



What Is A Shepherd?

A Pastor's Manual

*"Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks,
and look well to thy herds."*

Proverbs 27:23 KJV

By A. B.

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Introduction

As we begin, it is important to understand that in the New Testament the word in the original Greek for “pastor” and “shepherd” is the same. According to Vine’s *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, the definition of “pastor” is “a shepherd, one who tends herds or flocks.”

When God enters into a relationship with a group of persons and calls them His people, He makes Himself responsible for their care as a shepherd looks after his flock. It is a blessing to know that God has always concerned Himself for His sheep and provided for them in the best possible way.

In this short study we will see:

- How He provides and cares for those who are precious to His heart.
- He Himself has given to some of His servants the very special charge of caring for His own.
- The precious work that He has entrusted into the hands of those who have this great privilege and responsibility of being instruments of the Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Shepherd work is a work of those who are valiant, not lazy or self-seeking. It is for the one who has been called by the Lord and is willing to serve sacrificially with his whole heart. There is One who gives this charge and to whom His servants are accountable.
- Even though not all have been given the gift of a shepherd, each one of us has the privilege and responsibility to care for one another.

May the Lord bless this little study for our learning, help, direction and blessing; for the better care, growth and benefit of the Lord’s sheep; and most importantly for the glory and honor of our Savior and Lord.



The First Shepherd – Abel

God tells us in Genesis, “Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof” (Gen. 4:2-4).

We remember that Adam and Eve were put out of the garden after they sinned. Some time later they had two sons, Cain and Abel. Cain cultivated crops and Abel shepherded sheep and goats. As we consider this it is interesting to see that God speaks of eating meat only after the flood. It seems that Abel did not have his animals for meat. So, what did Abel do with his sheep? He brought the best and the fattest as an offering to God! And, beginning with Abel we see that most of the Old Testament sacrifices were sheep and goats.

What a beautiful example, full of significance, for all pastors! The first shepherd mentioned in the Bible had as his purpose of heart to care for the sheep in such a way that he could present them to God as a special offering – well cared for, strong, fat, healthy, pleasant, without defect or wound; something that would be very pleasing to the heart of God to His honor and glory. By contrast, during the time of Malachi the priests offered animals that were damaged, lame and torn to God’s displeasure (Mal. 1:8). Abel is a wonderful example in his attitude, care, selflessness and purpose of heart. What a challenge for the one who has been given the wonderful privilege and charge as a pastor of God’s flock. May the purpose of his heart be to present to God that which is pleasing, not for himself but for God!

Our Lord Jesus Christ was the perfect shepherd. We read: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). What was this joy that was before the Lord Jesus? It was to glorify God. Certainly it had to do with our salvation and bringing many sons to glory, but His foremost desire was to glorify God and to restore that which Satan had robbed through sin. This was His joy. He was ready to suffer the mocking, the hate, the shame, the curse of being nailed

to the cross, the abuses of man, and the weight of our sins – even to be made sin and to be forsaken by the Holy God. He did this for God and to have sheep from every tribe, tongue, people and nation. It was for these reasons that the Good Shepherd suffered, even to the point of giving His life for His sheep. “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mt. 20:28). The Lord Jesus, our perfect example said, “I am the good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep” (Jn. 10:11). The Lord Jesus Christ came to seek that wayward, lost sheep. Finding that one, He carried it on His shoulders, rejoicing: “What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing” (Lk. 15:4-5).



The Good Shepherd – The Lord Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus not only gave His life so that His sheep could have eternal life, but He also shepherds them every day. He cares and provides for every need of the believer while they are in this hostile, worldly wilderness. Psalm 23 shows us what the Lord, the Good Shepherd, does for His sheep on a daily basis. In this He is the example for pastors as to how they should serve, minister and shepherd the sheep that the Lord has put under their care. When we read this chapter questions for pastors are brought to mind:

- **“The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want”** (v.1). Can the sheep under your care say the same about the way that you are caring for them? Are you really meeting their needs?

- **“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures”** (v.2a). As the sheep are not able to rest unless they are satisfied, thinking of the green pastures, what are you giving your sheep to eat? Are you giving good things: “spiritual milk” (1 Pet. 2:2) and the Word of God? Or are you presenting things that are not from the Bible, such as your own opinions, the unbiblical teachings of a denomination, words to tickle the ears, or ideas and thoughts that will not offend the congregation so as to not lose members? Sheep lie down when they are at peace. Is the situation in their personal lives and in the flock such that they can rest quietly, or is there friction and strife? Problems between sheep affect the entire flock.

- **“He leadeth me beside still waters”** (v.2b). Are you satisfying the thirst of the sheep with pure, fresh water?

- **“He restoreth my soul”** (v.3a). Are you able to comfort or restore those who have hurts and pains in their lives, in their marriages or in their homes? Do you have a good knowledge of the condition, needs and concerns of the sheep? Do you have time for them?

- **“He leadeth me in the path of righteousness”** (v.3b). Are you leading the sheep blamelessly and without respect of persons, yourself being truly righteous? Do you know the right way so that you are able and qualified to guide others?

- **“Yea though I walk through the shadow of the valley of death I will fear no evil for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me”** (v.4). Are you ready to put yourself in front of danger for the protection of the sheep? Do you have the necessary instruments to protect them, guide them and correct them? Are you sufficiently competent to use the instruments in a correct way that will not hurt or discourage?

- **“Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of my enemies”** (v.5a). While here in the enemy’s land where believers are mocked and despised, are you able to provide a spiritual feast for the sheep entrusted to you? Can you direct them to the Lord Jesus?

- **“Thou anointest my head with oil”** (v.5b). At times there are wounds and disease in the sheep that require the application of the correct medicine in a loving, gentle way. Do you know how to do that?

- **“My cup runneth over”** (v.5c). Are the cups of your sheep running over in praise to God for what He has provided for them, including the care granted through the pastor in whose hands God has placed them?

- **“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever”** (v.6). This is the response of a sheep that is very secure, content and well cared for; enjoying the tenderness of God’s love.

Self Evaluation

As His sheep, this should be our response when we think of the Perfect and Good Shepherd and the wonderful care that He gives us. But sadly, many times we complain and are not content. This is our fault, not His. In the same way, the sheep that God has put under our care are many times not satisfied and content. As a pastor one may need to ask, “Is it my fault? Am I an Abel? Am I following the example of the Good Shepherd, to God’s honor and glory?”



Other Shepherds In The Bible

Although the Lord Jesus is our perfect example and model, we can find many valuable lessons and warnings by considering other shepherds in the Bible.

Jacob

When we consider Jacob's example as a shepherd we see that the work of a pastor is not for the coward and weak. It is not easy and does not consist of a life of comfort. Sacrificing, serving and giving are in place of receiving. Shepherds must even be ready to risk their life. The position is one of total surrender for the sake of the sheep. Jacob said to his father-in-law Laban, "Twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes" (Gen. 31:38-40).

We understand the suffering that he experienced in the wilderness, consumed by the extreme heat of daytime or the unpleasant cold of night. Despite the conditions, he did not leave the sheep alone; he suffered with them. He was constantly watching over them, not allowing sleep to overpower him because he knew that the sheep were his responsibility. He had to watch, he had to provide, he had to protect because he was responsible for their well-being, even though they belonged to someone else. What a lesson for those who are shepherds of God's flock today!

Rightly so, we read this next verse thinking of the subjection of the sheep to the shepherd and those who rule over them: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17). But, let's focus on the responsibility of the shepherd.

The one who is a pastor called of God must look after the souls of the sheep that have been given into his care. Every sheep is to be considered a treasure. What does one do with a treasure? He looks after it and guards it with all his heart! While looking after Laban's flock Jacob was personally responsible for the life and condition of each, individual sheep. He had to give an account to the owner for every precious one. Similarly, one day the shepherds of the Lord's flock will give an account to God for how they cared for the sheep. Then they will be rewarded for their work.

From Jacob's example we see the importance of knowing and dealing with each sheep in relation to its individual condition and limitations. Speaking one day to his brother Esau, Jacob said, "My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die. Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure" (Gen. 33:13-14). Jacob knew that he could not push his sheep excessively as this would be harmful to them. The mature ones could withstand more than the younger ones, but to push the young ones too much would be unhealthy. We see this same principle in 1 John 2 where the apostle addressed three distinct groups of people: children, fathers and young men; speaking to each according to their maturity. All believers are not equal – some need milk while others meat. The pastor should know what each one needs and is capable to bear.

From these points we understand that it is not the sheep of the flock that serve the pastor; it is the other way around. The pastor suffers, sacrifices, protects, provides and invests his all, even to his life, for the sheep. He does not concern himself with his own pleasures or desires nor seek his own importance. Rather, he wants the sheep to prosper since they are not his but they belong to the Good Shepherd who gave His life for us all.

Moses

About Moses, Isaiah wrote: "Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? Where is He that put His Holy Spirit within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with

His glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting name?" (Isa. 63:11-12). We remember that Moses grew up in Pharaoh's palace in Egypt receiving what was probably the best education available. But God had a special purpose for Moses and in His counsels He brought him to the desert where he spent 40 years looking after his father-in-law's herds. During those 40 years Moses was in the school of God. When his preparation was finished God called Moses to shepherd His people.

Moses was a very special example of what a pastor should be! He is known to be the meekest man of all (Num. 12:3) – even though the people of Israel were rebellious and tried his patience many times. Because of their disobedience God said several times that He would totally destroy the people of Israel. But Moses intervened on their behalf and petitioned God that He not do so, asking that he, Moses, be destroyed rather than the people (Ex. 32:32).

Although Moses was such an important and esteemed man, who alone had the privilege of coming into the very presence of God, he did not seek his own glory or interests. Rather, he sought blessing for the people, the flock of God.

David

Before David became the king of Israel he looked after his father's herds; he was a shepherd. Although well qualified to write from the perspective of a shepherd, he wrote Psalm 23 as being one of the sheep who experienced the joy of the Good Shepherd – Jehovah.

When David told Saul that he was ready to fight Goliath, he convinced the king with the following words: "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear" (1 Sam. 17:34-36). How courageous it was for a young man of 15-20 years of age to put his life at risk for the sake of the sheep – which were not his own, but his father's. This demonstrates the character of a true shepherd – an example or figure of our Lord Jesus who gave His life in order to free us from the power of Satan, our enemy. David did not do this in his own strength but in the power

of God. So for pastors today, as with all of us – without the Lord we can do nothing.

Later in life King David ordered a census to see the greatness of his army. God was angry at David for doing this and chastened him for it. He sent an angel which went through the nation killing many people. When David saw what was happening he cried out to God, "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? Let Thine hand, I pray Thee, be against me, and against my father's house" (2 Sam. 24:17). Knowing he was the guilty one, it hurt David to see the people suffer. Acknowledging his own guilt and responsibility, he put himself between God and the people to protect them.

This act of protection is just what the Lord Jesus did in the garden of Gethsemane. He put Himself between His disciples and the enemies who came against Him. Jesus told His enemies to let the others go free. We can apply this to ourselves. The Lord Jesus, who never sinned and was not guilty, took our guilt and punishment – dying for us. We read in Isaiah: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (53:5-7).

Paul

The apostle Paul had the privilege of revealing the great truths about the Church after it began on the day of Pentecost. Prior to that, God had Israel as His own chosen people. His relationship with them was based on laws, sacrifices and temple worship. But when they rejected their Messiah by crucifying Him, God set them aside temporarily (waiting for the time when He will take up His relationship with them) and started a special relationship with a new group of people consisting of all believers, the Church. God revealed through Paul how the Church was to function, its membership, the gifts and many other things.

Besides being a teacher and evangelist, Paul was a pastor. We see this in a number of things that he said in his letters. To the Corinthians he wrote: "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not

weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" (2 Cor. 11:28-29). Paul was saying that if anyone had a problem, difficulty or weakness he felt it as if it was his own.

With care and affection, He wrote as a nursing mother to the Thessalonians: "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable [a burden] unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God" (1 Th. 2:7-9).

On another occasion he wrote to the Corinthians as a father: "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me" (1 Cor. 4:14-16), and "Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved" (2 Cor. 12:14-15).

To Timothy, his son in the faith, Paul wrote: "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy" (2 Tim. 1:3-4). We feel the concern that Paul as a shepherd had for one of the sheep, Timothy.

To those of Philippi he wrote: "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith" (Phil. 1:23-25). He continued, "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all" (Phil. 2:17). It is obvious from these verses that he was happy and ready to give his life, his all, for the sheep.

Without a doubt, we see that Paul was a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ and that he cared for the flock with the same attitude as did the Good Shepherd. Both gave themselves totally in service for the sheep.

Conclusion

Reflecting on these beautiful examples we soon understand that to be a pastor is a service of great self-sacrifice, a giving of oneself for the sheep. It is not for personal prominence, but for the purpose of producing a people, at whatever personal cost, that are very pleasing to God!



The Hireling and Bad Shepherds

The Hireling Is Not A Shepherd

The Lord Jesus, when speaking about Himself in John as the Good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep, spoke about the hireling. We read in John 10:11-13: "I am the Good Shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep." Since the hireling is only looking after the sheep for a wage he does not care that much for them. He certainly is not ready to give his life for them as did the Good Shepherd. So one needs to ask himself: "Am I doing this work like the hireling or like the Good Shepherd?"

Bad Shepherds

In Ezekiel 34 God has a message for the shepherds of the people of Israel: "Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; Therefore,

O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out" (vv.2-11). As this is only a portion of the chapter, we encourage you to read the entire chapter to understand God's message of condemnation to the shepherds of Israel and His warning about what He is about to do *against* them and *for* His people. Notice how the Lord, our Good Shepherd in Psalm 23 does everything to meet the needs of the sheep, while the pastors in Israel in Ezekiel 34 did not.

How terrible it is to read these accusations against the pastors of old in Israel, their interests being only themselves. They abused those whom God had given under their care. Of course they did not recognize themselves as being like that – which is the same problem today. There are those who are simply making themselves rich at the sheep's expense. But God saw all the pastors of old did and took account. He rejected them and said that they would receive a just recompense [compensation] for their works (Lk. 23:41).

It is important that pastors put themselves in the light of God's Word to be judged according to His way of thinking and working. With great sadness Paul spoke to the elders in Ephesus, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:28-31). "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer. 17:9-10).

So it is that many times we deceive ourselves to justify what we are doing. But the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd of the sheep warns, "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock,

and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase" (Jer. 23:1-4) and "Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves in the ashes, ye principal of the flock: for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are accomplished; and ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel. And the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape. A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and a howling of the principal of the flock, shall be heard: for the LORD hath spoiled their pasture" (Jer. 25:34-36).

Remember that we have already seen that pastors will one day give an account to God of how they have carried out this service as shepherds of the flock of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 13:17). This position is a very serious and great responsibility. One day God will judge and reward [recompense] each one according to the manner in which they have carried out their service, both good and bad.



Biblical Aspects of Shepherding

Who Calls One To Be A Shepherd?

Although he felt incapable, the call that Moses received was a call directly from God. We read: "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt. And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Ex. 3:10-11). It was the same with David. "Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the shepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel" (2 Sam. 7:8).

In the New Testament we read: "Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? ... And he said unto Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed My sheep" (Jn. 21:15-17). It was the Lord who called Peter.

Even the great apostle Paul did not take this honor for himself but it was given to him by God. "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:1-2).

We read that it was God, by the Holy Spirit, who also selected the elders of the church. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

That *God chooses pastors* is important for all of us to understand in this day and age when there are many varying and incorrect practices of people taking responsibilities on themselves or being given them by others. We may ask where in Scripture do we find the common practices of our day, such as ordination or the selection of a pastor by a congregation? Where are the Biblical justifications to hold church elections where the majority of the members decides? They cannot be found.

Bible college courses or seminary may increase knowledge, but we never find them in Scripture to be qualifications for God's calling. A person designating himself as pastor or referring to a congregation as being "my church," as if he was the owner, places himself in disagreement with the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church, of which there is only one. To take such a position is a very serious thing and should be abandoned because it robs the Lord of His rights and position as head of the Church. When evaluating his abilities, Moses did not consider himself to be capable, even though God called him. And when Samuel went to anoint a new king over Israel the family totally forgot about David. Oh! his brother was very well qualified, they thought; even Samuel thought so. But God said "No!" We read: "And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, 'Surely the LORD's anointed is before him.' But the LORD said unto Samuel, 'Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart'" (1 Sam. 16:6-7).

When considering spiritual things, worldly human thoughts have no place. Neither should we say, "Well this is the way that we have done things over the years"; or "This is the way our denomination does things." We need to search and examine by asking, "What does the Bible say?" Then we need to put the biblical teaching into practice.

When Moses understood that he could not enter into the land of Canaan, he petitioned God that He would not leave Israel without a pastor. "Moses spake unto the LORD, saying, Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd. And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the

Spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honor upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation. And Moses did as the LORD commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation: And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses" (Num. 27:15-23). It is beautiful to see that Moses asked God and God Himself chose the one to be the pastor who would replace Moses. Moses did not even suggest Joshua, even though Joshua had been at his side for many years and seemingly was the obvious choice. It was God who chose!

We know that the Lord is our shepherd. He gave His life for His sheep; and since the Lord has done so, certainly a priority of His heart is the proper care of His own. Mark tells us, "Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and He began to teach them many things" (Mk. 6:34). Since the Lord had compassion for this multitude, can we even imagine that He would not provide shepherds for His sheep? It is best to let Him choose, in His love, the ones to look after us.

In Hebrews 13:20 the Lord who is over all has the title of "the Great Shepherd of the sheep." And in 1 Peter 5:1 He is called the "Chief Shepherd," being the one who is the most interested and involved with His sheep – more than any other. He has given the charge and responsibility for the care of His sheep to others, but He is lovingly watching to see how both His sheep and the pastors are doing.

God As Shepherd

God was Israel's pastor and they recognized Him as such. "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth" (Ps. 80:1). "Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him: behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He

shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Isa. 40:10-11).

Just as God cared for Israel, so He will also care for believers. He will not leave us without a shepherd. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12). Jesus Christ has all of the rights over the Church because it belongs to Him: "He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have preeminence" (Col. 1:17-18). The Lord Jesus Christ has taken it upon Himself to look after His Church. Therefore He is the One who calls and gives pastors to it; and they are responsible to Him.

What Is The Function Of A Shepherd?

God has given various gifts, some prophets, some evangelists, and some teachers and pastors. By the lists that are given in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 and Ephesians 4 we understand that normally speaking one person does not have all of these gifts. Perhaps a believer will only have one gift. So we need to ask, "What is the gift and work that the Lord wants from the one He has called to shepherd? Is it to rule, be the director, guide and delegate all in the church? Should he preach all the messages, direct the singing, choose all the hymns and say all the prayers? Is it to have a regular salary? From the Scriptures we know that this is not what the Lord has in mind.

In Peter we read that all believers are a royal and kingly priesthood, to give glory to the Lord: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in scripture. Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an

holy nations, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:5-9). It is the privilege and responsibility of all believers to offer spiritual sacrifices to God when the church meets. This may be by means of a prayer, praise, a reading of Scripture or through a hymn that is sung. This is not reserved for only one person or group of persons, but for every believer within the limits that the Word of God gives in relation to the spiritual condition of a believer and the limitations on sisters in the church.

Furthermore, God has given a gift to each member of the Body of Christ. We do not all have the same gift and neither do we have all of the gifts. Having one or a few who are chosen to preach, direct, organize and delegate takes away the right of the Lord Jesus to be the Lord and Head in His own Church – a very serious matter. In many places today the right of the Lord to use whom He desires by the Holy Spirit to give praises, to preach the Word or to pray is restricted by human organization. In so doing the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, has been replaced.

What Is Shepherding?

It is the work done by one who has been called by the Lord, given the charge and prepared by Him to look after His sheep. He must be able to teach but he may not necessarily be involved in public preaching as this is the work of the one who has the gift of a teacher. A shepherd looks after the sheep. He senses their weaknesses and needs, hopefully before they go astray. He helps, encourages and strengthens them. Many times the work is done in private between the shepherd and the sheep solely in the presence of God.

If a sheep goes astray there is more work to be done. One day Jesus, speaking to the Pharisees, asked, "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?" (Lk. 15:4). The sheep was lost. By itself the helpless one would not have returned home so the shepherd had to go look for it. The search was difficult and lonely. With perseverance, he looked and looked and looked until he found the lost sheep. He didn't give up until he found and brought it home again, sharing his joy with everyone. The shepherd examined the found sheep to see if medicine or an ointment

needed to be applied, being concerned until he was certain that it was fine.

When others are discouraged or give up, the pastor applies himself fully for the restoration of the dear, lost sheep. He gives his life in service for the sheep. Without looking for attention and his own glory, he works out in the field – a shepherd *with* the sheep. He watches carefully and knows the condition of those under his vigilance and responsibility: “Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds” (Prov. 27:23). We are reminded that David followed the sheep: “Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep” (2 Sam. 7:8). From that vantage point he could survey and watch over them. He would quickly see the one who was going astray, hurt or in need. The shepherd could then intervene and give the needed help.

A pastor guides more than he commands. “The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd” (Eccl. 12:11). A goad is a sharply pointed pole that was used to prick the animal without damaging it, to guide and encourage it to continue on. Guiding is by using the Word of God, necessitating a proper manner of life by the shepherd as an example for the sheep. “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation” (Heb. 13:7).

The shepherd must recognize spiritual dangers and protect and warn the sheep under his care. This includes being a good example, opening the pathway, and watching for and removing dangers and obstacles. “When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice” (Jn. 10:4).

A shepherd is one who has compassion and gives comfort. The Lord Jesus shows how we should comfort others. One day the Lord said to his disciples, “And now is My soul troubled” (Jn. 12:27) because He knew that in a few hours He would be suffering on the cross. But even with this burden in His heart, only a few moments later with His disciples sad and troubled, He said to them, “Let not your hearts be troubled” (Jn. 14:1). The burden of that which was before Him was so much greater than the sorrow of His disciples, yet, rather than being occupied with Himself He was concerned with them and their needs.

With an attitude of humility and compassion a good pastor is there to lift up the one who has fallen in the way. He is one who knows how to apply a spiritual remedy for the one who is wounded and hurt. “And He said unto them, ‘What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?’” (Mt. 12:11).

Peter, chosen by the Lord Himself to keep and feed the sheep and lambs, teaches that if shepherds do well there will be a good return from the Lord. He said, “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being [examples] to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Pet. 5:1). Considering his words we are reminded:

- God is the owner of the sheep.
- The elders need to feed the flock voluntarily and with a good heart rather than under obligation or for dishonest gain.
- Pastors, although having a certain authority in their leadership role, are not to act like dictators. Rather, they are to be good examples.

By meditating on each of these words we will reap rich teaching on the conduct and character of those who have been enlisted in the service of a shepherd.

The Importance Of Prayer

Reading Deuteronomy 9 we discover a quality which is absolutely necessary in the life of a pastor. Moses wrote: “Furthermore the LORD spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people ... Let Me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they ... And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread, nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger ... I prayed therefore unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, destroy not Thy peo-

ple and Thine inheritance, which Thou hast redeemed through Thy greatness, which Thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand ... Yet they are Thy people and Thine inheritance, which Thou broughtest out by Thy mighty power and by Thy stretched out arm" (Dt. 9:13-14,18,26,29).

We may be reminded of the story of Moses when he was up in the mountaintop with God: Israel made the golden calf and worshiped it. God told Moses that He saw the wickedness of the people and said He would destroy them and start over again through Moses. Not desiring this, Moses implored God, interceding on behalf of Israel. Moses requested that God not destroy them, reminding the LORD of His relationship with His people and the testimony of His great work of redeeming Israel from the bondage of Egypt by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Just think about it, Moses spent 40 days on the mountaintop in God's presence interceding for Israel. He was not there seeking something for himself but was there on behalf of Israel, seeking what was for their good and for the glory of God.

In a similar way Samuel was "grieved ... and he cried unto the LORD all night" over Saul and his failure to obey God's instructions (1 Sam. 15:11). Oh how Samuel cared about one!

These instances remind us of the Lord Jesus Christ interceding for all His sheep in John 17. We also think of His intercession for Peter: "The Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Lk. 22:31-32).

Obviously, a very great and important part of the work of a pastor is prayer, whether privately interceding for the sheep or praying with the sheep. God's strength, not ours, keeps the flock. So we ask, "How often are you praying? How much of your time is invested in prayer for each individual sheep as well as the flock that God has placed under your care?"

Jotham's Instruction On Authority

In the Old Testament book of Judges we have a story that is very instructive on authority. God, through Gideon, accomplished a great victory for Israel and they wanted to crown this man as their king.

But "Gideon said unto them, 'I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you'" (Jud. 8:23). "And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives. And his concubine that was in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech" (Jud. 8:30-31). "And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem unto his mother's brethren, and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, 'Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether is better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, which are threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that I am your bone and your flesh.' And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, 'He is our brother.' And they gave him threescore and ten pieces of silver out of the house of Baalberith, wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons, which followed him. And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself. And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that was in Shechem. And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, 'Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you. The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, 'Reign thou over us.'" But the olive tree said unto them, "Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" And the trees said to the fig tree, "Come thou, and reign over us." But the fig tree said unto them, "Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?" Then said the trees unto the vine, "Come thou, and reign over us." And the vine said unto them, "Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" Then said all the trees unto the bramble, "Come thou, and reign over us." And the bramble said unto the trees, "If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon"" (Jud. 9:1-15).

Let us briefly examine what the trees said when it was suggested to each one that they should become king.

- **Olive tree.** “Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?” The tree chose to do the work that God had given it to do, rather than to be important in the eyes of others. It wanted to please both God and man with its oil. We remember that the lamps of the tabernacle used olive oil so we see this as an example of being a bright testimony shining for the honor of God in the midst of a generation shrouded in great darkness. The olive did not want to abandon this important function that God had entrusted to it just to satisfy the multitude by taking a place over the rest.

- **Fig tree.** The fig tree had the same attitude. “Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?” How beautiful. The fruit of the fig tree was food and sweetness for those around it. One day the Lord Jesus seeing a fig tree sought to satisfy His hunger with its fruit. But when He arrived at the tree He found none (Mk. 11:12-13). May God find in us sweetness, or food, for Himself. In the Scriptures we often find that when someone offered a burnt offering to God it ascended as a sweet smelling savor to Him. May this also be the case in our service for Him.

- **The vine.** The response of the vine was the same: “Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?” It did not want to be great for itself, but it wanted to give joy to the heart of God. If this desire is found in us we too will give joy to His heart and to those around us.

- **The bramble.** Unlike the others, the bramble wanted to be great. Even though it was the lowest of all the trees it was the first to want the highest position. “If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.” We see the attitude of the bramble: the one that was the least qualified wanted to be the most important and to rule over all. What a contrast between the bramble and the three trees. The bramble was looking for self-importance whereas the trees wanted to serve God, producing the fruit intended by God for His glory and man’s blessing.

There is an important lesson for us in this parable. We see that the trees understood that they had a special, God-given task. They real-

ized that it was their privilege to do His work in the sphere that He had given them and because of this they were not willing to give this place up just for their own interests. Equally today God has given to each one of His children a gift, a service for Him. All believers have a gift; but just as there was an olive tree, a fig tree and a vine, there is diversity. May we recognize and understand what God has entrusted to us individually – each one having his or her specially designated service. May none of us usurp the service that God has given to someone else and let no one take a position that God has not given or which is not of God.

During the time of the apostles a certain man had the same attitude as the bramble, but this attitude is just the opposite of what should characterize a pastor. We read: “I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church” (3 Jn. 1:9-10).

Today’s concept of a pastor as found in many congregations is not what we see in the Bible and cannot be justified by Scripture. So if we want to be honest and serious in our walk with the Lord in the way that we meet together, we must separate ourselves from that which is not according to His Word. It is the glory and honor of the Lord that are important. Continuing with a person designated as a pastor who takes the position of the head or director is to take away from the Lord His rights – something we should never do.

Yes, thank the Lord that there are shepherds! He has provided them. If we did not have them the sheep, the flock, would be in much greater difficulty. As with all gifts, He has called those to be pastors to do His work for the blessing and good of the entire Body of Christ, the whole Church, not just a small local part of it. Those who have been called to this service and given this gift have a wonderful responsibility to Him who has called them. One day they will give an account to Him who will judge how they have done.

Conclusion

We have seen clearly from various verses and examples in the New Testament that the gift of pastor is not a person, but it is a spiritual gift

entrusted by God to one of His children to be used in the power of the Holy Spirit. This gift is for the benefit and building up of all believers, for God's glory.

The Bible does not teach the common practice of one calling himself "pastor" of a group to be their leader, nor that a person should take the place of directing in a time of worship, prayer or edification – the preaching of the Word. Such actions take from the Lord Jesus Christ His rights to direct His Church in the way that He knows is best! Doing so is a very serious offence.

Our Lord, who is the head of the Church, is the only One who rightfully chooses, prepares, commissions and provides all that is necessary to fulfill the functions of the gift of pastor. Such a service is one of total self-denial, surrendering his own rights for the sake of the Lord's sheep. The Lord has charged this person with this function and as such the pastor must look to Him, rather than the flock under his care, for spiritual guidance and provision as well as for his daily physical needs.



Caring For One Another

The work of caring for one another is not just for pastors. We have seen that all of the elders of the local church are also to serve in this way. And all who are spiritual must help those who are discouraged and in need. Paul said, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:1).

The Lord taught us through the parable of the good Samaritan that we need to look after one another. Jesus said, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. ... But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ... Jesus unto him, 'Go, and do thou likewise'" (Lk. 10:30,33-34,37). Then in James we read "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (Jas. 5:19-20). So we see that it is the responsibility of all of us to look after each other thus doing the work of a shepherd.

Joseph

There is one of whom we have not spoken because we do not normally associate him as being a shepherd. However, when we read his story we see that he was.

Jacob had many sheep and Joseph and his brothers looked after them. For certain reasons Joseph's brothers had bad feelings toward him and these feelings were so strong that the Bible says that they hated him.

One day Jacob sent Joseph to see how his brothers were doing as they were looking after the sheep near Shechem, which was about 50

miles (80 kilometers) away. Even though they were so far away and Joseph knew that his brothers hated him, Joseph obeyed his father and went. He wanted to do that which was the desire of his father, the one who had given him this service. His father “said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again” (Gen. 37:13-14). So because of the love he had for his father Joseph went. He left Hebron, where they were living, and came to Shechem. But they were no longer there. Joseph inquired and was informed that his brothers had taken the flocks to Dothan, another 20 miles (25 kilometers) further. So Joseph went and searched for his brothers until he found them because his father was concerned about them.

As we reflect on this story we understand that this is a figure of how our heavenly Father cares for us. We also see the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son who was loved of His Father left the Father’s house to come and look for us. There are many beautiful things in this story about Joseph that are a figure of the Lord Jesus: the relationship between him and his father, his service, how he was hated by his own brethren, his suffering but also his exaltation and glory as the ruler and savior of the world, and the restoration of the relationship between him and his brothers. What a wonderful example for each one of us.

Like Joseph we also need to think of the needs of our brothers and sisters. Our service should first of all be motivated by love for our Father. He tells us, “Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren,” and just like Joseph we should have a heart ready to obey our Father. We should be willing to sacrifice ourselves without regard to their attitude toward us or any other negative things that there may be to deviate us from this service. Joseph’s response to his father was “Here am I.” What is our response?



A Final Challenge and Important Consideration

Challenge

Pastoral or shepherd care is very important and necessary – something that each one of us must practice. “And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen. 4:9). So we ask ourselves: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” The answer is a resounding, Yes! Yes, I am!

Yes, bless God that the Lord Jesus Christ has given shepherds to His Church to care for His own with the purpose that there would be healthy, holy children of God who are pleasing to the Lord, for His honor and glory.

Yes, if Jesus Christ has given you the gift of a shepherd put it into practice in the manner that the Word of God teaches.

Yes, if you do not have this gift, still do the work of a shepherd, looking after your brother and sister in Christ by means of this important and necessary service.

One More Important Consideration

Although it was the Lord who commissioned Peter as a shepherd, we may wonder what qualities were needed by Peter to do this service? The Lord Himself gave the answer:

- He was to love the Lord – “Do you love Me?”
- He was to follow the Lord – “Follow thou Me”.

Isaiah 50:4 says “The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to *him that is weary*: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned” (italics mine). We can only speak words of encouragement to help others when we fill ourselves with the Lord Jesus in His Word and follow Him. When the Lord opened the Scriptures which spoke of Himself to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus their hearts burned within them, and when they saw the Lord they were so invigorated with joy they returned to their brethren

to be a blessing to them. So too with us, the only true way to serve others is to love and follow the Lord in intimate fellowship with Him.

“Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do” (1 Th. 5:11).

