent because after David things got progressively worse, they faced a spiritual decline. And so while you have the Davidic dynasty as the authorized dynasty to shepherd the house of Israel you also have the kingdom split and ten of the twelve tribes rejecting the Davidic dynasty and so their kings are not recognized shepherds, they don't recognize God as their shepherd. In 2 Chron 18:16 you see king Ahab won't have anything to do with the word of God and because of that the people were scattered all over the place, they were like sheep without a shepherd and they were easily ravaged by the wolves. But at the same time the southern kingdom also declines and it becomes apparent that God is going to have to provide this great Shepherd from David's line because progressively the kings get worse and worse. So let's go through some verses that depict the southern kingdom. Isa 56:10-12, YHWH's shepherds are blind, dreamers, dogs, greedy, without knowledge, unjust and drunks. All negative qualifications for the NT elder. In Jeremiah 10:21, the Old Testament shepherds that God had given to the nation became stupid and therefore the flock of Israel was scattered. In

Jeremiah 12:10 and following, the shepherds ruined God's vineyard and made it unfruitful, a den of wickedness. In Jeremiah 22:22 it is taught that bad shepherds will be swept away in judgment. In Jeremiah 23:1-4, and this one is worth turning to, ¹“Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!” declares the LORD. ²Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: “You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,” declares the LORD. ³“Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply. ⁴“I will also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the LORD.”

In Jeremiah 25:34 and following, it is taught that bad shepherds will not escape the judgment of God. In Jeremiah 50: 6, the Lord bemoans the fact that his people had become lost sheep and that their shepherds were the ones who led them astray and therefore the adversary devoured them. Now turn to Ezekiel 34, this is ten straight verses of scathing rebuke leveled at the shepherds of Israel. ²“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, “Thus says the Lord GOD, “Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? ³“You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat *sheep* without feeding the flock. 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.” That’s called lording it over them. ⁵“They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. ⁶“My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek *for them*.” ⁷Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ⁸“As I live,” declares the Lord GOD, “surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock, but *rather* the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock; ⁹therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ¹⁰“Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will demand My sheep from them and make them cease from feeding sheep. So the shepherds will not feed themselves

anymore, but I will deliver My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them.”

So it is evident that God is going to have to Shepherd them. Yet the Shepherd will also come from the Davidic dynasty. So the prophets begin to project out in the future, Isa 40:11, in the kingdom “Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs And carry *them* in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing *ewes*.” In Jeremiah 3:15, it teaches that in the millennium the Messiah will shepherd them by feeding them knowledge and understanding. In Ezek 37:24 in the kingdom they will have David as their King and they will have one shepherd over all. And in Micah 5:2-4 this shepherd will rise from the little insignificant town of Bethlehem to rule over all Israel and in this passage the Shepherd is depicted as being born, so a human, but as coming from eternity, so divine. "And He will arise and shepherd His flock In the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God, And they will remain, Because at that time He will be great To the ends of the earth."

Summing up the OT teaching on the Shepherd motif God himself is a Shepherd because people live in a fallen world and when He calls out a people for His name sake, then the adversary, Satan, and his minions, will attack and devour those sheep. God therefore, in divine providence, established a shepherd nation to stand against these adversaries, the nation Israel was to shepherd the nations, protecting them from the adversary. Within this nation not all were God’s people, only the remnant of those who believed, but God raised up individual shepherds to lead the whole nation, namely Moses, Joshua, the Judges, prophets and kings, especially David, who was raised in the pastures and trained to follow sheep, that he might be fit to lead the nation. But this David was not the ultimate shepherd of God's people. He recognized that God was His shepherd. And He prayed that God might one day shepherd His people. The shepherds that followed David were blind to the truth, unjustly gained off the people, lorded over them and spent most of their time getting drunk and looking out for themselves. It was evident that David looked beyond himself to none of these men but to one much greater than himself, the Messiah, one who was both God and man who would shepherd His people with perfect skill, the Chief Shepherd.

So, if you'll turn with me to the NT, John 10 we want to meet Him. This is all background to 1 Peter 5. All of this is in the background. In verse 7 Jesus is teaching, and he says to the nation Israel, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep." Now there are two metaphors here, one of Jesus as a door and the other of Jesus as a shepherd. Both are true, He's illustrating two points. The first point is in vv 7-10 and in these verses he's saying there's only one door and He means there's only way of salvation. And I am it, I am the door of the sheep, they enter into salvation by faith in Me. Verse 8, "All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them." Now the thieves and robbers are the leadership of Israel. They taught that salvation is by works, you can do works of righteousness and please God. But Jesus says the sheep did not hear them because the sheep understood that salvation was not by works but by faith. Verse 9, "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. 10The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." They are thieves, they steal life, I am not a thief, I give life. He's contrasting the true way of salvation from the false way. Now verse 11 he comes to the second metaphor, I am a good shepherd. I am the door and I am the good shepherd. And again He's contrasting Himself with the leadership of Israel. He says, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." Now that's easy enough, that's what a good shepherd would do; He would willingly lay down His life for the sheep. He's a sacrificial leader. And of course, it looks to the cross. Verse 12, "He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep." Now what did we read over and over in the OT about the shepherds, they blew it, they're the hired hands. God hired them to watch over His sheep but the moment danger came they ran off to protect themselves and the sheep got ripped up. He's giving a commentary on the OT and He's saying by contrast, I am the Shepherd David looked toward, I am the Shepherd Isaiah predicted, I am the Shepherd Micah predicted would be born in Bethlehem. Verse 14, "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep." He's saying I've got a remnant of Israel responding, they've entered the door through Me, by faith, they are My sheep and I know who they are and I am good to them, I lay my life down for them. And He's saying, you can go one way or the other

here guys, you can enter My sheepfold through faith in My death for you or you can keep trying that works stuff and see how that works for you. So it's all Israel up to this point but then in verse 16 He says something that introduces the interadvent age, "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd." So something else is coming because verse 16 is the future tense. So we have the remnant of Israel, they have entered through faith, but there's a split in the nation, the leadership of the nation are in rebellion, they're still wanting to be judged on their works, so they're going to reject their true Shepherd, they're going to crucify Him and after that then there are some other sheep who are going to hear His voice. Who are they? They're Gentiles, that's us. And this caused a real ruckus in vv 19ff because the Jews knew what He was saying. He was saying He was the God-man predicted Shepherd from the OT. So the Good Shepherd is going to go to the cross and that is going to introduce something new, the remnant of Israel is going to be joined to Gentile believers and they're going to constitute a new entity called the church.

Now with that as background turn to John 21. I want to remind you of what happened after this in a little dialogue between Jesus and Peter. Remember, Peter heard all this, Peter was a member of the remnant of Israel. Now verse 15, "So 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, "Tend My lambs." Now we don't have time to go into all the issues about the different words for love used here except to say this, Jesus is asking Peter if he unconditionally loves Him, if he'll do anything for him and Peter is saying I love you like a friend. So Peter isn't loving Jesus the way that Jesus is wanting him to. And Peter just never gets it. Verse 16, "He said to him again a second time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." ¹⁷He said to him the third time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep."

Now you can tell what Jesus wanted, you can tell that Jesus is leaving and He's not going to be around to tend His flock. And He doesn't want anymore of those bums like He had in the OT, He wants some real shepherds who love

Him unconditionally because if they love Him unconditionally then they'll actually care for the sheep. So that's why Jesus keeps asking him, Do you unconditionally love me, and Peter keeps saying, I love you like a good buddy, how does that ring your bell, Jesus. Yeah. Whatever. That that's not going to cut it is obvious but Jesus nonetheless is appointing Peter here as an elder of the coming Church.

So with that said turn to 1 Peter 5:1 **Therefore I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that is to be revealed,** and then he gives them the charge **shepherd the flock of God among you.** Now there's no question the office of elder is in view here and he's writing from Babylon to churches all throughout modern day Turkey. Peter had gone to Babylon because his mission was to the Jews and Babylon had a large Jewish population. Why did it have a large Jewish population? Go back to your framework of OT events. You have the kingdom solidified in the time of David, they enter the Golden Era of Solomon, Solomon starts to blow it, the Kingdom is Divided under Rehoboam into the northern and southern kingdoms. Both Kingdoms go into Decline. God disciplines them, they continue to rebel, finally the northern kingdom goes into Exile to Assyria, that's 721BC, the southern kingdom of Judah plods along a century longer and they go into Exile to Babylon in 586BC. That's Daniel and his friends Ezekiel and Jeremiah; these guys went into Exile, hundreds and thousands of Judeans went down to Babylon and when the Partial Restoration occurred seventy years later they didn't all return, some of them had started a new life and so they just settled around Babylon. And the population grew and Babylon became an intellectual center of Judaism. They produced the Babylonian Talmud, they had scribes who kept up the ancient Hebrew text and so forth. It was a center of Judaism. Such that when the 1st century comes along and everything occurs in the NT, Peter finds himself taking the gospel to Babylon. It would be like a Jew today who is concerned about his Jewish brethren, wants them to believe in Jesus, where would he go with the gospel? Podunk USA? No, he'd go to New York City because New York City has the highest population of Jews in the USA. So Peter goes to Babylon, lots of Jews there. Now he's writing from there to other Jews of the dispersion, if you notice in the Greeting of chapter 1, he's writing to Jews scattered throughout what is now modern day Turkey. And there were churches in all these regions and so he writes, **I exhort the elders among you,** that's a

very strong charge, he's gearing up for saying something very strongly and we already know why? Historically all of God's shepherds have blown it. And the one that didn't blow it they rejected. So Peter knows how difficult the task is, **I exhort the elders among you**, in whatever city you reside, whatever church you go to, there are a plurality of **elders** and you know who they are, this is exhortation for them.

Now on what basis? Who are you telling us to run our churches a certain way? Well, number one Peter says, I am **your fellow elder**. That word is only used here in the NT, they call that a *hapax legomenon*, a word used only one time. And what the word means is I'm an elder and you're an elder. Now Peter got his eldership from the Lord Jesus Christ. We already saw that in John 20 where Jesus asked him, "Do you love me," feed my sheep, "do you love Me?" Tend my lambs, "do you love Me?" Pastor My flock. I am leaving, you are staying, take care of my sheep while I'm gone. Ok, good buddy, whatever. Now it's already clear that they were not Peter's sheep. Jesus didn't say feed your lambs, He said feed My lambs. And now that the church is fully underway you had other men in local churches appointed to take care of the Lord's sheep. So Peter says I am your fellow elder. He could have said, I'm an apostle and I order you on that basis, but rather than do that he shows us something, he appeals to his eldership. And yet interestingly Peter is not a part of those local churches, as far as we can tell he didn't even found a single one of those churches, the churches in these regions were founded by Paul. But he writes them nonetheless as a **fellow elder** and gives them a charge.

Then he says, not only am I a **fellow elder** but I am a **witness of the sufferings of Christ**. Now he may have witnessed Christ's mental pain and agony in the Garden of Gethsemane before Christ was arrested by a Roman cohort, but it's only remotely possible that Peter was a witness of Christ's physical agony on the cross. So probably what Peter is saying here is I am a **witness of the cross of Christ**, I testify to the death of Christ on the cross for our sins. Christ predicted them, He accomplished them, I testify to them.

And third, I am a **partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed**, that is, I like you will be resurrected on the day of Christ's return for us. And a thing we want to note is a word that is seemingly left out of the translation altogether because it should say, a **partaker also of the glory that is about to be revealed**. So there's a word in here, *mellouses* that means

“something is about to happen,” “something is at the point of occurring,” and so make a note that this seems to be teaching imminency. That Peter expected the Lord to return in glory and resurrect us at-any-moment. And he looked daily for this moment when we would partake of the same glory that our Lord partook of at His resurrection. We would be resurrected like Him and we would see Him as He really is because we will be like Him. And that could be today, we don’t know, but what we do know is that we are partakers of the glory.

So, **I exhort you**, as a **fellow elder**, as a **witness** of the cross of Christ and as a **partaker** of the coming resurrection, verse 2, **shepherd the flock of God among you**. Now that’s the charge, it’s a command and we know what it entails because we have a long history of the shepherding motif from the OT. And we know what an abysmal failure most of the shepherds were. So it’s a sobering exhortation. It should be taken very seriously. The word means “to watch out for other people, to shepherd.” The Psalms of Solomon, which are not Scripture, but tradition, nevertheless, use the Greek word so I quote it for the sense. “He will be shepherding the flock of the Lord faithfully and righteously, and will suffer none among them to stumble in their pasture.” It’s an excellent summary of how the shepherd should shepherd. And as an elder what the exhortation to shepherd causes me to do is to evaluate, constantly, week in week out, are you doing this work? Have you learned what it means to shepherd? Have you learned what it means to suffer? Have you learned what it means to lead? Have you learned what it means to guard? Have you learned what it means to rule well? Have you learned what it means to feed? Have you learned what it means to restore a brother? Have you learned what it means to save the sheep from the path of destruction? And what it all boils down to is sacrificial love, sacrificial love. And over and over you have to ask yourself these things because shepherds have failed over and over and over in history and not a one of them ever escaped severe judgment. So everything an elder does is summed up by this command to **shepherd**. They are to **shepherd the flock of God**, not their own flock, God’s flock among them. So go ahead and look around you because these people here are God’s flock. These are people God purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28). And we as elders are appointed to shepherd you as His flock until the Chief Shepherd returns to shepherd you. And I am sure we are being watched very carefully as to how we do it. Do we love Jesus or is Jesus just a member of the buddy system.

Now Peter gives three ways of doing it. How should we shepherd God's flock? To describe it Peter uses the contrast method of teaching, negative, positive, don't do it this way, do it this way instead. All shepherding could be done the negative way, and most of it has been done the negative way. But Peter says do it the positive way because Peter finally figured out that Jesus wasn't in the buddy system, Jesus was in the sacrificial system. And He's the Great Shepherd, He's the One who shows us what it really means to Shepherd, He gave us His life. So the first contrast; **not under compulsion**, but voluntarily. Don't do it because you should, don't do it because it's your job, don't do it because of peer pressure, don't do it because someone told you to do it, do it because you want to do it, do it because you love the Lord, do it because that's what He did for you. We didn't read the verses but a few verses later Jesus said, I lay down my life for the sheep; no one takes My life from Me but I lay it down of My own initiative. He didn't die because He had to, He died because He wanted to. Nobody put Him on that cross other than Himself. The Roman armies didn't, Judas didn't, Pilate didn't, it was His own desire to get on the cross that got Him on the cross. Now when you have that kind of love you can't fake it, you can't work it up, it has to be built into you by the God with whom we have to do. Only He can do that after years and years of developing us and building us and transforming us and making us reflect on what He's done for us. So true shepherds shepherd not because they have to, but because they want to.

Second, **shepherd...not for sordid gain, but with eagerness**. The word eagerness actually means "eager for service," eager to serve others as Christ served us salvation. And yet how many times did we see in the OT the shepherds served for sordid gain? Served themselves? How they fed themselves when they should have been feeding the flock. How they misallocated justice for personal gain. How they were so drunk and stupid they didn't impart knowledge and understanding to the flock. It was the blind leading the blind and the sheep were scattered. God's shepherd cannot be in this for himself, he has to be eager for service, eager to help, eager to teach, eager to impart knowledge, eager to save the flock, eager to stand between the flock and the wolves. And even willing to die for them.

Third, verse 3, **nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock**. Not lording it over them, we saw

that in the OT, this is a domineering shepherd, someone who takes advantage; they give the commands and you better do it or else. This is not leading sheep, this is lording, this is not serving, this is enslaving, this is not helping, this is hurting. But it's common because one of the lusts men have is power, desire to have power and use it to control others. God's shepherd should never do that, but rather **prove to be an example to the flock**. See, right here we are in the same mode Paul was in when he kept saying, follow me, follow my example. And elders should say the same thing to the flock. It is not arrogant to say come and follow me, I can say that and I do say that. But the reason is not because when you follow me you are only following me. I am following Christ, he led the way, He gave me the example, so by following me you are following Paul who is following Christ. That is how it works and that is why Peter says be an example to the flock, show the flock what the Christian life looks like, let them see it in your individual life, your married life, your family life, your community life, show them how to live a Christian life in every sphere of life. Lead by example.

And now we come to verse 4, the results of proper shepherding, **And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory**. In other words there are rewards for shepherding well. Obviously, you are shepherding God's flock so that when the Chief Shepherd comes back for His flock, if they have been taken care of, if they have been protected from the dangerous predation of false doctrine, if they have been led to green pastures where the word of God was fed to them, if they have been taken to the waters of life and drunk of freely, then the elder **will receive the unfading crown of glory**, then he will be handsomely rewarded. The office of shepherd, under the Chief Shepherd, is a double edged sword. To shepherd poorly, as most have in the age of Israel and the Church, results in severe judgment, but to shepherd well results in tremendous blessing. That is why it is a privilege to serve in this office, it is a privilege to be called to the office. There are eternal rewards to be received. That's what Peter means when he says **the unfading crown of glory**. In the ancient world at the Olympic Games the winning athlete and only the winning athlete, there was no second and third place, it was first or nothing, winner or loser, and the winner would be given a celery wreath plopped up on his head. A few hours later it would wilt and shrivel. But the elder who wins by shepherding well, will receive an unfading crown of glory, a crown that will last as an

everlasting memorial to his faithful and righteous shepherding of the flock of God.

So I hope you now see that the office of elder is a shepherding office, the motif comes from the OT and is found in God Himself who, in a fallen world, calls people out and shepherds them, and those who are shepherded by Him are authorized to shepherd His people in this world. It came to Moses to shepherd the house of Israel, then to Joshua and finally to the Davidic dynasty which culminated in the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. He came as the Great Shepherd to call His sheep, but not all Israel were His sheep and so they crucified Him. He would depart at the ascension and He appointed Peter as the first shepherd of His people in the interadvent age and as Christ calls out more and more of His sheep from among the Gentiles, both Jew and Gentile in one new organism, the Church. More and more elders are appointed to shepherd the people God has apportioned among us, and if we love Him, if we love Him with an unconditional, sacrificial love, which is the real question every elder has to ask himself, then there is reward held up for us, the unfading crown of glory when Christ returns to shepherd His own flock. But if not, woe are we to mistreat and abuse God's flock, for the day of judgment will not be a pretty one.

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