

Fleecing the Flock

In scripture, God often refers to His people as sheep, tenderly cared for by faithful shepherds. *Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."* John 10:11. Likewise, our spiritual leaders, the elders are called to imitate Christ's example, guiding and nourishing the flock with love and truth.

However, not all who claim to shepherd God's people have pure motives. The phrase "fleecing the flock" is a somber warning used in religious circles to describe the exploitation of Christian believers, often financially by those entrusted to lead them.

The "flock" refers to Christians, 1 Peter 5:2-3, and "fleecing" draws from the image of shearing sheep. In a spiritual context, it refers to stripping believers of their resources, particularly money, under the guise of ministry and spreading the gospel, with little or no concern for their souls.

Sadly, this phrase is often associated with:

- Prosperity gospel preachers who demand generous "seeds" of faith while promising miracles in return.
- Televangelists who manipulate viewers into giving for personal gain.
- Religious leaders who live in luxury while their followers struggle financially.
- Churches that treat ministry as a business.

God has never been silent about such abuses. Through His prophets and apostles, He issued stern rebukes of the religious leaders of the day.

- Jeremiah 23:1-2 *"Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!" says the Lord. Therefore, thus says the Lord God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: "You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings," says the Lord.*
- Ezekiel 34:2-3 *"Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat and clothe yourself with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock."*
- 1 Peter 5:2 *"Shepherd the flock of God, which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly."*

As Christians, we are called to test all things and cling to what is good. 1 Thessalonians 5:21. Not every charismatic voice or well-produced message comes from a pure heart. Let us be wise, watchful, and rooted in God's Word, supporting godly elders and ministries that genuinely serve Christ and one another in love. *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."* John 10:27.

~Ron Josselet (Assisted by ChatGPT)