

The Good, the Great and the Chief Shepherd

Part 1

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[00:00:00] 365 Amen. [00:02:00] I want to present a compliment to dean Thomas Mathison for votes. To me, that was the greatest thing today. Julie, thank you for understanding. Congratulations Danielle. You know we've got one month until graduation, after you need to get on with your work. I for one think I should have bene toasted. [00:03:30] Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

[00:04:13] O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

See them now, with glorious banners O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

With the glory and the victory [00:05:04] To thee, O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave? Say his praises, praise the glory And the nations all his praise.

We will read from John's Gospel, chapter 10, verses 1 to 18.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. [00:06:15] But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his voice. And he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them, but they understood not what things they were which he spoke unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. [00:07:03] All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leadeth the sheep, and fleeth. And the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is

an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. [00:08:17] And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice. And there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. [00:09:08] John shows us four aspects of the assembly in his writings. In John's first epistle it is the family of God. And the important thought connected with the family of God is discernment. You have to be able to discern between a child in Christ and a father in Christ.

There are things which we cannot expect of a child in Christ, but we may well expect them of a father in Christ. [00:10:07] The second aspect we find in the book of Revelation, where the assembly is presented as the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And there the great thought is love. To be a bride or a wife means to be loved and to love. And then we find the third aspect in Revelation, the new Jerusalem, the city. And the great thought connected with the city is administration.

[00:11:01] And when the assembly is presented as city, then it is a matter of godly administration. But here in John chapter 10, the assembly is presented as the flock. It is one flock. And the great thought presented here is that there is one shepherd. The fact that the Lord Jesus is the shepherd is a great theme in the Holy Scriptures. In the Old Testament as well as in the New. And if we are occupied in our thoughts with what Jacob said about his twelve sons, then we see that he emphasizes the blessing of two of his sons. [00:12:13] One is Judah. And he says that the scepter will not depart from Judah until Shiloh cometh and the peoples will obey him.

This is the Lord Jesus in his official glory, in his royal glory. But then he emphasizes another one of his sons, and this is Joseph.

And he says from thence is the shepherd. And if we bear in mind what Joseph shows us as a picture of the Lord Jesus, [00:13:20] then we see the Lord Jesus as shepherd immediately. It is the moral glory of our Lord. This is what characterizes the Lord Jesus as shepherd. And if we go through the Old Testament, then we reach the part of the Bible which is best known, written three thousand years ago.

[00:14:03] And it has become a comfort for uncounted people. This is Psalm 23. And there the sheep speaks of the Lord Jesus in this picture as the shepherd.

But then the subject is also taken up by the prophets. I think of Isaiah chapter 40. He will shepherd them as a shepherd. You will also find him presented in this way in Jeremiah 17. There the scripture says that the Lord Jesus says prophetically, I was not, I give my free rendering now, I was not reluctant to be shepherd behind thee. [00:15:07] And then we see that the subject is also treated in the prophet Ezekiel and also in Zechariah.

And this is the passage I wanted to speak about next. So far I have only been able to find two occasions where someone speaks of the Lord Jesus as my shepherd. David in Psalm 23 and in Zechariah chapter 13, God speaks about him in this way.

[00:16:14] So the wake against my shepherd. The man who is my fellow. Then the subject is also presented of course in the New Testament. Under three aspects.

Here in John 10 we find the good shepherd. And we will identify two great characteristics of this good shepherd. But I will not make this known right now, only in the course of the evening. When the Lord Jesus lived here on earth he was the good shepherd. And then we move on to Hebrews chapter 13. [00:17:21] And there the Lord Jesus is presented as the one who brings, God is presented as the one who brings back the dead. It is the God of peace who has brought the Lord Jesus back out of death. And he is now in heaven. And there he is the great shepherd. And as the great shepherd he has two characteristics.

[00:18:01] The first one is presented in Hebrews. He is the great high priest. He is occupied with our weaknesses. And in John's first epistle he is the advocate. And there he is occupied with us when we have sinned. But the Lord Jesus will return in glory. This occupied us the whole day today. And this is the subject of Peter. One Peter five. He will be made manifest as the chief shepherd. This means the highest one, the chief shepherd.

[00:19:13] There is in fact a chief shepherd. But it is the Lord Jesus himself. But tonight we may be occupied with him as the good shepherd.

This week I came to Great Britain for the third time. And every time I emerge from the tunnel then I see sheep. And this year when I emerged from the tunnel I thought [00:20:05] Will the Lord give me an opportunity here to say something about the good shepherd? And I am happy to use this opportunity tonight. We find here that the Lord Jesus presents two pictures to us in these verses. The first picture is described in verses one to six. There we see the Lord Jesus as he enters through the door into the fold of the sheep. This fold is the Jewish fold of the sheep. [00:21:03] And the walls of this fold, these are the laws and ordinances. It is the middle wall of partition as described in Ephesians two.

These two passages, Ephesians two verses eleven to twenty-two and our passage here throw light on each other. And the Lord Jesus enters into this Jewish fold. And he enters by the door. And this shows us that the Old Testament scriptures were right and had their place. And now the Jewish sheep hear his voice.

[00:22:10] And we read a very sad phrase in John one. He came into his own and his own received him not. This is what the Lord Jesus experienced when he came to his beloved earthly people. But then we find this wonderful verse in John one that there were some individuals who did receive him. And these became his own sheep. They hear his voice.

[00:23:06] In the German speaking countries brethren often mention the voice of the Good Shepherd. I hope that's also the case in England. But now I would like to explain what the voice of the Good Shepherd is. The voice of the Good Shepherd always has a dual tone. And I would like to show these two tones in the Psalms. Firstly in Psalm forty and verse nine.

Psalm forty verse nine. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation. Lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. And the second tone in Psalm forty-five and verse ten. [00:24:20] Thou art fairer than the children of men. Grace is poured into thy lips. Therefore God has blessed thee forever. This is the dual tone of the voice of the Good Shepherd. One tone calls upon us for obedience and practical righteousness. And the second tone shows us his grace. When a voice comes to our ear. And it speaks about obedience and righteousness all the time. And never about grace. Then this is not the voice of the Good Shepherd. [00:25:23] And if there is a voice coming to our ear that only speaks about love, mercy and grace. And never about obedience and practical

righteousness. Then this is not the voice of the Good Shepherd either. Some years ago I listened to the ministry of a brother. And after the meeting he asked me what I thought about his ministry. I wouldn't have said anything if he hadn't asked me. [00:26:13] But as he asked me, I answered him. He spoke in a very solemn way. And everything he said was right. But he didn't mention grace a single time. But perhaps the other extreme is the bigger danger today. That people speak only about grace. And there is no call for obedience and practical righteousness. [00:27:01] So these sheep have heard the voice of the Good Shepherd. And they have become his own sheep. Because he has called them by name.

And here we see how you become a sheep of the Good Shepherd. This is a very personal matter. You must have heard the voice of the Good Shepherd personally. Parents cannot do this for their children. The husband cannot do it for his wife. Everyone must do it individually. And we know this wonderful passage in Isaiah 43. [00:28:06] I have called thee by thy name. Thou art mine. I hope that everyone here in this room is able to say this. Also the children. The Lord Jesus has called me by my name. I am his. These are happy men who can speak like this. And what does the shepherd do now with his own sheep? He leads them out of the fold. This matter of leading them out of is very important in the Gospels. And we also find this with respect to Calvary. [00:29:08] I would like to point out that it doesn't say in the Scriptures that the Lord Jesus went up to Calvary, but that he went out to Calvary. In Matthew's Gospel we find that he was led to this place by men. But in John's Gospel we see that he went out himself bearing his cross. Without the gate he suffered. And now he leads his own out. This is the theme of Hebrews 13. I do not want to enter into the details.

[00:30:07] I only want to point out that here he goes before us. And again this is the subject of Peter. He told us about the Lord's footsteps and that we are allowed to follow in his footsteps. This is the great privilege of the sheep of this shepherd. I think of my childhood. Often there was a lot of snow in Switzerland. And then when I saw the footsteps of a man in the snow when I was a boy, then this always induced me to step into these footsteps. Often I wasn't very good at doing this. [00:31:14] Because often these were very large steps. And sometimes I stepped next to those steps. And sometimes I fell down.

But nonetheless it always induced me to try to step into these footsteps. The footsteps of the Lord Jesus are perfect. And we will have to practice during our whole life to walk in these footsteps. [00:32:02] But what a privilege that he went before us. And that we may follow him. Is there anything higher on earth than to follow the good shepherd? This has two important consequences. Firstly, it is connected with reproach. A servant is not greater than his master. This is what the Lord Jesus tells us. If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you also. Whoever follows the Lord Jesus without compromise will be subject of reproach. It is the reproach of Christ. [00:33:02] But there is a second aspect to it. A deep joy in the heart. I'm not speaking about theories. Everyone can experience this in practice. Following the Lord Jesus, I remember the time when I went to school. There was a strong boy and he beat me up.

And he told me explicitly that the reason he did it was because I believed in the Lord Jesus. I went home weeping. But I had a deep joy in my heart. And everyone will experience this. [00:34:05] If you are the object of the reproach of Christ, this is not just any type of reproach. It is the reproach of Christ. And Hebrews chapter 13 says, bearing his reproach. Already the apostles, as described in the Acts, they were glad to suffer reproach for this name. These are the two great consequences of following him. Perhaps this is the reason why we have so little joy sometimes in our Christian lives. Because we do not follow the Lord Jesus without compromise. [00:35:06] These sheep follow him

because they know his voice. And they do not follow a stranger because they have examined the voice of the stranger.

And because after a long study they found out that it was a bad voice. And then they turn away from him. Sometimes I think if I observe the practical life of believers, that this is what the Bible says. But it's not what the Bible says. But the reason why they don't follow the stranger is because they do not know his voice. It is not necessary that we examine all the errors in Christendom. [00:36:19] A ship went into a harbor. And it was a very dangerous entry into this port. There were many rocks below the surface of the water. And the passenger went to this place on the ship from where the commands are given. And he said to the captain, I'm sure you know every rock in this area. And this is why you are able to go into this port. [00:37:06] And the captain said, I don't know any of the rocks. But I do know the way where there is no rock. And that's the way I take. And we also know the way where there are no rocks. This is the way of following the Lord Jesus without compromise. From verse 7 onwards we find a different picture. And there the Lord Jesus shows that he himself is the door. And for every man it is necessary to enter through that door. As a matter of fact, there is no salvation in anyone else. [00:38:11] And we want to state this very clearly in this year 1999. Salvation is in none other than the name of the Lord Jesus in whom we must be saved.

And it is a wonderful thing to be saved. I hope that every one of you has a heart filled with thankfulness for this. Everyone who belongs to the Lord Jesus, that they no longer perish. How terrible this is. Whoever rejects salvation in the Lord Jesus will perish. He will always be far off from God in the lake of fire. But he who enters through this door will experience three things. [00:39:27] Firstly, he will be saved. This is a very comprehensive term. And it implies the salvation of the soul. The salvation from the circumstances of life.

And it implies the salvation on the day of the rapture. When we will be transformed also as far as our body is concerned. This is the first thing. [00:40:10] The second is that he will go in and out. I know that there are brothers who see two sides in this term, going in and out.

They think of it as the holy and the royal priesthood. I am not so sure that this is meant here. This term, going in and out, means that there is free liberal movement in front of the shepherd without fear. [00:41:02] I want to state this very precisely. It is Christian liberty. Now I want to show Christian liberty. And first I will tell you what it is not.

It is not liberty to sin or to live in a worldly way. There are such voices today. And they think Christian liberty means a life without restraints. But we are warned about this idea in 2 Peter 2, that there are such who promise liberty, but who are slaves of the doom themselves. [00:42:11] 2 Peter 2, verse 19. Now I want to present Christian liberty. It is fourfold. And the first thing I want to show is in 2 Corinthians 3. In verse 17, where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

We will behold the glory of the Lord with unveiled face. This is the first aspect of Christian liberty. To find your joy in the Lord Jesus. [00:43:12] Sometimes I am surprised by what unbelievers are able to do. There are very friendly people. There are very helpful people. And there are very patient people. And sometimes we are impressed by these people. But there is something they are not able to do. They cannot find their joy in the Lord Jesus. This is Christian liberty. The second is in Romans 6. There mention is made of the sin dwelling in us. And we know that before our conversion we were slaves of sin. We had to sin.

[00:44:13] But the Christian liberty means that you no longer have to sin. Romans 6, verse 18. Being made free from sin. We know that as believers we are still able to sin. We know this from God's word. And we know this from our own bitter experience. But Christian liberty means that you no longer have to sin. And this is great liberty. The third is in Romans 8. Romans 8, verse 23. The liberty of the children of God. As a matter of fact, there it says the liberty of the glory of the children of God. [00:45:19] We have not yet reached the glory. But we do have the liberty. I want to explain this. If you ever come to Switzerland, then you can't simply come and visit me. That's a little bit difficult. Because often I'm not at home. And sometimes I'm very busy. So I have to tell you, you must first call me and ask me whether you can come. But I have seven children. And when they come home, they never have to call me up first and make arrangements. They can just come. This is the liberty of the children. [00:46:17] Exactly the subject of Romans 8. The liberty of the children of God is to be able to enter into the presence of the Father. His spirit testifies with our spirit that we are children of God. And we have received the spirit of sonship. And we cry, Abba, Father. I hope that you all make diligent use of this wonderful liberty. [00:47:05] To be able to enter into the Father's presence at any time. There we can make known all our requests. I experience this with my children. From time to time a child comes into my office. And normally they want something. Normally these are attacks on the Father's wallet. And some years ago one of my smaller children came. And it didn't have any question. And I said to him, what do you want from me? And this child said, I do not want anything of you. I just want to be with you a little while. [00:48:10] This is the liberty of the children of God. Have you experienced this? That you were on your knees before the Father. You have made known all your requests. And then you just wanted to stay with him for a little while. This is the liberty of the children of God. And the fourth passage is in 1 Peter 5. And there the resumption about the elders in general. 1 Peter 5 verse 2. They were to serve willingly. I want to make something very explicit here. [00:49:15] The Lord Jesus does not have anyone who works for him out of force. But only people who work willingly. Service is a matter of free will. It is the liberty of the believers to serve him. But this does not mean they are independent. This is our problem. That we think of being forced as dependent. And of willingly being shown as independent. But if we look at the Lord Jesus, then he says in John 17, I have come forth from with the Father. This was his free will or willingness. [00:50:18] And then he says, the Father has sent me. And this is perfect dependence. This is Christian ministry. Willingly and perfectly dependent. This is the going in and out of the sheep in front of the shepherd. And the third is that we find food. What is food? Food for our conscience and for our hearts. [00:51:05] I would like to address a word to those who are used in the ministry of the word. The objective of the ministry of the word is not to say lots of interesting things. But it is a matter of presenting the person of the Lord Jesus to their hearts and consciences. This is truly food for the believer. Years ago, a believer was taken to a three-day conference in Zurich. And after these three days he was asked, what is your impression? And he said, it was quite nice. But it was a little bit one-sided. [00:52:08] People were talking about the Lord Jesus for three days. He didn't know what he said. Can there be a higher praise for this conference here? Then someone said, they spoke about the Lord Jesus for three days. This is food for the soul. And now I would like to explain the following verses briefly. And before I do this, I remember a day thirty years ago. This was the day of my engagement. And I went to a jeweler's place with my bride. [00:53:13] By the way, it's the only time I was in such a shop. And I said to this man, we would like to buy two wedding rings.

And this man took a dark tissue and put it on the table. And I was shocked. But then I realized how this man worked. He worked by way of contrast. He placed the rings on this black fabric so that they were just so much more radiant. And this is exactly what the Lord Jesus does here. And if we don't see this, we will not understand these verses. [00:54:19] Firstly, he places a very black fabric there. And he speaks of a robber who steals and slays.

And on this dark background of hatred, he shows his wonderful love. Which he proved by giving his life on Calvary.

[00:55:01] This is the first great characteristic of the Good Shepherd. That he loves us with a love unto death. And then he shows us a background which is not just as dark. And he speaks of a hireling. In German, this is quite a difficult word. I do not quite understand why it's used here. And I hope you've got a better one in English. In German, you always have to explain this. Because many do not know what a hireling is. This is a man who shepherds the flock for money. And when there is danger, he flees. [00:56:03] Do you know what this is? This is unfaithfulness. And it is on this background that the Lord presents his faithfulness. Faithfulness unto death. These are the two great features of the Good Shepherd. He loves us. And he stands with us faithfully. And now we come to this important verse 16. There the Lord Jesus says, and other sheep I have, which are not of this fold. I am very glad about this. These are sheep from England, from Ireland, from Poland, from Germany, from Holland, from Switzerland. [00:57:06] And then he says a wonderful word. Them also I must bring. A wonderful must. And now he leads this one flock not into a new fold.

It is true that there is a wall around the believers. If we think of the assembly as a city, then we read about a great and high wall. But this wall is not there in order to keep the believers together. This wall is there to prevent evil from coming in. Or if there is evil inside, that it can be put out. [00:58:16] But it is never the idea of this wall to keep us together. What keeps us together then? It is the power of attraction of the shepherd. What can keep us together if the Lord Jesus doesn't? And it is in the measure that each one of us is attracted by the Lord Jesus that we are together.

[00:59:05] I don't just use the name of the Lord Jesus just as a word like that. But what I mean is all the glory of his person and his word. And this leads us to verses 17 and 18. As we are attracted by the shepherd and come nearer and nearer to him, then we will come to understand that he is the son of the father, the son of his love. And here the Lord Jesus says, therefore does my father love me. And here he presents this high truth that he has laid down his life as man but in divine power.

[01:00:17] And that in divine power as man he was raised from the dead. This commandment he had received of his father. And he has executed this command in perfection. And this is how he attracted the love of the father. Therefore does my father love me. We are privileged to belong to the flock of the Lord Jesus. [01:01:01] The good shepherd is in the center. And he is the son of the father. He feeds the flock. He calls the lame. He breaks their knees. And they are bound to his knees. [01:02:01] For the Lord, you have raised yourself as Lord. Oh, how good it is when you raise yourself as Savior's Lord.

May God and Father God, our God, bless thy name.

Thy good, thy good, O Jews, our priests, our angels, praise.

The joyful news of His coming hath held the youth of Israel.

[01:03:15] To thou, our God, our Counselor, our Partner and our Guide, and now our Shepherd of the people, hear my sigh.

The Lamb of God is risen from the dead. He is risen from the dead.

[01:04:08] We are the shepherd boys, which more true life shall be.

Our pilgrims to the wonderland of God's King.

He is risen from the dead. He is risen from the dead.

[01:05:06] He'll set us free.

The Lamb of God is risen from the dead. He is risen from the dead.

When thou from the grave camest low, His strength and life didst sustain.

[01:06:12] To stand with the cross and the foe, and with His life in our stead.

A song that forever shall be of the shepherd who gave himself up.

No one shall take so God-heav'n as clearly. No thing so amazing to us.

[01:07:18] Our deep and rich love will retain. His praise evermore shall employ.

Till heaven and earth remain in honoured high reasons of joy.