

SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK OF GOD

Message One

(Friday—First Morning Session)

Shepherding the Flock of God according to the Plan of God and the Word of God and according to the Teaching of the Apostles

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:22-23; Deut. 17:18-20; Titus 1:9

I. The elders should shepherd the flock of God according to the plan of God and the word of God—Eph. 1:22-23; Deut. 17:18-20:

- A. The plan of God is to have the church as the Body for His Son—Eph. 4:16:
 - 1. God desires to gain a Body for His Son, and this Body is for the expression of His Son—Col. 1:18; 2:19:
 - a. The Son of God is great, full, abundant, and rich; all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily—v. 9.
 - b. God desires to have a Body for His full Christ so that all the fullness can be manifested—Eph. 1:22-23.
 - c. In God's plan the church is the Body that God is seeking for His Son for the purpose of expressing Him—3:6; 5:23, 30.
 - 2. In order to carry out His plan to have a Body for His Son, God needs to establish local churches—1 Cor. 1:2; 12:27:
 - a. God desires that, in a practical way, those who are part of this Body would become churches in various localities—Rev. 1:11.
 - b. Each local church should be a miniature and a representation of the mystical Body of Christ—Rom. 12:4-5; 16:1, 4, 16.
- B. The elders should care for the church according to the word of God—Deut. 17:18-20:
 - 1. In ruling over God's people, the king had to be instructed, governed, ruled, and controlled by the word of God; the principle should be the same with the elders in the churches—vv. 18-19.
 - 2. If the elders are reconstituted with the holy word of God, they will be under God's government, under God's rule and control; then spontaneously God will be in their decisions, and they will represent God to manage the affairs of the church—1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17.

II. The elders should shepherd the flock of God by holding to the faithful word, which is according to the teaching of the apostles—Titus 1:9:

- A. In the church in the New Testament, the teaching of the apostles replaces the law in God's administration, and the elders of the churches are the direct administrators, who administrate according to the teaching of the apostles—Acts 2:42; 14:23; Titus 1:5.
- B. The elders are appointed to administrate God's government in a local church so that good order may be maintained in the church—vv. 9-10:

1. To accomplish this, the elders need to hold to the faithful word, which is according to the apostles' teaching, that they may be able to stop troublesome talkers and calm a tumultuous situation—vv. 9-14.
 2. The faithful word is the trustworthy, reliable, and true word that is taught in the churches according to the apostles' teaching; the elders in a local church should hold to this kind of healthy word that they may fulfill their duty in teaching—1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17.
- C. A basic principle of the eldership is that every elder must be a watchman who is on the alert lest some teaching different from that of the apostles' teaching is brought into the church—Titus 1:9-11; Acts 20:28-32.
- D. If the elders hold to the faithful word, which is according to the apostles' teaching, they will “be able...to exhort by the healthy teaching”—Titus 1:9; 1 Tim. 1:10:
1. *Healthy* implies the matter of life and points to that which is hygienic and which can inoculate others against spiritual poison and also is able to supply them with life—Titus 1:13; 2:1-2, 8:
 - a. The sound teaching of the apostles ministers the healthy teaching as the supply of life to others, either nourishing them or healing them.
 - b. In contrast, the different teachings of the dissenting ones sow seeds of death and poison into others—1 Tim. 1:3; 6:3.
 - c. Any teaching that distracts people from the center and goal of God's New Testament economy is not healthy—1:4; Eph. 4:13.
 2. The healthy words of the Lord are the source of the teaching that is according to godliness—1 Tim. 2:2; 3:16; 4:7-8; 5:4; 6:3, 5-6; Titus 1:1; 2:12:
 - a. When the Lord's words of life are taught, particularly in certain aspects, they become the teaching that is according to godliness—1 Tim. 6:3.
 - b. The living words of the Lord always bring forth godliness—a life that lives Christ and expresses God in Christ—4:7.
 3. Healthy teaching is teaching which is healthy in life and which ministers the supply of life—2 Tim. 4:3.
 4. The vain talkers are infected with doctrinal diseases and become unhealthy in the faith; they need the inoculation of the healthy teaching and the healthy word, which the elders should provide for their healing—Titus 1:9-10; 2:2; 1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3-4.
 5. The healthy teaching is according to the truth of the faith—Titus 1:13-14:
 - a. It is the content of the apostles' teaching, the content of the New Testament economy—1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3.
 - b. It not only ministers the life supply to the believers and heals the spiritual diseases, but in so doing it also brings the church into a sound condition with good order—Titus 1:5, 9-10.
 6. The healthy teaching with the healthy speech composed of healthy words is the most effective antidote to the opposers' evil speaking; such light-shedding and life-imparting teaching of the word of the truth always stops the mouth of doctrinal opinion instigated by the old serpent—2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 1:10.
 7. The crucial point of the healthy teaching of the apostles concerns the Triune God processed to dispense Himself as the all-inclusive Spirit into

His chosen ones so that they may be brought into an organic union to receive the divine transfusion and thereby become sons of God and members of Christ; as a result, they can be the Body of Christ—Eph. 1:22-23.