

SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK OF GOD

Message Two

(Thursday—Second Morning Session)

Shepherding the Flock of God according to God by Being Patterns of the Flock

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 5:1-4, 10; 1:8, 13; 2:7; Isa. 7:14-15; 2 Cor. 5:14; 12:7-9; Eph. 4:11-12

I. To shepherd the flock of God according to God is to shepherd the flock of God according to God's desire—1 Pet. 5:1-4:

- A. We must see that the heart's desire, the good pleasure, of God in His economy is to be the fountain, the source, of living waters to dispense Himself into His chosen people for their satisfaction and enjoyment; the goal of this enjoyment is to produce the church, God's counterpart, as God's increase, God's enlargement, to be God's fullness for His expression—Jer. 2:13; John 3:29-30; Eph. 1:22-23; 3:16-19, 21:
1. Instead of drinking Him to become His increase for His expression, we can become like Israel by forsaking God as the fountain of living waters to hew out cisterns (typifying idols) to replace God as our enjoyment—Jer. 2:13.
 2. An idol is anything within us that we love more than the Lord or that replaces the Lord in our life; whatever we possess, and even whatever we are, can become an idol—Ezek. 14:3; 1 John 5:21.
 3. The evil condition of the wicked is that they do not come to the Lord to eat and enjoy the Lord; they do many things, but they do not come to contact the Lord, to take Him, to receive Him, to taste Him, and to enjoy Him; in the sight of God, nothing is more evil than this—Isa. 57:20; cf. 55:1-3, 7.
 4. Although we are unfaithful, God is faithful in calling us into the fellowship of His Son, the enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ—1 Cor. 1:9.
 5. Our peace, safety, health, and possessions may become idols to us, but God is faithful in His purpose to take these things away so that we might drink of Him as the fountain of living waters; God is faithful in leading us into His economy, and His economy is for us to enjoy Christ, to absorb Christ, to drink Christ, to eat Christ, and to assimilate Christ so that God may increase in us for His expression—5:7-8; 12:12-13; Jer. 2:13; Hosea 14:1-8.
- B. We must be brought back to the realization that we need Christ as our enjoyment; we also have to help others to know how to enjoy Christ, and we have to bring the distracted believers back to the simplicity of the genuine appreciation, love, and enjoyment of the precious person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as their life and everything—2 Cor. 11:2-3; 1:24; Rev. 2:4, 7:
1. To enjoy Christ as our life supply should be the primary matter in the church life; the content of the church life depends upon the enjoyment of Christ; the more we enjoy Him, the richer the content will be.
 2. First Corinthians is a book on the enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ; the enjoyment of the crucified and resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit solves all the problems in the church—1 Cor. 1:2, 9, 24, 30; 2:2; 5:7-8.

- C. We must see that Christ as the life-giving Spirit has been intensified sevenfold to bring the degraded church back to the enjoyment of Himself as their life supply to fully save them organically for the accomplishment and finalization of God's economy—Rev. 1:4; 4:5; 5:6; 2:1, 7, 17; 3:20; Rom. 5:10.
- D. We must cooperate with the Lord to carry out His work in the stage of His intensification, shepherding others into the full enjoyment of Christ as the life-giving, sevenfold intensified Spirit to make them God's overcomers for the building up of the Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem—John 21:15-17; Rev. 1:12-13; Heb. 13:20-21.

II. We must shepherd the flock of God by being patterns of the flock; the best way to shepherd people is to give them a proper pattern—1 Pet. 5:3:

- A. In order to be patterns of the flock, we must contact the Lord as our living pattern in our spirit, in order to enjoy Him daily as the "heavenly butter," typifying the richest grace, and as the "heavenly honey," typifying the sweetest love, so that He may supply us with Himself as the resurrection power for us to choose the perfect will of God and sacrifice our lives for the church—Isa. 7:14-15; Deut. 32:11-14; Exo. 3:8; Eph. 5:25; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; 1 John 3:16.
- B. As a pattern of the flock, Peter enjoyed Christ as his preciousness (1 Pet. 2:7), as the richest grace (1:13; 4:10; 5:10) and the sweetest love (1:8) so that, as a leading witness of the sufferings of Christ, he enjoyed Christ as his rich supply to be a martyr who was willing to sacrifice his life to testify of the sufferings of Christ—5:1; John 21:15-19:
 - 1. Every elder should be a martyr, one who sacrifices his life for Christ; nothing is more noble than living a martyr's life and dying as a martyr for the Lord; whether a church is strong or weak depends upon the loyalty, faithfulness, and sacrifice of the elders—1 Pet. 4:19; Acts 4:19-20.
 - 2. To shepherd the flock of God requires suffering for the Body of Christ, as Christ suffered (Col. 1:24); this will be rewarded with the unfading crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:4).
- C. As a pattern of the flock (1 Tim. 1:16), Paul enjoyed Christ as the richest grace (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:7-9) and the sweetest love (Rom. 8:35; 2 Cor. 5:14) to constrain him to live to the Lord (v. 15) and to fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ (Col. 1:24):
 - 1. The goal of Paul's Epistle to the church in Ephesus was to bring the saints into the divine love as God's inner substance so that they would enjoy God as love (1 John 4:8, 16), enjoy His presence in the sweetness of the divine love, and thereby love others as Christ did (Eph. 5:25); Paul told them that the enjoyment of the Lord as grace was with those who love the Lord (6:24), and the phrase *in love* is used repeatedly in his Epistle to them (1:4; 3:17; 4:2, 15-16; 5:2).
 - 2. Paul experienced the all-inclusive Christ as the reality of the wine-producing vine, the One who sacrificed Himself so that He could become the new wine to cheer God and man—Deut. 8:7-8; Judg. 9:13; Matt. 9:17.
 - 3. Paul enjoyed and was filled with Christ as the heavenly wine to such an extent that he became wine to God, poured out as a drink offering in living

and dying to the Lord as a martyr, spending and being spent for the church as the building of God—Phil. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6-8; 2 Cor. 12:15.

4. Paul was a pattern to the elders in Ephesus, a pattern of what the elders should be to the church—Acts 20:27-38:
 - a. He served the Lord as a slave with all humility and tears and trials—v. 19.
 - b. He shepherded the saints by teaching them publicly and from house to house, declaring to them all the counsel of God, all of God’s eternal economy—vv. 20, 26-27.
 - c. He was burdened for the elders to see the precious love of God for the church and the preciousness, the exceeding worth, of the church in the eyes of God so that they would treasure the church as God did; he admonished the elders to “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”—v. 28.
 - d. He warned the elders concerning the destroyers of the divine building—those who are wolves, not sparing the flock, and those who speak perverted things to draw away the disciples after them—vv. 29-30.
 - e. He contacted each one of the saints, telling the elders to remember that “for three years, night and day, I did not cease admonishing each one with tears”—v. 31.
 - f. Because Paul saw that the unique goal of God’s calling is the building up of the Body of Christ and that Christ builds up the Body by the Body, he was a pattern to the elders in Ephesus of functioning to perfect all the saints “unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,” so that all the saints would grow in life and would function in life according to their measure of life to be a supply of life to cause “the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love”—Eph. 4:11-16.