

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
XLVIII. Christ's View Of A Correct Pastoral Ministry
(Matthew 9:35-38)

I. Introduction

- A. The Church is composed of people who have definite, intense spiritual needs. These needs are to be met by God as He uses His servants whom He sends to minister to the flock.
- B. However, many problems exist in the Church, problems that involve or affect both the flock of God as well as their overseers, so the need exists to understand a true pastoral ministry toward directing both people in the pew and leaders on the proper functions in the meeting of such needs.
- C. Matthew 9:35-38 presents Christ's view of a correct pastoral ministry, what we view for our insight:

II. Christ's View Of A Correct Pastoral Ministry, Matthew 9:35-38.

- A. Matthew 9:35-38 stops partway through Christ's earthly ministry to provide an important overview that Jesus had of the people to whom He ministered. This overview was the product of the Lord's extensive ministry in cities, villages and synagogues throughout Israel, a ministry of preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and affliction, Matthew 9:35 ESV.
- B. When Jesus viewed the crowds in His extensive ministry to Israel's people, He felt a strong emotion of "deep sympathy" (*splanchnizomai*) for the people (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 41), Matthew 9:36a.
- C. The cause for this intense sympathy by the Lord arose from His observation that they were being permanently, consistently, horribly mistreated by their leaders, and we explain (Matthew 9:36b):
 - 1. The people were "harassed" (*skullo*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 765), Matthew 9:36b. The verb is written as a perfect passive participle (*eskulmenoi*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 36; The Analyt. Grk. Lex., 1972, p. 168), meaning that others had kept the people harassed.
 - 2. The people were "lying on the ground" (*hripto*, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 743-744), which verb is also a perfect passive participle (*errimmenoi*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., The Analyt. Grk. Lex., p. 167).
 - 3. Since Jesus likened the people to sheep without a shepherd in Matthew 9:36c, He viewed them as harassed by their leaders who were like fierce wolves (Acts 20:29 ESV), and like sheep who are terrified by a fierce wolf so that they lie down, leaving them vulnerable to the wolf's attack, the people lived in immobilizing fear due to the oppressive treatment they were facing from their leaders (Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.).
- D. To address this need, in Matthew 9:37, Jesus told His disciples that the harvest of souls for the kingdom was plentiful as the need in the people was massive, but the laborers were few, the laborers being shepherds who would not harass and oppress the sheep like Israel's abusive religious leaders did but direct the people to the Lord Jesus and actually nurture and protect them.
- E. Thus, the disciples were to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out "workmen, laborers" (*ergates*, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 307) into His harvest field, Matthew 9:38.
- F. Matthew 10:1-42 then records Christ's commissioning of His disciples to go to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel," the flock to which He had been sent in His earthly ministry, the flock of such enormous need!
- G. We thus summarize Christ's view of a correct pastoral ministry in the local church of today (as follows):
 - 1. Opposite a self-serving, oppressive dominance over others, God wants church leaders to have a heart of deep sympathy for the people in the church as many are still reeling from religious oppressors of the past.
 - 2. Accordingly, God wants such leaders to sense the enormity of this need so that they pray that the Lord of the harvest might send out proper leaders for the harvest of souls in the world.
 - 3. Such leaders, when themselves are called of God, must view themselves as laborers, for shepherding harassed people involves lots of work, great patience and careful teaching, cf. 2 Timothy 4:1-2.
 - 4. Similarly, people in the pew need to realize that the leaders God wants them to have are not to be oppressive, harassing or abusive, but selfless, hard-working, consistent laborers with a heart for the people who have faced oppressive leaders.

Lesson: *Jesus viewed the people of Israel to whom He ministered as a flock of sheep who were afflicted, terrified and lying on the ground before the attacking wolves of their leaders. He urged that His disciples might pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laboring, compassionate shepherds to disciple people in God's harvest field. If God raises us up to shepherd God's people, may we work hard, graciously, sympathetically, and patiently to edify them.*

Application: *May all believers sense the need for correct shepherds of the Church and pray and act upon it.*