

My Sheep

John 10:27-28



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FOCAL Read Responsively **John 10:27-28** My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: **(28) And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any [man] pluck them out of my hand.**

We live in a day where people are overly fond of tolerance, of similarity, of a type of comfortable apathy. There is something overly comfortable in the post-Modern mind. We love the easy paths, the easy way, as long as that way leads to our pleasure.

I was recently in Raleigh, North Carolina, for my son's graduation from seminary. While we were in one part of the city my son pointed out the “standards” that were being placed on all businesses. New businesses in the community had to agree to a facade' of stone and neutral colors so that they matched the color of the older established businesses. Brightly colored signs were out. Signs were all small, tasteful, and designed to blend into the background. I wondered about the wisdom of this plan as I sought hard and long for a gas station. If I had not been dangerously close to empty I would have, no doubt, moved to another part of the city. When I want gasoline I don't want to hunt from pillar to post to find it. Similarity and blending into the background is poor practice for a business – especially if it wants to make money!

In like manner the religions of the world consider tolerance to be the greatest thing. It has always been this way. In olden times the pagan religions all had different gods, yet each religion would profess the validity of their neighbor's god. The king of Egypt would affirm that

Ninevah's gods were true and real, and the monarchy of Babylon would declare that the gods of the Philistines was just as valid as were theirs. Even the Caesar of the vast Roman Empire allowed its lands to worship whatsoever god they pleased, just as long as incense was burnt to the chief god of Rome once a year. It was *politically expedient* to accept another nation's gods and goddesses. Why fight battles over religions anyway? Everyone knew that there was no absolute truth – even in religion. A god was a “rabbit 's foot”, a thing to be followed for luck while in the midst of trial, but to be ignored or traded about when all things went well.

God's religion, compared to the world's religions, was *quite intolerant*. What did God say in Deuteronomy 5:7? **“Thou shalt have none other gods before me.”** The Great God Jehovah commanded His Israel that they would heed and worship Him exclusively. The ancient Jew was not allowed to blend into the background, to be like everyone else, to put on the facade' of the world. These were the people that the True God saved from out of Egypt with a mighty hand. These are the people that God loved, and saved, and led, and fed. He wrote in the Law (Exodus 20:5) **“Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God [am] a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth [generation] of them that hate me”**. The Great God of the Jews demanded that He and He alone be worshiped.

When we come to the New Testament we see the same type of intolerance. The Christian could have lived peaceably alongside the Romish unbeliever if he would only worship Caesar once a year. The Christian's

response was always (Acts 4:12) **“... there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”**. The New Testament Christian was thrown to the lions and the wild beasts to amuse the bloodthirsty spectators of the coliseum. Christians were lit on fire and set up as living candles while the unbeliever feasted in the light of this grisly glow. Terrible, awful things were devised to torture these harmless believers by demons masquerading as fallen humanity. Read “Foxes Book of Martyrs” and other ancient accounts of tortures that the believer in Christ endured and you will come away with an amazement in your heart. Any of these believers could have avoided the tortures of hell had they but denied their Lord and been more tolerant of the false gods and goddesses around them. Yet they had no choice. Had not Jesus said **“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life – no man comes unto the Father but by Me” (John 14:6)**. Didn't the Holy One of Nazareth and of the New Jerusalem say **“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”(John 10:9)**. The ancient Christian could not say that there are “many ways unto God”, for his Lord did not leave this option open to him. The God Who is and Who is not silent has one Way, one Means by which He can be reached. All other means, all other voices are but lies shouted into the wind. C.H. Spurgeon said:

“A thousand errors may live in peace with one another, but truth is the hammer that breaks them all in pieces. A hundred lying religions may sleep peaceably in one bed, but wherever the Christian religion goes as the truth, it is like a fire-brand, and it abideth nothing that is not more substantial than the

wood, the hay, and the stubble of carnal error. ... The religion of Christ is a thing of God's — its pedigree is from on high, and, therefore, when once it is thrust into the midst of an ungodly and gainsaying generation, it hath neither peace, nor parley, nor treaty with them, for it is truth, and cannot afford to be yoked with error: it stands upon its own rights, and gives to error its due, declaring that it hath no salvation, but that in the truth, and in the truth alone, is salvation to be found.”

The message of the Christian Gospel, decreed by God and founded in our Crucified and Risen Savior, is that there is salvation in no other but in Jesus. We are not saved by our goodness or by our moral fortitude. We who are saved have surrendered ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, and because of Him have been transformed by God our Savior into one of His sheep.

The Christian Is A Sheep Of Christ

FOCAL John 10:27 **My sheep** hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

When people hear “salvation” and “saved” in relationship to the Christian faith, they often equate this with deliverance from hell and admittance into Heaven.

This, dear friends, is not the true definition of salvation. It is true that the Christian is delivered from hell and admitted into Heaven: Jesus later in our text says **“and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never**

perish”. Yet I want to point out that Jesus does not begin with “I give you life, and you shall never perish”. He does not begin with admittance into Heaven and exclusion from hell. These things, *these effects* are mentioned only after Jesus speaks of **“My sheep”**. We who believe are redeemed from hell *because* we are saved, and we enter God's Heaven because we have been saved beforehand.

The Christian is a person who first and foremost is a **sheep of Christ**. A Christian is the purchased possession of God, belongs to God, is God's property, God's servant, God's child, God's charge. When Jesus looks at the Christian He sees **“My sheep”**. By what right does Jesus call us **“My sheep”**? The ancient text of the Prophet Isaiah says:

Isaiah 53:3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were [our] faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

There is no child of God alive today who loved Jesus from the very beginning. There was a time when we all **esteemed Him not**.

Because Adam fell, we all fell. Because Adam sinned, we all sinned. Sin and corruption is on the life of each person born into this world. From the smallest of infants to the oldest person on the face of this earth, we were all born in iniquity, born spiritually dead but physically alive.

We are not naturally born as the **My sheep** of Christ. We are naturally born **hiding our faces from God**. We try in our own ways to work our way to God, spurning His Way, despising the Cross. Like those at the Tower of Babel we say **“let us build us a city and a tower whose top may reach unto Heaven” (Genesis 11:4)**. The brick of our tower will be the “good works” that we do, and the **“slime for mortar”** will be our human morality. Surely we will be good enough to get into God's Heaven. Yet in the end our attempts at righteousness apart from God's Grace does no more than bring judgment on us all.

Those who are saved must become the **“My sheep”** of Christ. How does this happen? By believing that the Shepherd died for you. The Bible tells us:

Isaiah 53:5 But He [Jesus was] wounded for our transgressions, [Jesus was] bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace [was] upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.

If you are saved, you became saved by seeing Him on Calvary *wounded for you*. You saw His outstretched hands. No nails held those hands to the terrible tree. No, dear friends, love held Him there. The sheep of Christ is one who looked at the life of God being poured out on Calvary and, looking in anguish, we saw that that *Jesus Christ died for us*.

Mountain of God's Law, tried to be *good enough* to get into God's Heaven.

Yet as you scaled that terrible mount you heard the Word of God over and over:

Galatians 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed [is] every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

We would fail then, just as Israel failed in the desert when she relied on her own power. Cursed, cursed, cursed. What hope did we have? Then one day the Spirit of God brought light into the darkness of our lives. We heard these words **“My sheep”**, we saw our Shepherd on Calvary bleeding and dying for us. And, wonder of wonders, we *believed that He gave Himself for us*. We began to understand the Divine principle of *substitution*:

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He [God] hath made Him [Jesus to be] sin for us, who knew no sin; that we [His sheep] might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Jesus Christ took our place on Calvary! He bore our judgment, a certain dreadful coming judgment from God, in our stead. He was beaten for us. He was bruised for us. As it is written, **“Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to**

You who are now Christians tried to climb the

God” (1 Peter 3:18).

What is “salvation”? It is not just about Heaven and Hell, but it is *total restoration of man from the place where Adam fell*. As a matter of fact, salvation is a state *greater than that of Eden*.

Man in Eden **walked with the Lord God in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8)**. But man in Eden *was not the My sheep of Christ*. The Lord left Adam and Adam followed Satan. The Sheep of Christ are *never left alone, never forsaken*. A sheep has no natural defenses *but his Shepherd* – and the **Lord is my Shepherd (Psalm 23:1)**.

The Christian Hears The Voice of Christ

FOCAL John 10:27 My sheep **hear my voice**, and I know them, and they follow me:

How do we know that we are Christians? How do we know that we are the “**My sheep**” of Christ?

Illustrate Our Lord tells us that “**My sheep hear My voice**”. The word “**hear**” is the **Present Active Indicative** of the verb **akouo**, which means **to be able to not just hear, but intelligently discern what is being said**. I was given a wonderful illustration of this one time from the Holy Land. Three shepherds came together – with their flocks – to eat and fellowship one night. The three separate flocks all merged together into one huge flock. Upon finishing their meal the shepherds stood, shook hands, and each headed in their own direction,

calling to their own flocks. As if by magic that which had been a huge flock divided into three parts. The sheep knew the voice of their shepherds, and followed *him and him alone*.

The same holds true for the Christian. We who are His **know and hear His voice**. Wolves in sheep's clothing at times come in among us (**Matthew 7:15**), **false prophets seeking to destroy the flock**. These people may go by different names, and may claim that God speaks through them – yet the **My sheep of Christ** will not long bear them. **My sheep hear My voice**. The voice of a stranger will not entice the sheep of Christ. We hear only Him, we say only of Him:

Psalms 119:114 Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.

Here is the major difference between the Christian and the non-Christian. The Christian **hears and is able to discern the word of the Savior**. The non-Christian is yet dead in his sins, and unable to hear the call of the Master.

The sheep is bonded to the Shepherd – the believer changed by the operation of God the Holy Spirit at the point of salvation. Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews standing in His midst:

John 10:26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

These people were much like those that Peter wrote of in his second epistle. The Church – even from the beginning – had people who followed the Lord because they wanted something from Him. They sought healing, sought power, sought to be near Immanuel – yet they would not hear His Word. Peter wrote of these people, people who *saw and knew* the Way of righteousness, understood that surrendered faith to Jesus was the Way unto salvation, but these people turned away from the Lord. Like Judas of old, they used the Master, but never surrendered to salvation. Peter said:

2 Peter 2:22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, *The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.*

Listen to the Word of God: **the dog is turned to his own vomit AGAIN.** This is a person who was never saved. He may have been in Church, he may have followed the rituals that the Church follows, but he was not saved. Why? Because **he was yet a dog, and not a sheep.** And, as a dog, he turned away from the precious Word of the Master and turned back to the baser things of his own life. **He turned to his vomit again.** He was **like a sow washed, ready to return to the mud of the sty.** He loved the world and worldliness more than he loved the Word of God. He would not hear the Savior – if he were a sheep **then he would hear the Shepherd's voice.**

Every week before the close of service I beg you to examine yourselves, to look to your own hearts and

see if you are the sheep of Christ or not. Here is a test that you all can easily take: **do you hear the Master's voice?**

You may not understand the Scripture all together – I have studied this blessed Word from God for years and understand only a small portion of it – yet you should be able to hear His Voice (and cherish it) as you read the Word and attend to it in our assembly. Is His Word intelligible to you? Can you understand and respond to His voice, the Voice of Scripture? If so, you are **His sheep.** If not there is something radically wrong in your spiritual walk.

The Christian Walks In Union With Christ

FOCAL John 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and **I know¹ them, and they follow me:**

There is a wonderful relationship between the Christian and his Savior. Jesus first of all **knows His sheep.**

The word translated “**know**” in our text is a Greek verb that means “**to experientially know, to feel, to perceive, to know on an intimate basis, to know the needs of, to be intimately acquainted with**”.

There is an intimacy between the Shepherd and the sheep. Jesus emphasizes this two other places in our context:

¹ ginosko, to experientially know, to feel, be aware of, perceive

John 10:4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

Illustrate The Good Shepherd goes before His sheep and, as He leads them, He is well acquainted with the limitations of each and every one of His charges. See that sheep, he is a bit head strong, always stepping out into uncertain territory with nary a care. The Shepherd knows that and stands ready to pull him back from the brink of destruction with His staff. That lamb yonder, it loves to eat the wrong things, to wander away from the flock, to move into the dangerous. The Shepherd stands ready with His rod ready to strike the enemy and, if need be, to chasten the woolly headed lamb. See there a mother, heavy with child. The Shepherd tends to that sheep giving her extraordinary care. One by one the Shepherd looks over His flock, loving them as He leads them. He knows their needs – knows them – and leads from this superior knowledge.

The sheep **follow their Shepherd**. They must follow Him. The sheep know the price that was paid for their redemption. Look at Him on that Cross. Do you see the hands and feet trickling the precious Blood. This is no mere man, but this is Almighty God in the midst of us. The hands nailed to that Cross could shake the world just as easily as they healed the leper and the diseased. Those feet, pierced and bleeding, walked on water. Had He desired the stomp of that precious foot could have melted the mountains. That head bowed in anguish, with its nod could have made the heavens tremble. He Who hangs on that Cross for you and for me is none other

than Almighty God. The marks of the nails and the thorns in His body are proof that He loves us. We are graven in the palms of His hands.

We must obey our Shepherd. **John F. MacArthur²** aptly stated:

“Faith obeys. Unbelief rebels. The fruit of one's life reveals whether a person is a believer or an unbeliever.”

If you are a believer then **you follow the Shepherd**. You model your lives after Him, and grow to be closer to Him each and every day. **James Montgomery Boice³** was even more plain when he said:

“Jesus was strong in cautioning against presumption. He let no one think that he could presume to be a Christian while at the same time disregarding or disobeying His teachings. ... If we are not listening to Christ and are not following Him in faithful obedience, then we are not His.”

It does not matter by what title you are addressed, nor by what station in life you occupy. You can be the President of the United States, a King, a corporate Executive, a preacher or pastor or a Bishop in the church. But you are not one of Christ's sheep **if you do not follow Him**. We who are saved are under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that **Christ is our Head, Christ is our Shepherd**. The Bible says:

² *The Gospel According to Jesus*, page 178

³ *Christ's Call to Discipleship*, pg 166

Philippians 2:9-11 Wherefore **God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: (10) That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; (11) And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

This entire world will one day bow its knee to Christ. Every unbeliever, just before going into the Lake of Fire that burneth forever and ever, will bow their knee to Christ. **Jesus Christ is Lord.** The Bible says that Christ is

Colossians 1:18 ... the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

He is the Head of the Church, the Lord of this Body of believers, and the Lord of every believer. Are you His by faith? Then, dear one, **they follow Me.** The Christian, the sheep, the born again believer **follow his Lord and his Shepherd.**

Are there times when the believer walks apart from his Lord? Yes – sadly, yes. Yet this does not last for long before the sheep comes to his senses and returns to the Master's side. If you are saved you are no longer the sow wallowing in the mud.

You are no longer the dog returning to its vomit. You are sheep following the Shepherd, knowing that this is not only the right thing to do, but also *the smart thing to do.* A sheep that will not heed the Shepherd will soon find itself in a terrible predicament, perhaps in a place of death. The only hope for full life for the sheep is under the watchful eye of the Good Shepherd.

FOCAL John 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and **I know them, and they follow me:**

The sheep follow the Shepherd. When the mountaintops and great times of this life come, the sheep follow the Shepherd. The sheep in prosperity, in wonderful pasture, does not forget that it was his Master that brought him there. When the dark times and the valleys of this life come the sheep are not overwhelmed with despair. The Shepherd is there, overseeing all, watching in all. He knows our every need. When in the valley the sheep draw closer still to their Master knowing that He and He alone is Lord of all. The sheep follow the Shepherd in this life – and to the next. Jesus said:

FOCAL John 10:28 And **I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any [man] pluck them out of my hand.**

If you are His sheep now, you will be His sheep *then.* If you follow the Shepherd now, you will follow the Shepherd *then.* Eternal life was never given to the general populace by the Shepherd. No, dear friends, Jesus gives eternal life *to His sheep alone.* If you have not followed Jesus as Shepherd in this life, you need not

expect to be with Him in the next life. Yet if you have followed Him now, if you have believed on Him and have been changed from dog or sow to Sheep, then you will be with Him both now and throughout all eternity.

May God touch your hearts with His Word.



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