

Part One - Shepherd the Flock of God

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[0 : 00] Thanks, Norman. We'll continue where we were at. We're looking at this threefold, what you might almost say, negativity regarding the eldership.

First, they weren't to work reluctantly. And the second, they weren't to do it. Greed was not to be the motivating factor. Now, that doesn't mean that there is to be no remuneration or that there is to be no payment made, because the Lord elsewhere says that the laborer is worthy of his hire.

It means very simply that in the church, we must never be motivated by what we do for money, or that we would in any way try and exploit people or try and work things in such a way that what we're doing is in order, that it will be to our good, to our benefit.

That's basically what it is saying. It's not saying here that there should never be money or anything like that, but that the heart must be pure and the motives must be right. And the third thing is that that mustn't be done in a domineering way, forcing and in a forceful way, determined to have your own way, your own will, your own authority stamped over everything.

If we are to be true under shepherds, then we must follow the way of Jesus. And the way of Jesus was not to drive, but to lead.

[1 : 33] And that must be the way. That is really the biblical way. And so Peter is saying that there are to be examples to the flock of God.

And then Peter looks ahead and he says, when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

You see, Jesus will examine every ministry and every work within the church, whether it is at an official level or at an unofficial level.

He will examine the work of every minister and every elder and every deacon and every member and every believer. He is going to examine the work of that person.

The all-seeing eye is to see and take note of what is happening. And when you go to the book of Revelation and we find the Lord looking at the seven churches there, we find them assessing their work, what they're doing.

[2 : 37] And remember that the verdict that he gives is so different really to what they thought or what they expected. At the end of the day, what we are all looking for and working towards is the well-done, good and faithful servant.

And sometimes we might be completely wrong in our assessment and judgment of what people are about. Because some people in the work might be doing it out of a motivation to self, a motivation for their own glory, a motivation for the well-done from people.

That is not to be the motivating factor, but it is out of service to the Lord. So that at the end of the day, it is God's well-done that we hear.

And then Peter says that here that love, of course, and I don't think we need to emphasize that, though he doesn't, in this particular instance, he is so often emphasizing love that love has to be at the very forefront of all we do.

And so, when the chief shepherd, now we mentioned this before, Jesus is referred to in the Bible as a good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep. He is mentioned elsewhere as a great shepherd who has risen for the sheep and is ruling and governing his church today.

[4 : 05] And he is mentioned here as a chief shepherd who is going to return to take all the sheep home with himself. So the chief...

So Christ, as the shepherd, he is the one who has his fold, he has his flock, and he has his pasture. The fold, of course, is...

The fold, of course, is where all the sheep come into. And we've got to remember that Christ himself is the door of the sheep.

He is the door of the fold. And it is in and through Jesus that we enter in. If you today are a believer, you are in this fold.

And you know, the wonderful thing about this fold is it is absolutely secure. There are no holes in the fence so that no robber can come in and take you out.

[5 : 10] And you cannot... You cannot be... You're as safe and secure as it is possible to be. And you and I know in this world that that's a very difficult thing is to get absolute and ultimate security.

People are obsessed with security today. And yet it's almost impossible to find full security. Well, here we have it in Jesus Christ.

this fold is completely secure. And then within the fold are all the flock and every one of them is known and precious to Jesus.

And that's a wonderful thing. We used to have a few sheep, not a lot, when we lived in Calanish. Now, I knew some of the sheep as I looked at them, as I looked at their faces.

But I didn't know them all as I looked at their faces. But, you know, there were one or two folk around who had a lot of sheep. And they knew every sheep by its face.

[6 : 11] They didn't need to look at an ear marking. They didn't need to look at keel in the back. They didn't need to look at anything. It was an amazing thing where they could, they would know their own sheep just by looking in the face.

Now, I found that quite extraordinary. But, you know, the Lord knows all his own. Every single one. everyone has been brought into the fold by him.

Everyone has been marked by him. His mark is upon us. He knows us. And he loves us. He knows us because he died for us. That's the way he opened the door for us.

By dying. And of course he loves us. It's impossible for Jesus to have laid down his life for a person and not know about them. Nobody is going to come before Jesus at the end of the day and Jesus is going to say, Oh, now, yes, I hadn't realized I died for you.

Jesus will never say that. He knows every single one. Everyone. And that's a wonderful thing. So there's the, there's the, there's the fold and there's the flock and there's the pasture.

[7 : 23] And again, Jesus himself is the pasture because we feed upon him. He's everything. He's the fold. He's the way in. He is, he is the shepherd of the flock and he himself is the pasture.

They shall go in and when he takes them in, that's what he says in John, they shall go in and out and find pasture. And that is where we are. We come to his word.

We feed upon his word. We feed upon himself. That's what we want to do. And that's why that's what the Lord wants us to do. If we today could understand the heart of Jesus, we would see that Jesus wants us to take of himself, to feed upon himself, to be nourished by himself.

Take, eat. That's what he's saying, remember, at the Lord's Supper. And Jesus wants us to be at the Supper.

He wants us to be at the Lord's Supper. Take, eat. Take, eat of myself. He wants to fellowship with us. His desire for you and me to feed upon him is far greater than our desire to feed upon him.

[8 : 44] Be quite persuaded of that. Jesus today wants you to be nourished and fed and built up and strengthened and developed and maturing.

That's what he wants. And he wants you to come and to eat. And so, Peter is saying, he's talking here about the chief shepherd and he says, when the chief shepherd appears, and his appearing, as we know, will be very, very different to his first appearing.

When he comes this time, all will see him. It will be sudden, it will be spectacular, and it will be solemn.

Nobody will be asking and say, what's that? Or, who is that? Every eye will see him. Everybody will recognize him and know, this is the returning Christ.

And at that moment, there will be two totally different reactions. There will be one of terror and one of joy. I've got to ask you the question, if Jesus is to return now, what would your reaction be?

[9 : 53] Would it be one of thankfulness? Would it be one of joy? Or would it be one of fear and terror?

Would you be amongst those who are calling to the rocks and to the mountains to fall upon them, to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb? Or would you be saying, as it says at the very end of Revelation, even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Well, Peter says that when he appears, we will receive the unfading crown of glory. This crown of glory that will never fade.

This is speaking, of course, of honor, of attainment, of dignity, of authority, of greatness. And this crown, very different to the crown of the garland of leaves that was given in the days of Peter, very different even from a crown of gold, which will be put upon the head of royalty and would carry with it ten thousand worries.

Because there must be an awful lot of worries when that crown goes in a person's head. There will be an awful lot of worries. We'll go on with it. But here is a crown of glory that will never fade away and will continue to be all that it is reflecting.

[11 : 21] This crown is reflecting the glory of Christ himself as mediator. All that's in it, unfading. Everything in this world fades out.

Everything. Homes, lives, health, strength, beauty, speed, everything fades. But here's something that will never fade.

As that amazing grace when we've been there ten thousand years, bright, shining as the sun. And that's how it's going to be. Unfading.

The glory forever and ever and ever. It's no wonder Peter is looking forward and he's saying that's why he's saying to the church and those who are in authority in the church, time is short.

Christ is coming. You want to be a partaker in that glory. You're going to have an unfading crown of glory. Well, get busy. Get busy for the Lord, to the Lord, serve the Lord.

[12 : 22] And may we seek then to know that the joy of service and the joy and satisfaction that is found in following the Lord Jesus. Let's pray.

O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks for every good thing and for thy blessings to us, for thy goodness and mercy, and that thou will keep us, O Lord, in the way.

Do us good, we pray. Guide us and keep us and take us all home safely and forgive us our sin. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.