

## **“I Lay Down My Life for the Sheep”**

**Scripture: John 10:1-21(vv. 11-18)**

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### **I. Biblical Background**

The Gospel of John has as its essential purpose the call to repentance (to make a transformed change in your life and live it going forward to the glory of God. All together it gives us a well-rounded conception of Jesus Christ as the ideal man, King, Servant.

This chapter today, John 10:1-21 emphasizes the Parable of the good shepherd (Psalm 23 and Heb. 13:20). It is explained more specifically in verses 7-18. Here we see a new topic in some respects that resembles the parables of the Synoptics. (Matthew (18:12-14) and Luke (15:3-7) both cite a parable of a shepherd and his sheep. All three Gospels (Matt, Luke, John) emphasize the aspect of careful concern that the shepherd feels for them. The teaching is based on the practice of sheep herding, and several aspects are utilized to create a picture of the relation of Christ to his people. It is used in a wider meaning as Jesus continues his ministry to the beloved people of God. Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

The use of allegory is exciting as it contains particularly the ministry of Jesus himself. What an awesome imagery throughout these passages that empower us with what is godly in pursuit of ministry in taking care of the beloved faith community. This certainly helps us in our spiritual imagination words such as “sheep, sheep pen, gate, shepherd, stranger, watchman, thief, good shepherd, wolf, robbers”. In view of all this, the Lord knows we at times need simplicity of such defined words. Jesus used such to provide guidance to eliminate the necessity of detecting the difference of relationship between the disciples and himself. Even knowing Jesus’ voice is important. Each shepherd separated his sheep from the others by his peculiar call, leading them as a unit. In fact, if a stranger should use the shepherd’s call and imitate his tone, the flock would instantly detect the difference and would scatter in panic. They “listen to his voice” ... Jesus alone has the right to spiritual leadership of his people, and he knows them all by name! **What does it take for Jesus to do this?**

### **II. The Lesson: I Lay Down My Life for the Sheep John 10:11-18)**

**Verse 11: “I am the good Shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”**

We see that Jesus is adamantly stating who he is with a sense of the revelation of identification as he continues to project his ministerial purpose. Here we see additional aspects of his ministry as mentioned in verses 1-10. Those verses give us the imagery in the first two paragraphs of how he is depicting himself as one that gathers his sheep in the pen which has only one opening that serves as a shelter from the “thief” and “robber” who intentions were both for exploitation, and neither has any concern for the

welfare of the sheep. Jesus was contrasting himself with the false messiahs who by pretense or violence attempted to gain control of the people.

The concept of a divine shepherd goes back to Psalm 23, "The LORD is my shepherd" (Psalm 23:1-2, Eze. 34; 13, 15). This involves a caring, protective concern and a sacrificial attitude. This means a voluntary sacrificial death (10:11, 17, 18, 1 John 3:16). It means to 'lay aside, strip off (John 13:37, 15:13). "Life" involves personality, "soul" – the whole essence of a good shepherd ready to sacrifice his total self for the sake of the sheep. Life here refers to eternal life, God's life. It speaks not only of endlessness, but of quality of life. With Christ, life on earth can reach much higher quality, and then in heaven it will be complete and perfect.

He is explicitly stating he is the Gate, the Door, the Watchman, and He is the good shepherd that lays down his life for the sheep. The thieves and robbers (Pharisees/false prophets), strangers take life like wild beasts and discourage the sheep from entering the gate. Jesus is the good shepherd, that gives spiritual life and access to spiritual food. He describes three characteristics of the sheep 1) they hear his voice (vs.4); 2) they follow Him and 3) their eternal life can never be taken away. **A GODLY RESPONSE OF AFFIRMATION!**

**Verses 12-13: "The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So, when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.**

Again, an awesome contrast! Jesus' statement shows the difference between himself and the religious leaders of the day. The hireling is not so much bent on the destruction of the sheep but is more concerned more for his own safety than for that of the sheep. The hireling is not a shepherd...he runs when the wolf attacks, abandoning the sheep scattering them because he cares nothing for the sheep. He is the exact opposite of a good shepherd. He guides alright but will not endanger himself...lording himself over the flock entrusted under him and his main concern is to get paid!! (1 Peter 5:2-3). The sheep means nothing to him; they don't even matter to him. The good shepherd is a caring overseer, eager to serve and is courageous, is willing and not greedy. Its' an attitude of gratitude. **DON'T RESPOND LIKE A HIRED HAND!**

**Verses 14-15: "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me-just as the Father knows me and I know the Father-and I lay down my life for the sheep."**

Jesus knows for a fact – implying a relationship of trust and intimacy – ("know" 4 times) that His Father has given him this ministry to him. Wow, what knowledge – when you know that you know, that you know! OMG! Again, He is emphasizing "I am the good shepherd"! "know" is more than intellect – it implies a personal relationship between Him and the Father. Shepherd is mentioned in these verses more than five times. The shepherd has concern for the sheep because they are his own and he loves them

individually. What a statement...I know my sheep! My sheep know me! My Father knows me! And I know the Father! This is so explicit and to the point...what do YOU know of the Father!

Let's not forget the 'and' ...the good shepherd lay down his life for the sheep. AMEN. He risks his life for the life of the other sheep. He would leave the flock for a bit and search for the stray ones. He uses this picture when he describes a shepherd who left 99 sheep in the fold to search for one that has wandered off. Our Jesus had a nurturing spirit...a unique relative existence...that is why it is personal and recognize his voice when he calls them by name demonstrating obedience, returning to the fold in submission, returning humbly. AMEN! **YOU GOT TO HAVE A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP!**

**Verse 16: "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.**

Boldly, Jesus' attitude demonstrates once again his action. Already he has encountered the doubters, haters, rebellious folk, slanders and many of such spiritual darkness. He wished to include them in his salvation. This salvation was for Jews and Gentiles...an inclusive ministry which was also stressed in his prayer in John 17. This is what a good shepherd desires for all to have eternal life which is our eternal destiny. It is for the disciples – who must grow progressively and be preserved, and future believers. He was out to get those that are not of this sheep pen. In this context, the aim is one flock of Jews and Gentiles to form one spiritual body. In reality, some will believe, and some others do not. The LORD will have us to be mindful of the diversity and different cultures, but the good shepherd is still concern as he is the Gate, the Door, and the Watchman! Whosoever will, come and be a part of the flock. Further he states, I must...a mandate! Then he affirms they too will listen to my voice and there shall be one flock and one shepherd! AMEN! **IT TAKES RECONCILIATION!**

**Verse 17: "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life-only to take it up again."**

Jesus is on a mission, and this is the reason and his season for this time of his ministerial life. It appears he is saying, 'can you hear me now'. Wow, what authority is projected here from his Father's mandate (10:11, 15, 17). His authoritative attitude takes love and sacrifice both to him personally and to God and to the listener. Read 1 John 3:16-24. He laid down his life as we should for others; use our material possessions when we see others in need, have pity, loving others not only in words and tongue, but with actions and truth and set our hearts at rest in his presence. With this kind of confidence, Jesus was a rebel with a heart of obedience to his Father. The Good Shepherd, Jesus had the power – the authority-not only to voluntarily lay down his life for the sheep, but also to take it up again. No one, but God can do that! **IT TAKES DIVINE REASONING!**

**Verse 18: “No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”**

**No one!** What a bold attitude statement. **No one!** Jesus and the Jews! It is anyone who oppose – any opponents. He said to the Jews, your father, the devil (8:44). Not all Jews opposed him, in fact Jesus was a Jew, so were the twelve disciples and a vast majority of his followers. So, we are going to have opposers within and without the flock, yet Jesus says **no one** takes it from me, expressing matter of fact, I volunteer to lay it down and have the authority to take it up again! Many times, we see Jesus escaping capture or execution (5:18, 7:44-45; 8:20, 59). Only when he declared “the hour has come” (12:23) was it possible for his enemies to arrest him.

The awesome power of this authority is to take it up again and the authority to pick it up again!! Glory to God! Folks, it was part of the plan to ‘submit’ to death and then to rise from it victoriously alive. OMG! Look, anyone can lay down his life – the termination of physical existence – but only the Son of the Father could at will resume his existence! It was “of my own accord”. It was the divine plan: sacrifice and a manifestation of divine power – all motivated by his love for the Father and his readiness to carry out his Father’s purpose. Jesus was not a helpless victim of his enemies’ violence and obnoxious attitudes, but he had a right and the power to become the instrument of reconciliation between man and God and his opponents to be rounded up and placed in the sheep pen! Jesus is the Good Shepherd. **IT TAKES READINESS!**

**Verse 19-21: “At these words the Jews were again divided. Many of them said, “He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?” But others said, “These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”**

What a reaction to the Gospel truth! It caused division and that it is also a part of the divine plan of God, to divide the sheep from the goat. You see there is another type of sheep, mountain sheep that lives a wild, undomesticated, loud, boisterous similarly to goats. So, what kind of sheep of you...a mountain sheep of a goat type—bleeping, blaring, boasting what you are about! It’s not about you!!! Their reactions were outrageous. Division is inevitable when everybody is not on board and does not have eternal life becoming unreasonable and impossible to deal with.

Jesus is the good shepherd. His claim seems on the other hand, unreasonable and impossible, exaggerated and so contradictory to the popular understanding of the unity of God! Once again, the Jews and the others always ready for a debate. Jesus’ sayings only added to their irrational and blasphemous thoughts of his opponents. Jews said he was demonic. But the others said, it is not so. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind? Instead, they are the devil/demon personified: rage, slanders, haters, gossipers, the thief, robbers, stealers, killers and destroyers!

Jesus was speaking truth to power! He is not cray, cray! He is the Good Shepherd! He is the Gate! The Door! The Voice!