

JOHN 10:11-21
THE GOOD SHEPHERD!
PART 2

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 10 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

This morning we are in part 2 of our study of – ***THE GOOD SHEPHERD!***

Now when we think of a shepherd it may be hard for us to grasp what this is all about and really, how this even applies to us today.

Keep in mind they lived in an agrarian society, and they worked in the fields and there were many shepherds that worked with the animals, mainly sheep.

Here's the thing. It is true that times change. Fashion changes and for me, that was a good thing because I no longer have bell bottom pants and those suede brown and orange platform shoes. And technology changes, look at where we are at today! Many things change over time.

But there is one thing that stays that same and that is us, that is people. We may think we are different, but we still deal with the same problems they did back in the days of Jesus, even though we might call them something different.

So when we read these stories in the Bible, they were for the people of their day and they are for us today as well.

Remember what Paul wrote in Romans 15:4, “**For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.**”

In other words, Paul is saying that the Old Testament stories, the things that the children of Israel went through, from Genesis through Malachi are there for us to learn from.

And what do we gain from these teachings from the Old Testament?

We learn patience, waiting upon God.

We receive comfort as we see the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament, and what He did back then, He is doing today!

And as we take these Scriptures into our lives, we have hope as we see what God has done in the past, He is more than able to do in the present!

And now we are dealing with New Testament teachings and they are just as important today as they were almost 2,000 years ago!

You see, there are principles that we can learn from as we go through both the Old Testament and the New Testament as the Holy Spirit opens up the Word of God to our hearts and our minds!

So when Jesus speaks of Himself as the “**Good Shepherd**” we may miss some of the details of what a shepherd was like, but the Holy Spirit will open these things up to us.

One writer summed it up like this. He wrote,

We as Christians living in America in the 21st century lose out quite a bit when we read the Bible. Much of the significance behind the illustrations, parables and language used doesn't really communicate to us because we are so far removed from the cultural setting in which these things were spoken.

And even though the biblical writers spoke and wrote in very simple, everyday language, using very common and familiar illustrations and examples - yet much of what they taught escapes us.

For the most part the men that spoke and wrote these things were simple folk who lived in a rural setting. They were people who were familiar with nature, outdoor life, and the land around them. Many of them were farmers, fishermen, shepherds, and the like, who drew much of their language and illustrations from their occupations and familiar surroundings.

Most people in America, like us, are city people who are totally unfamiliar with such things as livestock, crops, farmland, vineyards and wildlife. Therefore, we miss much of the truth taught in God's Word because we're not familiar with such things as sheep, wheat, soil and grapes.

We must therefore transport ourselves, if you will, into their cultural setting and familiarize ourselves with their rural lifestyle if we are going to fully understand everything the Bible in general and Jesus in particular, desired to teach us through these things.

As we come to the John's gospel chapter 10, Jesus draws from one of these very familiar and common illustrations - the illustration of a shepherd and his sheep and in the process, He teaches us a wonderful and powerful principle - the love and care of God for His people - whom He likens in His Word to sheep.

- Source Unknown

Here is something that we need to understand, there were good shepherds and there were false shepherds back then and that principle is carried out into our day as well.

And Jesus is going to show us what He is like as the Good Shepherd, the characteristics of what a Good Shepherd is all about. And then He will share what a false shepherd is all about, what the characteristics of a false shepherd are all about.

I have broken the verses we will be looking at this morning into the following points.

They are,

***THE GOOD SHEPHERD LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP –
JOHN 10:11-13***

THE GOOD SHEPHERD LOVES HIS SHEEP – JOHN 10:14-15

THE GOOD SHEPHERD UNITES HIS SHEEP – JOHN 10:16

THE GOOD SHEPHERD FREELY CARES FOR HIS SHEEP – JOHN 10:17-18

THE JEWISH RELIGIOUS LEADERS ARE CONFUSED – JOHN 10:17-21

As I was working on this study, looking at the characteristics of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I was blown away. I saw how much He loves me and cares for me and not only that, but what He wants me to be like – ***HIM!***

So as we look at the way our Good Shepherd cares for us, let us also look at how our Good Shepherd wants us to manifest these qualities towards others!

With the whole COVID thing and the different sides Christians took, I am sorry to say I was very disappointed that the enemy could get so many Christians to fight against each other. And if it was that easy for him to do with just a virus, imagine what he can do when things get tougher out there, and it will!

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in John chapter 10, beginning in verse 11 and let's see what the Lord has for us this morning as we study His Word and we look at how much the Good Shepherd loves us!

JOHN 10**VERSES 11-13**

The first point we will be looking at this morning is – ***THE GOOD SHEPHERD LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP!***

Now I am sure at the time of Jesus there were many shepherds who thought that they were good, and they probably were.

But compared to Jesus, well, they did not compare.

Let me show you what I mean. As John 10:11 opens up Jesus says, “**I am the good shepherd.**” And we understand that, but I think there is a richer point that Jesus is making here.

You see, He is not like any other shepherd!

How can I be so sure about that?

Because in the Greek Jesus is saying, “***I am the Shepherd, the Good One.***”

Now, in the Greek there are two different words that are used for “**good**” and depending on which one Jesus used tells us a lot!

You see, there is the Greek word – ***AGATHOS***. And the idea with that word is being good morally!

Is that true about Jesus?

You bet it is!

Think of a painting, it may be morally good but artistically poor! That is the idea for this word.

But, if you wanted to express the idea of someone not only being morally good but totally beautiful, perfect, then you would use the Greek word – *KALOS*. And that is the word that Jesus used when He said that He was “good.”

In other words, Jesus is saying that, “*I am the good shepherd, the morally good one, the perfect one, perfect in everything. No matter how you look at me you will see beauty inside and out and in all I do and all that I say! I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD AND THERE IS NONE LIKE ME!*”

And please understand that Jesus is not just saying that He is another shepherd or one of the many good shepherds that have come down through history. Men like Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel. These were good men, men of God who served God faithfully! But Jesus is not like them!

Then what is my point? What is Jesus trying to tell us?

He is saying that there never has been a shepherd like Him and there never will be a shepherd like Him.

Now when Jesus said this, I am sure the Jewish religious leaders were not happy because they considered David their beloved shepherd, that there was no other shepherd like David.

And maybe some still feel that way. But what did David say in Psalm 23:1?

He said, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

David is saying that he is not the greatest shepherd, but the *LORD* is! And now that Shepherd has arrived, the Lord Jesus Christ!

Like Paul in Hebrews, who showed that Jesus is superior to all, Jesus is doing the same thing here by showing that He is superior to all.

Let me show you what I mean.

In John chapter 5 Jesus shows them that He is superior to Moses, the one who delivered them out of Egypt and led them those forty years in the wilderness and gave them the commandments of God!

In John 5:45-47 we are told, **“Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you - Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”**

Moses looked forward to the coming Messiah, Jesus and thus, Jesus is rebuking them for not believing what Moses was teaching!

Strike one!

In John chapter 8 Jesus told the Jewish religious leaders that He was greater than Abraham. He said, **“... ‘Most assuredly I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.’”** John 8:58.

Strike 2!

And here in John 10:11 Jesus is saying that He is the greatest shepherd that ever has been or will be, even greater than David!

Strike 3!

At least in the minds of the Jewish religious leaders. You see, Jesus was 100% correct in what He was saying, He is greater than everyone and everything, He is the best shepherd that ever will be or has been! And I think He is telling them that He is Almighty God because only He is superior to everything!

Now you can understand why they hated Jesus so much, they didn't believe what He was telling them! Or I should say that they did not want to believe because the evidence was standing right before them!

And I want you to see here the concern that a shepherd has for his sheep. And, again, our first point – ***THE GOOD SHEPHERD LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP!***

Again, this is fascinating to me. You see, the word “**for**” in the Greek is – HUPER. And it means “*instead of*” or “*in place of.*”

What's my point? My point is that our Good Shepherd laid down His life for us, He rescued us at the expense of His own life. Jesus gave His life in place of the sheep, to save them! Warren Wiersbe put it like this, “***He did not die as a martyr, killed by men; He died as a substitute, willingly laying down His life for us.***”

Can you imagine a shepherd who was willing to die for his sheep?

Sure, there were many good shepherds who would sacrifice their safety for their sheep, but to die, that was probably a rare characteristic in a shepherd!

Let me share this with you, it is from Spurgeon, and then I will expound on it. He wrote, “***In the Latin tongue the word for money is akin to the word ‘sheep,’ because, to many of the first Romans, wool was their wealth, and their fortunes lay in their flocks. The Lord Jesus is our Shepherd: we are his wealth.***”

That is how much He loves us, He is willing to die for us, not because we are worth anything, but because He loves us! And we will deal more with that in a few minutes but these two do overlap because you are not going to die for someone you don't love.

And what we see here is that Jesus is going to compare the True Shepherd to the false shepherds or the hireling, a hired man.

And one of the ways you can tell a false shepherd is that he takes from others instead of giving His life for the sheep.

Think about this for a minute. Jesus, being God, could have taken anything He wanted but instead He gave His life so we can have that abundant life in Him.

But the false shepherds steal life away, they destroy life!

That is what Jesus said in John 10:10, **“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”**

That is the comparison with the true shepherd and a false shepherd. Jesus gives to us life, abundant life and the false shepherd takes life away, he steals it from us because he doesn't care for us!

Today do we need to be aware of false shepherds?

You bet we do. I think we are in a time where false shepherds with their false doctrine are growing and more. And more people are being sucked into their teaching and their lives are being destroyed by them!

And I hear so often today that we are not to come against false shepherds, false teachers. We are not to name names.

Are you kidding me!

If you care for the sheep, you will warn them of the danger that is out there and that is what I try to do.

Listen to what Spurgeon had to say, over 125 years ago and how many have ignored those words today.

He wrote, *“How many there are of whom we have reason to fear that they must be hirelings, because, when they see false doctrine and error abroad, they do not oppose it! They are willing to put up with anything for the sake of peace and quietness.”*

Aren't we supposed to love people?

Of course we are and if you love people you will warn them of false shepherds with their false doctrine, you will speak to those who are teaching false doctrine with the hopes that they stop, but in the end, you stand up for the faith that has been entrusted to you!

And if you are doubting what we are to do with false shepherds, false doctrine, listen to what we are told in I Timothy 5:20, **“Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.”**

And Paul wrote in Romans 16:17, **“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.”**

They are to be rebuked, exposed. Many today feel that they don't want to name names of those who are teaching false doctrine, but that is not Scriptural. If you are teaching false doctrine it is a sin and it does need to be exposed!

There was the warning, and many have not heeded this warning and they are embracing the false teaching that is flooding into the church.

And as pastors, we are accountable. You see, the title of *“pastor”* translates from the same Greek word as *“shepherd.”*

And let me be clear on this. There is only one Good Shepherd, that is Jesus Christ, but as pastor, I am what you might say an under-shepherd.

Now you might be thinking, *“What does that have to do with me, I am not a pastor?”*

That is a great question. And it does have everything to do with you.

You see, maybe you are a mother, a father, a boss, a co-worker, a neighbor or whatever the case may be. Are you willing to lay down your life for your family, for your boss, for your co-worker for your neighbor and so on!

And what I mean by that is this. Are you willing to lead them in the truths of God found in the Word of God?

Now I am not saying when you see these people you have to do a Bible study, but are you living out your faith, are you answering questions that they may have, are you shining Jesus for them and willing to go and die for them?

Now you may be thinking, ***“They don’t deserve it. I am willing to help them but sometimes they just rub me the wrong way and that is it, I am done with them!”***

Can you imagine if our Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ did that with us? We would be in trouble all the time. But He doesn’t do that with us, He died for us so that we can live with Him and are we willing to die to bring the Gospel to people so that they too can live with Him?

I am seeing a trend in American Christianity, and that is all I can speak on because that is what I am seeing, and that is Christians who have become fearful, worried, avoiding others, and even stopping ministry at a time because of what may happen. That is wrong.

We need to earnestly contend for the faith and not just from our homes but in the highways and byways and compel people to come into the Kingdom of God at any cost!

For me, I am willing to give my all for the people that God has entrusted to me. That is what God has called me to do and it is what God has called you to do with the people that are in your life!

God became flesh, dwelt amongst us, took all kinds of abuse during His earthly ministry, was beaten, scourged, crucified for our sins and rose the third day, why? Because He loves us so much that – ***THE GOOD SHEPHERD LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP!***

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

The job of a shepherd was not an easy one. It required courage, commitment, hard work and a genuine love for the sheep seeing as a shepherd would sometimes be called to put his life on the line to protect the sheep from predators and thieves.

In Bible times lions, wolves, jackals, panthers, leopards, bears, and hyenas were common in the countryside.

The life of a shepherd could be dangerous as illustrated by David's fights with at least one lion and one bear (1 Sam. 17:34-35, 37).

Being a shepherd meant leading the sheep miles away from his home in search of places where they could graze; living out in the open countryside for weeks and even months at a time without seeing his friends or family (Luke 2:8).

It was truly a labor of love for those who were good shepherds.

- Source Unknown

And that leads us to our next point – ***THE GOOD SHEPHERD LOVES HIS SHEEP!***

VERSES 14-15

God laid down His life for us because He loves us. Not that we deserve His love, but He freely did this for us.

And that is what we see here in John 10:14-15 – ***THE GOOD SHEPHERD LOVES HIS SHEEP!***

Notice what Jesus says, “**. . . I know My sheep, and am known by My own.**” John 10:14.

The Greek word that Jesus used for “**know**” is *GINOSKO* and it speaks of knowing by experience.

When I went to nursing school there were students that were very good with head knowledge. They knew the book material and they did great on their tests, but when it came to application, they were not very good, they could not do what they were supposed to do even though they had the head knowledge.

For me, I knew what I was supposed to do, and I was able to do it. I took what I learned, and through the experiences that I was given, I was able to work in the various Intensive Care Units for almost thirty years!

There are people who may know about Jesus, they may have read through the Bible, they may be able to quote Scripture, but they never experienced God, they never had that intimate relationship with Him.

That is a good picture of the Jewish religious leaders. They knew about God, they read their Scriptures, they went through the religious rituals, many that they made up, and yet, they did not know God. Jesus said that they didn't and here in John He even speaks of them as being hirelings!

The faithful pastor will, as an under-shepherd, display the same characteristics as the Good Shepherd. He will sacrifice for the sheep, know the sheep, and be known by them. He will be a shepherd and not a hireling who does not care about the sheep. He can never hope to display these characteristics to the same extent as Jesus, but they should reflect his heart and his goal.

Again, listen to what these hirelings do, **“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.”** John 10:12-13.

For the hireling, 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!***

Phillip Keller, who was a shepherd for many years, gives us some insight into what a hireling is all about in his book, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*.

This is what he wrote,

“In memory, I can still see one of the sheep ranches in our district which was operated by a tenant shepherd (a hireling). He ought never to have been allowed to keep sheep. His sheep were always thin, weak and riddled with disease and parasites. Again and again, they would come and stand at the fence staring blankly through the woven wire at the green, lush pastures which my flock enjoyed. Had they been able to speak, I am sure they would have said, ‘Oh to be set free from this awful owner!’ This is a picture which has never left my memory. It is a picture of pathetic people the world over who have not known what it is to belong to the Good Shepherd, who suffer instead under [the control of] sin and Satan.”

That is what the Jewish people were suffering under, these hirelings or Jewish religious leaders and Jesus, the Good Shepherd, came to set them free.

Keller goes on to say,

“How amazing that men and women vehemently refuse and reject Christ as their Shepherd, fearing that to acknowledge His ownership is to come under the rule of a tyrant. The Good Shepherd, who loves and laid down his life for the Sheep, who came to seek and to save that which was lost - has only the good of the sheep in His heart. I could think of so many worse things than to commit my life to someone who created me, loves me, died for me and wants to lead me to green pastures now and forever.”

How true that is and yet, Satan gets people to reject Jesus and accept what he has for them, and it is never good, never abundant life!

Now I am sure that most people would say that Satan doesn't control them, but if it is not God, then there is only one other and that is Satan!

For these Jewish religious leaders, they were only interested in their position, themselves and we see that today with leaders in the church who are only interested in what they can gain from the people instead of loving them and giving their lives to their wellbeing!

And when danger comes, when times get tough, when things don't go their own way, they leave!

Listen to what the Lord said to the shepherds of Israel because I believe He is speaking to shepherds today as well.

In Jeremiah 23:1-2 we are told, **“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.”**

You see, that 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, as I have said.

And what we see here is that not only do we know God, but He knows us intimately! In fact, God knows the numbers of hairs on our head which sounds so insignificant to us but that is how detailed God is in knowing us.

We think we know ourselves, and unless we are bald, we have no idea how many hairs there are on our heads, but God does!

You see, God not only knows us by name, but every detail of our lives, and I guess that could be good or bad depending on what you are doing!

There is that intimacy between the Shepherd and His sheep. He loves them and thus, they love Him!

Jesus loves the sheep so much that he wants you to be one with Him. He wants the same unity and intimacy with you that a man wants with his wife.

Let me share a couple of verses with you and then I will expound on them.

In John 10:27 Jesus said, **“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”**

And in John 14:15 Jesus said, **“If you love Me, keep My commandments.”**

What is my point?

If we say we love Jesus, then we will be obedient to His Words.

First of all, look at the life of Jesus. His love for the Father was seen in His obedience to the Father!

In John 14:31 Jesus said, **“But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here.”**

Notice that Jesus showed how much He loved God the Father by His obedience to what the Father sent Him to do!

And then Jesus links our love to Him by following His commandments just as He followed what God the Father told Him to do.

We see that in John 15:10, where Jesus said, **“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.”**

True love for Jesus is linked to obedience to Jesus!

Now some freak out by that and think I am teaching the Law, that we need to keep the commandments of God. I am not.

Think about a marriage relationship. Your love for your spouse is not based on feelings because feelings can change. It is an act of your will, you love your spouse and you do those things that would bless your spouse.

There is not some law that says you have to love your spouse, you love your spouse because you want to love you spouse, it is an act of obedience to God!

Now how does that apply to us?

Are we willing to love the unlovable, those who we may have disagreements with, those who may not be kind to us? In other words, are we willing, not that we can't because we can, are we willing to love people like Jesus loves us?

That can only happen as we surrender our will to His will. As we are obedient to Him and if we refuse to be obedient to what He is showing us, then are we really loving Jesus?

Remember, obedience is linked to love,

And Jesus said in John 13:34, **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”**

God is not suggesting that we love each other, He is commanding us that we love each other. Why is this so important?

Because, as Jesus goes on to say that this shows you are one of His, you are a disciple of His!

Also, in John 15:12, Jesus said, **“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”**

How much does God love us?

He loves us so much that He sacrificed His life for us and thus, He commands us to love each other.

Why would Jesus give us such a command?

Because we have a hard time loving people because the flesh gets in the way!

And if you still doubt this, listen to what John says in I John 4:8, **“He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”**

Here's the thing. We can't manifest this love apart from God for this is an unconditional love, a love that no one deserves and yet, we give it as God has given it to us.

You see, love comes from God into our lives and then that love flows to others through us.

Thus, this *AGAPE* love stems from a regenerate nature and fellowship with God.

Paul put it this way in Romans 5:5, “**Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**”

Like I have said, the love of God flows into our lives and thus, it should then flow through our lives.

So then, if God is love, and He is, then being a child of God, that love should be seen in us also!

And this *AGAPE* love is an action word. It is not based upon feelings, but in reality, in doing.

Remember what Jesus said in John 3:16, “**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**”

And in I Corinthians chapter 13 we see the definition of God’s love, this *AGAPE* love and in this definition the words are all verbs, action words, not feelings!

And that is how we are to love, with action, tangible love, not just empty words! That is the love that God gives to us and, once again, we are to give to others!

And here is the difficult part if you are struggling with loving others. After John tells us that “**God is love**” he tells us that if we don’t manifest His love towards others, we really don’t know Him.

We may not like it, but it is a reality, God is love and we are to love others as He has loved us.

Make no mistake about it – ***THE GOOD SHEPHERD LOVES HIS SHEEP!***

But there is more, much more.

You see – ***THE GOOD SHEPHERD UNITES HIS SHEEP!***

VERSE 16

I don't know about you, but when I read this, I am very excited. Did you hear what Jesus said here?

He said, and this is from The Amplified Bible, "**And I have other sheep [beside these] that are not of this fold. I must bring and impel those also; and they will listen to My voice and heed My call, and so there will be [they will become] one flock under one Shepherd. [Ezek 34:23.].**" John 10:16.

And The Living Bible puts John 10:16 like this, "**I have other sheep, too, in another fold. I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice; and there will be one flock with one Shepherd.**"

Now I think you know the answer to this question, but I will ask it anyway. Who are the sheep that "**are not of this fold**"?

First of all, the Jews were His flock and then the other sheep who "**are not of this fold**" speaks of the Gentiles, you and me!

Clarke put it like this, "*Do not imagine that I shall lay down my life for the Jews, exclusively of all other people; no: I shall die also for the Gentiles; for by the grace, the merciful design and loving purpose of God, I am to taste death for every man, Hebrew 2:9; and, though they are not of this fold now, those among them that believe shall be united with the believing Jews, and made one fold under one shepherd, Ephesians 2:13-17.*"

God has brought down the walls of division between Jews and Gentiles and united them, us, into one fold! We are one in Christ!

Paul, in Ephesians 2:14-18 speaks of these walls coming down that kept Jew and Gentile apart and I think it is important we apply that to our lives today. He wrote, **“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”**

Paul spoke about the walls of separation coming down and so did Jesus! Did you know that in the world today there are over 45,000 Christian denominations, let alone adding non-denominational churches!

Now yes, we are not to unite just to unite, but we unite in truth, the truths of God found in the Word of God.

Now what was this division between Jew and Gentile?

Let me explain it like this.

The New Testament describes the Temple two ways.

First it is called *NAOS* in the Greek and that consisted of the Holy place and the Holy of Holies, the place where the High Priest could enter but only once a year, on the Day of Atonement!

Surrounding the Temple proper or the *NAOS* was several acres of land called the Temple Precincts, the Greek word that is used for that is *HIERON*.

In this area were a series of successive courtyards that led up to the Temple Mount and I will show you how they went.

First there was the *Court of the Priests*, which actually contained the Temple building itself, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, and only the priests were allowed in this section.

This is where they would offer sacrifices to God on the brass altar and wash in one of the Lavers (wash basins) before entering into the Holy Place of the Temple to burn incense to God on the golden altar of incense which stood in front of the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies.

Keep in mind we are moving outward from the Temple proper.

Next came the *Court of the Israelites*. You would enter this court through the gate called Nicanor's Gate, a great gate of Corinthian bronze which needed twenty men to open and shut it.

It was here, in this court, that the Jewish men assembled for the Temple services.

After that came the *Court of the Women* and to enter into this court you entered by the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, into which any Jew could enter but which was called the Court of the Women because it was as far as a Jewish woman could go.

From the Court of the Women you descended five steps to a level area in which there was erected a five-foot stone barricade that went around the entire Temple enclosure.

Then, after another level space, there were fourteen more steps that descended to the **Court of the Gentiles** also known as the **Outer Court**.

According to the Jewish historian Josephus, the wall dividing Jews from Gentiles was marked at intervals by stone inscriptions stating that no foreigner (Gentile) was permitted to go any farther.

You see, the Gentiles were outside the covenants of God and were seen as far away from God and below the Jews (the Court of the Gentiles being on the lowest level).

And the Gentiles knew the Jews did not accept them unless they became a Jew, a proselyte.

In fact, in 1871 archaeologists discovered an inscription that was located on the wall separating the court of the Gentiles from the other courts in the Temple that Herod built.

This is what the sign said, "***No Gentile may enter within the barricade which surrounded the sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death.***"

That wall was a visible reminder of the separation that existed between Jews and Gentiles. The Jews, as the covenant people of God were closest to Him.

And what Paul is saying here is that Jew and Gentile are one in Christ, that this middle wall of separation has been torn down!

And, if this is true, and it is, that Jew and Gentile are to be one, then why did God separate the Jews from the Gentiles in the first place?

Because through the Jewish people the Messiah was to come. He was not separating them for saving the Jews alone but both groups of people.

In fact, the Court of the Gentiles should have been the place where the Jews would win Gentiles to God, share their faith in the true and living God but instead it was a place where Gentiles were separated, and the money changers were ripping the people off who came to worship God by charging them high exchange rates.

It was a place of thieves and robbers instead of a place of witness and worship.

Many churches are doing the same today, keeping people from God because they don't dress a certain way or act a certain way.

Here at Calvary Chapel all are welcomed and as we go out into the highways and the byways, we compel people to come into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

And I want you to notice that the Law kept Jew and Gentile apart and Christ has come and abolished the Law of commandments that the Jews used as a source of righteousness and the Gentiles didn't keep!

The Law doesn't save, it just shows us our condition, sinners separated from God and only Jesus can save us from that condition as we receive Him as Lord and Savior. And as we do, that middle wall of separation between Jew and Gentile is broken down; don't start putting it back up again brick by brick!

Thus, the prayer of Jesus in John 17:20-23 is fulfilled. Jesus prayed, **"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."**

Now we can negate that prayer of Jesus by building up those walls between people or groups of people or we can allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives and fulfill that prayer!

You see, those walls are forever broken down! It is as Paul said in Romans 10:12-13, **"For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For 'whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.'"**

Don't put up those walls of separation, let us be one in Christ!

Hebrews 2:9 tells us who Jesus died for and I want you to listen to these words very closely.

We are told, **“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”**

This is not some new teaching, but a reminder of what God had promised throughout the Old Testament! The Messiah came to save Jew and Gentile!

Let me show you what I mean.

First of all, in Genesis 12:3 we are told, **“I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”**

Notice, that all the families of the earth will be blessed, and that blessing is found in the Messiah, in Jesus!

In Isaiah 42:6 we are told, **“I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles.”**

God did not exclude the Gentiles, but He used the Jews to bring forth the Messiah and then to be a light to the world.

The fact that God intended to save Gentiles was further confirmed to the Jewish people when God directed them to provide an area in the Temple precinct where Gentiles seeking to know the God of Israel and possibly proselytize (convert) to Judaism could come and ask questions of the priests.

VERSES 17-18

Here we see – ***THE GOOD SHEPHERD FREELY CARES FOR HIS SHEEP.***

I don't think we realize the love that Jesus has for us. And there is no greater demonstration of His love for us than His sacrifice on the cross of Calvary for our sins!

You see, when people see what happened to Jesus they love to try and figure out who did this to Him. Some say it was the Jews who did this. Others say it was Pilate who did this to Jesus. And still others say it was the Romans, they nailed Him to the cross and crucified Him!

Others would say that we all did because of our sins. I guess that is partially true, that is the reason He went to the cross, but Jesus freely gave His life for us so that we could live with Him!

It was not the nails that held Him to the cross, it was His love for us. And if you think about it, Jesus could have come down off that cross. He could have called twelve legions of angels to come to His side, (Matthew 26:53). But He freely gave His life to give us life! He had the power to lay down His life, and He had the power to take it up again.

So we see the concern that our Shepherd has for His sheep in that He died for them, loves them and unites them!

That is a pretty easy teaching by Jesus, but as we read on we will see the – ***JEWISH RELIGIOUS LEADERS CONFUSED!***

VERSES 19-21

As I have said before, Jesus does cause division among people and like back then, we see the same today. Humanity divides between accepting or rejecting Jesus.

Here we see that some said He had a demon, He was a madman. And there were the others who said He was of God because He opened the eyes of someone born blind.

But let me say this, it doesn't matter what you think or what any other person thinks. All that matters is what God has to say and we are accountable to Him because He has revealed Himself to us.

The problem today is that we have deviated so far from the truths of God in the church because, like the Jews back then, we have added to the Word of God and have negated what God has said because we don't like it.

It really doesn't change what God has said if you agree with it or not, but like I have said, you are accountable!

Listen to this point of view, and it is correct. One writer put it like this,

The issue is still the same today as it was then. Either the Lord Jesus Christ was a mad man, or He is the Savior of the world. Either He has a demon, or He is the Son of God. There has always been that division. . . .

The so-called liberal theologians are the most inconsistent and illogical in their views about Jesus Christ. They call Him a good teacher and a great moral example - but then go on to call Him a fraud and a mad man. He is either a fraud or He is the Son of God. Jesus Christ puts you on the horns of a dilemma, my friend. Either He is a mad man, or He is your God and your Savior?

- Source Unknown

You see, it is not that difficult but many make it difficult and have to ignore the truth so they can hold onto what they want to believe about God.

That is not really an option because if you are believing something you have come up with in your own mind, how do you know it is true?

Now some can say that about what we believe, what the Bible says. But let me say this, the Bible has been the most studied book around and it stands true to this day, and it will continue to stand true. Thus, what we believe has nothing to do with us, but what God has said in His Word, the Bible!

As I bring this study to a close, let me give you this to think about.

I don't care who you are, everyone has a shepherd, or to put it in our vernacular, everyone is being led by someone or something that is controlling their lives!

It could be money, possessions, some spiritual leader, some celebrity or movie star. It could even be drugs or alcohol, pleasure, success and the list can go on and on.

I realize that many would disagree with that because they feel that they are the ones in control of their lives. But they are deceiving themselves.

Years back Bob Dylan wrote a song, *Gotta Serve Somebody* and the chorus goes like this,

***But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed
You're gonna have to serve somebody
Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody***

- Bob Dylan, Gotta Serve Somebody

That is the point. And the reality is you will serve somebody, that is just the reality!

But let me give you a positive look on this. Remember what Joshua said in Joshua 24:15, **“And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”**

There is the choice for them and the choice for us, who are you going to serve, the Lord or your own selfish and personal gods?

You see, it is not if you have a shepherd, everyone does. The issue is what kind of shepherd do you have and where is that shepherd leading you.

For me and my house, we will serve the Lord and He is our Good Shepherd who will lead our life and lead us to heaven one day because **“... He leads me in the paths of righteousness [or the right paths] for His name’s sake.”** Psalm 23:3.

As we have seen,

- ***THE GOOD SHEPHERD LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP***
- ***THE GOOD SHEPHERD LOVES HIS SHEEP***
- ***THE GOOD SHEPHERD UNITES HIS SHEEP***
- ***THE GOOD SHEPHERD FREELY CARES FOR HIS SHEEP***

Won't you come to the Good Shepherd and allow Him to guide your life?