

Sunday Celebration (May 9, 2010) "The Passion of the Shepherd and the Purpose of the Flock" (Pt 2)
"Declining Flocks & Healthy Flocks"

INTRO ... The Ever-Present Reality of Decline

- One of the Great Revival Moments in this Country was the "GREAT AWAKENING"

Paul's Passion & Planning

Acts 20:17-30

Paul's Shepherd Meeting Agenda (1) I'm not going to see you again ... (2)
Continue in Your Calling to Shepherd the Church

EPHESUS

- A Strategic Church... Established with Paul's Help
- Led by Paul for 2-3 yrs
- Led by Timothy for several years
- The Object of Significant Scriptural Blueprints – Ephesians, 1Tim, 2Tim

3 PHOTOS of EPHESIAN CHURCH ... (1) Acts 20 (2) Eph. (3) Rev 2 – The Day of Decline

Rev 2:1-5 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. 2 "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. 3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

- The Threat of DECLINE has Always Accompanied the Church –

According to Acts 20 – Decline Comes through “WOLVES” –& -- “TWISTED THINGS” (DISTORTIONS)

- (1) What Represents a Wolf in Your Life?
- (2) What Represents “Distorted Beliefs/Ideas” in Your Life?

YOU need to be WISE ... SHEPHERDS need to be WATCHFUL & WARNING

STRATEGY in GOD’S PLAN ...This is an Important LEADERSHIP MEETING in the early stages of the church’s history. Paul has called a Leadership Summit of the SHEPHERDS in Ephesus. He cites the ministry of the Gospel, the declaring of the whole counsel of God, and the Shepherding of God’s Church

-- How many Christians come to Christ "personally" but don't read the instructions or understand God's Design Plan for the Church?

“The church of God, ‘that wonderful and sacred mystery’, is a subject that stands at the very heart of the Bible. For the church is the object of the redemption which the Bible proclaims. It was to save the church that the Son of God became man and died; God purchased his church at the cost of Christ’s blood. It is through the church that God makes known his redeeming wisdom to the hosts of heaven. It is within the church that the individual Christian finds the ministries of grace, the means of growth, and his primary sphere for service. We cannot properly understand the purpose of God, nor the method of grace, nor the kingdom of Christ, nor the work of the Holy Spirit, nor the meaning of world history without studying the doctrine of the church.” J.I. Packer, “Collected Shorter Writings”, vol 2, p. 3

EPHESIANS... The Instruction Manual to the Ephesian Shepherds ... *How to Shepherd the Flock*

Eph 3:7-11 ... Paul's Ministry of the Gospel and the Purpose of the Church

Eph 4:1-7 ... I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called...

... The Ministry of the Gospel is YOKED to the Functioning of the Flock

"The Anglican primates' recommended definition of the gospel includes the essentials: 'to make known by word and deed the love of the crucified and risen Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that people will repent, believe and receive Christ as their Savior and obediently serve him as their Lord in the fellowship of his church.'" John Stott, "The Living Church", p. 63

Rom 15:14-19 ... "full Gospel Ministry" for Paul

"The church is supposed to be God's new society, the living embodiment of the gospel, a sign of the kingdom of God, a demonstration of what human community looks like when it comes under his gracious rule. ...In other words, God's purpose is that the good news of Jesus Christ is set forth visually as well as verbally" John Stott, "The Living Church", p. 66

"Today, 'church growth' commonly refers to an increase in the membership rolls or attendance. But the New Testament perspective is that God is interested in quality even more than he is interested in quantity. He calls for the evangelizing of the world, but most of all he is concerned that the functioning of the church, the company of the faithful, should always and everywhere bring glory to him as this supernatural life of fellowship with Christ is displayed, lived out, deepened and ripened." J.I. Packer, "Collected Shorter Writings", vol 2, p. 9

Eph 4:11-16 ... Reveals this DIVINE STRATEGY Toward this Quality of Life

- Pastors (under- Shepherds) EQUIP the Saints

→ The Saints Do Ministry & Build up the Body

→ Health is Achieved When Each Part is Doing Its Part (v. 16)

"A body in which the blood does not circulate properly is always below par, and fellowship corresponds to the circulation of the blood in the body of Christ. We gain strength through fellowship and lose strength without it. We grow in fellowship. We go back if we live in isolation from one another." J.I. Packer, "Collected Shorter Writings", vol 2, p. 13