

WHEN PASTORS ARE JUST HIRED SERVANTS

(John 10; Jeremiah 23:1-5; Ezekiel 34:2,5-23)

Now the hireling flees because **he merely serves for wages** and is not himself concerned about the sheep (vs. 13). When presenting Himself as the Good Shepherd in comparison with others, YAHSHUA gave a solemn picture of a hired shepherd. He said, But the hired servant who is neither the shepherd nor the owner of the sheep, when he sees the wolf coming deserts the flock and runs away, and the wolf chases the and snatches them and scatters [the flock]. Now the hireling flees because he merely serves for wages and is not himself concerned about the sheep (John 10:12-13). We know nothing or very little about the responsibilities of a shepherd in our today's society to understand the depth of YAHSHUA'S words. However, there is much we can learn from the life of a shepherd. For example, they lead the sheep to good pastures, and cooler places higher in the mountain; at night they sleep outdoors to guard the sheepfold from wild animals and sometimes they shelter their flock in a cave assuring them with reassuring voice. Shepherds have to be diligent, dependable and brave to be a good one. Their lives are involved with their sheep from dawn to dawn. The lives of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David and many others were lives that portrayed a life of true shepherds. A good shepherd also has a relationship with his sheep. We see this in the life of David. He was truly a good shepherd. For two times he risked his own life to defend them as he told King Saul, Your servant kept his father's sheep. And when there came a lion or again a bear and took a lamb out of the flock I went out after it and smote it and delivered the lamb out of its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard and smote it and killed it. Your servant killed both the lion and the bear... (I Sam. 16:34-36a). Lion and bear are two powerful animals; a human being cannot easily prevail against them. David's love for his sheep carried a weight of sacrificial love. He was willing to die to save them. When YAHSHUA, our perfect Shepherd, said I am the Good Shepherd, the Good Shepherd risks and lays down His life for the sheep, He was offering His life as a sacrifice to save us from the hands of the Satan, who like the bear and the lion purposed to steal and destroy men. When Satan prevailed against man in the garden, he held him condemned to eternity. But our Good Shepherd came to save us from his power. YAHSHUA purchased us with His own precious blood when willingly He gave Himself up to be killed a death of crucifixion. Peter wrote, You must know that you were redeemed from the useless way of living inherited by tradition from forefathers, not with corruptible things [such as] silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot...you have been regenerated (born again), not from a mortal origin, but from one that is immortal by the ever living and lasting Word of God (I Peter 1:18-19,23). When YAHSHUA reinstated Peter, He used the term, "shepherd, and feed my sheep" to imply his position of a pastor. Paul, when writing to Timothy defined the responsibilities of a bishop, which is the same as pastor. The Greek term episkapos translates episcopal, elder, overseer or pastor. These terms all refer to the same office. In his writings Paul instructed the young Timothy concerning this saying, the saying is true and irrefutable: If any man seeks the office of bishop, he desires an excellent task.

Now a bishop must give no grounds for accusation but must be above reproach the husband of one wife, circumspect and temperate and self-controlled; sensible and well behaved and dignified and lead an orderly life; hospitable, a capable and qualified teacher, not given to wine, not combative, but gentle and considerate, not quarrelsome but forbearing and peaceable and not a lover of money. He must rule his own household well, keeping his children under control, with true dignity, commanding their respect in every way and keeping them respectful, he must not be a new convert, or he may [develop a beclouded and stupid state of mind] as the result of pride and fall into the condemnation that the devil did. Furthermore, he must have a good reputation and be well thought of by those outside [the church], lest he become involved in slander and incur reproach and fall into the devil's trap (1 Tim. 3: 1-7). In Passing, I must say here that the pronoun "she" is not included in the above requirements for a pastor. A woman's authority should not be over man. God so instituted the order of authority when he created Adam and Eve.

These are requirements worthy noting for a person who desires to be pastor. These should be an agreement between him and God. Education without the spiritual guidelines is like a physical body voided of the soul. It would serve the church of Christ well if they prioritized these requirements when looking for a pastor. Many churches today are filled with mislead and ignorant Christians, because their pastors are wolf dressed in sheep skin. Today's churches are simply businesses in the term of a franchise. They have lost the true meaning of "shepherd My sheep," as YAHSHUA commanded Peter, for many go in for the money. They are hired servants. Many pastors are fattening themselves with the resources of the flock without regarding their needs. They are money hungry; it is their god. Just look the way some of them live today. They constitute an embarrassing picture of what Christianity is all about according to the teachings of YAHSHUA, Who when He sent His disciples out to preach the gospel instructed them saying, As you go, preach saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand! **Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Take no gold nor silver nor copper money in your purses. And do not take a provision bag or a wallet for a collection bag for your journey, nor two undergarments, nor sandals, nor a staff; for the workman deserves his support (Matt. 10:6-10).** The Word of the Lord remains standing today as it did in the days of the Old Testament prophets. "Thus says the Lord God" is a term that confirms the words spoken by the Lord to a true prophet. To the Prophet Ezekiel the Lord said, Woe to the [spiritual] shepherds of Israel **who feed themselves!** Should not the **shepherds feed the sheep?** **You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you kill the fatlings, but you do not feed the sheep. The diseased and weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the hurt and crippled you have not bandaged, those gone astray you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought to find, but with force and hardhearted harshness you have ruled them and they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild beasts of the field (Ezekiel 34: 2-5).**

Sadly, this is the picture of today's many pastors. Many Christians are misguided and confused; many are spiritually ignorant. Several have left their pastors and are wandering from church to church, and others have left the church all together to join sects as Mormons. Some are tired of water down messages or elementary stage of teachings God's doctrine, as the writer to the

Hebrews wrote: Therefore, let us go on and get past the elementary stage in the teachings and doctrine of Christ, advancing steadily toward the completeness and perfection that belong to spiritual maturity. Let us not again be laying the foundation of repentance and abandonment of dead works and of the to God, with teachings about purifying the laying on of hands, the resurrection from the dead, the eternal judgment and punishment. [these are all matters of which you should have been fully aware long, long ago.] (Heb. 6:1-2). As a result, many Christians cradled as babies have never grown in spiritual maturity for they continue to feed on milk. They are obviously inexperienced and unskilled in the doctrine of righteousness, for he is (they are) a mere infant(s)! (Heb.5:13).

But God's calling to all shepherds continues: Take care and be on guard for yourselves and the whole flock over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you bishops and guardians to shepherd (tend and feed and guide) the church of the Lord, which He obtained for Himself with His own blood (Acts 20:28); and in I Peter 5:2-4: Tend the flock of God that is [your responsibility], not by coercion or constraint, but willingly, not dishonorable motivated by the advantages and profits, but eagerly and cheerfully; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd is revealed, you will win the conqueror's crown of glory. These are absolutely solemn and worthy of thoughts. The responsibility of a pastor weighs heavily on his shoulder when he heeds to the call. Peter finally took his position of a true shepherd compelled by the love He had for the Lord YAHSHUA: Love that matured to the point of giving his life for Christ and for His sheep. Your love for the sheep is measured by the love you have for the Lord. How much do you pastor love Him?