

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

John: Believing On The Christ, The Son Of God, For Eternal Life

Part LI: Trusting In Christ For His Post-Resurrection Discipling Assignment For Shepherds (John 21:15-17)

I. Introduction

- A. John's Gospel presents Jesus as the Son of God Who was full of grace and truth, and the events surrounding His death, burial and resurrection reveal His grace and truth in His claim to be the Son of God and Messiah.
- B. His post-resurrection discipling assignment for shepherds in the Church testifies of Christ's Headship of the Body with an emphasis on His grace and truth, and we view that John 21:15-17 passage for our insight:

II. Trusting In Christ For His Post-Resurrection Discipling Assignment For Shepherds, John 21:15-17.

- A. When Jesus was reinstating Peter due to his former sinful threefold denial, giving him opportunity to voice a threefold re-commitment to Christ, Jesus kept calling Peter in John 21:15-17 figuratively to feed or shepherd His flock, to disciple fellow believers in the Church.
- B. The English translations vary only slightly on the words Christ used in each such call of the Lord, but the Greek text is rich with distinctions worth studying for discipling and pastoral work (as follows):
 1. In John 21:15c, Jesus told Peter, "*Boske ta arnia mou,*" or "Feed My lambs" (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 412; R. C. Trench, Syns. of the N. T., 1973, p. 84-86), to *give Bible content to new converts* (as follows):
 - a. Little lambs figuratively picture spiritually immature new converts, and "feeding" them as opposed to the more general word of "shepherding" used in John 21:16c points to giving them Bible factual content.
 - b. Thus, one who shepherds others in the Christian context should take care to give understood, basic Biblical content to new converts of the Christian faith to equip them to begin to mature in the faith.
 2. In John 21:16c, Jesus told Peter, "*Poimaine ta probata mou,*" or "Shepherd My sheep" (Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., Trench), to *exercise "the whole office of the shepherd" for the flock* (as follows):
 - a. The verb rendered "shepherd" involves "the guiding, guarding, folding of the flock, as well as the finding of nourishment for it," Ibid., Trench, p. 85.
 - b. Peter explains how this work is to be accomplished in 1 Peter 5:1-4: (1) In calling Church elders to "shepherd" the local church in 1 Peter 5:1-2a, Peter utilized the same verb "shepherd" Jesus used here in John 21:16c. (2) Applied to local church shepherding, Peter held it involved (a) taking the spiritual oversight willingly versus grudgingly (1 Pet. 5:2b), (b) not greedy for money, but eager to serve (1 Pet. 5:2c), (c) not lording over the flock, but influencing via example (1 Pet. 5:3). (3) In the end, Christ, the Chief Shepherd, would give such shepherds a crown of glory that would never fade away, 1 Peter 5:4.
 3. In John 21:17c, Jesus told Peter to "*Boske ta probata mou,*" or "Feed My [adult] sheep" (Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., Trench, p. 84-86), to *give Bible content to adult, mature believers* (as follows):
 - a. Mature believers need the intake of new Bible information that they also might keep growing in Christ.
 - b. However, this takes much work, the mining of Scripture for deeper truths, what often does not occur in many groups of believers today where believers are often repeatedly taught only well-known truths.
 - c. Accordingly, passages like Matthew 13:51-52 highlight the important work of Bible teachers and pastors needing to bring forth out of the Old Testament as well as New Testament passages priceless, previously unknown truths for God's people so they can keep growing in Christ. There is thus value in gaining formal training in the original Bible languages and in Bible exegesis, and in practicing real exegesis, 2 Tim. 2:15.
 4. An overview of these threefold commands by Christ reveals that two of the three commands focus on the "feeding" of Bible content (*Boske*, John 21:15c, 17c), "a most important" lesson, that the giving of Bible content, or "food," for God's people is the all important focus. "How often, in a false ecclesiastical system, the preaching of the Word loses its preeminence; the *boskein* ["to feed"] falls into the background, is swallowed up in the *poimainein* ["to shepherd"], which presently becomes no true *poimainein*, because it is not a *boskein* as well . . ." (Ibid., Trench, p. 86) **I could not say it better myself!**

Lesson: Christ directed that those who shepherd God's people (1) should give Bible content to new converts so they might grow, (2) to apply that content to life in the shepherding of maturing believers (3) while also mining deep truths of Scripture to keep mature believers growing, (4) with the chief overall focus being to teach Bible content.

Application: (1) May we believe in Christ as the Risen Lord full of grace and TRUTH for His people. (2) May we who shepherd other believers in some capacity heed our Lord's directives given in John 21:15-17.