

# The Pastor's Charge, Part 1

by C.J. Mahaney

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*Pastors have a vital role in preparing their churches for suffering, trusting God in the midst of it, and being there at the side of their congregation when they suffer.*

**Duration:** 1:01:19

**Scripture:** Psalm 23

**Topics:** "Pastoral Ministry", "Spiritual Leadership"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of shepherding the flock of God, drawing from 1 Peter chapter 5. It highlights the deep responsibility and privilege of pastoral ministry, focusing on the metaphor of shepherding throughout redemptive history. The speaker encourages pastors to be amazed and humbled by their calling, reminding them of the grace and restoration available even in moments of weakness and failure.

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## Transcript

Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 5, and it is my privilege this evening and Wednesday evening to address you from this passage. So let us give our attention to God, to his word as he once again, yet again, so kindly and graciously addresses us this evening. 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 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. Just pause with me as I ask for mercy so that I might serve you effectively this evening.

Father, have mercy on me at this time, in this moment, so that I might serve those before me, those I love, those I so desire to serve. Lord, you know of my deep respect for these men and their wives. You know I want to play whatever small role I can in their lives.

You know I want to make whatever small contribution I can to their hearts and pastoral ministry. So could this be one of those moments? Grant me that desire. Oh Lord, I in this prayer am not seeking to overcome any reluctance in you.

You are eager to bless your people when they gather and give attention to your word, and you, you the chief shepherd, are particularly eager to bless those you have called to pastoral ministry when they gather to give attention to your word. So I proceed with great confidence, not in myself, but with great confidence in the chief shepherd, that he is present to bless, that he is present to refresh all shepherds present, to refresh the wives who are present of these shepherds, to refresh them with the word of God. So Spirit of God, grant that gift of illumination as we contemplate this passage and apply it to our lives.

May it make a difference, or may it make an immediate difference. May this word be felt immediately in its effects as we contemplate this passage, as I have the privilege to preach this passage. May the felt effect of this passage be immediately apparent, and may it have an enduring effect as well.

May it make a discernible difference, a discernible difference as everyone present returns home, a discernible difference even this Sunday, a discernible difference to those we return to serve, those you have entrusted to our care. So, chief shepherd, care for those you've called to be shepherds. Through the preaching of your word I pray, and I thank you in Jesus' name, amen.

If you love history, if you love history, then you've probably noticed that there has been a recent renewed interest in presidential history in general, and Mr. Abraham Lincoln in particular. This appears to have been inspired by the celebration taking place throughout this year, marking the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth, and it also appears to be inspired in part by President Obama's interest in Abraham Lincoln as well. I, like many of you, I love history, and if I were the President of the United States, I think my first official act would be to identify and assemble the leading presidential historians of our time.

Actually, let me revise that. That would be my second official act, because my first official act would be, my first official act would be to eliminate the BCS. That would be my first official act.

Ladies, that would be the bowl championship series that would relate to college football, and I would eliminate that series immediately as President of the United States. I would jail all those who are responsible for that, and I would create a playoff system and series that would involve either eight or 10 teams. I haven't finalized that yet.

I'll get back to you when I do. That's what I would do. Second thing I would do is I would address college basketball, and I would increase the fouls from five to six so that you wouldn't be disqualified until you committed six fouls, so that would transform college basketball immediately, and then I would do something historic and unprecedented.

I would create a new cabinet position. I would create a position Secretary of Sports. I would.

I'd have a Secretary of Sports, and I would actually, I would probably assign myself to be the Secretary, and I'm sure I would be reelected by a landslide, so those would be some of my first official acts, but when I turned away from the world of sports, I would turn to the world of history, and I would indeed identify, and I would assemble the leading presidential historians of our time. I would want, I would actually, I would want to meet with them weekly. I would want to meet with them weekly so that they could instruct me, so that they could instruct me from presidential history so that on a weekly basis, I could ask them questions about presidential leadership throughout history because there is a wealth of wisdom present in history, and I would be a fool if I were president not to take advantage of this.

Harry Truman, the 33rd President of the United States, was no fool. The man loved history, and he understood the unique role of past presidents, and the unique example and counsel they provided for him as the, in effect, weight of responsibility for our country and in the midst of war weighed upon his soul. There's an excellent book, Truman, by David McCullough.

McCullough quotes Harry Truman on this exact topic. President Truman said the following, if a man is acquainted with what other people have experienced at this desk, Truman would say, sitting in the Oval Office, it will be easier for him to go through a similar experience. It is ignorance that causes most mistakes.

The man who sits here ought to know his American history at least. When Truman talked of presidents past, Jackson, Polk, Lincoln, it was as if he had known them personally. If ever there was a clean break from all that had gone before, he would say, the result would be chaos.

Now, if it is wise for a sitting president to pay careful attention to and learn from previous presidents, then it would certainly be wise for us as pastors to pay careful attention and learn from the example of godly leaders in Scripture and pay particular attention to passages in Scripture that address those who serve in pastoral ministry. There is a wealth, there is a wealth of wisdom from above present in these passages and we would in effect be fools not to take advantage of this. So, this evening we will hear, we will hear from someone who was familiar with pastoral ministry.

Someone who knew what it was like to sit behind the desk of a pastor and stand behind the sacred desk instructing the local church and his divinely inspired words will make it easier for us to pastor. Easier for us to go through a similar experience. Ignorance of these words will be the cause of most of our mistakes and if there is a clean break from these words, then the result will be chaos.

Sadly, as one studies pastoral ministry and observes pastoral ministry across the landscape of American evangelicalism, the ignorance of what Scripture teaches about pastoral ministry, the break from pastoral ministry as theologically defined and described in Scripture and the resultant chaos is quite evident and very grieving. The man who sits in the oval office should be familiar with those who have previously occupied this office and the pastor of a local church should be familiar with these divinely inspired words from the pen of Peter. Like Truman's familiarity with previous presidents, we should be so familiar with these words that when we reference these words, it is as if we had known Peter personally.

So let me ask you, how familiar are you with these words? These divinely inspired words. First Peter chapter five verses one through four. This evening, this evening we have the privilege, we have the privilege and the thrill of being instructed about pastoral ministry by Peter himself, who identifies himself in this passage as a fellow elder, as someone who has sat behind the pastoral desk, someone who is intimately familiar with pastoral ministry.

The man understands the responsibilities of pastoral ministry, the challenges of pastoral ministry, the pressures of pastoral ministry. He has felt them. He has faced them.

He empathizes with us. He's one of us. We have the privilege and thrill of spending time this evening and learning from someone who was a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed.

Someone who was not only intimately familiar with pastoral ministry, listen, someone who was intimately familiar with the chief shepherd himself. He learned from the chief shepherd himself what it means to be a shepherd, what's involved in pastoral ministry, how to shepherd the flock of God. And most important this evening, most important this evening, we have the privilege and thrill of being addressed by the chief shepherd himself.

He has inspired these words. He has preserved these words, specifically for those who are called to pastoral ministry. And he addresses us personally this evening, identifying himself in this passage as the chief shepherd.

Oh, these verses we are gonna contemplate this evening and Wednesday evening are a unique gift from the chief shepherd to all he has called to shepherd the flock of God so that we would not be ignorant, so that we wouldn't make unnecessary mistakes, so that there would not be chaos, but instead so that we would be wise and effective and fruitful in our care for and leadership of the church, ultimately for the glory of God. Let's give our full attention and our careful attention to this passage this evening so that we might receive the wealth of grace and wisdom present in this passage so that our churches, the churches we have the privilege to serve might experience the fruit and effect of this passage in and through our service and our leadership. What a privilege, what a thrill.

Two evenings devoting our entire attention to in effect sitting at the feet of the chief shepherd and learning how to shepherd the flock of God. Now, prior to our contemplation of this passage, we've gotta take a few unhurried moments to consider the context of the passage. Actually, Peter insists we do this as indicated by the opening word in verse one.

So, so, the word indicates an inferential connection with the preceding paragraph or preceding content of this letter. So functions as a therefore, drawing our attention to the previous paragraph and assuming knowledge of the previous paragraph. So one must not read or interpret chapter five verses one through four divorced from the previous paragraph.

In chapter five, verse one through four, Peter doesn't just suddenly and randomly address pastors. The previous paragraph, chapter four, verses 12 through 19, informs chapter five, verses one through four, and the previous paragraph is about suffering. Chapter four, verse 12, he references the fiery trial, the fiery trial that they are experiencing.

Actually, suffering is a predominant theme throughout the entirety of the letter. The entire letter is punctuated by references to suffering. Peter introduces this theme of suffering at the outset of the letter.

In chapter one, verse six, we read that, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials. And actually, this reference in chapter four is the fifth time in just four chapters that he has addressed suffering. And in chapter four, verses 12 through 19, he identifies a particular kind of suffering, a particular kind of suffering a Christian experiences for their identification with Jesus Christ.

Suffering in the form of opposition from the non-Christian populace. And if you study the internal evidence of the letter, it's quite obvious that the church scattered throughout Asia Minor was experiencing persecution. They were being slandered, maligned, and reviled, and there is the possibility that this involved physical suffering as well.

So from the outset of this letter, Peter has been caring for them in the midst of suffering. He has been preparing them for suffering. He has been informing them about the purpose of suffering.

He has been informing them about the appropriate response to suffering and the difference the gospel makes in the midst of suffering. He has been addressing how to live in a culture that is intolerant to the exclusive claims of the gospel. And what you wanna notice in chapter four, verses 12 through 19, you wanna notice the skillful pastoral care that is particularly evident in these verses.

Verse 12, note, do not be surprised by these fiery trials. Continue reading in verse 12. Do not think it strange.

Do not be surprised. Do not think it strange. In verse 15, Peter addresses, in effect says, don't be the cause of your suffering.

And then note in verse 16, he says, do not be ashamed of your suffering, or do not be ashamed in the midst of your trials. And then the content of verses 12 through 18 really provides a biblical perspective of suffering and then delivers us to verse 19, where we read, therefore, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful creator while doing good. So the content of verses 12 through 18 positions them to apply verse 19.

Peter assures them. He assures them that God is sovereign and that God is faithful and that he can trust them and entrust themselves to him, just like the Savior who he referenced previously in chapter two when he wrote, when he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but he continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

So suffering informs chapter five, verses one through four. Suffering informs pastoral ministry and, in effect, infuses pastoral ministry with a particular urgency and importance and weight. The more violent the suffering, the more vulnerable the flock, and the more imperative the need for faithful pastoral ministry.

So in chapter five, verses one through four, we are reminded about the importance of pastoral ministry in the midst of suffering and the difference pastoral ministry can make when the church suffers. Now, pastors are never optional for the church, always necessary for the church prior to the Savior's return, but pastors are, if possible, even more critical in the midst of suffering. And here's what a pastor needs to know about suffering and how they are to serve during the season of refinement for the church, how they are to serve and care for the church through suffering.

So in light of suffering, here are the implications for pastors in the midst of suffering. Here is how to care for and serve and lead the church in the midst of suffering because we are responsible to care for the people of God and to prepare the people of God for the fiery trial. We must prepare our churches for various forms of suffering a Christian will experience.

Please don't confine your understanding of suffering to exclusively to persecution. Suffering in Scripture is a broad category. It involves and includes persecution for the faith.

It involves trials of various kinds. It involves being sinned against. It involves sickness.

It involves death. It is a broad category, and I want to encourage you to take advantage of a three-part series that was given by our friend John Piper if you were present at the last T4G conference in the final interview where we had the privilege to interact with John after his message. I believe it was Ligdunken

referenced this series John did on suffering, and John communicated what he taught in the context of this particular series.

He was addressing our tendency to restrict suffering to persecution alone or exclusively to persecution or to assume that these passages like chapter four verses 12 through 19 are only relevant to persecution, and so he was encouraging us to broaden our understanding of suffering as a means of serving the church, and so he taught a three-part series at Wheaton College called Treasuring Christ and the Call to Suffer, and I would encourage all pastors to take advantage of the content of this particular series and to benefit from its relevance for our role as pastors in preparing the church for suffering and caring for the church in the midst of suffering. Pastors must prepare their churches for suffering, and pastors play an absolutely vital role in the midst of suffering because when someone suffers, they are vulnerable to being surprised by their suffering, confused when they suffer, and not sure how to glorify God in the midst of suffering, and appropriate teaching and pastoral care can make all the difference when someone experiences suffering in whatever form, however long. We ought to prepare the church for suffering so that they don't think it strange when they experience suffering, so that they are not surprised by suffering or confused when they suffer, so that they are assured that God is sovereign in the midst of suffering and has a divine purpose for their suffering, even when they can't immediately discern that purpose, so that they are assured that God is present, even though it can feel as if He is distant or even absent, so they do not think God is judging them or condemning them when He is simply refining them and actually desires to reveal Himself to them.

In verse 17, the reference to judgment beginning in the house of God, it's not a reference to punitive judgment, but purifying and refining fire. When someone is suffering, God isn't condemning them, God is refining them. It's the fiery trial, doesn't destroy the people of God, but instead refines them and draws them closer to the Lord and makes us, by God's grace, more like the Lord.

So if those we have the privilege to serve are prepared for suffering, if they are informed about the purpose of suffering, then they will be able to apply verse 19, and in the words of Spurgeon, they will be able to trust God's heart even when they cannot trace His hand in their lives. Many, many years ago, a wise older pastor said the following to me, following exact words, CJ, prepare your church for suffering. I am so grateful that I was the recipient of his wise counsel, and that by God's grace, I sought to devote myself to his counsel and serve this church I love the most and prepare them for suffering.

It was some period of time after that interaction with this wise older pastor that in one week here in this church, we had two children die. They died in the same week. Friday night, we met at the funeral home for one child.

Saturday morning, we buried that child. Saturday night, to the funeral home again for another child. Sunday after the meeting, buried that child.

Friday night, I will never forget at one point being seated and looking out on a large room filled with church members grieving and crying. Small casket, child's toys. As I studied the scene with tear-filled eyes, somebody got in front of me and said the following.

No one, you prepared us for this. Exact words, no one at God, no one is complaining. Everyone is grieving but trusting for preparing us for this.

Pastor, you must prepare your church for suffering. As Don Carson has written, all one has to do is live long enough and one will suffer. And when those in your church experience suffering, particular severe suffering or prolonged suffering, your care for them is of critical importance.

Adversity and suffering is a time when the role of a pastor is unique and is a role unlike any other role. We must prepare the church for suffering and we must be there at their side when they suffer. And pastors, we must not miss these moments.

We must not miss these moments. We must not miss these events. We must not miss these seasons.

Listen, we are all of us as pastors. We are all weak and we are sinful and we fail. We fail pastorally.

I fail pastorally each and every day. But there's a difference, I think there's a difference between failing to serve as effectively as I would desire in the mundane of daily life, failure to serve as effectively as I desire in daily decision making, fail to serve as effectively as I desire in sermon preparation, fail to serve as effectively as I desire in sermon proclamation. There's a difference between failing to serve in all those ways and failing to prepare someone for suffering and failing to care for someone in the midst of suffering.

There's a difference. Listen, there's a difference. There's a difference between a professional baseball player making an error in the fourth inning of a regular season game in June and the error Bill Buckner made in the 10th inning of the sixth game of the 1986 World Series.

And I think when we fail to effectively prepare folks for suffering and care for folks in the midst of suffering, particularly suffering that is severe or prolonged, it's a spiritual error of the Bill Buckner nature and magnitude. And listen, by God's grace, by God's grace when we prepare folks for suffering and when we care for folks in the midst of suffering, they will never forget the difference we made. They will never forget the role we played during the most difficult time of their lives and their gratefulness will be deep and it will be profound and it will be unending.

So the pastoral role and responsibility as described in chapter five verses one through four must be informed by suffering. And pastoral ministry is infused with a particular urgency and importance because of suffering. A suffering church needs pastors and pastoral ministry and a suffering church needs pastors and pastoral ministry as defined and described in verses one through four.

So I think now we are appropriately prepared to consider this divinely inspired exhortation, this description of pastoral ministry, this pastoral charge. There are three points I want to draw your attention to this evening, or no, I want to draw your attention to derived from this text. Actually this evening I only have one point I wanna draw your attention to.

This evening I want to address one point, I want to address the task. And then on Wednesday evening I will address the final two points. This evening, just the task.

This evening, just verse two. The task, shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight. The task, shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight.

In these few words we encounter a theologically rich metaphor, shepherd. A relatively broad command with many implications, shepherd the flock of God. And one implication in particular is specified, exercising oversight.

And by identifying the elders as those called to shepherd the flock of God, Peter here employs an evocative metaphor to describe our role and responsibility. Identifying the work of elders with the shepherding imagery that would have been familiar to the original recipients of this letter. This designation of elders as shepherds, and this task, shepherd the flock of God, is evocative both historically and theologically.

The original recipients of this charge would be aware that Peter is drawing from a rich Old Testament background when he exhorts the elders to shepherd the flock of God. And in order for us to comprehend and feel, and I want us to feel, feel the full impact of this charge and our call, we must be aware as well. And I would have to acknowledge that up until recently I was only superficially aware.

I was only superficially aware of the rich theological background present in this exhortation and this metaphor in particular. But my understanding of this metaphor and its theological significance has deepened. It has deepened through Jeff's class on biblical theology and a book I'm reading that was recommended to me by my friend, Phil Sasser.

The title of the book is *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, subtitled *Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* by Timothy Laniac, available in the bookstore. And I would encourage you pastors to obtain this book and to read this book. Now, I was talking to Phil about it this afternoon, and he was saying, well, the book can at times be tedious.

And I said, yes, the book can at times be tedious, but when you feel the full impact of this metaphor upon your soul, it is worth your time and effort to endure some degree of tedium and to read through this book so that this metaphor transforms your perspective of yourself and your role in the context of your local church. Let me just create an appetite for this book by giving you two references from this book. Mr. Laniac writes the following.

At a time when books on leadership are being published at a dizzying pace, listen, one wonders if the Bible has anything to say about it. Lord, I need self-control. There are so many comments I want to make here, but I don't know that it would serve everybody to make them, so please restrain me.

While the Bible does say a lot about the topic, there has been no survey like the one you are about to read. One of the primary metaphors by which biblical authors conceptualize leadership is shepherding. This is quite consistent throughout the Old and New Testaments.

Yet no exegetical resource orients the culturally removed contemporary pastor to the wealth of this material. It is my hope that the following journey through Scripture will prompt rich reflection on the nature of the pastor's identity as God's under-shepherd. Listen, one cannot take this journey through Scripture without being deeply affected by this journey.

And a few pages later, Laniac describes the effect of this journey when he writes, in light of the current interest in leadership and in the face of our culture's tendency to package concepts in tidy boxes, one might expect this to be a contribution to a new model called shepherd leadership. Principles will surface in this study. However, pastors who have read this work have described a different benefit, a more subtle but profound change in their sense of identity.

This might be the product of a fresh connection to the historic plan of God with his people. It might be a sense of awe at being called to serve behind the great shepherd. Lord, I pray that we would all feel that

sense being called to serve behind.

Behind, I am affected by that sentence every time I read it. Oh, Lord, increase our sense of awe that we have been called to serve behind the great shepherd. For some, it is a renewed regard for their vocation as a robust and significant calling.

The shepherd image, listen, is about perspective as much as praxis. Yes, it is. It's about perspective as much, if not more.

And we must remember that perspective always precedes practice. We prematurely desire specifics related to practice, but we must be first informed by perspective so that all our practice is rooted in perspective and derived from perspective. And when you are informed by this perspective, it will find its way into all of your practices and it will create new practices.

These are the kinds of effects and affects a metaphor should have. The mounting force of the metaphor should make some lasting impressions. Oh my, one cannot make this journey without experiencing lasting impressions.

A biblical theology of this metaphor, the shepherd, must inform our practice of pastoral ministry. This must be a primary informing metaphor for us in sovereign grace ministry, for all pastors in sovereign grace ministry. Our primary metaphor informing pastoral ministry is not found in the managerial world.

It is not derived from the world of business. It is found in this world. It is the world of a shepherd.

So I recommend you take this journey. Schedule this journey for yourself over the next year. Take this journey yourself over the next year for the good of your soul and for the sake of your church.

And what I hope is these few minutes tonight really create a desire for this journey. I hope this message in effect forms a brochure, an effective brochure creating a desire in your heart for the actual journey and the resultant experience, lasting impressions. When we encounter this metaphor in 1 Peter 5, shepherd the flock of God, it arrives, listen, it arrives in verse Peter chapter 5 with mounting force.

It arrives with mounting force for those who are aware of its role in redemptive history. So just for a couple of minutes, I'll take you on a journey. Let's take a brief journey together so that we might have a fresh experience this evening of the mounting force of this metaphor as it arrives in 1 Peter chapter 5. So let's begin.

Let's begin in Genesis chapter 48 where Jacob identifies God strikingly as my shepherd. In Genesis 48, 15, we read the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day. Being a shepherd himself as was his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham, this metaphor God as my shepherd would be rich with meaning for Jacob.

And the journey continues. The journey continues in Psalm 23 where we overhear David as he sings, the Lord is my shepherd. In Psalm 23, David composes one of the world's most enduring poems and he conceives of God as his shepherd and he fills out the metaphor and describes for us in detail the personal and comprehensive nature of God's shepherding care.

And then we come to God's promise of kingship to David in 2 Samuel 5. We hear God say, you are going to be the shepherd of my people Israel. And so God's own shepherding care is now going to be mediated

through an appointed leader. And then in Jeremiah 3, verse 15, in the wake of judgment upon the northern kingdom, we hear God bidding his people to repent and he makes the following promise.

And I will give you shepherds after my own heart who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. Next we hear Ezekiel addressing God's people in the midst of exile. He indicts the leaders of Israel for failing in their call as shepherds.

And then God promises to rescue his sheep and provide a faithful shepherd. I will rescue my flock. They shall no longer be a prey.

And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David. And he shall feed them and he shall feed them and he shall be their shepherd. And then centuries pass and one day, a day long awaited for, a day like no other day, the promised one raises his voice and says, I am the good shepherd.

I am the good shepherd. And the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. I am the good shepherd.

I know my own and my own know me. And I lay down my life for the sheep. And he did indeed lay down his life.

And after he did lay down his life on the cross for our sins and was raised from the dead and following his resurrection, he restores one who denied him prior to his death. He restores Peter and he commissions him with these words, Simon, do you love me? Feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep. And no doubt with this experience vividly in mind, Peter writes in chapter five, verse two, shepherd, the flock of God.

And so with mounting force, this metaphor comes to us in first Peter five, where we are informed here, we are informed that the elders are the inheritors of the shepherding function of God himself, which finds its highest expression in the savior who is called in this passage, the chief shepherd. Throughout redemptive history, God has been gathering a people for himself that he will shepherd and care for. And one day they will dwell with him for all eternity.

And so in first Peter five, we don't simply have a random job description for elders, but instead a text that reveals the purpose of God to gather a people and the nature of God to care for his people. And most importantly, the gospel has the highest expression of that care. When Peter exhorts us to shepherd the flock of God, he reminds us of our place in redemptive history, of our place in the history of God's personal and particular and passionate care for his people, both directly and through human agency.

Shepherds, we are being addressed this evening as those who are called by God to play a part in the purpose of God for his people in redemptive history. We are to look at this phrase and ponder this phrase, shepherd the flock of God among you, and look up from our Bibles and be affected in the deepest part of our soul that we have been called by the chief shepherd. To shepherd the flock of God.

The flock of God, to shepherd the flock of God in Richmond, shepherd the flock of God in Charlotte, shepherd the flock of God in Franklin, West Virginia, to shepherd the flock of God in Orlando, to shepherd the flock of God in Boston and in Chicago, shepherd the flock of God in Minneapolis, to shepherd the flock of God in El Paso, shepherd the flock of God in Pasadena, to shepherd the flock of God in San Diego, to shepherd the flock of God in 23 countries of the world. We have been called to, listen, shepherd the flock of God. This task, shepherd the flock of God, is the most elevated task God could assign a man because this is the flock of God.

This is God's flock, God's people, the flock of God. We've been called to care for his people, serve his people, teach his people, lead his people. They aren't our people, they are his people.

They are the flock of God. They are those for whom Christ died. We have been called to care for his people.

We have been entrusted with those for whom the Savior died. He died for them and some of them have been temporarily entrusted to us so that we can direct their attention to him. We are to shepherd them.

We're to shepherd them, we're to feed them and tend them and care for them and protect them and pursue them when they stray. We are to apply the gospel to their hearts. We represent the chief shepherd and we are to, in some way, reflect the chief shepherd.

Most important, we are to draw their attention to the chief shepherd who uniquely suffered for them and calls them to suffer for him. We are to shepherd the flock of God. We are to exercise oversight which involves attentiveness, watchfulness, knowing their condition, provision and protection.

It requires our sacrifice and our service and the content, the force of this metaphor, shepherd the flock of God. As it arrives in 1 Peter 5, the mounting force of this metaphor, shepherd the flock of God, should leave us, there simply should be nobody more amazed than we are. That one has been called to pastoral ministry.

That one has been called to shepherd the flock of God should leave us both amazed and humbled. I think our amazement at this call should rival and be exceeded in amazement only by the experience of conversion. Listen, my conversion remains incomprehensible to me, just incomprehensible.

In light of his holiness and my sinfulness, in light of his justice and my sinfulness, in light of his wrath and my sinfulness, the grace of God as revealed in the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ for my sins is simply amazing. My conversion is incomprehensible. It is amazing, but God, call a sinner to shepherd his.

Why, why would God also call, it's simply amazing he has saved us, but why would he also call us to pastoral ministry? Why, why would we be called to play some role in caring for his people? Listen, I am, as I ponder my conversion, I am increasingly amazed by grace as I contemplate the Father's love as revealed through the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross for my sins. I am not less amazed today. I am not simply as amazed today as I once was upon my conversion.

No, I am more amazed. My amazement by the grace of God, about the grace of God has only increased over the years, not decreased, and I'm sure that would be your experience as well. But I am also increasingly amazed as I contemplate the call of God to pastoral ministry.

I am increasingly amazed and perplexed that God would call me to pastoral ministry because I am, listen, I am increasingly aware of so many reasons why I think this wasn't the smartest move on his part. Increasingly amazed that he would entrust all to you. I'm gonna entrust them to you.

And it's humbling, it's humbling because who is sufficient for this task? I mean, one can't contemplate this call, this charge, this task without being reminded of one's weakness and one's sin. Can't do it. I mean, to be reminded of this task is to be reminded of one's weakness and sin.

And so before I close, I wanna serve you by reminding you who wrote these words. Because the one who wrote these words, the one who penned this exhortation was very familiar with weakness and sin and failure. And his weakness and sin and failure are all well-known, having been recorded and preserved in the Gospels, the book of Acts, Paul's letter to the Galatians.

First Peter was written by the man who boldly and arrogantly declared, even though they all fall away, I will not. And when the Savior adjusted that arrogant declaration, Peter said emphatically, if I must die with you, I will not deny you. And then Luke tells us that upon Peter's third emphatic denial, the Lord looked at him and it appears there was eye contact.

These words, chapter five, verses one through four were written by the man who publicly denied the Savior and who was restored by the Savior after his resurrection. And no doubt, that unforgettable experience of being restored by the Savior was vivid, vivid in Peter's heart and mind when he wrote, look carefully, chapter five, verse 10. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

So there is hope. There is hope, even if you're Simon Peter, there is hope for us all. The one who denied the Savior, who was restored by the Savior is the very one who this evening exhorts us to shepherd the flock of God.

So I hope that this exhortation from the inspired pen of Peter to shepherd the flock of God ultimately reminds all of us of the good shepherd who laid down his life for our sins, the chief shepherd who by his grace has called us to care for his people. The one who has called us to this sacred task. May we begin this conference freshly amazed and deeply humbled.

May that sense of awe rest like a discernible weight upon our souls as we contemplate who we have been called to stand behind. The great, the great. The next time you are asked what you do, this won't alter the content of what you communicate, but it'll have a transforming effect on the tone.

There should be some element of amazement in your voice when you inform someone, I'm a pastor. The mounting force of this metaphor should affect your soul. What are we doing here? How did you get here? The more perplexing question is, why am I here? Because I don't deserve, and I'm humbled.

Because I'm not sufficient, not sufficient. But Peter makes eye contact with me and says, there's hope for you because God himself will restore and confirm and strengthen and establish you. Here's what I pray.

I pray that this perspective makes a difference the next two days. I pray that we arrive at each seminar and the evening session amazed and humbled. I pray we listen differently, having been informed by this metaphor.

I pray we eagerly anticipate being equipped by the chief shepherd to shepherd the flock of God. I pray we are amazed. I pray we are humbled.

I pray this perspective makes a discernible difference in our heart and practice. I pray that it's obvious to those we return to. I pray in our heart that we would please God as we contemplate this call to shepherd.

Lord, may that sense of awe rest upon us. Increase our amazement. We are deeply humbled.

And we thank you this evening for forgiving us our many sins and constantly restoring us when we sin and confess our sin. Thank you, Lord, for this perplexing call. I pray that there would be a sense of awe in all our souls as we contemplate this call.

I pray fresh amazement would break out in the hearts of all who are present. And Lord, we are deeply humbled as we contemplate this call because in and of ourselves, we are not sufficient for this task. But our hope is not in ourselves.

We turn our attention to the chief shepherd who has called us to this task, whose grace makes us sufficient for this task, who died for those who have been entrusted to our care and who has promised, he who began a good work in them shall bring it to completion. So our hope is in you, Lord. And may that fresh hope in you make a difference as we have the privilege to care for those temporarily you have entrusted to us.

All for your glory, I pray and thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.

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