

Message Five

Shepherding according to God

(1)

**Shepherding People by Cherishing and Nourishing Them
according to the Pattern of the Lord Jesus and of the Apostle Paul**

Scripture Reading: John 10:11; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 5:4; Eph. 5:29;
John 21:15-17; Acts 20:20, 28, 31; 2 Cor. 11:28-29;
1 Cor. 9:22; 2 Cor. 12:15; 1 Cor. 8:1; 13:4-8a

I. We need to shepherd people according to the pattern of the Lord Jesus in His ministry for carrying out God's eternal economy—Matt. 9:36; John 10:11; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 5:4:

- A. 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:
 - 1. 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.
 - 2. 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.
- B. In Luke 15 the Lord Jesus unveiled the saving love of the Triune God for sinners—vv. 1-2:
 - 1. We need to follow the steps of the processed Triune God in seeking and gaining fallen people—vv. 3-7, 8-10, 17-18.
 - 2. Our not having the Father's loving and forgiving heart and the Savior's shepherding and seeking spirit is the reason for our barrenness.
 - 3. We need to cherish people (to make them happy and to make them feel pleasant and comfortable) in the humanity of Jesus—Matt. 9:10; Luke 7:34.
 - 4. We need to nourish people (to feed them with the all-inclusive Christ in His ministry of three stages) in the divinity of Christ—Matt. 24:45-47.
- C. Christ came not as a Judge but as a Physician to heal, recover, enliven, and save the lepers (8:2-4), paralytics (vv. 5-13; 9:2-8), the fever-ridden (8:14-15), the demon-possessed (vv. 16, 28-32), those ill with all kinds of diseases (v. 16), despised tax collectors, and sinners (9:9-11) that they might become reconstituted to become people of His heavenly kingdom—vv. 12-13.
- D. He had to pass through Samaria, purposely detouring to Sychar to gain one immoral woman, cherishing her by asking her to give Him something to drink that He might nourish her with the flowing Triune God as the water of life—John 4:3-14.
- E. As the One without sin, He did not condemn the adulterous woman but cherished her for the forgiveness of her sins judicially and for the setting free from her sins organically—8:1-11, 32, 36.
- F. He went to Jericho just to visit and gain one person, a chief tax collector, and His preaching was a shepherding—Luke 19:1-10.
- G. He cherished the parents by laying His hands on their children—Matt. 19:13-15.

- H. The first one saved by Christ through His crucifixion was a robber sentenced to death—Luke 23:42-43.
- I. The Lord's commissioning Peter to feed His lambs and shepherd His sheep was to incorporate the apostolic ministry with His heavenly ministry to take care of God's flock, which is the church that issues in the Body of Christ—John 21:15-17; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 5:1-4; 2:25; cf. Heb. 13:17:
 - 1. In His heavenly ministry, Christ as the High Priest, with a golden girdle on His breast, is cherishing and nourishing the churches—Rev. 1:12-13.
 - 2. In His heavenly ministry, Christ is the Great Shepherd of the sheep to consummate the New Jerusalem according to God's eternal covenant—Heb. 13:20-21.

II. We need to shepherd people according to the pattern of the apostle Paul as a good shepherd, taking care of God's flock—1 Tim. 1:16; Acts 20:28:

- A. Paul shepherded the saints as a nursing mother and an exhorting father—1 Thes. 2:7-8, 11-12.
- B. Paul shepherded the saints in Ephesus by teaching them “publicly and from house to house” (Acts 20:20) and by admonishing each one of them with tears even for as long as three years (vv. 31, 19), declaring to them all the counsel of God (v. 27).
- C. Second Corinthians 3:2-3 reveals that Paul wrote living letters of Christ with the life-giving Spirit as the essence:
 - 1. Because the believers are a letter of Christ, they are also the letter inscribed in the heart of the apostles; today while we are ministering Christ to others, Christ is simultaneously written in the one to whom we are ministering and also in us.
 - 2. This means that we can never forget those to whom we have ministered Christ; the one writing produces two original copies and involves two hearts becoming one.
- D. Paul had an intimate concern for the believers—7:3; Philem. 7, 12.
- E. He came down to the weak ones' level so that he could gain them—2 Cor. 11:28-29; 1 Cor. 9:22; cf. Matt. 12:20.
- F. He was willing to spend what he had, referring to his possessions, and to spend what he was, referring to his being, for the sake of the saints—2 Cor. 12:15.
- G. He was a drink offering, one with Christ as the wine producer, sacrificing himself for others' enjoyment of Christ—Phil. 2:17; Judg. 9:13; Eph. 3:2.
- H. He was a minister of the Spirit to honor God by being filled with the Spirit to walk by the Spirit for His glory and to honor man by ministering the Spirit to them for their supply—2 Cor. 3:6, 8; Gal. 5:16, 25; Judg. 9:9.
- I. Paul indicated in his teaching that the church is a home to raise up people, a hospital to heal and recover them, and a school to teach and edify them—Eph. 2:19; 1 Thes. 5:14; 1 Cor. 14:31.
- J. Paul revealed that love is the most excellent way for us to be anything and to do anything for the building up of the Body of Christ—8:1; 12:31; 13:4-8a.

III. “I hope that there will be a genuine revival among us by our receiving this burden of shepherding. If all the churches receive this teaching to participate in Christ's wonderful shepherding, there will be a big revival in the recovery”—*The Vital Groups*, p. 40.