

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Ezekiel: Effective Ministry To The Spiritually Rebellious
Part LII: God's Judgment Of Israel's False Shepherds
(Ezekiel 34:1-10)

I. Introduction

- A. God's people in Scripture have consistently been likened to a flock of sheep, Psalm 95:7; John 10:27-29. Accordingly, the spiritual leaders He has set up over His people are consistently likened to shepherds, Ezekiel 34:1-2; 1 Peter 5:1-2. As such, God's human shepherds of His people are accountable to God, 1 Peter 5:4.
- B. One of the passages in Scripture that reveals the proper and improper roles of such human spiritual shepherds is Ezekiel 34:1-10 where God called Israel's Old Testament human shepherds into account for failing at their duties, and He clearly enumerated those duties. We thus view this passage for our insight and application:

II. God's Judgment Of Israel's False Shepherds, Ezekiel 34:1-10.

- A. Israel's kings, priests and prophets were all spiritual shepherds in a sense in that they all in their respective roles were positioned to influence the spiritual welfare of God's people, His figurative "flock."
- B. Accordingly, Ezekiel 34:1-6 is God's address through Ezekiel to all such shepherds, a passage that summarizes the ways these overseers had failed spiritually to shepherd Israel's people (as follows):
 1. Israel's spiritual shepherds had selfishly fed themselves instead of feeding God's people, Ezekiel 34:1-3.
While caring for sheep, shepherds were responsible to see that the sheep had adequate pasture, water and safety from inclement weather and animals of prey. However, Israel's shepherds had focused only on their own agendas and fulfilling their own lusts often at the expense of the people, heavily taxing them by figuratively slaughtering the fat ones and using their wool for clothing instead of securing their safety and economic welfare that the people might economically blossom.
 2. Israel's spiritual leaders had failed to heal the wounded sheep, failing figuratively to strengthen the weak, to heal the sick, to bind up the injured, to bring back the strays and to search for the lost, Ezekiel 34:4a.
Such failure as shepherds of sheep translates into a failure by spiritual leaders to address spiritual needs in God's people with adequate Scripture teaching, Scriptural counsel and Scriptural encouragement.
 3. Israel's spiritual leaders had failed to rule His people with gentleness and example, resorting rather to force and harshness, and sheep and people alike only shrink back from such actions by leaders, Ezekiel 34:4b.
 4. Israel's spiritual leaders had failed to provide spiritual guidance for God's people so that they had scattered, every man doing what was right in his own eyes instead following the God of Scripture, Ezekiel 34:5-6.
- C. In view of this great shepherding failure, the Lord announced that He was opposed to these shepherds, and would hold them accountable for failing to shepherd His people effectively and thus cause them to cease their functions as shepherds along with their destructively evil deeds toward His people, Ezekiel 10:7-10.

Lesson: *Though God had assigned Israel's leaders to shepherd His spiritual flock, His people Israel, those leaders had failed in four main ways: (1) they had selfishly used the people to address their own needs or agendas at the painful, costly expense of God's people; (2) Israel's leaders had failed to address the spiritual needs of God's people with Biblical guidance, teaching and nurture; (3) those leaders had failed to relate to God's people with gentleness, resorting instead to cruelty and harshness and (4) Israel's leaders had failed to provide Biblical leadership so that the people ended up doing what was right in their own eyes instead of obeying God, scattering from God's blessing. Thus, God promised to remove these shepherds from overseeing His people.*

Application: *(1) There are principles of spiritual leadership from this passage that apply to shepherds of God's people in every era of history (as follows): (a) Spiritual leaders must not aim selfishly to use the people of God to address their own material needs or career agendas at great cost to the people, but instead focus on how they might address the needs of God's people. (b) Spiritual leaders must not merely pass the time in their roles, but work hard at expounding Scripture to address the people's needs of guidance, instruction and spiritual nurture. (c) Spiritual leaders must not rule God's people with harshness and cruelty, but lead by an overwhelming example, 1 Peter 5:3. (d) Spiritual leaders must not be neglectful of guiding God's people in the path of righteousness, leaving them to do what is right in their own eyes, but always present God's Word as the standard of righteousness to be heeded for blessing. (2) If today's spiritual leaders will perform their tasks well, they will be blessed in their oversight to remain as God's shepherds, but if they fail, God will remove them from their roles. May all of us spiritual leaders then always strive to be pleasing to the Lord that we might remain blessed in our ministries of oversight.*