

Message Three

Shepherding according to God

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 5:1-3; John 10:11; 11:25; Acts 20:28; Luke 15:4-6, 8-9, 18-24, 32

1 Pet. 5:1-3 Therefore the elders among you I exhort, who am a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory to be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God; not by seeking gain through base means but eagerly; nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock.

John 10:11 I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live.

Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.

Luke 15:4-6 Which man of you, who has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he finds it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes into his house, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.

vv. 8-9 Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one silver coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek carefully until she finds *it*? And when she finds *it*, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I lost.

vv. 18-24 I will rise up and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants. And he rose up and came to his own father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion, and he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him affectionately. And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his slaves, Bring out quickly the best robe and put *it* on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fattened calf; slaughter *it*, and let us eat and be merry, because this son of mine was dead and lives again; he was lost and has been found. And they began to be merry.

v. 32 But we had to be merry and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life, and he was lost and has been found.

I. In His heavenly ministry Christ is shepherding people, and we need to cooperate with Him by shepherding people; without shepherding, our work for the Lord cannot be effective—Heb. 13:20-21; John 21:15-17.

II. Peter charged the elders to shepherd the flock of God according to God—1 Pet. 5:1-3:

- A. *According to God* means to live God.
- B. To shepherd according to God is to shepherd according to God's nature, desire, way, and glory, not according to our preference, interest, purpose, and disposition.
- C. To shepherd according to God is to shepherd according to what God is in His attributes—Rom. 9:15-16; 11:22, 33; Eph. 2:7; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:12.
- D. In order to shepherd according to God, we need to become God in life, nature, expression, and function—John 1:12-13; 3:15; 2 Pet. 1:4:
 1. We need to be filled to the brim with the divine life, enjoying the Triune God as the fountain, the spring, and the river to become a totality of the divine life, even to become the divine life itself—John 4:14; Rom. 8:6, 10-11.
 2. We need to become God in His attributes of love, light, righteousness, and holiness—1 John 4:8; 1:5; 2:29; 1 Pet. 1:15-16.
 3. We need to be the reproduction of Christ, the expression of God, so that in our shepherding we express God, not the self with its disposition and peculiarities—John 1:18; Heb. 1:3; 2:10; Rom. 8:29.

4. We need to become God in His function of shepherding the flock according to what He is and according to His goal in His economy—Eph. 4:16; Rev. 21:2.
5. When we are one with God, we become God and are God in our shepherding of others.

III. If we would shepherd according to God, we must be persons in resurrection—John 10:11; 11:25; 2 Cor. 1:9:

- A. John 10 is on shepherding, and John 11 shows that shepherding must be with resurrection life.
- B. If we are natural, full of the natural view, philosophy, and logic, we cannot feed others.
- C. To be in resurrection is not to live our natural life but to live the divine life—Gal. 2:20.
- D. If we are persons in resurrection, we are in life, and we become those who can shepherd others—John 11:25; 21:15-17.

IV. In order to shepherd according to God, we need to flock the saints together—10:16; Luke 12:32; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2-3; cf. Isa. 40:11:

- A. The proper shepherding is to flock the saints together.
- B. In John 10 and 21 the Lord used three words concerning shepherding: *feed*, *shepherd*, and *flock*; we all need to learn to feed, to shepherd, and to flock together.
- C. Christ's feeding us with Himself as the pasture is for us to be flocked together with God's other sheep to be His one organic Body to arrive at the ultimate goal of God's economy—the New Jerusalem—Eph. 4:16; Rev. 21:2.
- D. All the churches should learn how to flock together so that they can be blended together; in an atmosphere of flocking we are subdued, convinced, nourished, and stirred up by the Lord.

V. We need to shepherd the flock of God according to the Father's loving and forgiving heart and according to the Son's seeking, finding, and shepherding spirit—Luke 15:4-24, 32:

- A. We should follow the steps of the processed Triune God in His seeking and gaining fallen people—vv. 4-6, 8-9, 18-24, 32.
- B. Our natural tendency is not to shepherd others but to criticize them and regulate them:
 1. Whenever we criticize someone, we lose the position to take care of that one.
 2. Our natural tendency is to regulate others and place demands on them according to ourselves, not to cherish and nourish them according to God.
- C. We need to have a change of concept through being disciplined to have the divine concept, the concept that is according to the Father's loving heart and the Son's shepherding spirit.
- D. Our shepherding should be according to God's love toward the fallen human race; the fallen human race is joined with Satan to be his world in his system, but God has a heart of love toward these people—John 3:16.
- E. We need to be shepherds having the loving and forgiving heart of our Father God in His divinity and the seeking, finding, and shepherding spirit of our Savior Christ in His humanity.
- F. "If this kind of fellowship is received by us, I believe there will be a big revival on the earth, not by a few spiritual giants but by the many members of Christ's Body being shepherds who follow the steps of the processed Triune God in seeking and gaining fallen people" (*The Vital Groups*, p. 40).