

WEEK 4 — OUTLINE

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

Scripture Reading: Acts 20:18-38

« DAY 1 »

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. 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 (1 Cor. 1:9; 5:7-8; 12:12-13; Jer. 2:13).

« DAY 2 »

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 (1:2, 9, 24, 30; 2:2; 5:7-8).

« DAY 3 »

II. We must shepherd the flock of God by being patterns of the flock; the apostle Paul, as a pattern to all the believers, the members of the Body of Christ, lived Christ for His magnification as His continuation (1 Pet. 5:3; Phil. 1:19-21a; Acts 9:4-5, 15; 26:19; 1 Tim. 1:16):

- A. *Paul was a disciple of Christ—seeing Christ, hearing Christ, and learning Christ as the reality is in Jesus (Acts 9:1-19, 25-27; 22:14-15; Eph. 4:20-21).*
- B. *Paul was a chosen vessel of Christ to contain Him, be filled with Him, and overflow with Him for His fullness (Acts 9:15; 2 Cor.*

4:7; Eph. 1:22-23; 3:19).

- C. Paul was a man of prayer (Acts 9:11; 13:1-3; 14:23; 16:13, 25; 20:36; 21:5; 22:17; 28:8; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2).
- D. Paul depended on the Body, doing everything in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body (Acts 9:11-12, 17-18, 25-27; 1 Cor. 1:1; 12:14-27).
- E. Paul practiced calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 9:14, 21; 22:16; 2 Tim. 2:22; Rom. 10:12-13; Phil. 2:9-11).

« DAY 4 »

- F. Paul lived by the all-inclusive Spirit of Jesus (the Spirit of a man with abundant strength for suffering) for his preaching ministry, a ministry of suffering carried out among human beings and for human beings in the human life for the building up of the Body of Christ (John 7:37-39; Acts 9:16; 16:7, 22-34; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24; 2 Cor. 6:4; 11:23; Heb. 6:19-20; 13:13).
- G. Paul lived in his mingled spirit (the divine Spirit mingled with his human spirit as one spirit) (Acts 17:16; 19:21; Rom. 8:4, 6, 16; 1 Cor. 6:17).
- H. Paul was filled with the Spirit of joy, essentially for his existence, and with the Spirit of power, economically for his function (Acts 13:9, 52; Eph. 5:18).
- I. Paul exercised himself to always have a good and pure conscience (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Tim. 1:19; 3:9).
- J. Paul lived a life of always rejoicing in the Lord, praying unceasingly, and thanking Him in everything (Acts 16:25; 27:35; Phil. 4:4; Col. 3:16; 1 Thes. 5:16-18).
- K. Paul was allied with God and assisted by God to speak the gospel

boldly in the name of Jesus to spread the testimony of Jesus unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 9:20, 27; 26:22-29; 28:31; 1:8; 1 Thes. 2:2; cf. Rom. 15:24, 28).

« DAY 5 »

- L. Paul cherished the saints in the humanity of Jesus and nourished them in the divinity of Christ with all the truths of God’s eternal economy, displaying in his living the word of the Lord Jesus that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:18-38; 1 Thes. 2:1-12).*
- M. Paul was a pattern to the elders in Ephesus, a pattern of what the elders should be to the church (Acts 20:27-38):*
1. He served the Lord as a slave with all humility and tears and trials (v. 19).
 2. 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).
 3. 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).
 4. 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).
 5. 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).
 6. 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).

« DAY 6 »

N. Paul’s fourth ministry journey (Acts 27–28) shows in a particular way his life of living Christ, magnifying Christ, doing all things in Christ, and pursuing Christ in order to be found in Christ (Phil. 1:19-21a; 3:8-9, 14; 4:13):

1. All during the apostle’s long and unfortunate imprisonment-voyage, the Lord kept the apostle in His ascendancy and enabled him to live a life far beyond the realm of anxiety; this life was fully dignified, with the highest standard of human virtues expressing the most excellent divine attributes (vv. 5-9).
2. This was Jesus living again on the earth in His divinely enriched humanity! This was the wonderful, excellent, and mysterious God-man, who lived in the Gospels, continuing to live in the Acts through one of His many members! This was a living witness of the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and God-exalted Christ!
3. In Paul’s living and ministry he expressed the very true God, who in Jesus Christ had gone through the processes of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection, and who, as the all-inclusive Spirit, was then living in him and through him (Gal. 1:15-16, 24; 2:20; 3:14; cf. Acts 28:6).
4. On the sea in the storm, the Lord had made the apostle not only the owner of his fellow voyagers (27:24) but also their life-guarantor and comforter (vv. 22, 25); now, on the land in peace, the Lord made him furthermore not only a magical attraction in the eyes of the superstitious people (28:1-6) but also a healer and a joy to them (vv. 7-10).

5. The warm welcome that Paul received from the brothers in Rome and the loving care of those in Puteoli (vv. 13-15) show the beautiful Body life that existed in the early days among the churches and apostles:
 - a. Apparently, the apostle, as a prisoner in bonds, had entered the region of the dark capital of the Satan-usurped empire; actually, as the ambassador of Christ with His authority (Eph. 6:20; Matt. 28:18-19), he had come into another part of the participation in the Body life of Christ's church in the kingdom of God on earth.
 - b. While he was suffering the persecution of religion in the empire of Satan (the satanic chaos in the old creation), he was enjoying the church life in the kingdom of God (the divine economy for the new creation); this was a comfort and an encouragement to him.
- O. *The ultimate issue of the church will be the New Jerusalem in eternity future as God's full and eternal expression; this should be the reality and goal of all our gospel preaching today as we follow the pattern of the apostle Paul—"proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered" (Acts 28:31).*

« WEEK 4 — DAY 1 »

Morning Nourishment

1 Pet. 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God; not by seeking gain through base means but eagerly.

Jer. 2:13 For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew out for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which hold no water.

In his first Epistle, Peter speaks of Christ being the Shepherd and Overseer of our soul, our inner being and real person (2:25). Then in 5:1-2 he tells the elders that their obligation is to shepherd God's flock according to God. According to God means that we must live God. We must have God on hand. We have God in our understanding, in our theology, and in our teaching, but we may not live God when we are shepherding people. When we are one with God, we become God. Then we have God and are God in our shepherding of others. To shepherd according to God is to shepherd according to what God is in His attributes. God is love, light, holiness, and righteousness. "According to God" is at least according to these four attributes of God. We must shepherd the young ones, the weak ones, and the backsliding ones according to these four attributes. Then we will be good shepherds. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 5, "The Vital Groups," p. 114)

Today's Reading

[Jeremiah] reveals that God's intention 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 (John 3:29-30; Eph. 3:16-19, 21). This is the heart's desire, the good pleasure, of God in His economy (Eph. 1:5, 9; 3:9-11). The full development of this thought, sown as a seed in Jeremiah 2:13, is in the New Testament (John

4:10, 14; 7:37-39;...Rev. 22:1, 17).

Israel should have drunk of God as the fountain of living waters that they might become His increase as His expression, but instead they committed two evils: they forsook God as their fountain, their source, and they turned to a source other than God....The hewing out of cisterns portrays Israel's toil in their human labor to make something (idols) to replace God. That the cisterns were broken and could hold no water indicates that apart from God Himself dispensed into us as living water, nothing can quench our thirst and make us God's increase for His expression (John 4:13-14). (Jer. 2:13, footnote 1)

God intended to dispense Himself into man as man's satisfaction that God might be enlarged, but man became unfaithful and unchaste and forsook God for idols....Whatever we possess, and even whatever we are, can be an idol....In the matter of such unfaithfulness to God, we are the same as Israel.

When we believed in the Lord Jesus, we might have expected to have peace and blessing. But instead we might have had many troubles and might have lost our security, our health, or our possessions. When some Christians experience such things, they may question God's faithfulness and ask why He did not prevent hardships from happening to them.

We need to realize that in allowing us to have troubles, God is faithful in His purpose to turn us from idols and bring us back to Himself. Our peace, safety, health, and possessions may become idols to us, and God is faithful to take these things away so that we may drink of Him as the fountain of living waters. If our house or our possessions become idols to us, we drink of them and not of God. God's faithfulness is a matter of dealing with these idols and causing us to drink of Him.

God is faithful in leading us into His economy, and His economy is for us to drink Christ, to eat Christ, to enjoy Christ, to absorb Christ, and to assimilate Christ that God may have His increase with us to fulfill His economy. This is God's faithfulness. (Life-study of Jeremiah, pp. 27-29)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 5, "The Vital Groups," ch. 7; Life-study of Jeremiah, msg. 4

« WEEK 4 — DAY 2 »

Morning Nourishment

2 Cor. 11:3 But I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your thoughts would be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity toward Christ.

1 Cor. 1:9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

[In 2 Corinthians 11:3 simplicity refers] to the believers' single-hearted loyalty, single-minded faithfulness, toward Christ. In the garden of Eden, Eve, the wife of Adam, was deceived by the serpent, Satan, through his questioning and undermining of God's word, and was thus carried away to the tree of knowledge and distracted from the simplicity of eating the tree of life (Gen. 3:1-6)...The church in Corinth, the pure virgin betrothed to Christ, was being deceived by the Judaizers, the ministers of Satan (2 Cor. 11:15), who were undermining God's word by preaching another Jesus, a different spirit, and a different gospel (v. 4). Because of this undermining preaching, the apostle was fearful that the Corinthians would be distracted by the teachings of the Judaizers and would be separated from the genuine appreciation, love, and enjoyment of the precious person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as their life and their everything. (2 Cor. 11:3, footnote 2)

Today's Reading

Eating the tree of life, that is, enjoying Christ as our life supply, should be the primary matter in the church life. The content of the church life depends on the enjoyment of Christ. The more we enjoy Him, the richer the content will be. But to enjoy Christ requires us to love Him with the first love. If we leave our first love toward the Lord, we will miss the enjoyment of Christ and lose the testimony of Jesus; consequently, the lampstand will be removed from us. (Rev. 2:7, footnote 6)

First Corinthians is a book on the enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ (1:2, 9,

24, 30)...In this Christ there is an absolute, wonderful, excellent, and killing death. In the crucified and resurrected Christ there is the killing element that kills all our negative “germs.”...If we eat Christ every day to enjoy Him, we will be nourished, and the negative elements within us will be killed.

The enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ solves the problems in the church through the work of the cross (1:13a, 18, 23-24; 2:2). By “the cross” I mean the death of Christ, especially the subjective aspect of His death. The Christ whom we enjoy today is the all-inclusive One, and included in His being is the killing death. As long as we enjoy Him, we get killed, not in a negative way but in a positive way. When we enjoy Him every day, we get killed every day. One brother may be very offended by another brother and may even be full of hatred, but when this brother enjoys Christ, his germs of hatred toward the other brother are unconsciously killed. In marriage life the husbands offend the wives and the wives offend the husbands, but when the husbands and wives love the Lord and enjoy the Lord day after day, their bad feeling toward each other disappears. It is cleared up by the killing element within the very Christ whom they experienced. Inside of them there is a great change from hatred to love because of their enjoyment of Christ. Because there were so many problems among the Corinthians, Paul wrote to them concerning the enjoyment of Christ. This enjoyment solves our problems by killing the germs within us. (CWWL, 1988, vol. 4, “The Excelling Gift for the Building Up of the Church,” pp. 444, 446-447)

This all-inclusive One, with the riches of at least twenty items [revealed in 1 Corinthians], God has given to us as our portion for our enjoyment. We should concentrate on Him, not on any persons, things, or matters other than Him. We should focus on Him as our unique center appointed by God, that all the problems among the believers may be solved. It is into the fellowship of such a One that we have been called by God. (1 Cor. 1:9, footnote 2)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1965, vol. 3, “The Enjoyment of Christ,” ch. 1; CWWL, 1988, vol. 4, “The Excelling Gift for the Building Up of the Church,” ch. 1; CWWL, 1985, vol. 3, “Elders’ Training, Book 5: The Lord’s Up-to-date Move,” ch. 2

« WEEK 4 — DAY 3 »

Morning Nourishment

Acts 20:19-20 Serving the Lord as a slave with all humility and tears and trials which came upon me by the plots of the Jews; how I did not withhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring them to you and by not teaching you publicly and from house to house.

No one among the saints is qualified in himself for the eldership. According to 2 Corinthians 3:5, the apostle Paul says that we are not sufficient of ourselves but that our sufficiency is from God. So all the brothers who bear the responsibility of the eldership should put their trust in the Lord...Paul is a real pattern to all the elders....Although he himself had never been an elder, he set up a model, a pattern, an example, for the elders whom he had trained. So whatever he spoke about himself, his expectation was that all the elders would follow his steps and imitate what he had been doing. First, Paul said that he was serving the Lord as a slave. The elders all have to serve the Lord as a slave. They are not put into a position of dignity or rank. In the church there is no rank and no position. There is only humility and slavery. Following humility there are tears, not joy and happiness. Then third are the trials that come upon us from other people who claim to be for God and even conspire to undermine the work. (CWWL, 1989, vol. 4, "Talks concerning the Church Services," pp. 209-210)

Today's Reading

Elders should serve the Lord not just as servants but slaves, losing their right and all kinds of liberty. Actually, to be put into the eldership is to be brought into slavery. We all are slaves to serve the Lord. To serve the Lord here is not to serve the Lord directly but indirectly by serving His people. The elders must pick up the burden of a slave to serve the big family of their Master. We must behave, do things, and even have our being as slaves with all humility.

We should brand ourselves with the word humility. We have no right to be

proud of anything. Everything that is glorious should go to our Master. He is the only One who is qualified to be proud of anything. We are destined to be humble. To be humble is not an easy thing; to be proud is easy. To be humble and even to be humbled are not a happy thing but a thing of tears.

Acts 20:20 says, “How I did not withhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring them to you.” Paul did not shrink from his duty. He did not withdraw from declaring to the saints anything that was profitable to them. To declare something is more crucial and more important than to merely tell. Paul did a faithful job to declare every bit of God’s interests that He had toward His people.

Paul did not withdraw from his responsibility. Rather, he taught the believers publicly in the meetings and privately from house to house.

A local church in its administration does need some management in its business affairs. But the main responsibility of the elders is first to shepherd, as Peter tells us in his first Epistle, chapter 5, verse 2. As we have indicated, shepherding requires teaching, so the elders should also teach (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17). For the elders to teach others, they first of all must be taught. They must learn first.

Just to visit the homes of the saints and tell them to trust in the Lord and believe in Him is not adequate. The elders must read to them some profitable verses, give them some definitions, and teach them with the holy Word. Then they will be edified, established, strengthened, and built up.

To shepherd is not just to give a message. This is neither adequate nor primary. The primary responsibility is to go to the saints and shepherd them in their homes. So Paul set up a pattern for the elders by teaching the saints publicly and from house to house. In Greek from house to house means “according to houses.” If there is a house, the elders should go. If there are ten houses, they should go to each one to visit each of the saints. (CWWL, 1989, vol. 4, “Talks concerning the Church Services,” pp. 210-211)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1989, vol. 4, “Talks concerning the Church Services,” ch. 2

« WEEK 4 – DAY 4 »

Morning Nourishment

Acts 20:27-28 For I did not shrink from declaring to you all the counsel of God. 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.

Not only did Paul teach [the believers in Ephesus], care for their interests, and care for the things that were profitable to them, but he declared also God's counsel, God's plan, and God's economy. No doubt, Paul taught the Ephesians a great deal concerning God's New Testament economy.

Similarly, all the elders must learn what God's New Testament economy is and point this out to the saints. By knowing God's eternal economy, most of the saints would then be solidly grounded and deeply rooted. Most Christians today receive only shallow teachings, instructing them to be good, humble, loving, and kind....The things of God's New Testament economy, God's eternal plan, and God's plan for the church are absolutely lacking among them. Hence, what is needed among us is the proper biblical, divine revelation concerning God's eternal economy. (CWWL, 1989, vol. 4, "Talks concerning the Church Services," p. 212)

Today's Reading

The elders must learn all the things of God's economy and dive into them....They will be able to comfort the disappointed saints by telling them God's economy. To hear God's economy and receive such a high calling will become a strong comfort and encouragement to the disappointed ones. The problems that we are facing today in the recovery are mainly due to the lack of a deep understanding and realization of God's eternal economy.

In Acts 20:28 Paul admonished the elders to "take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers."

Apparently, it was Paul who appointed them as elders. Actually, it was the Holy Spirit who placed them as overseers. Here Paul uses the term overseers instead

of elders. These two synonyms are used interchangeably. The term elder refers to the person, but overseer speaks of his responsibility. An overseer should not be sloppy or sleepy but all the time watchful. He must be aware of the situation of the church and oversee each member of the flock. If so, he will know what the need is and what they should do.

Paul charged the elders not only to teach but also to shepherd the church of God, which God obtained through His own blood. To obtain in Greek also denotes “to acquire,” or “purchase.” His own blood is a dear term. God considers the church as a treasure that is very dear and precious in His eyes. He loves the church to such an extent that He purchased it with His own blood.

Similarly, the elders should also love the church as God does...God used His own blood. So we must love the church with this kind of fine feeling and affection.

Verse 29 says, “I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.” To spare the flock means that we love the flock with tender care by cherishing and nourishing. However, the wolves would not care for the church in this way. On the contrary, they would sacrifice the church for their own interests and satisfaction. They are wolves hunting for prey.

Verse 30 follows, “And from among you yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them.” Not only will wolves come in from without, but men will rise up from within the church, speaking perverted things.

Finally, Acts 20:31 says, “Therefore watch, remembering that for three years, night and day, I did not cease admonishing each one with tears.” Paul not only went to their house, but he also admonished each one of them with tears day and night. The elders among us must pick up a burden to do this day and night. They should go to the homes of the saints and admonish each one with tears. (CWWL, 1989, vol. 4, “Talks concerning the Church Services,” pp. 212-214)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1988, vol. 4, “Further Light concerning the Building Up of the Body of Christ,” ch. 2

« WEEK 4 — DAY 5 »

Morning Nourishment

Acts 20:31 Therefore watch, remembering that for three years, night and day, I did not cease admonishing each one with tears.

Eph. 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

[In Acts 20:28 His own blood indicates] the precious love of God for the church and the preciousness, the exceeding worth, of the church in the eyes of God. Here the apostle did not touch the divine life and nature of the church as in Ephesians 5:23-32, but the value of the church as a treasure to God, a treasure which He acquired with His own precious blood. Paul expected that the elders as overseers would treasure the church as God did.

Both the Holy Spirit and God's own blood are divine provisions for the church that He treasures. The Holy Spirit is God Himself, and God's own blood denotes God's work. God's redemptive work acquired the church; now God Himself, the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), cares for the church through the overseers. (Acts 20:28, footnote 5)

Today's Reading

According to Ephesians, the unique goal of God's calling is the building up of the Body of Christ. In Matthew 16 the Lord Jesus said that He would build His church. The book of Acts and the Epistles reveal that the church is built up not by the Lord directly, but through the members of the Body. Christ builds the Body by the Body. God has called us for the fulfillment of this goal.

Ephesians 3:2 speaks of the stewardship of the grace of God, and 4:12, of the building up of the Body of Christ....The stewardship of the grace of God is not

limited to Paul and the other apostles. Do not think that Paul was such a steward and that you are not. Paul's intention here is to impress the saints with the fact that they all have received the stewardship of the grace of God for the building up of the Body of Christ. According to 4:12, the building up of the Body is not the work of the apostles alone; it is the responsibility of all the saints...[who] are perfected unto the work of ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ. The Greek word rendered "unto" in this verse also means "for the purpose of," "with a view to," or "resulting in." The perfecting of the saints results in the work of ministry, which in turn results in the building up of the Body of Christ. The Body is not built up directly by the apostles and the other leading ones; it is built up directly by the saints.

Verse 12 speaks of the saints, and verse 16 mentions "each one part." According to verse 16, the Body causes the growth of itself unto the building up of itself in love. In order for this to take place in a practical way, all the saints need to be perfected by the apostles and the other leading ones....Paul expected every saint to be the same as he was.

Paul was not only an apostle; he was also a prophet, an evangelist, and a shepherd and teacher. Many of us, however, may classify the gifted ones mentioned in verse 11 into four distinct categories: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the shepherds and teachers. But Paul, the pattern of God's called one, was all of these. Paul certainly was a prophet. In his Epistles he uttered some great prophecies, such as those found in 1 Corinthians 15 and in 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Paul was also an evangelist. Who was a greater evangelist than he was? He preached the gospel wherever he went. Furthermore, Paul was a shepherd and a teacher. Day and night, he cared for all the churches and all the saints. Finally, who can deny that Paul was a teacher?...Therefore, Paul was an apostle, a prophet, an evangelist, and a shepherd and teacher. His burden and intention in chapters 3 and 4 were to point out that every saint should be the same as he was in these respects. (Life-study of Ephesians, pp. 329-331)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 4, "Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John," ch. 13; Life-study of Ephesians, msgs. 39, 41-42

« WEEK 4 — DAY 6 »

Morning Nourishment

Phil. 1:19-21 ...For me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

At his conversion Paul was transferred from the law and his former religion into Christ and became “a man in Christ” (2 Cor. 12:2). Now he expected to be found in Christ by all who observed him—the Jews, the angels, and the demons. This indicates that he aspired to have his whole being immersed in and saturated with Christ that all who observed him might find him fully in Christ. Only when we are found in Christ will Christ be expressed and magnified (Phil. 1:20). (Phil. 3:9, footnote 1)

Today's Reading

On the sea in the storm, the Lord had made the apostle not only the owner of his fellow voyagers (Acts 27:24) but also their life-guarantor and comforter (27:22, 25). Now, on the land in peace, the Lord made him furthermore not only a magical attraction in the eyes of the superstitious people (28:3-6) but also a healer and a joy to them (vv. 8-9). All during the apostle's long and unfortunate imprisonment-voyage, the Lord kept the apostle in His ascendancy and enabled him to live a life far beyond the realm of anxiety. This life was fully dignified, with the highest standard of human virtues expressing the most excellent divine attributes, a life that resembled the one that the Lord Himself had lived on the earth years before. This was Jesus living again on the earth in His divinely enriched humanity! This was the wonderful, excellent, and mysterious God-man, who lived in the Gospels, continuing to live in the Acts through one of His many members! This was a living witness of the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and

God-exalted Christ! Paul in his voyage lived and magnified Christ (Phil. 1:20-21). (Acts 28:9, footnote 1)

In his living and ministry [the apostle] expressed the very true God, who in Jesus Christ had gone through the processes of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection, and who, as the all-inclusive Spirit, was then living in him and through him. (Acts 28:6, footnote 1)

The warm welcome of the brothers from Rome and the loving care of those in Puteoli (Acts 28:13-14) show the beautiful Body life that existed in the early days among the churches and apostles. This life was a part of the heavenly kingdom life on the Satan-darkened and man-inhabited earth. Apparently, the apostle, as a prisoner in bonds, had entered the region of the dark capital of the Satan-usurped empire; actually, as the ambassador of Christ with His authority (Eph. 6:20; Matt. 28:18-19), he had come into another part of the participation in the Body life of Christ's church in the kingdom of God on earth. While he was suffering the persecution of religion in the empire of Satan, he was enjoying the church life in the kingdom of God. This was a comfort and an encouragement to him. (Acts 28:15, footnote 2)

In the four Gospels God was incarnated, passed through human living, died, and resurrected, thus completing Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God (Col. 2:9). In Acts this embodiment of God, as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), spreads Christ into His believers, that is, works the processed Triune God into His chosen, redeemed, and transformed people to make them the constituents of the church, through which God may be expressed. The ultimate issue of the church will be the New Jerusalem in eternity future as God's full and eternal expression, which will also be God's eternal kingdom as the sphere in which He reigns in His divine life in eternity forever and ever. This should be the reality and goal of all gospel preaching today. (Acts 28:31, footnote 2)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 4, "Incarnation, Inclusion, and Intensification," ch. 2; CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 5, "How to Be a Co-worker and an Elder and How to Fulfill Their Obligations," ch. 3; The All-inclusive Christ, ch. 5

WEEK 4 — HYMN

Consider Him, let Christ thy pattern be Encouragement — For Considering Christ

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The image shows a musical score for a hymn. It consists of four staves of music in a treble clef with a common time signature (C). The melody is written on the first staff, and the lyrics are written below it. The second staff continues the melody and lyrics. The third staff continues the melody and lyrics. The fourth staff continues the melody and lyrics. The lyrics are: "1. 'Con - si - der Him,' let Christ thy pat - tern be, And know that He hath ap - pre - hend - ed thee To share His ve - ry life, His pow'r di - vine, And in the like - ness of thy Lord to shine." The chords are indicated by letters above the notes: C, F/C, C, C/E, F, F/A, C, F, C, Am, D7, G, C, F, C/E, C, D, D7/F#, G, G7/F, C/E, F, C, F, C/G, G7, C.

2. “Consider Him“; so shalt thou, day by day,
Seek out the lowliest place, and therein stay,
Content to pass away, a thing of nought,
That glory to the Father’s name be brought.
3. Shrink not, O child of God, but fearless go
Down into death with Jesus; thou shalt know
The power of an endless life begin,
With glorious liberty from self and sin.
4. “Consider Him,” and thus thy life shall be
Filled with self-sacrifice and purity;
God will work out in thee the pattern true,
And Christ’s example ever keep in view.
5. “Consider Him,” and as you run the race,
Keep ever upward looking in His face;
And thus transformed, illumined thou shalt be,
And Christ’s own image shall be seen in thee.