

## Message Six

### **Entering into Christ's Wonderful Shepherding in His Heavenly Ministry to Shepherd the Church of God as a Slave of God for the Fulfillment of the Dream of God**

Hymns:

Scripture Reading: Acts 20:19-20, 28, 31; John 21:15-17;

1 Pet. 2:25; Matt. 24:45-47; 25:3-4, 9, 22-23

- Acts 20:19 Serving the Lord as a slave with all humility and tears and trials which came upon me by the plots of the Jews;
- Acts 20:20 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,
- Acts 20:28 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.
- Acts 20:31 Therefore watch, remembering that for three years, night and day, I did not cease admonishing each one with tears.
- John 21:15 Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs.
- John 21:16 He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Shepherd My sheep.
- John 21:17 He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved that He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep.
- 1 Pet. 2:25 For you were like sheep being led astray, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.
- Matt. 24:45 Who then is the faithful and prudent slave, whom the master has set over his household to give them food at the proper time?
- Matt. 24:46 Blessed is that slave whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.
- Matt. 24:47 Truly I say to you that he will set him over all his possessions.
- Matt. 25:3 For the foolish, when they took their lamps, did not take oil with them;
- Matt. 25:4 But the prudent took oil in their vessels with their lamps.
- Matt. 25:9 But the prudent answered, saying, Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.
- Matt. 25:22 And he who had received the two talents also came and said, Master, you delivered to me two talents; behold, I have gained another two talents.
- Matt. 25:23 His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful over a few things; I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.

- I. We need to enter into Christ's wonderful shepherding in His heavenly ministry by enjoying and ministering Christ to shepherd the church of God as a slave of God for the fulfillment of the dream of God, the eternal purpose of God—Acts 20:19-20, 28, 31; Rom. 1:1; Gal. 6:17; Mark 9:7-8; Eph. 3:11:**

Acts 20:19 Serving the Lord as a slave with all humility and tears and trials which came upon me by the plots of the Jews;

Acts 20:20 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,

Acts 20:28 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.

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

Rom. 1:1 Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, a called apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

Gal. 6:17 Henceforth let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the brands of Jesus.

Mark 9:7 And a cloud appeared, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud: This is My Son, the Beloved. Hear Him!

Mark 9:8 And suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone, but Jesus only with them.

Eph. 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord,

A. God's dream is the dream of His eternal purpose to have the reality of Bethel, the house of God, the mutual dwelling place of God and man; in this universe God is doing only one thing—He is building His eternal habitation for His eternal expression—Gen. 28:11-12, 16-19a; Matt. 16:18; John 14:23; 15:5; Rev. 21:3, 22.

Gen. 28:11 And he came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and he lay down in that place.

Gen. 28:12 And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

Gen. 28:16 And Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, Surely Jehovah is in this place, and I did not know it.

Gen. 28:17 And he was afraid and said, How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

Gen. 28:18 And Jacob rose up early in the morning and took the stone that he had put under his head, and he set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it.

Gen. 28:19 And he called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz previously.

Matt. 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him.

John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

Rev. 21:3 And I heard a loud voice out of the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.

Rev. 21:22 And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

B. Christ as the Slave-Savior did not come to be served, but to serve; as the great Shepherd of the sheep, He served us in the past, He still serves us in the present, and He is going to serve us in the future—Mark 10:45; Luke 22:26-27; 12:37; Heb. 13:20; Rev. 7:17; Gen. 48:15.

Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.

Luke 22:26 But you shall not be so; but let the greatest among you become like the youngest, and the one who leads like the one who serves.

- Luke 22:27 For who is greater, the one who reclines at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am in your midst as the one who serves.
- Luke 12:37 Blessed are those slaves whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Truly I tell you that he will gird himself and will have them recline at table, and he will come to them and serve them.
- Heb. 13:20 Now the God of peace, He who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant,
- Rev. 7:17 For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and guide them to springs of waters of life; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.
- Gen. 48:15 And he blessed Joseph and said, / The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, / The God who has shepherded me all my life to this day,

C. Whenever we have a need, we can come to the Lord and let Him serve us so that He can serve others through us; as the life-giving Spirit, the Slave- Savior shepherds others through us by dispensing Himself as life into us so that we can become the channel for Him to dispense Himself as life into others—Matt. 26:13; John 13:12-17; 1 John 3:16; John 10:10; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:6.

- Matt. 26:13 Truly I say to you, Wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what this woman has done shall also be told as a memorial of her.
- John 13:12 Then when He had washed their feet and taken His outer garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, Do you know what I have done to you?
- John 13:13 You call Me the Teacher and the Lord, and you say rightly, for I am.
- John 13:14 If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.
- John 13:15 For I have given you an example so that you also may do even as I have done to you.
- John 13:16 Truly, truly, I say to you, A slave is not greater than his master, nor one who is sent greater than the one who sends him.
- John 13:17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.
- 1 John 3:16 In this we know love, that He laid down His life on our behalf, and we ought to lay down our lives on behalf of the brothers.
- John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly.
- 1 Cor. 15:45 So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul"; the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.
- 2 Cor. 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

D. Our service to the Lord in time is a preparation for our service to Him in the next age and in eternity—Matt. 25:21; Rev. 22:3:

- Matt. 25:21 His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful over a few things; I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.
- Rev. 22:3 And there will no longer be a curse. And the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His slaves will serve Him;

1. Our usefulness before God is the result of our being mingled with Him; the measure of God in us is the measure of our usefulness before Him—Col. 2:19; Heb. 13:20; Phil. 2:13; 3:8-9.

- Col. 2:19 And...holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.
- Heb. 13:20 Now the God of peace, He who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant,

- Phil. 2:13 For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.
- Phil. 3:8 But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ
- Phil. 3:9 And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith,

2. God's only goal in time is to dispense Himself into us day by day so that we may be fully mingled with Him; all our service is a matter of God coming into us and coming out of us—John 7:37-39; 2 Cor. 3:2-3, 6, 16-18.

- John 7:37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.
- John 7:38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.
- John 7:39 But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.
- 2 Cor. 3:2 You are our letter, inscribed in our hearts, known and read by all men,
- 2 Cor. 3:3 Since you are being manifested that you are a letter of Christ ministered by us, inscribed not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone but in tablets of hearts of flesh.
- 2 Cor. 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
- 2 Cor. 3:16 But whenever their heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.
- 2 Cor. 3:17 And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.
- 2 Cor. 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

E. Christ as the Steward in God's house makes us the dispensing stewards of the mysteries of God and of the varied grace of God for the carrying out of His eternal economy, His household administration—1 Cor. 4:1; Eph. 3:2; 1 Pet. 4:10; Isa. 22:15-22.

- 1 Cor. 4:1 A man should account us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.
- Eph. 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,
- 1 Pet. 4:10 Each one, as he has received a gift, ministering it among yourselves as good stewards of the varied grace of God.
- Isa. 22:15 Thus says the Lord Jehovah of hosts: / Get up, go to this steward, / To Shebna, who is over the king's house, saying,
- Isa. 22:16 What are you doing here, and whom do you have here / That you have hewn a tomb for yourself here, / As he who has hewn a tomb on the heights, / As he who has cut out a resting place for himself in the rock?
- Isa. 22:17 Jehovah soon throws you far away, O mighty one, / And He grasps you firmly;
- Isa. 22:18 He will wind you up tightly; / Like a ball He will toss you into a wide land. / There you will die; and there the chariots of your glory / Will become the disgrace of the house of your master.
- Isa. 22:19 And I will drive you from your position, / And from your standing He will pull you down.
- Isa. 22:20 And in that day / I will call to My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah,

- Isa. 22:21 And I will clothe him with your tunic, / And I will strengthen him with your girding sash, / And I will put your dominion into his hand; / And he will become a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem / And to the house of Judah.
- Isa. 22:22 And I will set the key of the house of David upon his shoulder - / When he opens, no one will shut; / When he shuts, no one will open.

**II. To shepherd the flock of God is to watch over the souls of the saints, being one with the Lord as the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls in His care for the welfare of their inner being and in His exercising His oversight over the condition of their real person—John 21:15-17; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:1-6; Heb. 13:17:**

- John 21:15 Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs.
- John 21:16 He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Shepherd My sheep.
- John 21:17 He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved that He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep.
- 1 Pet. 2:25 For you were like sheep being led astray, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.
- 1 Pet. 5:1 Therefore the elders among you I exhort, who am a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory to be revealed:
- 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;
- 1 Pet. 5:3 Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock.
- 1 Pet. 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
- 1 Pet. 5:5 In like manner, younger men, be subject to elders; and all of you gird yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.
- 1 Pet. 5:6 Therefore be humbled under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time,
- Heb. 13:17 Obey the ones leading you and submit to them, for they watch over your souls as those who will render an account, that they may do this with joy and not groaning; for this would be unprofitable to you.

**A. For the sake of the flock, the elders must enjoy the Lord every day as grace and truth so that they may be dispensers of grace and truth—Eph. 3:2; 4:29; 1 Tim. 3:2b; 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Titus 1:9.**

- Eph. 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,
- Eph. 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but only that which is good for building up, according to the need, that it may give grace to those who hear.
- 1 Tim. 3:2 The overseer then must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, of a sober mind, orderly, hospitable, apt to teach;
- 1 Tim. 5:17 Let the elders who take the lead well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and teaching.
- 2 Tim. 2:24 But a slave of the Lord ought not to contend but be gentle toward all, apt to teach, bearing with wrong;
- 2 Tim. 2:25 In meekness correcting those who oppose, if perhaps God may give them repentance unto the full knowledge of the truth,

2 Tim. 2:26 And they may return to soberness out of the snare of the devil, having been caught alive by him, unto His will.

Titus 1:9 Holding to the faithful word, which is according to the teaching of the apostles, that he may be able both to exhort by the healthy teaching and to convict those who oppose.

- B. For the sake of the flock, the elders need to buy the oil every day (Matt. 25:3-4, 9), to pay the price to gain more of the Spirit, by buying the truth of God's economy (Prov. 23:23), buying gold refined by fire that they may be rich toward God, buying white garments that they may be clothed with Christ by living out Christ, and buying eyesalve as the anointing Spirit to heal their blindness (Rev. 3:18).

Matt. 25:3 For the foolish, when they took their lamps, did not take oil with them;

Matt. 25:4 But the prudent took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

Matt. 25:9 But the prudent answered, saying, Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.

Prov. 23:23 Buy truth, and do not sell it; / Buy wisdom and instruction and understanding.

Rev. 3:18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see.

- C. For the sake of the flock, the co-workers and elders need to be faithful and prudent slaves, taking care of the Lord's possessions and investing their spiritual gift by giving the food of the word of God, the full gospel of God's economy, to the sinners, the believers, and the churches—Rom. 1:1; Matt. 24:45-47; 25:22-23.

Rom. 1:1 Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, a called apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

Matt. 24:45 Who then is the faithful and prudent slave, whom the master has set over his household to give them food at the proper time?

Matt. 24:46 Blessed is that slave whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.

Matt. 24:47 Truly I say to you that he will set him over all his possessions.

Matt. 25:22 And he who had received the two talents also came and said, Master, you delivered to me two talents; behold, I have gained another two talents.

Matt. 25:23 His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful over a few things; I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.

### **III. The elders should not lord it over God's flock, which is God's possession; the churches are God's possession, allotted to the elders as their portion, entrusted to them by God for their care—1 Pet. 5:3-4:**

1 Pet. 5:3 Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock.

1 Pet. 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

- A. To lord it over others is to exercise lordship over those who are ruled (Matt. 20:25); among the believers we are all brothers, and only Christ is our Lord, our Master, and the Lord of the harvest (23:8, 10; Luke 10:2).

Matt. 20:25 But Jesus called them to Him and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great exercise authority over them.

Matt. 23:8 But you, do not be called Rabbi, for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers.

Matt. 23:10 Neither be called instructors, because One is your Instructor, the Christ.

Luke 10:2 And He said to them, The harvest is great, but the workers few; therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest that He would thrust out workers into His harvest.

- B. The elders in the church can take the leadership (not the lordship) only by becoming patterns of the flock, taking the lead to serve and care for the church so that the believers may

follow—1 Pet. 5:3; 1 Thes. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 4:12; 5:17.

1 Pet. 5:3 Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock.

1 Thes. 5:12 Furthermore we ask you, brothers, to acknowledge those who labor among you and take the lead among you in the Lord and admonish you,

1 Thes. 5:13 And to regard them most highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

1 Tim. 4:12 Let no one despise your youth, but be a pattern to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

1 Tim. 5:17 Let the elders who take the lead well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and teaching.

C. We should not tell the saints where to live, what to do, or where to go without directing them to pray so that we can honor Christ as the Head of the Body:

1. Any decisions that you make by yourself for others are an insult to Christ as the Head of the Body; none of us should ever tell others where they should go; what an insult this is to the Lord!—Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:15-16.

Col. 2:19 And...holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

Eph. 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,

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.

2. If you have told others where to move, you must repent and ask them to forgive you because you gave them instructions about what they should do; to do this is to usurp the position of the Lord and to make yourself the Lord.

3. Concerning any move you make in the Lord's recovery, you must go directly to the Lord Himself and pray; you must have the assurance that the Lord is sending you; everything must be brought into the presence of the Lord, and everyone should pray until he is clear about the Lord's leadings—Mark 1:35-38; 2 Cor. 2:12-14.

Mark 1:35 And rising very early in the morning, while it was still night, He went out and went away to a deserted place, and there He prayed.

Mark 1:36 And Simon and those with him hunted for Him,

Mark 1:37 And they found Him and said to Him, All are seeking You.

Mark 1:38 And He said to them, Let us go elsewhere into the nearby towns that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I came out.

2 Cor. 2:12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and a door was open to me in the Lord,

2 Cor. 2:13 I had no rest in my spirit, for I did not find Titus my brother; but taking leave of them, I went forth into Macedonia.

2 Cor. 2:14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in the Christ and manifests the savor of the knowledge of Him through us in every place.

D. We also need to check whether the leading we have from the Lord corresponds to the feeling of the Body—Acts 13:1-4a; 21:4, 11:

Acts 13:1 Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Acts 13:2 And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

- Acts 13:3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.
- Acts 13:4 They then, having been sent out by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia; and from there they sailed away to Cyprus.
- Acts 21:4 And when we had sought out the disciples, we remained there seven days. These told Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem.
- Acts 21:11 And he came to us and took Paul's belt; and having bound his own feet and hands, he said, Thus says the Holy Spirit, In this way will the Jews in Jerusalem bind the man whose belt this is and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

1. If the leading ones, after much prayer, are truly burdened about a certain matter, through fellowship they should pass on their burden to the saints and ask the saints to pray; eventually, the saints will receive a personal leading from the Lord, and they may move accordingly.
2. If you move to a place without prayer and fellowship, you will be shaken when tests, afflictions, and persecutions come; if you pray and fellowship, you will have the assurance that the Lord sent you there, and you will never regret your move, no matter what the outward situation may be.

E. We need to be careful about directing or controlling the young saints related to their marriage—Matt. 19:5-6:

- Matt. 19:5 And said, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall be joined to his wife; and the two shall be one flesh"?
- Matt. 19:6 So then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has yoked together, let man not separate.

1. In the church life all we can do concerning the young people's marriage is to minister life to them; we must help them to look to the Lord's leading, to learn how to walk in the Spirit, and help them not to indulge in lust or to have their own taste or choice—Gen. 2:21-24; 24:64-67; 49:31.

- Gen. 2:21 And Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place.
- Gen. 2:22 And Jehovah God built the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman and brought her to the man.
- Gen. 2:23 And the man said, This time this is bone of my bones / And flesh of my flesh; / This one shall be called Woman / Because out of Man this one was taken.
- Gen. 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.
- Gen. 24:64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes; and when she saw Isaac, she sprang off the camel.
- Gen. 24:65 And she said to the servant, Who is this man who is walking in the field to meet us? And the servant said, It is my master. And she took her veil and covered herself.
- Gen. 24:66 And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done.
- Gen. 24:67 And Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother. And he took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. And Isaac was comforted after the death of his mother.
- Gen. 49:31 There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah -

2. We should not try to conduct them into a marriage or match them; only the Lord knows who is a good match for another person; we do not know.

3. We do not control and, even the more, we do not conduct or indicate what brother or sister might be best for them; if we leave this matter to the Lord and pray for the ones concerned, we will save the church much trouble.
4. On the one hand, we should not interfere with them; on the other hand, we have to help them in morality, in life, in human living, in taking care of the future, concerning their parents, and even in praying and seeking the Lord concerning the one whom they marry not being their choice.

#### **IV. We need to take care of the saints in everything and in every way for the dispensing of Christ into them:**

- A. The elders must minister Christ to meet the need of all kinds of people, contacting and visiting them regularly and inviting them to their home for meals—1 Tim. 5:1-2; 2 Chron. 1:10; Col. 1:28-29; Jude 12; John 12:1-11.

- 1 Tim. 5:1 Do not upbraid an elderly man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers,  
 1 Tim. 5:2 Elderly women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.  
 2 Chron. 1:10 Now give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this great people of Yours?  
 Col. 1:28 Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ;  
 Col. 1:29 For which also I labor, struggling according to His operation which operates in me in power.  
 Jude 12 These are the hidden reefs in your love feasts, feasting together with you without fear, shepherding themselves; waterless clouds being carried off by winds; autumn trees without fruit, having died twice, rooted up;  
 John 12:1 Then Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.  
 John 12:2 Therefore they made Him a supper there; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of the ones reclining at table with Him.  
 John 12:3 Then Mary took a pound of ointment, of very valuable pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment.  
 John 12:4 But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was about to betray Him, said,  
 John 12:5 Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?  
 John 12:6 But he said this not because it mattered to him concerning the poor, but because he was a thief, and holding the purse, carried off what was put into it.  
 John 12:7 Then Jesus said, Leave her alone; she has reserved it for the day of My burial.  
 John 12:8 For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have Me.  
 John 12:9 Then a great crowd of the Jews found out that He was there, and they came, not because of Jesus only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead.  
 John 12:10 And the chief priests took counsel to kill Lazarus also,  
 John 12:11 Because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed into Jesus.

- B. We must contact the saints and minister Christ to them as the sin-dealing life; the life of Christ is a life that deals with sin, a sin-dealing life—Lev. 10:17:

- Lev. 10:17 Why have you not eaten the sin offering in the place of the sanctuary? For it is most holy, and He gave it to you to bear the iniquity of the assembly, to make expiation for them before Jehovah.

1. If we are going to minister Christ to a person who has been committing sins, we have to trust in the Lord that we may have the grace with the Spirit to soften his hardened heart—Rom. 2:4; Titus 3:3-4; cf. Heb. 3:13.

Rom. 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of His kindness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that God's kindness is leading you to repentance?  
 Titus 3:3 For we also were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving as slaves various lusts and pleasures, spending our lives in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.  
 Titus 3:4 But when the kindness and the love to man of our Savior God appeared,  
 Heb. 3:13 But exhort one another each day, as long as it is called "today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin--

2. We do not need to mention his weakness, fault, or sin, because the life of Christ ministered into him will heal him, killing the germs, destroying the problems, and building up a permanent, lasting oneness of the Spirit.

3. We have to do our best to recover a fallen saint; even if it took eight months or a year to get one or two sinful saints recovered, this would be a great thing—Gal. 6:1-2; 1 John 5:16a.

Gal. 6:1 Brothers, even if a man is overtaken in some offense, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, looking to yourself lest you also be tempted.

Gal. 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ completely.

1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he should make request concerning that.

4. This is to bear away the iniquity and solve the problems of the people of God; furthermore, this kind of ministry by the Spirit and in love will maintain the oneness of the Spirit in the church life—Col. 3:12-15.

Col. 3:12 Put on therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, inward parts of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering;

Col. 3:13 Bearing one another and forgiving one another, if anyone should have a complaint against anyone; even as the Lord forgave you, so also should you forgive.

Col. 3:14 And over all these things put on love, which is the uniting bond of perfectness.

Col. 3:15 And let the peace of Christ arbitrate in your hearts, to which also you were called in one Body; and be thankful.

## V. In their fellowship with one another, the elders need to be restricted in their speaking—John 6:63; Acts 6:10:

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

Acts 6:10 Yet they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke.

A. Those who cover others' sins, defects, and shortcomings enjoy, gain, and receive blessing, but uncovering brings in a curse—Prov. 10:12; James 5:19-20; Gen. 9:21-27.

Prov. 10:12 Hatred stirs up strife, / But love covers all transgressions.

James 5:19 My brothers, if any one among you is led astray from the truth and someone turns him back,

James 5:20 Let him know that he who turns a sinner back from the error of his way will save that one's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Gen. 9:21 And he drank of the wine and became drunk. And he uncovered himself inside his tent.

- Gen. 9:22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside.
- Gen. 9:23 And Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders, and they walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. And their faces were turned backward, so that they did not see their father's nakedness.
- Gen. 9:24 And Noah awoke from his wine and learned what his youngest son had done to him.
- Gen. 9:25 And he said, Cursed be Canaan: / A servant of servants / Shall he be to his brothers.
- Gen. 9:26 And he said, Blessed be Jehovah, / The God of Shem; / And let Canaan be his servant.
- Gen. 9:27 May God enlarge Japheth, / And let him dwell in the tents of Shem, / And let Canaan be his servant.
- B. The elders need to realize that in their shepherding, they have to cover others' sins, not to take account of others' evils—1 Cor. 13:5-7.
- 1 Cor. 13:5 It does not behave unbecomingly and does not seek its own things; it is not provoked and does not take account of evil;
- 1 Cor. 13:6 It does not rejoice because of unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;
- 1 Cor. 13:7 It covers all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
- C. Love covers all things, not only the good things but also the bad things; whoever uncovers the defects, shortcomings, and sins of the members of the church is disqualified from the eldership—cf. Matt. 24:49.
- Matt. 24:49 And begins to beat his fellow slaves and eats and drinks with the drunken,
- D. The elders should not speak reviling words (to revile is to rebuke or criticize harshly or abusively; to assail with abusive language); those who take in reviling words bear the same responsibility as those who speak reviling words; in order for the church to maintain the oneness, the brothers and sisters must withstand reviling words—1 Cor. 6:10; cf. Num. 6:6; Lev. 5:3.
- 1 Cor. 6:10 Nor thieves nor the covetous, not drunkards, not revilers, not the rapacious will inherit the kingdom of God.
- Num. 6:6 All the days that he separates himself to Jehovah he shall not come near a dead person.
- Lev. 5:3 Or if he touches the uncleanness of man, whatever his uncleanness is with which he becomes unclean, and it escapes his notice, when he comes to know it, then he will be guilty.
- E. The consciousness of sin comes from knowing God; in the same way, the consciousness of reviling words comes from the knowledge of the Body; reviling words are opposed to the testimony of the Body—1 Cor. 1:10.
- 1 Cor. 1:10 Now I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion.
- F. God will never entrust authority to those who by nature like to criticize others; the elders, on the one hand, should have a clear sight over the people with much discernment, and on the other hand, they should be blind spiritually—Eph. 4:29-32.
- Eph. 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but only that which is good for building up, according to the need, that it may give grace to those who hear.
- Eph. 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption.
- Eph. 4:31 Let all bitterness and anger and wrath and clamor and evil speaking be removed from you, with all malice.

Eph. 4:32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ also forgave you.

**VI. The organic maintenance of the golden lampstand is Christ's heavenly ministry to cherish the churches in His humanity and nourish the churches in His divinity to produce the overcomers through His organic shepherding—Rev. 1:13; 2:7; John 10:11, 14; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4; Heb. 13:20.**

Rev. 1:13 And in the midst of the lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment reaching to the feet, and girded about at the breasts with a golden girdle.

Rev. 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

John 10:11 I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

John 10:14 I am the good Shepherd, and I know My own, and My own know Me,

1 Pet. 2:25 For you were like sheep being led astray, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

1 Pet. 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Heb. 13:20 Now the God of peace, He who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant,

**VII. The goal of Christ's wonderful shepherding in His heavenly ministry is to build up the New Jerusalem for the accomplishment of the eternal economy of God; for eternity we will enjoy the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shepherding us and continually guiding us to springs of waters of life—Rev. 7:13-17.**

Rev. 7:13 And one of the elders answered, saying to me, These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where did they come from?

Rev. 7:14 And I said to him, My lord, you know. And he said to me, These are those who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Rev. 7:15 Because of this they are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits upon the throne will tabernacle over them.

Rev. 7:16 They will not hunger anymore, neither will they thirst anymore, neither will the sun beat upon them, nor any heat;

Rev. 7:17 For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and guide them to springs of waters of life; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.