

The Good Shepherd Lays Down His Life For The Sheep

Far too often, as Christians mature they lose the wonder of their Savior, but I believe the Bible would teach the opposite. The more a Christian matures in this life, the more that Christian should increase in his wonder of the Savior who did for him. This text has increased my desire to say this:

BECAUSE JESUS DIED FOR ME, I WANT TO LIVE FOR HIM.

I'd like for us to look at this today by considering 6 major statements that Jesus made as He talked with religious people about the truth of the Son of God.

Statement #1 - As the Good Shepherd, I give my life in death to provide life for the sheep. **10:11**

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

This occupation of a shepherd is prominent throughout all of Scripture. Abel, the brother who was commended by God and declared to be righteous by faith, was a shepherd (Hebrews 11:4; Genesis 4:2). Jacob, the man whose name God changed to Israel was a shepherd (Genesis 32:28; 47:3). Moses, the man who God would speak with face to face, as one speaks to his friend, was a shepherd (Exodus 3:1; 33:11). David, the king of Israel who was called a man after God's own heart, was a shepherd (Acts 13:22; 1 Samuel 16:11). And according to the inspired words recorded by David in Psalm 23, even God Himself is a shepherd.

There is nothing glamorous about the job of a shepherd. There's nothing desirable. It is a rewardless and thankless job. It's a job that the world does not celebrate, and yet, it's the job that God has chosen for so many great men of the past, and it is even the job that God has chosen to describe Himself by. We learn in Psalm 23 that The Lord is a Shepherd of His own, and now in John 10 we learn that Jesus is the Good Shepherd. By the way, did you know one of God's divine attributes is that He is good? Psalm 145:9 - "The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made." Jesus made the claim, "no one is good except God alone" (Mark 10:18). The Bible is clear. Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, is God.

Why is He the Good Shepherd? Because He lays down His life for the sheep. He dies so that the sheep don't have to die.

Who is your shepherd today? No one can Shepherd you like Jesus. No one can die for you like Jesus has died for you, and no one can give you eternal life like Jesus can give you.

Statement #2 - As the Good Shepherd, I am not a hired hand who flees My sheep in the face of danger. **10:12-13**

"He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep."

There is a drastic difference between the Good Shepherd and the hired hand. The hired hand is no shepherd at all. He is a false shepherd, a phony shepherd. This is the difference between the founder and owner of a company versus a cheap unattached employee.

The picture Jesus is developing here is that there are a lot of religious people in the world who are giving a false representation of themselves. They claim to care for the people they are trying to influence. They claim to be like a shepherd to the people, but they don't care for the people. If you have influential religious people in your life who are not trying to point you to a close walk with Christ, then you need to run from them.

Jesus is no false shepherd. He is the Good Shepherd. He is no hired hand. He is the rightful owner of the sheep. He truly cares for the sheep. He comes to find the sheep and rescue the sheep from danger. That's the kind of shepherd Jesus is.

Statement #3 - As the Good Shepherd, I intimately know my sheep and my sheep know Me. **10:14-15**

"I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep."

Jesus is the owner of the sheep. They belong to Him, and not only that, He knows them and they know Him. Between Jesus and the people that belong to Him, there is an intimate relationship. Christianity is not a system of rules that will get you into heaven. It's a relationship with Christ. The believer in Jesus is drawn to the words of Jesus. There is a ring to Jesus' voice that the believer recognizes as true. The believer hears the word of God, he hears the word of Christ and he says, "I agree." And in faith to Jesus, a person belongs to Jesus.

Jesus, being the omniscient God knows who are the believers in this world, and He knows them personally, fully, and closely. As a believer continues in the Word of God and applies the word of God, he comes know Christ intimately. No set of rules, rituals, or codes will get you this. It is only by faith in the Son of God as revealed in the Word of God.

Jesus decided to clarify just how close this relationship can be. There is no closer and greater relationship than the relationship between the Father and the Son. This close fellowship between God the Father and God the Son is an eternal fellowship. And Jesus said that His relationship with His people is just like that. It's close. It goes on for eternity. It's intimate. It's in the context of Godly righteous love, and it's defined by the sacrifice of Christ.

This relationship is only possible through the sacrificial work of Jesus on that cross. This relationship is only offered because Christ died. This fellowship is always under the umbrella that Jesus died for the sheep. Do you want to be close with Jesus? Dwell on this fact: Jesus died for you.

Statement #4 - As the Good Shepherd, I will bring Jews and Gentiles who belong to Me together into one flock. **10:16**

"And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd."

Jesus declared He must bring into His "flock" people or "other sheep" who are not of "this fold." As people are drawn to faith in Jesus, they become part of His flock, and He is the one Shepherd of that flock.

What does Jesus mean by "other sheep" and "this fold?" Charles Ryrie, John Phillips, C. I. Scofield, Ray Stedman, Warren Wiersbe, Charles Swindoll, David Thompson, S. Lewis Johnson, J. Vernon McGee, and Thomas Constable are all men who have devoted decades their lives to the study of the Bible, and they all would say that "this fold" refers to Jewish people, and "other sheep" refers to non-Jewish people.

"This fold" = Israel.

"Other sheep" = non-Israelites who would believe.

"One flock" = the combination of Israelite believers and non-Israelite believers who are a part of the church.

"One shepherd" = Christ, being the owner, provider, and protector of the people who have placed their faith in Him.

This is my stance and I'll give you 4 Biblical evidences to defend my stance.

(Evidence #1) - The Word of God classifies people into three categories during this current age.

1 Corinthians 10:31

(Evidence #2) - Jesus said He must bring in those not of this fold. That is exactly how Paul described Gentiles being brought near to God through the ministry of Christ in **Ephesians 2:11-22**.

(Evidence #3) - While much of the Old Testament focuses on the nation of Israel, God consistently declared a plan that He would reach out beyond the people of Israel in order save people of the whole world. **Isaiah 42:1; Psalm 86:9; Genesis 12:3**

(Evidence #4) - Israel had already been understood to be sheep of God's pasture. **Psalm 79:13**

Now before I move on, I'll say this: If you are a part of the Church, that means you were chosen by Christ, you belong to Him, and you were brought into His flock when you heard the message of salvation and believed in Jesus. If that is you, then Jesus is committed to being your Shepherd for all of your days. That means when you get caught up in sin, you are walking into danger and Christ, by the Spirit of God, will work in your mind and heart to convict you. The Christian's mind is different than the mind of the unregenerate world. The world can live in sin and can live guided by their own desires and appear to be fine, but the Christian who follows after his own sinful desires won't ever be truly happy with himself. Be a sheep that doesn't wonder off the path Christ has for you. Stay close to the Shepherd and you will find more freedom and more joy than you've ever known. You don't belong to yourself. You belong to Christ, so go live for Him and watch He'll do in your mind and heart.

Statement #5 - As the Good Shepherd, I am loved in a special way by the Father. **10:17**

"For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again."

God the Father loves Jesus the Son in a unique special kind of way because Jesus was willing to die and rise again. Jesus was willing to leave the splendor of heaven and come to this earth. He was willing to come to this dark world of sin. He lived as God in human flesh, and He was mocked, ridiculed, rejected, beaten, and put on cross to suffer and die a death He did not deserve. He did that so that people who are enemies of God might become friends of God. He did that so that sinful rebellious people may become saintly righteous people. The humility in Jesus' willingness to go through what He went through caused the Father to love the Son on a level beyond our comprehension.

This is the not sole reason why the Father loves the Son. I think the best understanding of what Jesus means here is that because Jesus has chosen to do something that would please the Father, the love between the two could be expressed in the fullest possible sense.

God's love is a complicated subject. There is a love of God for the whole world in that He sent His own Son to offer salvation to the sinful world (Romans 5:8; John 3:16). There is a "much more than" love of God to experience for those who come to faith in Jesus and are reconciled to God (Romans 5:9-10). There is an even deeper love of God to experience for those who have believed in Jesus and then go on to obedience to the words of Jesus (John 14:21; Ephesians 3:14-19). If you want to know love beyond measure, live your life for Christ.

Jesus explains that the fullest extent of the deepest love possible includes the reality that Christ gave His life away in death so that others who are dead might have life. Because of that, the Father loves the Son in a special unique way.

Notice also that Jesus said, "I lay down my life that I may take it up again." The amazing reality the Bible declares for us is that Jesus was delivered up in death because of our sins, but notice, it's not just that Jesus would die. He would also take His life up again. He would be raised back to life. He would lay His life down and take it back. His death may have been because of our sin, but His resurrection declares that God accepted the payment Jesus made on that cross for sinners. Jesus resurrection proves that God will declare any sinner righteous when that sinner places his or her faith in Jesus (Romans 4:25-5:1).

If today you say, "I want Jesus to be my Shepherd. I want to become one of His sheep," but you have never believed in Him for salvation, you need to know this: All people on this earth deserve the eternal wrath of God because all have sinned against God (Romans 3:23; Ephesians 2:3), but Jesus went to that cross and died as a substitute for us (Galatians 1:4), He took our penalty of death (Romans 5:6; 6:23), He took the wrath of God for us, He died, but He could not be held by death (Acts 2:24), In His sacrifice for us, He defeated death, and He rose again (Romans 1:4). If you believe in Him, believe that He died and rose again for you, you will be saved unto eternal life (John 3:16). Put your faith in Him today, choose to believe in Jesus and you will be saved (Acts 16:31). The good news is that simple. The Good Shepherd is that loving. He is that merciful. He is that gracious. He will forgive you of all your sin and give you eternal life by simply believing in Him (Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-9).

Statement #6 - As the Good Shepherd, I have voluntarily made the choice to lay my life down. **10:18**

"No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

No one took His life from Him. No one put Him death. Pilate had no control over Jesus' death. The Jews had no control over Jesus' death. The Roman soldiers had no control over Jesus' death. No one took Jesus' life from Him. He had complete control over the entire situation of His own death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus had complete sovereign authority, power, and control over His own life. God the Father had "given the reigns" to Jesus regarding this. Jesus had complete control over His own life as He lived on this earth in human flesh. Regarding Jesus' life and His death, He could have done whatever He wanted to.

But do you know why He's the Good Shepherd? He's the Good Shepherd because what He chose to submit Himself completely to the will of the Father. The plan of the Father for before the foundation of the world involved the Son being the sacrifice (Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 2:20) that would save sinners from the penalty of their sin, and Jesus chose every minute of His earthly life and ministry to submit Himself to that plan. He voluntarily chose to become a sacrifice. He voluntarily chose to lay down His life. He chose to be made sin for us so that we might be made righteous in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). That's what the Good Shepherd does for the sheep who are His own.

And in light of all that, it makes me want to say

IF JESUS DIED FOR ME, I WANT TO LIVE FOR HIM.

What does the work of the Good Shepherd make you say?