

SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK OF GOD

Message Three

Shepherding the Flock of God into a Life of Prayer for the Organic Practice of the God-ordained Way in the Vital Groups

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 2:1-4, 8; Eph. 3:16-21; 6:10-20; Acts 1:14; Rom. 15:16; Rev. 12:11

I. The elders must have a prayer life and a prayer ministry to shepherd the local church as the flock of God—1 Tim. 2:1-4:

- A. The elders in the church must take up Paul's charge to "first of all" pray; in a local church the leading ones must have a prayer life to set an example of prayer for all the members to follow, by praying always in every place and at every time in spirit—vv. 1-2, 8; Eph. 6:18.
- B. Prayerlessness is a sin; all in the Lord's recovery must be prayerful and stand against the sin of prayerlessness—1 Sam. 12:23; Col. 4:2.
- C. "Recently, my activity was limited for a time so that I could rest and care for my health. When I heard about certain needs, I prayed for them. Perhaps the Lord limited me that He might impress me with the fact that prayer is more important than work. May we all learn the lesson that the way to have a good church life is to pray. This is crucial. If our talking is turned into praying, the church in our locality will be transformed" (testimony of Brother Lee from the *Life-study of 1 Timothy*, p. 28).
- D. Our prayer is required for the carrying out of God's desire that we may have a proper, enjoyable church life in all godliness and gravity and that all men may be saved and come to the full knowledge of the truth—1 Tim. 2:1-4, 8.
- E. In our prayer we must follow the pattern of the apostle Paul, who was "obsessed" with the heavenly vision of God's economy to dispense Himself into His chosen people to make them the expression of Christ; Paul saw that the reality of the Body life is the inner experience of the indwelling Christ, and he never neglected God's desire to work Himself into man—Eph. 3:14-19.
- F. Our spirit and attitude with our thoughts and prayers should be that the saints will have Christ inwardly, that Christ will make His home in their hearts, and that they will be filled unto all the fullness of God; based on this spirit and attitude, we should bow our knees to pray and have faith before God; in this way our service in the church will be great and glorious for God's glory in the church—vv. 20-21; 2 Cor. 4:13.

II. The organic practice of the God-ordained way in the vital groups to build up the church can be carried out only by much and thorough prayer:

- A. To be blended together in the vital groups, we first need to pray by ourselves privately; we need to be watchful, on the alert, for the maintaining of our prayer life—Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2:
 - 1. We should not allow our private time of prayer to be spoiled, captured, annulled, or interrupted; our attitude in our prayer should be that we are

now with our King and that we would not be interrupted from having this time with Him—Matt. 6:6.

2. We should go to God alone, without any persons, matters, or things to distract or occupy us so that we may be thoroughly infused and saturated with God; we need to get to a higher level, on a “high mountain,” to contact the Lord privately and secretly in a definite and prevailing way to be infused with Him—14:22-23; Mark 1:35; Exo. 34:4, 29; 33:11.
 3. In our private time with the Lord, we can open our being fully to Him, and in the light of His presence, we can confess our sins to Him to receive His forgiveness and cleansing so that there is nothing between us and Him and so that we are full of light to shine forth God—1 John 1:5, 7, 9; Luke 11:33-36.
- B. To be blended together in the vital groups into one accord to become a corporate meal offering, we must exercise and release our spirit by much and thorough prayer—1 Cor. 12:24; 10:17; Lev. 2:1-13; Acts 1:14; 2:42; Matt. 18:19:
1. If our spirit is not exercised and released through our prayer, we cannot be blended with others; the way for us to become blended is through prayer that releases our spirit—*Hymns*, #846.
 2. When we come together corporately to pray, we should not pray long prayers full of reasons and explanations to teach the Lord and full of giving the Lord descriptions and instructions; instead, we need to exercise and release our spirit by praying short prayers, simply telling the Lord what we want Him to do for us (cf. Mark 10:51); we should speak what is on our heart to God in a sincere way and never fill up our prayer with many empty words (Matt. 6:7-8).
 3. A long prayer always kills the prayer meeting; a long prayer indicates that we care only for ourselves and for our feeling, not for others or for the atmosphere and flow of the Spirit in the meeting; we should pray in a way that the next one who prays can continue our prayer—cf. 1 Cor. 14:16.
- C. For the building up of the vital groups, we need much and thorough prayer to make a corporate Nazarite’s consecration to the Lord to fulfill the New Testament priesthood of the gospel of God—Num. 6:1-9, 22-27:
1. We must save sinners to offer them to God as acceptable sacrifices—Rom. 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9.
 2. We must bring the believers up to lead them to present themselves to God as living sacrifices—Rom. 12:1.
 3. We must admonish and teach every saint in all wisdom to present each one full-grown in Christ—Col. 1:28-29.

III. We must realize that our working together with God to carry out the God-ordained way to build up the church is a spiritual warfare and that prayer is the secret to accomplish God’s work; we need adequate and thorough prayer to withstand the stratagems of the enemy—Eph. 6:10-20; Matt. 16:18-19; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Neh. 4:17; Dan. 10:10-21; Rev. 12:11:

- A. “I am concerned that when the co-workers and elders meet together, there is a lack of prayers and, even more, a lack of weighty prayers. For this reason,

recently when I was resting, I often felt a heavy weight on my heart. Deep within my spirit I sensed that this was an attack of the authority of darkness from behind. We have neglected this matter. I believe there may be some who are praying counter prayers. Hence, we must ask the Lord to resist prayers that are directed particularly against the work we are carrying out, against the church, and against my leading. The prayers we utter before the Lord must stand against these counter prayers. May the Lord cover us and not allow the enemy to have any ground to do damage...We need prayers to fight the spiritual warfare” (*Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord’s Recovery, Book 1: The Vision and Definite Steps for the Practice of the New Way*, pp. 251-252).

- B. “We need to see that no matter how busy we are, we must set aside some time to pray. Especially when the elders gather together, this time must be treasured and used for prayer. We should not merely pray for eight or ten minutes and then move on to discuss business affairs. This will never work. When the elders come together, there should only be prayer. We should pray and pray until the Holy Spirit moves. The discussion of business affairs is secondary. In fact, every such matter, no matter how crucial it is, is secondary. The primary need is prayer. If the spirit is dormant and a spirit of prayer is lacking, the Holy Spirit will remain still. This is the most subtle contingency that the enemy has in his camp against the Lord’s move. For this reason, we must all be watchful in our prayer” (*Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord’s Recovery, Book 1: The Vision and Definite Steps for the Practice of the New Way*, p. 271).