

Message Four

Shepherding People by Cherishing and Nourishing Them for the Building Up of the Church

Scripture Reading: Eph. 5:29; Rev. 1:12-13; 2 Cor. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 8:1; 13:4-8, 13

Eph. 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church.

Rev. 1:12-13 And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment reaching to the feet, and girded about at the breasts with a golden girdle.

2 Cor. 7:2-3 Make room for us; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one. I do not say *this* to condemn *you*, for I have said before that you are in our hearts for *our* dying together and *our* living together.

1 Cor. 8:1 Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

13:4-8 Love suffers long. Love is kind; it is not jealous. Love does not brag *and* is not puffed up; it does not behave unbecomingly *and* does not seek its own things; it is not provoked *and* does not take account of evil; it does not rejoice because of unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; it covers all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never falls *away*. But whether prophecies, they will be rendered useless; or tongues, they will cease; or knowledge, it will be rendered useless.

v. 13 Now there abide faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

I. The content of God's entire New Testament economy in His complete salvation is Christ as the Son of Man cherishing us and as the Son of God nourishing us—Eph. 5:29:

- A. Christ as the Son of Man came to redeem us from sin, accomplishing His judicial redemption through His death (1 Tim. 1:15; Eph. 1:7)—cherishing.
- B. Christ as the Son of God came to impart the divine life into us abundantly, carrying out His organic salvation in His resurrection (John 10:10; 1 Cor. 15:45b)—nourishing.

II. In His heavenly ministry, Christ shepherds the churches as the golden lampstands by cherishing them in His humanity as the Son of Man and nourishing them in His divinity as the High Priest—Rev. 1:12-13:

- A. The Son of Man is in His humanity, the golden girdle signifies His divinity becoming His energy, and the breasts are a sign of love; Christ's golden energy is exercised and motivated by His love to nourish the churches.
- B. As the Son of Man, He cherishes the churches in His humanity by trimming the wicks of the lampstands, cutting away everything that is not according to God's purpose, such as our flesh, our natural man, our self, and our old creation with all of our wrongdoings, shortages, failures, and defects—v. 13; Exo. 25:38; 30:7.
- C. As the High Priest with His divinity as the "energy belt," He nourishes us with Himself as the all-inclusive Christ in His full ministry of three stages so that the saints may grow and mature in His divine life and become the overcomers in His sevenfold intensification—Heb. 8:1-2; Rev. 2:7, 17; 3:20.

III. The members of the vital groups must shepherd people by cherishing and nourishing them:

- A. To cherish people is to make them happy, pleasant, and comfortable (Matt. 9:10; Luke 7:34); to nourish people is to feed them with the all-inclusive Christ in His full ministry in His three stages—incarnation, inclusion, and intensification (Matt. 24:45-47).

- B. Cherishing and nourishing people should be by the divine and mystical life in resurrection (with the Lord's presence as the charming factor), not by the natural life in the old creation—John 5:19, 30; 6:57; Gal. 2:20.

IV. We need to live a shepherding life, a life of ministering Christ to others in love for the building up of the church; this life is a fruitful life—Acts 20:20, 31; 1 Cor. 8:1; John 15:5:

- A. In taking care of the churches and in shepherding the saints, what is needed is the intimate concern of a ministering life—2 Cor. 7:2-3; Philem. 7, 12:
1. In the shepherding of the saints, it is possible that we may kill others; the reason for this killing, this fruitlessness, is the lack of intimate concern—cf. 2 Cor. 3:6:
 - a. The milk of the word of God, the life supply of Christ, should be used to nourish the new believers in Christ, not to “boil” them—Exo. 23:19b.
 - b. If we have the ability to carry on a work but lack an intimate concern, our work will be fruitless; our heart must be enlarged to embrace all believers regardless of their condition—2 Cor. 6:10-11.
 2. How fruitful we are, how much fruit we bear, does not depend on what we are able to do; it depends on whether we have an intimate concern.
 3. A ministering life is a life that warms up others; if we would minister life to the saints, we must have a genuine concern for them, a concern that is emotional, deep, and intimate.
 4. We must shepherd the saints as a nursing mother and an exhorting father—1 Thes. 2:7-8, 11-12.
- B. Love is the most excellent way for us to be anything and to do anything for the building up of the Body of Christ—2 Tim. 1:7; 1 Cor. 8:1; 12:31b:
1. We must have the kind of love to go and tell the dormant ones who think that the church condemns them that the church does not condemn anyone; rather, the church wants to see all the dormant ones come back:
 - a. Without the Lord's mercy, we would be the same as the dormant ones; therefore, we must love them.
 - b. It all depends upon love, as the wise king Solomon said, “Love covers all transgressions” (Prov. 10:12b).
 2. Because the church is a home, a hospital, and a school, we must be one with the Lord to raise up, to heal, to recover, and to teach others in love:
 - a. We must come down to the weak ones' level so that we can gain them—2 Cor. 11:28-29; 1 Cor. 9:22; cf. Matt. 12:20.
 - b. We must spend what we have, our possessions, and spend what we are, our being, for the sake of the saints—2 Cor. 12:15.
 3. Love is not jealous, is not provoked, does not take account of evil, covers all things, endures all things, never falls away, and is the greatest—1 Cor. 13:4-8, 13.