

FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
CHRISTOLOGY: JESUS CHRIST
PART 9

This morning we are in part 9 in our study of Jesus Christ in our series Foundation of Faith! Last time we were focusing on the seven “**I AM**” statements made by Jesus. And please understand that when Jesus says that He is the “**I AM**” He is saying that He is the voice of the burning bush who spoke to Moses back in Exodus chapter 3! When Jesus says that before Abraham was “**I AM**” He is saying that He is Almighty God. Thus, these seven “**I AM**” statements are important for us to look at and understand for they give us a picture of our great God, our Savior, our Jesus!

Now some may wonder why this is so important. Why do we have to spend so much time examining the life of Jesus? What is the big deal? It truly is a big deal. You see, when God became flesh and dwelt among us in the Incarnation, He claimed many things about Himself. He made the bold statement that the eternal destiny of every person who has ever lived and is living, every man, woman and child all depends on how they view Him! That is a radical statement to say the least, but He did make it!

Now here’s the thing. If the claims that Jesus has made are true, then what we believe about Him, the decision we make about Jesus is going to determine whether we spend eternity with Him or without Him. Thus, nothing can be more important than that. And I know, there are those out there who say, “How do you know what you believe is true?” For me, that is easy because the Scriptures testify that there is a God who has told us what is going to happen long before it does, prophecy shines a big light upon God and thus, His truth.

The other thing is this. Say everything I believe in is wrong. Jesus never existed, and thus, He is not God and we just got here by a series of random chance happenings, what did I lose out on? I have lost out on absolutely nothing. I have lived a good life. I have done things that are good. I have treated people fairly. I respect life and-so-on. Now let's turn that around. What if everything I believe about Jesus is true, and it is, and you reject Him, what did you lose out on? You lost out on everything! You will be eternally separated from God and cast into the Lake of Fire where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Thus, the decision you make is more crucial and the evidence that has been presented over the past several weeks is overwhelming that Jesus is God! And as we began our series on Foundation of Faith we saw that there must be a God, there must be a creator, a designer and there is and His name is Yahweh!

Now over the past several weeks we have seen the attributes of Jesus, that they are the same as God the Father's attributes and thus, Jesus must be God, the second person of the Holy Trinity. We saw His humanity in the Incarnation, that Jesus was fully God and yet, in the Incarnation He was also fully man! We have seen the extra Biblical accounts of Jesus, that He was real, that some of the events of His life have been recorded for us in secular history! We have seen that Jesus claimed to be God in many verses in the Scriptures. Now you can try to deny that, but at least the Jews were honest. They recognized what Jesus was saying and that is why we see them gather stones to stone Him to death because He, being a man, made Himself equal with God. And Jesus could do that, it was nothing something that He tried to steal that was not His, because He is God!

Now last week we began looking at first of these seven “**I AM**” statements that Jesus made and we covered three of them. We looked at Jesus saying, “**I AM the bread of life**” in John 6:35. We looked at Jesus saying, “**I AM the light of the world**” in John 8:12 and 9:5. We looked at Jesus saying, “**I AM the door**” in John 10:7-10. And this morning we are going to continue looking at these “**I AM**” statements that Jesus made, we will look at the fourth of these statements because this one is so important. Not that some are less, but as you will see, this one shines through and then next time we will finish up looking at the last three.

First, let me deal with this other issue because some may say that Jesus was insane to make the claims that He made and yet the evidence does not support that statement that Jesus is insane! Let me share with you what the Scriptures have to say about Jesus and then I will share with you what a secular psychiatrist had to say.

First of all, in Matthew 7:28-29 we are told, “**And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.**” Does that sound like a mad man? Does that sound like someone who is insane, lost His mind? Not at all, the people were astonished by His teachings. You see, someone who is insane would do insane things and we don’t see that with Jesus and the people understood that He spoke with authority!

Another incident we see is found in John 7:45-46 as the Pharisees sent some of their men to apprehend Jesus and we are told, **“Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, ‘Why have you not brought Him?’ The officers answered, ‘No man ever spoke like this Man!’”** That is a remarkable statement by these men. They went to arrest Jesus and when they heard Him speak they were so blown away that they just left Him alone. It was not that He was crazy, but again, He spoke with authority, with power and they recognized this fact.

You can search the Scriptures all you want and you will never find anything indicating that He was insane, out of control, that He just plain lost it! Yes, His family, his mom and brothers and sisters thought He was crazy but they were family and what is interesting is that we see them turn to Jesus and receive Him as their Lord and Savior after his death and resurrection. They no longer thought He was crazy because the things that He said came to pass, they were true and He did the things the Old Testament Prophets said would come to pass in the life of the Messiah. So there is no denying it.

You see, what you do find when you search the Scriptures is that Jesus was a man who spoke with authority, something the people were not use to, and all that He did pointed to the fact that He was the Son of God! Listen to what J. T. Fisher, a secular psychiatrist had to say about Jesus. And keep in mind that this man is not saved; he has nothing to gain by saying these things. And he is just speaking forth what he sees in the life of Jesus. This is what he wrote,

If you were to take the sum total of all authoritative articles ever written by the most qualified of psychologists and psychiatrists on the subject of mental hygiene - if you were to combine them and refine them and cleave out all the excess verbiage . . . and if you were to have these unadulterated bits of pure scientific knowledge concisely expressed by the most capable of living poets, you would have an awkward and incomplete summation of the Sermon on the Mount. And it would suffer immeasurably through comparison. For nearly two thousand years the Christian world has been holding in its hands the complete answer to its restless and fruitless yearnings. Here . . . rests the blueprint for successful human life with optimism, mental health, and contentment.

- J. T. Fisher and L. S. Hawley, *A few Buttons Missing*, p. 273

So when you look at the facts, this idea that Jesus was mentally ill does not fit the picture, not at all. Thus, what He is saying must be true and it is, He is the Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity and now let's continue looking at those seven **"I AM"** statements that Jesus made about Himself!

4. THE DEITY OF JESUS

THE SEVEN "I AM" STATEMENTS MADE BY JESUS

D. I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD – John 10:11

The fourth of the seven “**I AM**” statements that Jesus made is found in John 10:11 where we are told, “**I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.**” In this portion of John we see Jesus separate Himself from the other shepherds, the false shepherds, the hirelings, the shepherds who were only interested in themselves and not their sheep.

On the other hand Jesus says that He is the good shepherd, one of noble character. In fact, Jesus is in a class by Himself and the reason is simple, He tells us that fact when He says, “**I am the good shepherd.**” You see, He is saying that He is the great “**I AM**” and to prove that He is the good shepherd He tells us what a good shepherd would do. A good shepherd would give his life for the sheep!

This first aspect of the relationship that Jesus has with His flock, the Church, you and me is seen in the giving of His life for the sheep. He is the Lamb of God who has come to take away the sins of the world and He did this by paying in full the penalty for our sins, dying on the cross of Calvary. He became sin for us so we can become the righteousness of God in Him! You might say that this is a past picture of Jesus as He has paid in full the penalty for our sins!

But there is more. You see, in Hebrews 13:20-21 we are told, **“Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”**

So not only is Jesus the **“good Shepherd”** as He gave His life for His sheep, but He is also the **“great Shepherd”** of the sheep, of you and me! In this picture of Jesus you might say that this is speaking of the present work of Christ in our lives, a Psalm 23 picture! Let me explain with this illustration. We are told,

The Camden, Maine, Herald ran two photos on the same page: one of Camden’s board of selectmen and town manager; the other of a flock of sheep. Unintentionally the captions were reversed. Under the picture of the sheep the caption identified them, left to right, as town officials; the one under the photo of the town fathers grouped around a table read, “The Sheep Fold – naive and vulnerable, they huddle for security against the uncertainties of the outside world.”

- Down-East

How true that is. You see, as you look at this world it is full of uncertainties but in Christ we have that comfort, we can rest and as I have said, it is truly a picture of Psalm 23 that God wants us to see. We are the sheep and He is our Great Shepherd! Now let's read through Psalm 23 and then we will break it down so I can show you what I mean. We are told starting in verse 1 of Psalm 23, "**The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.**" Psalm 23:1-6.

What a beautiful Psalm and yet, many times it is only read at funerals. Folk's, I hate to disappoint you, but this Psalm is not for the dead, it is for the living. Let me show you what I mean as we look at these verses that David wrote that give to us a picture of what Christ is doing in our lives right now, our Great Shepherd!

Notice how this Psalm starts out, "**The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.**" Psalm 23:1. You see, there is satisfaction in our lives when the Lord is our Great Shepherd. And yet, as you look at people today it seems they just can't get no, satisfaction! They do lack so many things and thus, they do want them! Thus, they try to fill their lives with all kinds of things to satisfy what is lacking in their lives, and they still don't find it, it still escapes them.

Did you ever want something so badly, you had to have it, and when you finally got it, what happened? You probably moved on and wanted something else. What is lacking in the hearts and lives of people is not things but God, Jesus Christ, our Great Shepherd. The Lord put it this way in Isaiah 55:1-3, **“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you -- The sure mercies of David.”**

Once we let go of what we want, surrender to our shepherd, He will supply for us what we need, not what we want! And here’s the thing. When we do surrender to Him do you know what happens? His will becomes our will and because of that we are satisfied because He has given to us what we wanted and what we wanted was what He desired for us in the first place. How beautiful that is!

Now, there are many times that we think we need more than we really do, but God knows what is best for our lives as Paul said in Philippians 4:19, **“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”** Thus, we can have an outward peace, trusting in God to care for us, to supply all our needs as He cares for His sheep while things are in chaos around us!

Let me ask you this. Are you in want of things, of a man or woman, of a job, of a home, of a car, of this or that? Again, this idea of wanting speaks of hunger and isn't it interesting that this hunger is only satisfied in Christ. In fact, Jesus calls for us to come to Him, to rest in Him. Mick Jagger was wrong, we truly can get satisfaction, but it is only found in Jesus our Great Shepherd!

As we continue on in Psalm 23, we read in verse 2, “**He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.**” Sheep are very nervous creatures. They won't lie down; they won't feed if they are fearful, if they are nervous. But, if they trust their great shepherd, they will lie down, and not in barren, dry fields, but our shepherd has us lie down in green pastures or pastures of tender grass!

I believe David is speaking of that inward peace that we can have as we submit our lives to the Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ, trusting and resting in Him. In Colossians 3:15 we see Paul tell us, “**And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.**”

I have been a critical care nurse for 30 years and I know what can happen when a nurse is anxious in caring for a critically ill patient. They see it in their eyes and the patient gets anxious, they are fearful, they wonder if they are going to die. I have felt, one of my responsibilities as a Registered Nurse in an ICU was to make my patients feel comfortable. And, even if things are not going well, I want them to see the peace that I have because it will give them peace. I would joke with them, that unless they saw my eyes bulging out of my head, then they should not worry. That is what our Prince of Peace does for us. He is never anxious or worried, and thus, as we look to Him we can find that peace, He has things under control!

And make no mistake about it, we all need those times when we can rest in Jesus, get re-energized you might say and feed upon Him. We need those times of still waters in our lives when things are not going bonkers, going crazy. Now, in saying that, there are times of lying down and there are times of moving and we will see that as we move on in Psalm 23. But just remember that there is no such thing as a Christian couch potato, there are no Mr. or Mrs. Potato heads in the body of Christ. There are times of refreshing and there are times for moving. May we not forget that!

And here's the thing. When the sheep were resting was there danger still around them? Absolutely but they did not see it because they trusted in their shepherd, they rested in Him and that is exactly what we need to do, no matter what is happening around us, look to our Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ! God can bring to us His peace in the midst of these storms in life and we can be refreshed.

Now notice what David says as we continue on in Psalm 23. Look at verse 3 where David tells us what our Great Shepherd is doing for us. We are told, "**He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.**" Psalm 23:3. I believe our souls are lifted up; they are refreshed as we follow the Lord down the right paths, the paths of righteousness. In other words, now it is time to get up and get moving, the times of being refreshed in the tall grass, lying besides those still waters are over for now and we need to move down the path of righteousness and as we do, as we are obedient to Him, guess what? He restores our soul, or He refreshes us even when we are moving! I like that.

Years ago, when the kids were young, Joe and Tony, we would take family vacations and we would camp a lot. It was cheap and it was fun, even though it was a lot of work. Now let me say this, I am not an experienced hiker and years ago we did not have GPS, so when we would go hiking we would try to stay on or hike on the established paths. But, there are times when others have trodden down their own paths and it gets very confusing. Sometimes it looks like the trail is going in every direction.

I think that is very true in the world we are living in. All kinds of people are making paths and encouraging us to go down this one or that one. Religious people make some of these paths; others by non-religious people, but they all have a zeal for us to follow their path. So how do we know which one to go down?

The path we must follow must be in accordance to God's Word. Don't deviate to the left or to the right because you will only find trouble, danger, you won't find rest for your soul down these paths in the end, even though you think this is what you need, this is what you want! God rebuked His people for this very error, deviating to the left and to the right instead of staying steady on course. In Jeremiah 2:13 we are told, "**For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, And hewn themselves cisterns -- broken cisterns that can hold no water.**"

The first evil deals with their turning from that which is pure, the Lord and are following the polluted waters of this world. Secondly, these broken cisterns are the philosophies of this world, which are so often in opposition to God. Thus, they turned away from God and His Word and God calls that evil, it is dangerous!

To give you just a couple of verses regarding how the Word of God directs us, lets begin with Psalm 119:105 which says, **“Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.”** God’s Word light’s our ways, it shows us where to go and it also shows us where not to go! In Psalm 119:133 David tells us, **“Direct my steps by Your word, And let no iniquity have dominion over me.”** God’s Word keeps us on the right paths, the paths of righteousness! And lastly, in Psalm 25:4-5 David tells us, **“Show me Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day.”**

Think of it like this, if God is our Great shepherd, if He provides for our needs, if He gives us that inward peace, then why do we think He made a mistake in His Word when He says something we don’t agree with? He is not wrong, we are! God directs us down the right paths, the paths of righteousness and He gets the glory as we walk!

In the New Testament we see Paul make this same claim about the Word of God as he wrote in II Timothy 3:16-17, **“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”** Listen to how The Living Bible puts these verses in II Timothy, **“The whole Bible was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives; it straightens us out and helps us do what is right. It is God's way of making us well prepared at every point, fully equipped to do good to everyone.”**

In other words, the Word of God, the Bible tells us what is right, it tells us what is wrong, it tells us how to get right when we have gone astray and it tells us how to stay right. What is Paul telling us? As we follow our Lord, our Great Shepherd Jesus Christ, He will lead us down the right path, the path of righteousness or as David put it, **“He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.”**

As we move on in Psalm 23 this is one of the verses that we often hear at funerals, if not the whole Psalm and again, let me say this, it is not for the dead, this is for the living and you will see what I mean in a minute. Let’s read verse 4 of Psalm 23 and then I will expound on it. We are told, **“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”**

Let me say this, when I die I am not going to be traveling through the valley of the shadow of death, I am on a fast track to heaven, to be with my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. This verse is much more applicable and appropriate for the living and not the dead! I hope you understand that, I hope that makes sense to you!

Here’s the thing. To get to the better grazing lands they would have to go through dangerous valleys with dangerous shadows where wild animals would be hiding, ready to prey upon them and kill them. But you had to go through the valley of the shadow of death to get to the mountaintop. Now, notice that it doesn’t say that we are to stop, build a house, put up a white picket fence, and hang your little curtains and-so-on. No, it says as you go ***THROUGH*** this valley! It is not our home; it is a place we are passing through to get to the mountaintop!

I believe the Lord is speaking of trials, difficult times God will use to help you to grow. You don't grow on the mountaintop, you grow in the valley. Remember when Peter, James and John were taken up to Mount Hermon, the Mount of Transfiguration and Jesus was transfigured before them in all of His glory. Mark tells us that His clothes were whiter than any launderer could get them. That was the mountaintop experience for these men, they didn't grow there, in fact Peter wanted to stay up there, build a few condos, but the Lord ignored Peter. Why?

Because there was work to do down in the valley and thus, as they came down from the mountaintop there was a man down in the valley who was devastated over his demon-possessed mute son who kept throwing himself into the fire and the water. This poor father didn't know how much longer he could protect his son. You see, there was a ministry that needed to be done, hurting people, people in need, a time of growth. The thing we need to remember as we go through the valley is Jesus does not say to us, "Go ahead into the valley and good luck to you! Hope to see you at the top of the mountain."

No, Jesus, our Great Shepherd does not drive us like cattle but He leads us through the valley of the shadow of death. He would not send us anywhere that He has not been before nor will He leave us alone. He is caring for us! Because of that, no matter what comes our way, we should not fear for He is in control, He is with us!

Now let's think about this for a minute. If this Psalm and especially this verse are speaking of death, why do I need to have a rod and a staff to be used upon my life? If I am in heaven, why would the Lord need to use a rod and staff upon me? He wouldn't! You see, that would make no sense at all. Thus, as I have said, this is speaking to the living and not the dead!

Now here's the thing. A shepherd of Jesus' day wore a cotton tunic that was held together by a leather cord belt. Hanging from the belt was a pouch, which carried dried fruit or several small stones for the sling that was also hung from the belt. The sling was used not only to ward off predators, but to also cause wandering sheep to come back to the flock by slinging the stone beyond where this sheep was, scaring him back.

Also attached to the shepherd's belt was a small club-like instrument called a rod, used to fight off predators in close, hand-to-hand combat, such as bears and wolves! The club was also used as an instrument of correction for persistently wandering sheep. The shepherd would take this wayward sheep, break one of its legs and then set the broken leg, then he would place this sheep upon his shoulders and carry it around until the leg was healed. Once he was healed he would let him down and this sheep would stay close to the shepherd because of the bonding that took place during this healing process. And you know what, it would not wander again!

At times, in our lives, God has to use His rod of correction to break us of self-rule, of our wandering you might say. It is not that He hates us, but that He loves us so much that He is doing this for our own good! We might not think so as we are going through them, but it is for our own good, self does need to be broken. Then, as we are broken and healed we won't be so quick to wander away from Him and be easy prey for the Devil and his schemes! So the rod was an instrument of protection and also it could be used as an instrument of correction for the wandering heart!

Also, the shepherd had a staff in his hand which was a large stick some seven or eight feet long with a crook at one end with which the shepherd would hook the sheep or lambs headed in the wrong direction. Also, as the sheep would come into the sheepfold at night, the shepherd would stop each one with his staff and inspect them for any diseases, or problems that needed to be cared for. God does the same with each of us, He looks over our lives, knows us better than we know ourselves. Thus, as we go through this valley of the shadow of death the Lord is leading, protecting and correcting us, which should bring comfort to our souls knowing that our Great Shepherd loves us that much!

Let me illustrate this for you with this true story. We are told,

Dr. Andrew Bonar told me how, in the Highlands of Scotland, a sheep would often wander off into the rocks and get into places that they couldn't get out of. The grass on these mountains is very sweet and the sheep like it, and they will jump down ten or twelve feet, and then they can't jump back again, and the shepherd hears them bleating in distress. They may be there for days, until they have eaten all the grass. The shepherd will wait until they are so faint they cannot stand, and then they will put a rope around him, and he will go over and pull that sheep up out of the jaws of death. "Why don't they go down there when the sheep first gets there?" I asked. "Ah!" He said, "they are so very foolish they would dash right over the precipice and be killed if they did!" And that is the way with men; they won't go back to God till they have no friends and have lost everything. If you are a wanderer I tell you that the Good Shepherd will bring you back the moment you have given up trying to save yourself and are willing to let Him save you His own way.

Again, that is our Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ. He will wait till we get to the end of ourselves, and then pull us up out of that shadow of death you might say and lead us on. But it is the Lord working in us but He won't work until we let Him and many times we have to get to the end of ourselves, which is pretty far down the road, before we will look up and let Him pull us up and out and let him led the way once again. You see, our Great Shepherd knows where He is going, He knows what He is doing and He knows what is best for our lives and so, may we follow Him!

Looking on in Psalm 23, listen to what David says in verse 5, "**You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.**" This horn of oil, once again was attached to the shepherd's belt and it was used to anoint the heads of the sheep in the flock, which would act as an insect repellent and also help reduce friction between the sheep when they would butt heads with each other.

There are many diseases out there; we call them diseases instead of sin today but God still calls "sin" sin, and these sins have bitten us. The only way to prevent these pests from bothering us and becoming infected with their deadly poison is to allow the oil of the Holy Spirit to flow over our lives and protect us, to be a shield you might say for us!

Here is another point we need to look at here. When we feel the tendency to butt head's with other people. When people are just rubbing us the wrong way, we just can't get along with them. When there is friction in our life, what are you going to do? Here it is, don't act like a goat and butt heads with each other. Be a sheep and allow the oil of the Holy Spirit to put an end to that friction that is developing or has developed. May love flow from our life instead! It is as Paul said in Romans 14:19, "**Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.**"

You see, God has brought us up out of the valley of the shadow of death and now we rest on a table or mesa where there is abundant areas to graze, to feed upon. I believe these are those abundant blessings that God bestows upon us.

And as we conclude this Psalm, David says in verse 6 of Psalm 23, "**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.**" If I am following after the Great Shepherd, following after Jesus, going where He is leading, I will not only be blessed but I will leave blessings behind wherever I go and so will you! It is as Proverbs 4:18 tells us, "**But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.**"

When you enter a room do you make things brighter? You should. As you leave a room, do you leave a warm feeling behind or a cold one? It should be a warm feeling as the love and warmth of God shines down upon them from you! We should be leaving all kinds of blessings behind to bless people by our actions and by our words!

And in the end, when my days are up, what has begun on this earth in my life will continue on into heaven, as I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever! How beautiful that is to me and I hope it is to you! You see, that is our Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ!

Let me share with you this new rendition of Psalm 23, it is called The 23rd Channel and it goes like this,

The TV is my shepherd, my spiritual growth shall want. It maketh me to sit down and do nothing for its name's sake because it requireth all my spare time. It keepeth me from doing my duty as a Christian, because it presenteth so many good shows that I must see.

It restoreth my knowledge of the things of the world, and keepeth me from the study of God's Word. It leadeth me in the paths of failing to attend the evening church services, and doing nothing in the kingdom of God

Yea, though I live to be a hundred, I shall keep viewing my TV as long as it will work, for it is my closest companion.

Its sounds and pictures they comfort me.

It presenteth entertainment before me and keepeth me from doing important things with my family. It fills my head with ideas which differ from those in the Word of God.

Surely, no good thing will come out of my life because of so many wasted hours, and I shall dwell in my regrets and remorse forever.

- Paul Lee Tan, Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, 6508

May we get our priorities right and look to our Great Shepherd who loves us and watches over us!

The third and final point is this. Not only is Jesus our “**Good Shepherd.**” Not only is Jesus our “**Great Shepherd.**” But Jesus is also our “**Chief Shepherd**” as we are told in I Peter 5:4, “**and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.**”

We have seen the past work that God has done the present work He is doing and now, as Peter speaks of our Chief Shepherd he is speaking of the future work that our Shepherd Jesus Christ is going to do!

This should be comforting to every one of us. That the work that Christ has begun in our lives He will complete, He will finish. Now, there are some who believe you can walk away from the faith, you can lose your salvation, that someone can snatch it from you! Folk’s, that is just plain wrong and not Scriptural. Think about this for a minute. What did you do to earn your salvation in the first place? Absolutely nothing and thus, as the Bible tells us, it is a free gift from God that He will never take away. How do I know that? Because the work He began in us He will complete!

You see, once we are His, do you know how well He will watch over us? Look at John 10:27-30, where Jesus tells us these comforting words, “**My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one.**”

Do you see the security we have in Christ, once we are His no one can take us out of His hand or the Father's hand for they have cupped their hands over our lives. And in knowing that, do you really think any created being can remove us from Them? No way! We are His! Now, we can turn away from Him, but we are still His, and in that we miss out on the blessings and if need be, as we have seen, He will break us of self so that we will return!

Let me share with you this illustration and you will see what I mean regarding our Chief Shepherd and His sheep. We are told,

During World War I, some Turkish soldiers tried to steal a flock of sheep from a hillside near Jerusalem. The shepherd, who had been sleeping, awoke to find his flock being driven off. He couldn't recapture them by force, so he called out to his flock with his distinctive call. The sheep listened, and returned to their rightful owner. The soldiers couldn't stop the sheep from returning to their shepherd's voice.

-David Guzik

We are His sheep, we hear His voice and follow after Him and He knows us by name, that is how well He knows each of us! Don't follow after the stranger who has come to steal, to kill, to destroy your life! Follow after the good shepherd who gave His life for us so that we may live!

You see, if we are truly His we will follow Him and we will not be lead astray by the false shepherds that are out there! Remember what Jesus said about the false shepherds in John 10:12-13, **“But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.”** The Amplified Bible puts these verses like this, **“But the hired servant (he who merely serves for wages) who is neither the shepherd nor the owner of the sheep, when he sees the wolf coming, deserts the flock and runs away. And the wolf chases and snatches them and scatters [the flock]. Now the hireling flees because he merely serves for wages and is not himself concerned about the sheep [cares nothing for them].”**

Here we see the contrast between the hireling and the good shepherd. This is a paid position and there is no attachment to these sheep. If they are injured, if they die, if they go hungry, it is not their concern. They are interested only in *THEMSELVES!* Thus, when danger comes, when times get tough, when things don't go their own way, they leave! The Lord put it this way in Jeremiah 23:1-2, **“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!’ says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: ‘You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,’ says the LORD.”**

Look at the various religions of the world, the various cults and you will find this to be true. They don't care about the person but they do care about themselves! It is about them and that is the heart of a false shepherd, he not only leads you away from the truth, but he does not care for you!

Thus, as you look things over and compare the two you see that this is not the heart of a shepherd and tragically many sheep have been hurt by these hirelings who are only interested in themselves and not the sheep that God has entrusted to them. Peter put it this way in I Peter 5:2-4 when he said, **“Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”** You see, a Good Shepherd will give His life for the sheep and our Good Shepherd has done that very thing for us!

Next time we will finish up looking at the last three of the seven **“I AM”** statements that Jesus made, and how important they are for us to understand. As I close this morning, may we look at the past work that our *Good Shepherd* has done for us, laying down His life for us so that we may live with Him. May we look at the present work our *Great Shepherd* is doing in our lives, sanctifying us, making us more like Him. And lastly, may we look at the future work of our *Chief Shepherd*, that He will take us home to glory one day, He will finish the work that He has begun in us. Remember what Jesus said, **“I am the good shepherd.”** May we never forget that!