

# *The Shepherd of the Flock*

By John Thiel, [mp3](#)

*Scripture reading: Isaiah 40:11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry [them] in his bosom, [and] shall gently lead those that are with young.*

According to the Scriptures, Jesus is the Shepherd of the everlasting covenant. And the qualities of this shepherd touch us, because He cares for His flock. We are His sheep and have all gone astray; we have turned everyone to our own way. But as our Shepherd He reaches out for the sheep that has gone astray, and He does not treat it in a harsh manner because it has gone astray. He takes it into His bosom, and comforts it, and carries it home. We want to continue this meditation on the Shepherd of the flock.

He will behave toward us like a shepherd dealing with those who have been bruised and scattered, as we see in Isaiah 40:11. The picture of the flock that has gone into disarray and has been scattered is clearly dealt with in the book of Ezekiel. Because the sheep have been scattered across the hills, He has to step in as a faithful shepherd to bring them all together.

**Ezekiel 34:11 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, [even] I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. 12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep [that are] scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. 13 And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and [in] a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. 15 I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD. 16 I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up [that which was] broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.**

Because God's people have been misguided by false shepherds, Jesus Himself steps in, and He will deal with the fat and strong with judgment, but He will take care of the flock that was severely treated.

## Saving the Flock

Today we want to go into the deep meditation of the Shepherd according to the following words:

**Ezekiel 34:22 Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. 23 And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, [even] my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. 24 And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken [it].**

Don't those last words mean something powerful? God, the Majesty of the universe, has spoken. He cannot lie; He changes not. And what He has declared to us here is an assurance for every bruised and wounded sheep that where the shepherds have failed the people, Jesus, the Son of David, is set up as one shepherd over them, and He shall feed them. Under the false shepherds there has been head-butting. The strong members of the flock were not correctly controlled by the shepherds, and they were head-butting the weaker ones. Don't you see that in today's circumstances?

## Unfaithful Shepherds

**Ezekiel 34:2 ... Woe [be] to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! ... 4 The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up [that which was] broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.**

Isn't this a sad picture? When the sheep have been mistreated by their fellow sheep, instead of dealing with the sheep like gentle shepherds, the shepherds ruled them with cruelty and force. So the poor sheep were bewildered.

**Ezekiel 34:21 Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad; 22 Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle.**

When the shepherds are false, the sheep become nasty to one another, and they head-butt and they push and shove. So the sheep are scattered abroad; they become a prey. But He says, I will save these weak ones; I have gone out to search for them because they have been scattered.

This is spiritually speaking of course. The sheep have become scattered because they didn't know what was truth and what was error anymore. It is the reality that we find ourselves in today with people's minds in a shattered state as to what is truth and where they can find comfort. They think to themselves, "Because of sin I have fallen, I have made mistakes, and I have no comfort that can really help me through my perplexing circumstances." So for all who feel mistreated in this world and in the church, for all who feel spiritually lean, skinny, sick, destitute, who feel uncertain, who hunger for the true love, for true sympathy, even though they are worthy of rebuke for having failed, who are in need of sympathy because they feel sorrowful for the things they have committed; for all these people there is someone who will supply our want. Jesus turns our attention to this:

## **The Good Shepherd**

**John 10:11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.**

There He is, the true one Shepherd, the Son of David.

**John 10:14 I am the good shepherd, and know my [sheep], and am known of mine.**

When the sheep that have been scattered hear the true shepherd, the true voice, they come running. They are sick; they have been battered; they have felt lean, destitute, and uncertain. You see sheep in this uncertainty chased by dogs. This is what we see in today's shepherding. There is no shepherding; the poor sheep are fenced in, and when they get shifted from one paddock to another, the dogs chase them; and they are terribly upset. This is the condition of the church today. But when they hear the true Shepherd's voice, they are relieved; that is where they run to. *I know My sheep, and am known of Mine*, says Jesus.

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

And as they follow Him, the promise of the true Shepherd is expressed in the following words:

**Isaiah 40:11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd:**

They have been bruised, head-butted, shouldered and pushed away; but

**Isaiah 40:11 ...he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry [them] in his bosom, [and] shall gently lead those that are with young.**

Here is the precious promise, but we want to understand this Shepherd, so that we can appreciate how our burdened soul is comforted by this Shepherd.

## Who Are His Sheep?

To begin with, who are His flock that He knows and who know Him? Who are they? Those churches that claim to be the flock, to be the shepherds over the flock, they existed in the time of Christ, and He, the Shepherd, came;

**John 1:11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, [even] to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.**

Can you discern here who the true sheep are and who the true flock is? *He came unto His own*, which were reportedly His flock, but *His own received Him not*. So are they the flock? No; they didn't recognise His voice. My sheep know My voice, Jesus said. But they received Him not; so were they His sheep? Obviously not. And they were not His true shepherds either. This is what He was saying in Ezekiel. So who are His true sheep?

**John 1:12 ...as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, [even] to them that believe on his name:**

Those who were born of the word of Jesus Christ:

**John 1:13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.**

These are His sheep. And while they may have gone astray, while they may have been lost, they cried and they bleated, and Jesus came to search for them. These are the ones who will recognise His voice.

**Jesus says, "I know my sheep." Let us consider this statement. We are known by God before we receive Him. "I know my sheep." How do souls become Christ's sheep? By choosing to receive Him. {TMK 52.2}**

This is exactly what we read. To them that *received Him* He came as a shepherd – those who choose to receive Him.

**But Christ had first chosen them. He knew every one who would respond to His drawing, {Ibid.}**

God has a foreknowledge, He knows who are going to choose to receive Him. So He chose them before they even existed; and they were the ones that He chose to be His flock.

**He knew every one who would respond to His drawing, and He knew every one who would be inclined to receive Him but who, through popular opposing influences, would turn from Him. {*Ibid.*}**

Why were they scattered, those whom He knew would respond to Him? Because of the opposing influences of these false shepherds, these false preachers, these false apostles and prophets. The sheep, under these opposing influences, would turn from Him. Do you know a person who did that, who, under the opposing ministries of Christ's day, turned from Him, but found Him again? It was the thief on the cross. The thief on the cross wanted to follow Jesus; but because Jesus was being opposed by the leaders, he lost his way because of the leaders, and he became a thief. And now, as He sees Jesus hanging on the cross, the sheep recognises his Shepherd, and he says, *Remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.*

Isn't that a beautiful story? "My sheep will know My voice." They were turned away by the popular opposing influences.

**Those who heard the voice and did behold Jesus as the Lamb of God believed in Him and became His property from their own choice. {*Ibid.*}**

And the thief on the cross made his choice at the last moment, because he was a sheep.

**But . . . their choosing of Christ was in response to His drawing. The love of Jesus was expressed to us before we loved Him. {*Ibid.*}**

What a meditation. These are the true sheep, the ones that choose; but they choose because they were drawn and Jesus knew them.

## **The Lamb of God Became the Shepherd**

Now comes a very important little point: "Those who heard the voice and did behold Jesus *as the Lamb of God* believed in Him." Why is it that He knows them so well, and that they can obey Him so well? Why?

**John 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.**

Why does the Shepherd know His sheep so well? and why can they know Him and choose Him? Because the Shepherd became a lamb. He Himself came into

the flock as a lamb, and a sheep as He grew older. And how was He treated as a lamb by the shepherds? Can you see the picture? The false shepherds treated *Him* like they treated the other sheep. He was buffeted, He was ruled by force. Does He know the experience of the sheep and the lambs? And can they recognise that He is a true shepherd because He knows them by His experience? and they know Him because His experience is their experience. This lamb, the Lamb of God, became the Shepherd. Ponder what He knows about His mistreated sheep. What does He know? You can identify with the Shepherd because He identified with you the lamb as a lamb. This is the description of His experience when He came to this planet:

**Isaiah 59:14 And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. 15 Yea, truth faileth; and he [that] departeth from evil maketh himself a prey:**

They have made themselves a prey;

**Isaiah 59:15 ...and the LORD saw [it], and it displeased him that [there was] no judgment.**

Jesus saw it; He came here and experienced it.

**Isaiah 59:16 And he saw that [there was] no man, and wondered that [there was] no intercessor:**

Here is a direct reference to Jesus here on earth. There was no man that was supporting Him. They all left Him and fled, because of the false teachings of the shepherds. So they all fled and left Him alone. *There was no man*, and He *wondered that there was no intercessor*;

**Isaiah 59:16 ...therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.**

This is a direct reference to Jesus in His experience as a lamb. All this is written in a metaphorical manner, like a parable, but it brings home the important lesson that Jesus can be both a lamb/sheep and a shepherd. He can be both a sin offering and the priest. He was the sin offering, the Lamb that was slain, and He became a priest. Jesus experienced the mistreatment of all the sheep that want to make the choice to be His sheep, those who really desire to withdraw from bewildering corruption and bewildering confusion, as is expressed in these words: *judgment is turned away backward*. Aren't you feeling it? You go here, you run there, and you try and find the word here and there; and then you come under the Shepherd's caring flock, and you think, Why am I going everywhere else? This is what I want. And then you get floundered again because you get confused by the false teachings. This is what happened to the thief on the cross;

he got confused. He recognised the Shepherd's voice, but he got confused. How many are doing this today? Confused, bewildered with the corruptions and the wrongs in their world. What hope have they? I can't find my way; they think; I'm like a bleating sheep, or like a little lamb that has tripped over the edge of the precipice and got caught in the thicket.

Do you know the experience? Do we know the experience of a bewildered sheep? Investigate your own experience. This is exactly what my experience has been through the years. Growing up in the Seventh-day Adventist church, becoming confused with Des Ford's messages and by the new doctrines that were coming into the church and that had already existed before I was even born, and trying to find my way through the morass, and nearly giving up along the way, and even falling away from the perfect things that I wanted to follow; I was misguided too. Then the Lord picked me up through the Spirit of Prophecy and showed me through His voice where the truth was. I have shared this with all the people who know me. This has been my experience. And if people who are not His sheep and the true Shepherd's hear what I have to share, they buffet me; they tell me how wrong I am, and I get confused again for a moment. "Lord! How can I find my way through this?" I went through it severely. That was when the Lord sent a magpie: "Praise the Lord, don't give up. Keep on following Me." And so I did; and I am here today. I was a sheep floundering. Were you? Earnestly desiring to do right, to struggle against the odds? Does Jesus know it? Does He know my experience or not?

## His and My Experience

In the following words you see the Lamb. This is the true meaning of the Lamb that was slain. It was a lamb that went through my experience. He went through it and knows His sheep.

**Psalm 69:1 Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto [my] soul.**

When a flood overwhelms you, you don't know where you are anymore; you stumble around. I've had that experience: I came down a slippery drip into the water one day, and then I stumbled and tumbled, and I didn't know where up and down was. *The waters are come in unto my soul.*

**Psalm 69:2 I sink in deep mire, where [there is] no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. 3 I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God. 4 They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, [being] mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored [that] which I took not away.**

Can you see His experience? And can you see your own?

**Psalm 69:8 I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children.**

Have you experienced that as a child, as a sheep, that wants to follow God? Is this your experience? Here it is. This is your Shepherd that is speaking here.

**Psalm 69:20 Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked [for some] to take pity, but [there was] none; and for comforters, but I found none. 21 They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.**

If you read it and apply it in reality to what your own experience is if you are a lamb of God, a sheep that wants to follow God, this is your experience. Jesus knows His sheep by experience. Let us continue and see if we measure up again. Am I a sheep that has suffered like this, because I wanted to follow God, to do His will, but even my relatives gave me a hard time? Even my father gave me a hard time if I wanted to follow the right way.

**Psalm 22:14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. 16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. 17 I may tell all my bones: they look [and] stare upon me.**

These are the words of the One who said,

**Psalm 22:1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? [why art thou so] far from helping me, [and from] the words of my roaring?**

Have you ever said that? You felt separated from God? Your Shepherd knows it. *I know My sheep, and am known of Mine.*

**A true shepherd knows and pities and helps the sheep that most need his help--those that are bruised and lame and feeble. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd." {TMK 53.2}**

Why?

**Far more intimately than the patriarch Jacob knew the weak, the suffering, and the lame among his sheep, does the Chief Shepherd know His flock. He knows what no one else knows. He has Himself weighed every burden. No one knows the weight like Himself, for He has borne all our griefs, and car-**

**ried all our sorrows. It was this that made Him a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. {TMK 53.3}**

This is our true Shepherd, because He was a sheep, a lamb, mistreated, suffering, wanting to follow God and do His will, and buffeted for doing so, from a child up. Can you just imagine the experience? I thank God that He knows my experience.

## **Making the Break**

When you really decide to make the break, it's so hard, isn't it? When you really decide that you are going to follow Jesus against all the odds; when you've been in a church that has left you high and dry but you feel attached to that church, it's so hard to leave it, isn't it? You feel all alone; you are really ready to collapse, as Jesus described it; you have no internal strength left anymore; hear your Shepherd.

**Through all our trials we have a never-failing Helper. {DA 483.1}**

He was alone, remember. There was nobody there with Him. We feel alone, and He says:

**He does not leave us alone to struggle with temptation, to battle with evil, and be finally crushed with burdens and sorrow. {Ibid.}**

Are you a sheep? Do you want to be like this, or do you want to come out successful at the end? He does not leave you alone to be finally crushed with burdens and sorrow.

**Though now He is hidden from mortal sight, the ear of faith can hear His voice saying, Fear not; I am with you. {Ibid.}**

You are not alone; never alone.

**"I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore." Revelation 1:18. {Ibid.}**

I was a dead lamb, He says, a lamb slain; and now I am alive again and I am your Shepherd.

**I have endured your sorrows, experienced your struggles, encountered your temptations. I know your tears; I also have wept. The griefs that lie too deep to be breathed into any human ear, I know. Think not that you are desolate and forsaken. {Ibid.}**

Don't think it.

**Though your pain touch no responsive chord in any heart on earth, look unto Me, and live. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Isaiah 54:10. {Ibid.}**

Remember, the Shepherd of the everlasting covenant. This whole message is the source of keeping my head up out of the flooding waters around me. How Satan would like to destroy me, you may not know as much as Jesus knows. But I want to share with you this wonderful hope. If you have any responsive chord within your heart as you hear or read this message, respond. Don't shove it off to another time. Let the beauty of God's comfort, Jesus, your personal Shepherd, make the change within. Study His life and realise He understands *you* because He has gone through *your* experience. Look at His internal struggles a little longer.

## ***Consider Him***

**Hebrews 5:7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;**

*I know your tears*, He says. And He knows everybody else's as well because He went through the lot.

**Hebrews 5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;**

Is that our story? Do you have to suffer a lot to learn? He suffered it.

**Hebrews 5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;**

He was a lamb that was being made perfect, so that when He came as a lamb to the slaughter, He was perfect, sinless. There never dwelt sin in Him. He only received yours and mine. And it became a literal experience *as though* He had sinned. But He never did. This is what we are to be doing:

**Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of [our] faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider him...**

How much time do we spend considering Him?

**Hebrews 12:3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. 4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.**

I have, Jesus says, and if you will follow Me, you will experience My righteousness. Will we not just hear or read this message? O how frequently we hear or read and we take it not with us in reality. We can argue the doctrines; remember, so could the foolish virgins. But we want to come away from this message with an assurance that will carry us through so that we will be the sheep that follow that Shepherd alone.

## **Cosseted in the Shepherd's Bosom**

So when I need cossetting, when I need succour like a lamb pressing close to the bosom of the shepherd, He is there in reality. This is the Testimony of Jesus, the Shepherd's voice speaking to our hearts:

**If there is not another soul in the universe that regards you, the Lord God of Israel is looking upon you with thoughts of compassion, tenderness, and sympathy. He sees you with your strong impulses when fainthearted and discouraged. . . . You have the deepest, the richest, the most refreshing sympathy in the bosom of the great Shepherd. We have not an high priest who cannot sympathize with us, but One who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. {TMK 53.4}**

**Not only has every provision been made that when tried and tempted you should find help and strength and grace, but also that your influence upon other minds should be fragrant. {TMK 53.5}**

You are not going to be one of those head-butting, shouldering sheep. You will have compassion on the others because you are His true sheep. Your influence upon other minds will be fragrant.

**Not only does Christ know every soul, and the temptations and trials of that soul, but He knows all the circumstances that irritate and chafe the spirit. {Ibid.}**

He doesn't just know our sufferings; He knows the things that chafe us, the circumstances that irritate. He knows it all.

**Your great danger is in being self-sufficient. This will not do for a Christian. Christ will give you His patience if you ask for it. {Ibid.}**

**God's abounding love and presence will give you the power of self-control. {TMK 53.6}**

As you take hold of this, as you go through your temptation and you know that as a lamb and a sheep you have been misguided, like the thief on the cross; as bad as that maybe; as bad as becoming a thief, there is still hope for you.

Though he was a thief, yet he was a sheep. Isn't it profound? So whatever you feel, even if you feel that you have done too much wrong, that you've really gone over the edge now, and you think, I'm lost; don't go there. The thief on the cross wasn't lost; he was a sheep. If he would respond to the Lamb that was hanging on the cross, he would be saved; and he was.

**He will mold and fashion your mind and character. He will direct your aims and purposes and capabilities in a channel that will give you moral and spiritual power which you will not have to leave here in this world but can carry with you and retain through eternal ages. {Ibid.}**

True succour, true help, close to the bosom of our Shepherd. You and I may be His sheep and understand other sheep. You will understand why the other sheep are floundering around, and you will have compassion on them. In *His* church you will be cared for by *Him*, because His church are the sheep that have Him very close.

## **In God's Flock**

**To Jesus the whole human family is entrusted, as the flocks of sheep are entrusted to a shepherd. These sheep and lambs are to be tended with pastoral care. {TMK 52.3}**

This is God's church now, God's flock:

**They will be guarded by the faithful Chief Shepherd, under the care of faithful under shepherds, and if they will obey the voice of the Chief Shepherd they will not be left to be devoured by wolves. {Ibid.}**

Here is the description of God's true fold. It is composed of undershepherds who are under the Chief Shepherd and who will feed the flock according to the Chief Shepherd. The sheep *will be guarded by the Chief Shepherd under the care of faithful undershepherds*, as rare as they are today.

**Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice, . . . and they follow me" (John 10:27). The Shepherd of Israel does not drive His flock, but He leads them. {TMK 52.4}**

You see, this is someone that you are going to have to follow. You're not going to get pushed. And if the undershepherds are being corrected by the Chief Shepherd, they will not push you! They will not discipline you in a harsh manner. They will lead on and you will need to follow. This is what Apostle Paul said, *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*. It's up to the individuals in the church whether they will recognise the undershepherds and follow them or not.

**The Shepherd of Israel does not drive His flock, but He leads them. His attitude is wholly one of invitation. {*Ibid.*}**

Have you felt that? You've been invited; you know, Oh, this is it; I know this is it; but you are not being pushed to become part of it. It's your choice.

**If we are indeed sons and daughters of God we not only hear, but recognize the voice above all others. We appreciate the words of Christ, we distinguish the truth as it is in Jesus from all error, and the truth refreshes the soul, and fills it with gladness. {*Ibid.*}**

The Shepherd who Himself is a lamb will successfully satisfy all true sheep. Here is that beautiful illustration of a pastoral symbol:

**Revelation 7:16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.**

So many people read this to mean "when Jesus comes". But the Lamb is there to do it *now*. Let us respond; let us be sheep that are feeling and hearing the Shepherd's voice. Even though I may have been misguided, and I may even be doing things right now that are consciously wrong; yet I can hear the Shepherd's call, and I am going to let it all go for Him.

May God be with us as we continue to take the opportunities that are ours at this moment.

Amen.