

The Pastor's Charge, Part 2

by C.J. Mahaney

Pastors must shepherd the flock of God willingly and joyfully, not under compulsion, to please God and effectively serve the church.

Duration: 1:06:22

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:2

Topics: "Pastoral Ministry", "Church Leadership"

Description

This sermon from 1 Peter chapter 5 emphasizes the importance of shepherding the flock of God willingly, joyfully, eagerly, and humbly. It addresses the temptations pastors face, such as serving under compulsion, seeking personal gain, and domineering over others. The sermon highlights the need for pastors to lead by example, especially in humility, and points to the future reward of receiving the unfading crown of glory from the chief shepherd upon his return.

Transcript

1st Peter chapter 5, begin in verse 1. So, so I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion but willingly as God would have you, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Let's pray.

Lord thank you for this time together. Thank you for the countless ways you have blessed us during this time together. Thank you for your kindness and your mercy and your grace.

Thank you. Now Lord, once again in this final session as we turn our attention to your word, grant us the gift of illumination. I pray.

Assist me Lord so that I might serve those I love effectively this evening. Bring this conference to a wonderful conclusion. Thank you for your word.

Thank you for these words. Thank you for inspiring these words and preserving these words with us in mind, with us in mind this evening. I proceed confident that you by your spirit will grant the gift of illumination we've requested and reveal the grace and glory of your son through this passage.

All for your glory, I pray and thank you in Jesus' name, amen. We began the conference contemplating our call to shepherd the flock of God and consider the implications of this metaphor for pastoral ministry. Last night Jeff skillfully clarified our preeminent priority as shepherds.

We are students of the word. We are teachers of the word. We are a company of expositors.

And this morning Dave inspired us with a fresh vision for mission and church planting. This morning Dave called us to in effect look up from our locale and consider what role we can play in the great commission. This was followed by Jared wonderfully directing our attention to future generations and impressing upon us the difference that we can make transferring the gospel to a future we won't see.

And tonight, well tonight Peter would like to have one final conversation with you. Tonight, Peter would like to address you and not simply address you in general. Tonight he'd like to have a parting conversation with you addressing your heart in particular.

We began two nights ago devoting our attention to verse one, devoting our attention to the task, verse one, and to shepherd the flock of God that is among you. And this evening we will give our attention to the remaining verses. And those remaining verses address first our hearts.

Point two is the manner of ministry. Point one the task. Point two the manner.

And in verse three Peter addresses the heart, not simply the task. He very skillfully examines our motives for ministry and he informs us of three temptations that are common to ministry. Peter is very aware of the great privilege of this task but he is also aware of the pitfalls one encounters in this task.

So the task is sacred, shepherd the flock of God. The task is sacred, the temptations are subtle and serious and our motives for ministry and our attitudes toward ministry really make all the difference in ministry. So it is and it should be strikingly evident in this passage that motives matter to God.

Motives matter to God and since they matter to God they should matter to us as well. It is possible for one to be devoted to the sacred task, to be diligent about the sacred task but fail to glorify God, fail to effectively serve the church because their motivation for the task was not pleasing to God. So in order to protect us from this plight Peter cares for us this evening by providing us with a series of contrasts so that our manner in ministry and our motive for ministry might be pleasing to the chief shepherd.

If the original elders who first laid eyes on this letter needed these exhortations then quite obviously so do we and we would be wise this evening to pay very careful attention to these words and to let these words perform their gracious sanctifying work in our hearts this evening. Shepherd the flock of God the manner by which we do so, point one, not under compulsion but willingly as God would have you. Not this, not under compulsion, but this, willingly as God would have you.

It would appear that some who were at one time willingly serving are now reluctant to serve, are now less enthusiastic about serving. Perhaps, perhaps escalating persecution and this threat to them as leaders and this threat to their families has dampened and diminished their motivation for the shepherding task. This passage would seem to be particularly relevant for pastors serving in countries where conversion to Christ is illegal and baptism brings a prison sentence where being a pastor is simply and clearly dangerous.

And for all pastors who are serving in those contexts this evening we want to say they have our deepest respect. But it's not just persecution that can dampen and diminish willingness in pastoral ministry. There are numerous circumstances and experiences that can wear down the heart of a once willing and joyful pastor reducing his heart to obligatory joyless service.

And let's just consider a few of those circumstances and experiences that can have this effect on a pastor's heart. Sermon preparation can have this effect on a pastor's heart. Sermon preparation is repetitive for those who have a primary responsibility to preach and teach the words particularly on Sunday.

It is a repetitive task and sermon preparation is hard work. It is hard work. There is no way to avoid the hard work of sermon preparation.

Sermon preparation is always hard work. One never outgrows the hard work in sermon preparation no matter how dependent one is upon the Holy Spirit, no matter what one's belief is in the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Sermon preparation for everyone is hard work if properly done.

It's hard work and there's no way, at least I haven't discovered a way, to expedite the task. No way to expedite the task and to some degree it's lonely work. Though the help of others is absolutely invaluable, I find it invaluable in the preparation process.

Essentially, at some point in the process, you're alone. You are by yourself. It is Saturday and you are alone and you are aware you are alone and you're also aware that other people seem to be doing other things.

And everything they're doing appears to be fun and attractive and enjoyable and appealing and there you are. And Sunday's coming and you've had difficulty sleeping for the past few nights and you've been devoting hours to the text. This is my experience of sermon preparation.

This is the normal experience of sermon preparation for me. It is hour after hour after hour of hard work, at times momentarily interrupted by what appears to be clarity. And then ten minutes later that proves to be deceptive after all.

And one looks at one's notes and one is embarrassed by what appears there. And one is tired and one is confused and one is fearful. And over the weeks and over the months and over the years, a task that at one time was a pure joy becomes pure obligation.

The preaching event, particularly if it's weekly, can wear down the heart of a once joyful pastor, particularly when a sermon doesn't seem to go well. Or a series of sermons don't seem to go well. You have devoted 20 to 30 hours preparing a sermon.

Ten minutes into it, you have this horrific feeling confirming that it does appear to be as poorly prepared as you thought it was last night. And it's average, hopefully. And after the meeting, you interact with a number of people and nobody even mentions.

No one says anything about the sermon. The only thing you hear about preaching is somebody approaches you and just says, you know, a year ago, you preached a sermon. I get that all the time.

I get that regularly wherever I go. The only conclusion I've come to is that my sermons aren't particularly effective in the moment. But somehow, after I've preached and well after I've preached, people are eventually affected and then they get back to me and inform me about previous sermons.

It's an awkward moment. You've just finished preaching. Somebody comes up to you and says, three years ago, you preached a sermon.

Did I? I'm like, pal, you might not have noticed, but I just preached another one. Or the only response you receive after you preach is, hey, you mispronounced a word. Thank you very much.

Thank you, buddy. Oh, before you go, you're ugly too. You go home, even the wifey.

I've had this experience so many times with Carolyn. I mean, she fears God. And I think she fears this question.

So how did you think it went, dear? Well, love, it wasn't one of your best. There's no use asking anybody else. If the wife says it wasn't one of your best, it wasn't a good sermon.

There's no reason to ask anybody else for their evaluation. There's no reason to search for encouragement. If it's out there, it's not genuine.

And my concern is when that wasn't one of your best starts to become a theme. And have you ever had this experience? I've had this experience numerous times over the years. You accumulate these experiences as you have this privilege to devote yourself to this task.

It's like Monday morning, and suddenly, clarity. I'm reading the Post Sports page, and suddenly, clarity about yesterday's sermon comes rushing into my mind. I've had this happen numerous times where I do put the paper down, look up, laugh, like what is up with this? Listen, the hard work of preparation followed by what feels like average sermon after average sermon after average sermon can wear down the soul of a once joyful pastor.

Pastoral care can wear down the soul of a once joyful pastor. Day after day, caring for individual after individual, hearing about sin after sin after sin. There is a cumulative effect on your soul as you seek to care for those who are struggling with their sin.

And as you meet with them again and again and again and yet again and again and again, though they are struggling against their sin, they don't seem to be making much progress in their struggle against their sin. And there is this cumulative weight of all of their sins pressing in upon your soul, and then you're aware of your own struggle with your peculiar set of sins, and a once joyful pastor becomes weary. And you encounter a situation you did not expect where hundreds of hours are poured into a particular man and numerous people are involved, and yet he is resolved to leave his wife for another woman, and you married them, and you never imagined on that day when you announced them as husband and wife that you would sit across from him as he informed you he was leaving her, and there was nothing you could do about it.

And add to this caring for those who are suffering and caring for those who are suffering severely and suffering in a prolonged way, the hours that are involved in caring for just one individual and then at times in churches, doesn't it appear that a number of individuals are all suffering simultaneously, and they know you by your name at the hospital because you're there consistently, and then some of these individuals

don't just suffer, they die. And he's 32, and he's got three small kids, and a once joyful pastor can wear, and then the email appears from a friend who you have served in the church and served with in the church for years, and the friend informs you they're leaving the church. You didn't even know the possibility was under consideration, and as you study the email, the reasons for leaving don't seem to be either theological or substantive.

Suddenly, someone you love, who you thought, we're going to run the whole race together, emails you and says, I'm not running with you anymore. And a once joyful pastor experiences weariness of soul. Listen, it's possible over a period of time to lose the wonder and the joy of being called to pastoral ministry.

Normally happens slowly and imperceptibly, but eventually, eventually you go to work under compulsion, not willingly, not joyfully. As you drive to work, you look just like everyone else driving to work. Perhaps you've even begun to wonder what it would be like to do something else, to have another job.

You're no longer amazed you're a pastor. You're no longer amazed you've been given this privilege to shepherd the flock of God. The original recipients of this letter needed this exhortation, and I think I can safely assume that perhaps you do as well.

Perhaps you've lost some of the original joy you once had. Perhaps you've lost some of the original joy you once had as you served the church. And when we lose our joy in ministry, inevitably, we start to complain about ministry.

So, Peter wants to talk to us about this temptation this evening. He wants us to examine our hearts and to guard our hearts in order to protect our hearts from the weariness of soul that is a temptation for all who are in pastoral ministry, robbing us of the joy of pastoral ministry. In order to please God and effectively serve the church, our service must be done willingly and joyfully.

In order to please God, in order to effectively serve the church, our service must be done willingly. Our service must be done joyfully. Faithfulness to this task is important, but it's not sufficient.

Faithfulness is important. Faithfulness is necessary. Faithfulness is commendable, but it's not sufficient.

In order to please God, in order to please God and effectively care for the church, our service must be done willingly. It must be done joyfully. In order for a pastor to please God, a pastor must serve the Lord with gladness.

In order for a pastor to effectively serve the flock of God, the pastor must serve the flock of God with gladness. So this task, this sacred task, shepherd the flock of God, this sacred task must be carried out in a certain manner. It must be carried out in this manner.

I'd argue this evening that some tasks, maybe even most tasks, can be done effectively without the presence of joy. It's not necessary for my dentist to be happy. It's not.

I don't really care if he's happy. I want him to be skilled. I'm not looking for friendship.

I'm not looking for humor. I'm looking for flawless dentistry. That's what I'm looking for.

I'm looking for maximum anesthesia to the legal limit and flawless dentistry. That's what I'm looking for. Dentistry does not require joy.

To work on my car, as I'm looking at different places, I'm not looking for joy. That's not going to be the difference maker. The difference maker is going to be, can you fix the car? So when I pick up the car and pay for the car, car's fixed.

Noise is gone. I don't care if you're happy. I'd like you to be happy.

I want you to be happy. But it's not required for you to be happy. What's required is, fix the car.

That's what's required. That's all we're asking here. I want the car fixed.

I want to pay you. It's not important for you to be happy. We need a surgeon.

I don't know. When I ask people for recommendations for a surgeon or surgery, I'm not saying, I'd like somebody who's happy. Do you know somebody who's happy? Can you recommend any joyful surgeons? Joy isn't even a category.

No, man. You want that individual who's written up about all the plaques on the wall, all the degrees, all the certificates. Doesn't matter if he's happy or not.

You just want to know he has this world-class gifting, and there will be no moment where he says, Oops. That's all you want to know. Most specialties don't require joy.

Just skill. Not so pastoral ministry. Pastoral ministry requires skill and joy.

Pastoral ministry requires willingness and joyfulness. God-glorifying pastoral ministry requires more than faithfulness, more than diligence, more than competence. Pastoral ministry must be done willingly.

Pastoral ministry must be done joyfully. And this isn't simply Peter's personal preference. This is the command of God.

Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly. Look, as God would have you, God would have us shepherd the flock of God willingly, joyfully, as God would have you. This, serving the Lord with gladness, shepherding the flock of God willingly and joyfully, this is the command of God, not the preference or simply the recommendation of Peter, as God would have you.

Look, how would you have me shepherd the flock of God? I would have you shepherd the flock of God joyfully. That's how I'd have you, shepherd the flock of God. God wants happy pastors.

Because unhappy pastors misrepresent him and misrepresent the sacredness of the task. God wants happy pastors. Therefore, when there is a prolonged absence of joy in our hearts, we must take that absence of joy most seriously.

We must examine our hearts. We must pay particular attention to our hearts when there is an absence of joy for this task. And we must take immediate action.

We must take dramatic action, if necessary, to address our hearts because our hearts matter to God. Our motives matter. Attitudes matter.

It's not enough to be skillful. By God's grace, we must also be joyful. God would have us be joyful as we shepherd the flock of God.

Therefore, there is instruction here we must give careful attention to prior to returning home. We must purpose, by the grace of God, to please God in our hearts by shepherding the flock of God, not just faithfully, not just diligently, not just skillfully, although all are most important and commendable, but we must also do this task joyfully. We must model this and we must teach this.

It must be discernibly obvious to those we have the privilege to serve. It must be obvious to them we are happy pastors because God would have us to be happy pastors. And we should be happy pastors because God has forgiven us of all our sins through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

That alone should transform our motive and heart attitude and the resultant joy should be present in our lives. We should also be happy because we have been called to this sacred task. We are standing behind the great shepherd.

We should be amazed and we should be humble and we should be happy. And it should be obvious to the church that we are happy. We should be modeling this for them and we should be communicating this to them.

We should be transferring this to everyone who serves in every ministry of the church as well. One of the great joys about this conference is just observing up close and personal the staff at Sovereign Grace and the members of Covenant Life Church who serve us. They aren't just faithful.

They aren't just diligent. They aren't just competent. They're happy.

They are joyful. Doesn't that just set the whole experience apart? They're not here under compulsion. They're not motivated by some sense of obligation.

No, they love being here serving the Savior and serving the Savior by serving pastors and their wives. And if you notice, and I'm sure you do, it's the same ones year after year after year except the next generation is coming up right behind them. So as soon as you walk into the registration, you're not just encountering skill and competence and faithfulness, you're encountering joy.

It's because the pastors of this church have transferred not just faithfulness to serve, but joyfulness in serving. It matters. Listen, we are to create a culture of joy in our churches.

Not just a culture of faithfulness and diligence, a culture of joy. Shepherd the flock of God, not under compulsion, but willingly. I love this phrase.

As God would have you. Lord, how would you have us shepherd your flock? CJ, I would have you shepherd them joyfully, happily, willingly. Not under compulsion.

This task requires not just skill. It requires joy. Point two, not for shameful gain, but eagerly.

Point two, not for shameful gain, but eagerly. All right, there's no way we have time for this whole sermon. So here's what we're going to do.

We are not going to do point two. And actually, I think earlier, Jared certainly made references to the primary content of this point. But let me just introduce it without expanding on it so you can consider it and apply it to your lives.

Not for shameful gain, but eagerly. At first glance, this really can, well, to us, this can appear to be perplexing because normally in this country, someone doesn't pursue pastoral ministry for the financial benefits present in pastoral ministry. But listen, there are countries where this is a very real temptation, where ministry is a means.

It's a means of financial stability, if not financial prosperity. So this is a real temptation elsewhere. But I don't think we can confine this temptation to finances alone.

I think this passage can also form a warning. It can form a warning about the temptation to use ministry as a means of personal gain in whatever form. Title, recognition, certain role.

So I think there is a broader category addressing our hearts, pursuing ministry for what one receives from ministry, rather than, well, what a phrase. You're just eager to serve. And Jared wonderfully addressed this this morning when he talked about not insisting on a particular role, not demanding that we serve in a certain way.

Yeah. Peter would say, just be eager to serve. However God indicates you are to serve.

You should be eager to serve. You know why you should be eager to serve? Because you should be amazed you get to serve the flock of God in any way. So we should all be aware that over time our roles will change.

But with the changing of our roles, there should be no subsiding of eagerness to serve. And I'm now already too far into this, so we're just going to point three, because I don't want to keep you this evening. Point three, not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

Shepherd the flock of God, not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. One reads this passage, and one can hear the echoes of the Savior's words in Mark 10 as one reads this passage. You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles, lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them, but it shall not be so among you.

But whoever would be great among you, must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you, must be slave of all. If lording it over the church was a temptation for those elders Peter addressed in this passage, then brothers, it is no less a temptation for us. We are not exempt from this temptation.

Now, please do not misunderstand. Pastors are clearly delegated a genuine authority, a genuine authority for the service of the church. They are to direct the affairs of the church.

They are in this passage clearly to exercise oversight. Pastors are delegated a definite, genuine authority in the service of the church. They are to exercise oversight, but not lord it over the flock.

Two distinct categories, exercise oversight, lord it over the flock. There's a difference, and we must understand the difference. In order to avoid lording it over the church, we must understand the nature and the extent and the purpose of the authority we have been delegated by the chief shepherd.

And I think that the nature, extent, and purpose of pastoral authority and the potential for its misuse is most effectively described by Edmund Clowney in his fine commentary on 1 Peter when he writes the following. The elder has authority. He is called to exercise a shepherd's oversight.

Christ, the chief shepherd, has called him to exercise a shepherd's care. But the under-shepherd is not a stand-in for the Lord. He presents the word of the Lord, not his own decree.

He enforces the revealed will of the Lord, not his own wishes. For that reason, any undermining of the authority of Scripture turns church government into spiritual tyranny. If church governors add to or subtract from the word of God, they make themselves lords over the consciences of others.

If church governors add to or subtract from the word of God, they make themselves lords over the consciences of others. So, a pastor has responsibility to teach God's word. A pastor has responsibility, or pastor is in plurality, have the responsibility to direct the affairs of the church and to watch over the souls that have been entrusted to his care.

But, I am not, you are not, we are not stand-ins for the Lord. And if we add to or subtract from Scripture, well then, I am lording it over the church. Both are temptations.

Add to, subtract from. Both are temptations, but I think our temptation is more the temptation adding to rather than subtracting from. I think that's the temptation that we in Sovereign Grace need to pay careful attention to.

Adding to, not subtracting from. We potentially add to Scripture whenever we fail to distinguish the difference between principle and practice. We're potentially adding to Scripture whenever we fail to make that distinction between principle and practice in our counseling and in our preaching.

So, we must make this distinction when we teach or counsel, and we must alert either an individual or the church we are addressing to this distinction. There must be clarity on this point. There must be, we must be clear on the difference between biblical principle, the word of the Lord, the revealed will of God, and practical application, which often takes various forms and can't be reduced normally to a single form.

And if those we counsel and teach aren't aware of this distinction, well, they are vulnerable to wrongly assuming or concluding that a particular practice is equal in authority to the biblical principle or that there is only one acceptable application and practice. So, we must be careful to make this distinction and to alert them to this distinction. Now, so there is no misunderstanding.

I don't think there is anyone in sovereign grace who is intentionally adding to Scripture. I don't think there's anyone here who's thinking, I am intentionally and strategically adding to Scripture. Don't think anyone here is doing that.

And I think every pastor here is desirous of serving folks by providing them with very specific and practical examples of application, and I commend you for this, and we must continue to do this. It is part of our pastoral responsibility in serving those who have been entrusted to our care. But, if we don't distinguish between principle and practice, there can be an unintended perception and an unintended consequence.

And we do lord it over the church whenever we assign biblical authority to a certain practice or restrict the application of a passage to a certain practice. If we do this, regardless of our sincerity, we lord it over the church and we sow legalism into the church. Whenever we as pastors assume that our preference and our practice is authoritative, our leadership becomes authoritarian.

And in the kindness of God, we have this warning in this passage that we are to shepherd the flock of God willingly, joyfully, eagerly, and not domineering over those in your charge, but instead, look at this phrase,

being examples to the flock. There's the alternative. Not domineering, don't add to, don't subtract from scripture.

Instead, be examples to the flock. I think we are also vulnerable to lording it over the church whenever we place an emphasis upon our position or our authority rather than primarily on our personal example. If your attention is primarily devoted to being an example to the flock, you will be less apt to lord it over the flock because the distinguishing mark of a pastor is not title and not position, but example.

So our leadership of the church is not informed by the managerial model or the military model. Our leadership of the church is informed by the shepherding metaphor and the accent on that metaphor is on personal example. We are shepherds, not cattlemen.

We lead the church. We don't drive the church. We lead the church by example, not by decree.

We lead the church by example. We lead the church by walking ahead of the church, setting an example for the church and calling them where appropriate, when appropriate to follow that example. See, the shepherd is observed by those in the church and known and trusted by those he cares for because of his example.

And when you are a genuine example to the flock, normally the flock will not find it difficult to support you and follow your leadership. They won't. They won't have any hesitation to approach you and ask for your help.

They won't have any hesitation to ask a question, voice a concern. Now, please don't misunderstand. You aren't a flawless example.

I obviously am not a flawless example. No one is a flawless example, but everyone must be a genuine example. And being a genuine example to the flock begins with humility, begins with humility.

And Peter's example of humility and his emphasis upon the importance of humility are present in this passage in a most pronounced way. His example of humility is evident in his self-designation in verse one. So I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder, as a fellow elder.

Again, to quote Clowney, with great tact Peter speaks not of their participating with him, but of his participating with them. His phrasing shows the humility to which he would summon his fellow elders. Oh, it does indeed.

Behold the man's example of humility because there are many ways he could have identified himself. Could have identified himself as personally chosen by the Savior. Could have identified himself as a witness of the transfiguration.

Could have identified himself as given the keys to the kingdom, preached on the day of Pentecost, first witness to the Gentile community, part of the first council that preserved the doctrine of justification by faith alone. This man writing this letter had one impressive resume. But this man writing this letter was also very familiar with pride.

He had played the arrogant man before, but no more. In this passage, he leads by example. His self-designation is a loud statement of his humility.

And then look with me in verse five, six, and seven, as this emphasis of humility continues. Likewise, you who are younger be subject to the elders. Jared referenced this this morning.

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another. For God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Theme of humility continues in verse six.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time he may exalt you. His example of humility, his emphasis upon humility. The man led by example.

So must we. You know, it's really not difficult to receive an exhortation to humble yourself from a man who's already humbled himself. I mean, if you're studying his example in verse one, as he identifies himself as a fellow elder, and you're perceptive of that humility, not a problem at all when that person turns, makes eye contact with you, and says, likewise, you, clothe yourself with humility.

He led by example. He was a genuine example, not a flawless example, but he was a genuine example of humility. You know, I don't think this should be difficult for most of us.

Certainly shouldn't be difficult for me because I don't have an impressive resume. I don't, quite obviously. I'm reminded that every time I have an interaction with somebody I haven't met previous, and I'm consistently having those interactions, and so inevitably, in the interaction, you get questions like, where did you go to college? There's an assumption that you went to college.

There's an assumption that you graduated from college. So I'm continually informing people that I am a high school graduate, not a college graduate, and then I'm informing people what I do, and I'm a pastor. Of course, in this culture, that gets a mixed review.

Rarely is anybody amazed. Don't have an impressive resume. It shouldn't be difficult for me to present some degree of genuine example in the form of humility to those I have the privilege to serve.

Actually, it shouldn't be difficult for any of us present if we just simply remember, if we all remind ourselves that we are sheep before we are shepherds, and we remain sheep even after we become shepherds, and we must never forget this. We must never forget that we are more fundamentally sheep than we are shepherds. Recently had the privilege to interview David Pallison.

What a privilege to ask him questions. What a privilege to be on the receiving end of that man's wisdom. By the way, I think he's coming in May.

Pastors, make time if you can in your schedule to listen for a week to that man teach what a gift he is to sovereign grace. And if you haven't seen this interview, it's posted on the Cheap Seats blog, and it is one rich interview. I have just lingered over line after line after line.

One question is, David, what single bit of counsel has made the most significant difference in your leadership? And his counsel, his answer was simply this. I mean, I'm leaning forward. What single bit of counsel has made the most significant difference in your leadership? Answer, David Pallison.

The shepherd must know that he is one of the shepherd's needy and beloved sheep. That is one bit of counsel that has made the most significant difference in his leadership. You can best give to others the very things that you are receiving and living.

That is humility personified. Let me ask you, which are you more aware of, being a sheep or being a shepherd? We should live aware that we are needy sheep loved by the good shepherd. And we must never forget that fundamentally we are sheep, not primarily shepherds.

And this shepherding task, it is temporary. It is a temporary assignment. And in this task, we are called to lead by example.

And a godly example begins with humility. And let me remind you, those you are serving and leading, they are studying your example. They are studying your example even more carefully than they are studying your sermons.

So we have to ask ourselves, what are they learning from my example? Is humility obvious from your example? The most effective way we can serve the flock of God and please the chief shepherd over decades of ministry is not only or exclusively by our faithful execution of our pastoral responsibility, but by the consistent cultivation of a genuine example of humility. When Robert Murray McShane was addressing this issue and area, he said the following, my people's greatest need is my personal holiness. And that is profoundly and accurately true.

Shepherd the flock of God, not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. So as we conclude this section, how can we avoid shepherding the flock of God under compulsion for personal gain, lording it over those in your charge? How can we avoid those three temptations? And how can we cultivate willingness and joy and eagerness? And how can we lead by example? How can we set some example of humility? Listen, it is only possible to avoid these temptations and cultivate joy and eagerness and humility. This is only possible if one has an eternal perspective that is revealed in verse four.

Final point, the reward. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Peter doesn't simply inform us of the task, doesn't simply address our hearts.

In verse four, he turns our attention away from our hearts, and he directs our attention to the future, and he directs our attention to the return of the chief shepherd. He directs our attention to the return of the chief shepherd and directs our attention to the award awaiting those who are faithful and joyful and eager and humble by the grace of God in the execution of their pastoral responsibility. So what will protect us from these temptations? What will sustain our soul in the midst of all of the challenges of pastoral ministry? Well, over the decades of pastoral ministry and through all of the challenges in pastoral ministry, an awareness of the future, an anticipation of the future will make all the difference in our souls, will make all the difference in our souls this evening, and will make all the difference in our souls throughout our remaining years.

John Calvin wrote of this verse that to prevent the faithful servant of Christ from being cast down, there is this one and only remedy to turn his eyes to the coming of Christ, which is exactly what Peter does. In verse four, he turns our attention away from our hearts, and he directs our attention to the return of the chief shepherd. And in this verse, verse four, we discover the relationship between, well, the relationship between our eschatology and pastoral ministry.

We discover, in effect, that the prophetic is indeed practical. Our awareness of the future, our anticipation of the chief shepherd's return makes all the difference in your soul, makes all the difference in your soul in the present. Anticipating that day will make a difference in your soul today.

So in the midst of all of your pastoral responsibilities, as you devote yourself to the task, as you address your heart and examine your heart, don't lose sight of that day! Because if you lose sight of that day, you will be vulnerable to weariness today. You must work back from that day to today. That day must be our point of reference for today, or else you'll be governed by what takes place today.

See, our motivation for ministry must transcend our experience of ministry in order to sustain us in ministry, because ministry is hard work. Ministry is hard work. It's difficult.

It's repetitive. It involves suffering and opposition. And I'm not in any way overlooking the joys of pastoral ministry.

There are innumerable joys in pastoral ministry as well. But biblically, the greatest joy from pastoral ministry comes at the end of pastoral ministry. The greatest joy awaits the chief shepherd's return.

The greatest joy awaits the reward he returns with. So the Scripture doesn't anchor our joy in the immediate. The Scripture anchors our joy in the future, in the return of the Savior.

And the Scripture reveals in verse 4 that upon his return, the chief shepherd will reward faithful, joyful pastors with the unfading crown of glory. What a day that will be, in particular for ordinary pastors like us. What a day that will be.

What a day that will be for pastors who preach, it seems, average sermon after average sermon after average sermon. What a day that will be for pastors who have, like me, average gifting. What a day that will be for pastors who are pastoring churches today that aren't impressive, that are not numerically large.

Pastors of churches who have never experienced revival. What a day that will be. What a day that will be when the chief shepherd returns to evaluate those ordinary pastors of average gifting, not on the basis of the numerical size of their church, but instead, did they serve joyfully and eagerly? Were they examples to the flock? Were they students of the Word and teachers of the Word? Were they part of a company of expositors? Did they have a heart for church planting? Did they seek to transfer the gospel to a future generation they did not see? Oh, on that day, the Savior Himself will be rewarding ordinary pastors for all of those things, and He will be giving them, each of them, an unfading crown of glory.

They will be honored on that day by the chief shepherd Himself. Faithful pastors will receive a crown of glory from the one who wore a crown of thorns as He made His way to a cross to die for our sins. The one who wore a crown of thorns will give unfading crowns of glory to faithful, joyful pastors.

Brothers and sisters, this is amazing. This is amazing, and this is humbling, and this will be unimaginably awkward. I mean, in Revelation 4, we read that the 24 elders fell down before Him and they cast their crowns before the throne.

Well, I imagine we'll do the same. I mean, the Lord personally, the chief shepherd, puts an unfading crown of glory on my head. Sorry, Lord, I deserve this.

I know only one thing to do with this. Cast it. We are to live today in light of that day, and as we contemplate that future day, here's what happens.

It breaks into the present, and it transforms everything. It addresses weariness and restores joy, creates joy, sustains eagerness, and it certainly provokes the cultivation of humility. Shepherds, that day and what

will take place on that day is well worth all of the serving and all of the sacrifices and all of the suffering involved in pastoral ministry.

So, shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly as God would have you, not for shameful gain, but eagerly, not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock, and when the chief shepherd appears, you, you, yes, you, you, you, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Let's pray. Father, I do pray that this eternal perspective, I pray it would break into our souls this evening, and I pray it would break into our souls increasingly in the future, and I pray it would have a transforming effect on our souls.

I pray that it would break into the souls of any and all weary pastors who are present, any pastors more characterized by the absence of joy than the presence of joy, pastors who are not serving joyfully, but under compulsion, pastors who are not serving eagerly. Lord, I pray that this perspective of the future would break into their souls and transform their souls, and Lord, for any who are in any way domineering, Lord, I pray that this passage would inspire conviction and instead a resolve to be an example to the flock, an example of humility in light of that final day, so that, Lord, as we devote ourselves to this sacred task, we might please you in our motive and attitude as we anticipate that reward from the chief shepherd himself. Oh, Lord, thank you for these words.

I pray that they would have their transforming effect in all our hearts and lives, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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