

A Christmas Series: The Doctrines of Grace in the Coming of Christ

THE LORD'S GIFT FOR HIS OWN

John 10:7-30

Intro: No one can read the Bible with any degree of understanding without seeing that the people of God are very precious to Him. Often as I have read the prophecy of Isaiah, and have come to the forty-third chapter, I have read and re-read the first verse of the chapter, and have stopped to think about those wonderful words. Let me read it and verse two to you this morning;

1 But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

2 When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee (Isa. 43:1-2).

Now I recognize that I am not of the seed of Jacob, nor of Israel (who incidentally was the same person), but I know that they were saved just like I was saved, and so I can apply to myself what the Lord said about them as His people. This verse tells us that the Lord had redeemed that nation, that He knew them by name, and that He delighted to say, "Thou art mine."

In the prophecy of Jeremiah we find other words that go along the same line, words that apply to all of us as the Lord's people. Jeremiah wrote about the Lord appearing to him on behalf of Israel, and these are the words that Jeremiah said that the Lord said to him. Listen to them as I read them to you. I know that they are familiar to many of you:

3 The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee (Jer. 31:3).

This verse contains some wonderful truths concerning our salvation. They are words that really go beyond what we are capable of understanding, but they are certainly words that we can believe and profit greatly from them. The Lord told Jeremiah about himself and about all of His people that He has loved them with an everlasting love. God is an everlasting, an eternal God, without a beginning, and without an end, and that throughout eternity He has always loved His people. This means that He never stops loving us, and His love never changes. Our love for Him may

have its ups and downs, but God's love for us never changes. Even when we do not please Him, His love for us remains the same. He may have to chasten us, but even then He loves us the same. He chastens us because He loves us.

I pointed out in my first message in this series that we are born in sin, that there is nothing in any of us that would commend us to God. We learned also that by nature we do not have the capacity to know God, nor to please Him. When you as a Christian understand how totally you and I have been affected by sin, then we will be more amazed than ever that God loves us and that He in His marvelous grace has worked in our hearts to draw us to Himself. And when did He chose us? He chose us according to Ephesians 1:4 and 2 Thessalonians 2:13 and 14 "before the foundation of the world," even before the beginning of time. When you and I were saved, we experienced what God had been determined to do for us before there was any such thing as creation.

God has done another thing in the Bible to help us to understand how dear we are to Him. He has used figures of speech to show us how dear we are to Him. One of those is that the Lord is our Shepherd, and we are His sheep. It was through King David that the Lord by the Holy Spirit gave us the twenty-third Psalm. It used to be that most people, even people who did not claim to be Christians, knew part or all of Psalm 23. I am not so sure that that is true today because many people in our country don't own a Bible. Some have never seen a Bible. Many have never held a Bible in their hands. There are many people in the world today who would like to get rid of every Bible. They don't want us to know what the Bible teaches, and we can see by the way they live how they are suffering because they have chosen to reject God's Word. And the Bible is God's Word. It was written by men, to be sure, but they were men who were directed by the Holy Spirit in what they wrote so that the Bible is different from any other book that has ever been written. Regardless of what men may do, they will never be able to do away with the Bible. Many have tried to do away with it in the past, but now they are gone and the Bible remains.

Sheep are among the most defenseless of all animals. The familiar Christmas story in the Gospel of Luke begins with the words,

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night (Luke 2:8).

A shepherd cannot go to work at 8 and get off at 5; he has a twenty-four a

day job. If he just took care of them for eight hours a day, and left them alone the other sixteen hours, it would not be long before he had no sheep. Either they would wander away, or some wild animal would soon attack them and eat them. That is the reason that Luke 2:8 tells that there was more than one shepherd taking care of the sheep that Luke was talking about. They would watch in shifts. One or more were always awake, protecting the sheep.

But David said, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” If the Lord is your Shepherd you don’t need two because He never slumbers or sleeps, and He is great enough to take care of us whatever enemy might come along. I hope that you can say, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” But you can’t say that unless first of all you can say, “The Lord is my Savior.” He saves you first, and then He becomes your Shepherd as well. He knows how much we need Him even though it seems to take us a long time to learn that lesson. David was strong enough to kill a lion or a bear, but he knew down in his heart that it was the Lord Who enabled him do what he did. In himself he knew that he was as helpless, and defenseless, and needy as a lone sheep. The mighty King David, who started out life as a shepherd, knew that the Lord was the One, and the only One, who could meet His need throughout time and for all eternity, as his Shepherd.

Now in John 10 the Lord used that same figure of speech in describing His people. He called Himself “the good Shepherd.” You see that in John 10:11, and you see it again in verse 14.

People may read the Christmas story in the Gospel of Luke where it tells us about the shepherds and the sheep without ever thinking that those Shepherds were a representation of the Lord Himself, and that the sheep pictured the people of God. And in the same way people can read about the birth of the baby Jesus, about the angels singing, *and especially about the angel of the Lord said to the shepherds. Let me remind you of what that angel said. Here are the words. Perhaps you first learned them as a little child in Sunday School. The shepherds were terrified because they had never experienced anything like what was taking place, but they were evidently godly shepherds. And so the angel of the Lord said to them,*

10 Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings (meaning, I preach the Gospel unto you) of great joy, which shall be to all people (or all the people, the people of God).

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:10b-11).

This is not just an incident in the lives of those shepherds which are to entertain children, but which had no meaning. This was what the prophets of the OT had looked forward to. God was fulfilling His promise of a Redeemer Who had come to save His people from their sins.

People don't usually link together the manger with the Cross. The Lord Jesus came as The Good Shepherd, but He came to give His life for the sheep. He said that in John 10:11, and He repeated it in verse 15. See the same emphasis in verses 17 and 18. He knows who His sheep are, and His own know Him.

Now we learned last Sunday morning, if we did not know it before, that in eternity past the Father gave to His Son those to whom the Son was to give eternal life. These are called in Scripture, the elect, the people who have been sovereignly chosen of God for salvation. These are the ones the Lord Jesus was speaking about when He spoke of as "My sheep" (v. 14). Christ laid down His life specifically for His sheep, for those whom the Father had given to Him. And as the Lord spoke to His hearers, He said what is recorded for us in verse 16. (Read.) He was speaking to Jews in this discourse. Therefore, "the other sheep" had to be Gentiles. God has His elect throughout the world in all generations. The Lord said, "Them also I *must* bring" – that little four letter word in English, three letters in Greek (δεῖ) which Thayer says in his lexicon, or dictionary, of NT Greek words which speaks of "that constraint which arises from divine appointment" (p. 126).

The Lord spoke of them as sheep before they were saved. They were sheep, the elect of God, in all of the nations of the earth. There is not one way of salvation for Jews, and another way for Gentiles. There is not one way of salvation for Hebrew speaking people, and a different salvation for those who speak Spanish, or German, or French, or Arabic, or English any other language. Wherever you may go in the world you will find the Lord's sheep. They must be reached. They will be reached. And they will hear the Shepherd's voice calling them through the Gospel. And ultimately there will be "one fold and one shepherd," and His Name is the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet, though Jesus Christ was hated and His message, for the most part rejected, yet it will prevail. The purposes of God will not fail. All of His sheep wherever they are, will hear, and will come, drawn to Christ by the mighty power of God.

It looks to us like the future of the middle east is in the hands of Iran, or

Syria, or Hezbollah in Lebanon. Or looking farther east, in the hands of Russia or China or North Korea. Some Americans feel that destiny is with the United States. We may yet see a lot of trouble among the nations of the earth, but that which in the hand of God determines the outcome of all things is the salvation of God's sheep. Among the nations of the earth, there are always those who are sheep. They must hear. They will hear. And they will respond to the Shepherd's voice. You and I have a part in making sure that they hear as we preach the Gospel to every creature we can. It is by divine decree that they will be saved. We don't know who they are. That is why we are to go to all, preaching the Word, trusting the Lord to use His Word and to draw His sheep to Himself.

But before I close today, let me call your attention briefly to verse 25 through 30.

Jesus knows a lot that we don't know. He knows His sheep. And He knew that He was speaking to many who were not His sheep. And so look at what He said in 25 and 25. He didn't say that you are not my sheep because you do not believe, but He said that you do not believe because you are not of my sheep.

I wonder how many of you heard the special on CNN this past week called, What Is A Christian? Lucille and I listened to it as the moderator surveyed pastors and others religious leaders from various groups, some that you would expect would know the answer to the question. The moderator even asked one pastor directly, "What is a Christian?" He answered that question by telling some of the things a Christian will do, but he drew a blank on the question, "What is a Christian?" Nobody ever over the two hour time span gave the right answer to "What is a Christian." I was appalled. I wondered if they knew how to point some inquiring person to Christ if someone were to ask them how to be saved. Saved from what? Saved for what? There are obviously many people in our country who call themselves Christians who do not have the slightest idea what a Christian is, and many of them are pastors.

Now look at verses 27 through 30. Memorize these verses if you do not know them. These are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, and so we have the highest possible authority upon them. True Christians are those who have heard the Lord's voice in His Word, who recognize that they are hopeless and helpless sinners, and who turn in faith to Christ, believing that what He did when He died on the Cross, is the only way to have

eternal life, and to find acceptance with God. As a result they follow the Lord, they live the way that He wants them to live.

Cf. John 3:16; 1 John 5:12.

When you have eternal life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, His promise to you is that you shall “never perish.” The word “never” is the Greek is a double negative. We could translate it, no never. A double negative in Greek is not a positive like it is in English; it is an intensive negative, meaning that such a thing as a true believe in Christ falling away and finally going to hell, will never under any circumstances ever happen. The Lord Jesus has only one kind of salvation, and that is eternal! And both the Son and the Father secure our salvation.

Concl: The Apostle Peter in his second epistle gave this important command to the professing Christians to whom he was writing, most of whom were probably really saved. Nevertheless it was important for all of them to do it. Here is what he said: “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10a). Do you think that you came to Christ “on your own”? Or were you called. Do you think that you chose Christ, or did He choose you? And does your life witness to others that you are a new creature in Christ? Or do you claim to be a Christian, but still live like people live who don’t make the claim that you do.

A Christian is a person who is trusting Christ for salvation, and who gives all of the glory to God and to Christ. Make sure of your calling and election. There is nothing in all of life that you and I need to be more certain about.