

Ezekiel 34:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.

Analysis

"The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost." This comprehensive indictment lists shepherds' failures: neglecting weak, ignoring sick, abandoning broken, not seeking lost. True pastoral ministry requires compassion, diligence, and sacrifice—strengthening the weak, healing the sick, restoring the fallen, seeking the lost. Christ perfectly fulfills this shepherd role, seeking and saving the lost (Luke 19:10). Reformed pastoral theology emphasizes shepherding as primary ministerial function, not just preaching but personal care, discipline, and restoration.

Historical Context

Judah's leaders (586 BC) failed every pastoral responsibility. Instead of strengthening faith, they promoted idolatry. Instead of healing spiritual sickness, they offered false assurances. Instead of restoring the fallen, they exploited them. Instead of seeking the lost, they drove them further away. This wholesale pastoral failure necessitated exile. The passage shaped Christian understanding of ministry—shepherds must actively care for individuals, not just manage institutions. Jesus's

parable of the lost sheep (Matthew 18:12-14) echoes this passage, emphasizing God's concern for each individual.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. Which of these pastoral responsibilities do you most neglect in caring for others?
2. How does this comprehensive list challenge narrow views of ministry focused only on preaching or administration?

Interlinear Text

אֶת H853	הַחֹלִי הַ The diseased H2470	לֹא H3808	חֲזַקְתָּם have ye not strengthened H2388	וְאֶת H853	הַחֹלִי הַ The diseased H2470	לֹא H3808
וְאֶת H853	רַפֵּאתָם neither have ye healed H7495	וְלִנְשֻׁב־רֶת that which was broken H7665	לֹא H3808	וְחִבְשָׁתָם neither have ye bound up H2280	וְאֶת H853	
	הַנִּדְּחָת that which was driven away H5080	לֹא H3808	וְהִשְׁבַּתָּם neither have ye brought again H7725	וְאֶת H853		
	הָאֲבֵדָת that which was lost H6	לֹא H3808	בְּקִשְׁתָּם neither have ye sought H1245	וּבְחֹזֶק הַ but with force H2394	וְרִדִיתָם have ye ruled H7287	
וּבְפָרְךָ: H853	אֶת H853	וּבְפָרְךָ: and with cruelty H6531				

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 9:36 (Parallel theme): But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

Ezekiel 34:16 (Parallel theme): I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.

Matthew 10:6 (Parallel theme): But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Hebrews 12:12 (Parallel theme): Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

Jeremiah 8:22 (Parallel theme): Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

2 Corinthians 1:24 (Parallel theme): Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

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