

Message Four

Shepherding in Paul's Ministry

Scripture Reading: Heb. 13:20-21; 7:25-26; 1 Tim. 1:16; 1 Thes. 2:7-8, 11-12; Acts 20:19-20, 27-28, 31; 2 Cor. 6:11, 13; 7:2-3; 11:28-29; 12:15; Eph. 4:8-12, 16; 1 Tim. 4:6

I. Christ is the great Shepherd—Heb. 13:20-21:

- A. Hebrews 13:20 tells us that God “brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep”:
 - 1. The sheep here are the flock, which is the church—John 10:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:3.
 - 2. God raised Christ from the dead to be the great Shepherd of the sheep in resurrection—Heb. 13:20.
 - 3. Having been redeemed by Christ, we are now being fed by Him as our great Shepherd—1:3; 13:20; Psa. 23:2; Ezek. 34:14:
 - a. A shepherd takes care of all the needs of the flock, and his main goal is to feed the flock; he does everything for the flock so that the flock may eat properly; this is the dispensing of life.
 - b. Our great Shepherd, Christ, feeds us with God as the green pasture; this is to dispense God's divine life into our being—Heb. 13:20; Psa. 23:2.
- B. God raised up our Lord Jesus from the dead to be the great Shepherd to consummate the New Jerusalem according to God's eternal covenant—Heb. 13:20-21; 8:6, 8; 9:15:
 - 1. The eternal covenant is to consummate the New Jerusalem by shepherding—13:20-21.
 - 2. The eternal covenant is the covenant of the new testament to gain a flock, which is the church issuing in the Body of Christ and consummating the New Jerusalem—Rev. 21:2.
- C. Christ is the great Shepherd through whom God, based upon His redeeming blood of the eternal covenant, perfects the sheep of God, the churches, in every good work for the doing of His will, doing in us that which is well pleasing in His sight—Heb. 13:20-21:
 - 1. The believers can do God's will within them by being perfected through the shepherding of Christ in resurrection.
 - 2. Today Christ is in resurrection, and He is shepherding us from within; when He shepherds us in this way, we do God's will—Phil. 2:13.

II. The apostle Paul is a pattern of shepherding the saints in cooperation with Christ's shepherding in His heavenly ministry—Heb. 13:20-21; 7:25-26; 1 Tim. 1:16; Acts 20:20:

- A. Paul shepherded the saints as a nursing mother and an exhorting father—1 Thes. 2:7-8, 11-12:
 - 1. Paul and his co-workers regarded the believers as children under their fostering care; just as parents care for their children, fostering their growth, so the apostles cared for the new believers.
 - 2. Paul considered himself a nursing mother, who nourishes and cherishes her children, taking care of them in a tender way; Paul's care for the new believers was full of tenderness—vv. 7-8.
 - 3. Paul also likened himself to a father who exhorts his children; in cherishing the believers as their own children, the apostles considered themselves nourishing mothers; in exhorting them, they considered themselves fathers—vv. 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 the saints with tears even for as long as three years (vv. 31, 19), declaring to them all the counsel of God (v. 27):
 - 1. Paul taught the believers publicly in the meetings and privately from house to house—v. 20.

2. Teaching in Acts 20:20 really means shepherding; in the New Testament teaching goes along with the matter of shepherding; shepherding needs the proper teaching—Eph. 4:11, and footnote 2.
 3. Paul was a pattern in declaring God’s eternal economy—Acts 20:27; Eph. 3:9.
- C. Paul had been enlarged in his heart to have the intimate concern of the ministering life—2 Cor. 7:2-3; 1 Thes. 2:8; Phil. 2:19-20:
1. We all need to be enlarged in our hearts, reconciled fully to God (2 Cor. 5:20); then we will have a life that is a ministering life, a life that can bear much fruit—6:11, 13, and footnotes 111 and 133:
 - a. If we would have an all-fitting life, we need an enlarged heart, a heart to embrace all of God’s people—cf. 1 Kings 4:29.
 - b. Our goal should not be to become great persons; there have been some who were considered great men, but their hearts were small; we should prefer to be a small person with a big heart, an enlarged heart to embrace every believer in Christ—cf. Col. 1:28-29.
 2. In 2 Corinthians chapter 7 we see Paul’s intimate concern for the believers:
 - a. It is possible to become knowledgeable in spiritual matters and powerful in preaching and yet still be unfruitful; furthermore, in the shepherding of the saints, it is possible that we may kill others (cf. Exo. 23:19b; 2 Cor. 3:6); the reason for this killing, this fruitlessness, is the lack of intimate concern; in shepherding the saints what is needed is the intimate concern of the ministering life.
 - b. In 2 Corinthians 7 Paul was very emotional because his concern was so deep and intimate. D. Paul came down to the weak ones’ level so that he could gain them—2 Cor. 11:28-29; 1 Cor. 9:22:
 1. In 1 Corinthians 9:22 Paul says, “To the weak I became weak that I might gain the weak”; this means that we should come down to the weak ones’ level; this is the way to shepherd people by visiting them.
 2. Paul also says, “Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?” (2 Cor. 11:29); this is to burn in sorrow and indignation over the cause of the stumbling of all the fallen ones; this shows the pattern of Paul as a good shepherd in his taking care of God’s flock.
- E. As a lover of the church in oneness with the church-loving Christ, Paul 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 in order to build up the Body of Christ—Eph. 5:25; 2 Cor. 12:15; 11:28-29.

III. In Ephesians 4:11-12 Paul says, “And [Christ] Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ”:

- A. Paul points out in Ephesians 4 that Christ, the ascended Head, in His ascension gave gifts—gifted persons as apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers—to His Body for its building up—vv. 8-12:
1. We need to see what it means to perfect the saints, what is the work of the ministry, and what it is to build up the Body of Christ.
 2. Ephesians 4:11-16 is a portion of the Word that has been missed by most Christians; this portion of the Word has to be recovered, and we must believe that today is the right time and we are the right people for the Lord to carry out such a recovery.
- B. We need to enter into the apostle Paul’s thought when he talks about the perfecting of the saints; the thought of this word concerning the perfecting of the saints is that God’s intention is to have every believer able to do the things that the gifted persons do—vv. 11-12:

1. There is a capacity in the divine life that the believers possess and enjoy, and this capacity needs to be developed unto their ability.
 2. Every believer should be able to do the work of the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the shepherds and teachers.
- C. According to the grammatical construction of Ephesians 4:11, *shepherds and teachers* refers to a single class of gifted persons:
1. A shepherd should know how to teach, and a teacher should be able to shepherd.
 2. Shepherding needs teaching, and teaching needs shepherding; therefore, shepherd-teachers are one category of persons; they shepherd others in order to teach them, and they teach others by shepherding them.
- D. Teaching people is not a matter of teaching doctrine but of ministering Christ as the life supply to them—cf. 1 Tim. 4:6:
1. When a shepherd takes care of a flock, he does not mainly teach the flock; actually, the flock does not need much teaching; what it needs is feeding for nourishment.
 2. The proper shepherding is not to rule over others but to minister life to them—cf. 1 Pet. 5:3.