

THE GREAT “I AM’S” of JESUS

by

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CHAPTER FIVE

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

In the same discourse in which Jesus called Himself the door, He expressed the type and meaning of His ministry in the claim, “**I am the good shepherd**” (John 10:11).

- As the door, He is entrance into the sheepfold, exit to shielded pastures, and protection from harm in the pasture.
- As the Good Shepherd, He is owner of the sheep, provider of their sustenance, and security for His sheep.

As David, the psalmist, sang of the Shepherd, he not only had in mind the Heavenly Father, but the promised Messiah. In Psalm 23, David gave a picture of the claim of Jesus as the Good Shepherd.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD CARES FOR THE SHEEP

Sheep are called “dumb” animals. They seem to have no care for themselves. Why should they worry or fret? Why should they be uneasy? The Lord provides for them. If the children of the King could be as trusting as sheep and would follow as they, the Shepherd, there would be proper relationship between the Good Shepherd and His believers.

“**I shall not want,**” says David, as he looks toward the Good Shepherd for his sustenance. What the Christian may need in food, clothing, and shelter, Jesus will provide. There may not be all the material things for which man may have a desire, but there will be a full supply of all the Christian needs. Paul put it this way, “**But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus**” (Philippians 4:19). What more could be desired?

My friend was preaching under a brush arbor in the country. As a boy I heard him preach a sermon using the acrostic W-A-T-C-H. The words used were: Watch your “wants,” your “actions,” your “tongue,” your “company,” and your “hands.” It was a good sermon.

The preacher suggested to his audience that if they were careful about their “wants” they might be happy in the Lord. If we want what the Lord wants us to have, we can be supremely happy in Him. He will provide every need the Christian has.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD PROVIDES REST

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.” Rest is sometimes recess from labor. Rest in the Lord may be complete relaxation in the green pastures provided by the Good Shepherd. Rest may mean a change of work under the Lord’s leadership; it may mean security in relief from pain; it means trust in the Lord: to the Christian, rest means leaving everything to the Lord. The lilies need not worry; they will be clothed. Christians may trust in the Lord and have full rest. If the Christian will trust in the Lord for his sustenance, he will find the green pastures all about him.

In calling Himself the bread of life, Jesus also spoke of the refreshing water which makes for eternal life. David sang of such refreshing when he said, “. . . **he leadeth me beside the still waters.**” The Christian hungers and thirsts after righteousness. As Jesus leads him beside the still waters, he may slake his thirst and be sure of the imputed righteousness of Christ.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD IS INSPIRATION

“He restoreth my soul,” says David. In his daily communion with the Lord, the Christian will receive inspiration for every day’s living and for life ahead. As he walks in paths of righteousness, the Christian’s inspiration comes from Christ, for whose name’s sake he walks in correct paths. The presence of Christ gives him inspiration for righteous living.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD PROVIDES SECURITY

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,” is security both here and hereafter. The Christian may be under the shadow of death, but Christ gives him the victory over death. The presence of Christ brings light: there can be no shadow when Jesus is there. He comes in under the clouds and dispels darkness. He is the light which **“lighteth every man.”** There is no need to fear when Jesus is present; He dispels our fears and inspires our hopes.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD GUIDES HIS SHEEP

The rod and the staff of the Lord comfort the Christian. Providing security now, the Lord provides leadership for tomorrow. If the young man would like to know how to cleanse his way, let him look to the Word of God. Jesus is the law of life for tomorrow. The Christian can find guidance for every day as he walks with Jesus. The teaching, the rod, the guide, the staff, these are ever present. The Christian who yields to the rod and staff of the Good Shepherd will walk in paths of peace and righteousness. He will be comforted in times of sorrow, guided in times of indecision, taught in times of wondering, and led in times of wandering.

There is victory for the sheep when the Shepherd provides. It matters not how many enemies the Christian may have, the Lord provides a table of contentment, fellowship, and consolation to those who are in His fold. The victory that overcomes the world is our faith, faith in the Good Shepherd. He is our all.

THE LORD CHOOSES HIS FOLLOWERS

David sang about the anointing and the overflowing cup. The Lord chooses His followers and sets them apart in His service. The sheep do not choose the shepherd; the shepherd chooses the sheep. The calling, the anointing, the overflowing of blessings come from the Shepherd, whose supply is inexhaustible.

LOVE BEGETS LOVE

The goodness and mercy of the Good Shepherd, given to His sheep, becomes a part of the trusting sheep. As Jesus manifests His love, His mercy, His grace, His goodness to His children, He lets them partake of His attributes. The Christian grows in the likeness of Christ. The sin of man broke the image of God; Christ restored that image in His children. Every virtue of the Good Shepherd becomes the heritage of His sheep. Care, concern, compassion, love, all these attributes of Christ expressed in guidance and security of believers, become a part of the believers themselves. To one another the followers of Christ become inspiration, comfort, and security.

Paul said, **“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known”** (I Cor. 13:12). He also said, **“For we know in part,”** yet he was sure that in Christ and through Christ we should know perfectly. What we see now is veiled by the shadow of ignorance and inexperience. What we shall learn through Christ will be perfection and consummation.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD KNOWS HIS SHEEP

Jesus said, **“I am the Good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.”** He calls each sheep by name. He admits each sheep individually. In the sheepfold are only those sheep who enter through the door, which is Christ. He calls each by name, and gives to each the security of the sheepfold.

Isn't it a wonderful thing to know that every believer In Christ has a new name by which he is identified as he enters by means of the door into the safety of the sheepfold? There is no question about his worthiness; he enters through the authority of Christ.

Many plans have been offered for salvation. Man has thought he could devise more equitable systems of justice and has offered many substitutes for the simple plan of salvation offered by Jesus. God's plan is so simple that wise men stumble over it, but simple shepherd folk are able to understand. The sheep goes in under the hand of the beckoning Shepherd. It is called by an individual name.

- Salvation is individual, not en masse.
- Entrance into the sheepfold is single, one by one, not as a group.
- Jesus calls each by name and admits His child into the safety of His kingdom.

As the shepherd knows his sheep, so is he known by them.

“I am the Good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine,” Jesus said. The sheep look to the shepherd for sustenance, guidance, and security. The children of the Good Shepherd must look to Him for all the blessings of life. Through Christ the Christian lives, so that it is no longer he who lives but Christ lives in the believer. The Christian looks up to Jesus and trusts Him for all of life. His living, his influence, the blessings which are showered upon him, and the blessing which he may be to the world, the Christian owes to Christ. He lives less and less his own personal life and more and more the life of Christ.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS SHEEP

As John stated it, Jesus was saying, **“I’m the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for His sheep.”** He said, **“As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep”** (John 10:15).

There was perfect agreement between the Father and the Son that Jesus would lay down His life of His own accord. He was not forced into the sacrifice by the Father; He laid down His life of Himself. He declared that the Father loved Him because He was laying down His life that He might take it up again. He said, **“No man taketh it (my life) from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it (up) again”** (John 10:18). It was the plan of salvation. Father and Son agreed to the plan.

Laying down His life for His followers was not a matter of dying as a martyr to a good cause. Jesus not only died for the sins of man, He also died as the sin of man. He became sin and was crucified as sin to destroy sin that in the destruction of sin He might give life to His sheep.

The life Jesus laid down for His sheep was death in their stead. He died that men might not have to die for their sins. Also He died in order that He might give to His followers the new life. He died for a purpose. His sacrificial death was a life-giving sacrifice. All who believe in Him will escape death and inherit eternal life.

Jesus made quite a contrast between the hireling and the shepherd. The hireling became a shepherd for remuneration. He would flee to save his own life when danger impended. The Good Shepherd would give His life for the sheep.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD HAS OTHER SHEEP

The Jews could understand the analogy of the shepherd and his sheep.

- They were shepherds themselves.
- They could understand that the shepherd knew his sheep and the sheep knew their shepherd.
- They could comprehend the meaning of the shepherd’s risking his life for his sheep as owner.

Jesus offered a new principle in mentioning “other sheep,” not quite so understandable to His hearers.

Jesus said, **“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”** (John 10:16).

The other sheep must have referred to the Gentiles. It was not enough for the Saviour to lay down His life for one race, one chosen nation, a separate people. He gave His life **“a ransom for many.”**

Outside the chosen nation were many people standing in need of salvation. The Heavenly Father and the only begotten Son had a plan for the salvation of the world, a plan comprehensive enough to embrace all mankind.

“For God so loved the (whole) world (all races), that he gave his only begotten Son (for the redemption of all mankind), that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Other sheep are in that **“whosoever.”**

The new name given to believers in Christ may well be **“whosoever.”** There is nothing to shut any race or nationality out of the plan of salvation. Jesus is the door. He is the Good Shepherd. He is the Only-begotten Son. He is the way of eternal life. He is the Shepherd of the sheep.

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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