

His sheep follow Him (Quality: Very Good)

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[0 : 00] I'd like to try to speak to you this evening from a portion you'll find in the Gospel according to John, chapter 10, verses 4 and 5.

The fourth and fifth verses in the tenth chapter in the Gospel according to John. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers.

The Bible uses the illustration of sheep to set forth God's people in their relationship.

To their Lord as their shepherd. I hope I may speak for all of you here tonight, when I say that it is my desire, our desire, to know that we are among God's sheep.

[1 : 51] And to this end, I would like to just look at two characteristics of the sheep, as suggested in these two verses.

Let us search our own hearts. And inquire within. Are we like this?

Do we know his voice? And when he goes before us, do we follow him? And do we, conversely, flee from strangers, and refuse to follow them, because we know not their voice?

May I just briefly then look at our subject in its scriptural setting.

Then in the immediate context of this gospel, and then at these two characteristics of the sheep.

[3 : 11] First of all, God does have a flock. All the animals that the Creator made, He has selected the sheep to set forth His people.

And the relationship between sheep and their shepherds set forth the relationship between them and Jesus Christ, their good shepherd.

I'd like just to very briefly refer to Ezekiel 34, the chapter we read together. At this point, one of the verses towards the end of that chapter.

Where Ezekiel is led to prophesy of the coming good shepherds. Verse 23, I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David.

he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. A reference here, of course, to David's son, and David's Lord.

[4 : 50] Greater than David is here, Jesus himself, who came of the line of David's. God promises he will set up one shepherd over them.

So, over the Lord's elect people, there is one shepherd set up over them. If you're amongst the sheep, you will acknowledge that one shepherd shepherd, who is set up over you.

However, vast the flock may be, may run into hundreds or thousands, each sheep has a direct relationship to the shepherd.

The shepherd is over them all. and this shepherd, Ezekiel prophesies, shall feed them and be their shepherd.

He shall feed them. Surely a prophecy here referring to a food for the sheep.

[6 : 23] If we to begin with, just keep with the metaphor, there are the pastures necessary for the sheep. They must have green pastures to eat.

And the green pastures in which the sheep of God feed are the pastures of the gospel, the word of God, ever green.

The pastures on the hills, as the sheep nibble them, become short, but they grow again. The rains come, and the lush pastures are renewed.

God sheep feed, on the word of God. But the word is renewed. They, as it were, assimilate into their souls the truth of God's word.

But God's truth is not one we're lessened thereby. They haven't exhausted it. But my wealth have to come back and feed again and again in those same pastures.

[7 : 48] And other sheep too. Others of the Lord's flock will feed in the same pastures. Changing the metaphor.

Surely here the prophet Ezekiel is referring to that wonderful food which the shepherd gives us to eat. His own body and his own blood.

This he says his body is meat indeed and his blood is drink indeed. The God's people feed upon their Lord.

And so following the change of metaphor the shepherd becomes the lamb.

The lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. And this man gives his body to them to eat and invites them in the familiar type of the New Testament ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

[9 : 10] To eat his body and to drink his blood in remembrance of him.

The other verse is the last verse in Ezekiel 34. Ye my flock, flock of my pasture, are men. And I am your God, saith the Lord God.

There can be no doubt the meaning of this verse. You were my flock.

My flock are men. not angels, men. The shepherd delights not in the company only of sinless angels, but wonder of wonders, grace amazing, in the company of sinful men.

You, my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men. men. And I am your God, saith the Lord God. Sinners make up the flock of Jesus Christ.

[10 : 36] Sinners saved, sinners washed, sinners cleansed, sinners justified, sinners sanctified, but sinners, men, men.

You are my flock. So, I'm sure there are other passages in the word of God that may come to your minds that we don't need to refer to tonight. So it is established beyond any dispute that God has a flock of men.

Do you belong to it? Do I belong to it? I hope so. I hope we all do, but I hope that we shan't just make an assumption about it, but that we shall know, and know in the way that we shall consider together in a little while, that we are amongst the flock of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I just want to refer to a subject in the context of the gospel here before us. In chapter nine, there is the account of the man that was born blind having his sight restored to him.

And interwoven with the account of the under full and miraculous giving of sight to this blind man, there is an account of the conflict between him and the Pharisees, and indeed between the Pharisees and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[12 : 27] Christ. They were unwilling to acknowledge a good work if Jesus had anything to do with it. And they were unwilling to acknowledge people as being good people if they had anything to do with Jesus Christ.

and so this young man, he gained his eyesight but he lost his esteem amongst men.

He gained a wonderful friend in Jesus but he also gained many enemies amongst the Pharisees.

and so intense was their bitter hatred to Jesus and to the man because of his association with Jesus that they excommunicated him by custom.

And in this chapter we read of the Lord coming back to him speaking to him and making known true character of his person and his mission to him and the young man also received not just the sight of his eyes but the true sight of faith he was brought to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[14 : 17] Who were the Pharisees? Pharisees? Well they were blind leaders of the blind and they are those in the language of this parable and of verse 5 who are termed strangers for it would seem to me that the Lord Jesus Christ with the events recorded in chapter 9 still fresh in his mind spoke this parable and explained in this beautiful biblical metaphor himself and his sheep the relationship between them and the characteristics of his sheep so there were to go back to

Ezekiel 34 and its language false shepherds and Ezekiel had to prophesy against the shepherds of Israel those men who by the office which they held and the calling which they had received should have been engaged in feeding the flocks but instead they had fed themselves not much difference between false shepherds of Ezekiel's day and the Pharisees of Jesus' time they have a similar hallmark he eat the fat he clothe you with the wool he kill them that are fed but he feed not the flock now what is

God saying to us in all this he is saying to us that though he is the shepherd the great shepherd the chief shepherd there are other shepherds there are those who would seek to poach and steal the sheep of Jesus Christ there are those who would come and try to rob or to lead astray those who belong to the flock of Jesus now we need to understand that today and in a moment or two we shall have to have a look at these strangers to see if we can discover their identity that we may be warned against them we may be warned against being led astray by their voice although verse five does so wonderfully say the sheep of

God are not going to be misled by these false shepherds because they know not the voice of strangers well in this parable in chapter ten picking it up just at verse four the situation envisaged is of the flock within the sheep fold perhaps as was often the case we may think of more than one flock in the sheep fold different shepherds would bring their flocks into the fold keep them there during the night before leading them out next morning and let's just imagine there were two or three flocks in the sheep fold as pictured in this parable by

Jesus and he that is the shepherd puts forth his own sheep not someone else's sheep they don't take any notice of him but he puts them forth and this is how he does it he goes before them and calls them that's all and they follow him and the reason is they know his voice if twenty men stood at the door of the sheep fold and called them they'd take no notice but when their shepherd came and spake they would go with him now that's the picture here he puts forth his own sheep he goes before them and the sheep follow him for they know his voice sometimes when people talk about sheep they talk about silly sheep and there's a illustration that people use when they say we all go like sheep following one another don't think that is strictly speaking accurate you see because the sheep don't follow one another they don't go just because they see another sheep going every sheep goes because they know the voice of the shepherd that's why that's what brings them out of the sheep fold that's what brings them to the green pastures wherever it is the shepherd intends to lead them he goes before again it is sometimes commented that there is a great difference between eastern shepherds and shepherds in our own country in so far as the eastern shepherd goes in front whereas his western counterpart goes behind well that's not always the case because I saw only yesterday sheep following the shepherd on the

[21 : 36] Cumbrian hills the shepherd actually was in a Land Rover and he was travelling at a fair speed over the hills and the sheep were running to keep up with him so it's not always eastern shepherds exclusively who work in this way our friends in this country do the same thing the sheep follow the shepherds they know his voice they know what he's got for them they know that he has their best welfare at heart they're going to be where the shepherd is so seeking to discover whether we are amongst the sheep we must ask ourselves the question first and each of us personally do I know his voice if the shepherd were to come and speak in this assembly this evening would I know unmistakably the voice of my shepherds can we answer that yes or no without any hedging without any qualification there's no hedging or qualification here they know his voice they know his voice and I believe it is true of the

Lord's sheep they do know his voice they love his voice what is it that makes the voice of the shepherd so immediately recognisable first of all the shepherd's voice has in it authority he speaks with authority doesn't ask you whether you would want to do this or whether you thought of doing the other or whether you would agree to following him in this he says do it he says come he says go he says do this the shepherd speaks with authority and he does through his word speak with authoritative power to his sheep they need it shepherd doesn't sit down and hold a conference with the sheep and say what now where shall we go today what pastures shall we look out for today he knows where he's going and without any consultation with them leads them forth there's authority and the sheep know that they acknowledge it and they love it oh what use will a shepherd be who says well if you like you can go that way or if you prefer you can go or if you don't want to do anything you can stop where you are no our shepherd isn't like that he speaks with authority and not as do the scribes and in the word of God you will discover over and over again the authority of God

God knows what he says is true God knows what his plan and purpose for his people is and that plan and purpose is revealed in clear authoritative words in holy scripture they know his voice but secondly there is love in the voice of the good shepherd he's not some tyrant he's not some hireling just doing a job just a lady in the sheep about they're his he loves them in fact we know that this good shepherd has laid down his life for the sheep he loves them to the end having loved his own which were in the world he loved them unto the end and whenever

Jesus speaks to his sheep although there's the clear certain ringing tone of authority there was also the the gentler tone of love everything that he says is said in love and the sheep mechanised that they know that he loves them they know that he cares for them why he should they do not know indeed they can never advance any reason as to why they should be amongst the loved of God but they are because God loves them God confirms his love to them over and over again he speaks to them in such endearing affectionate tones thirdly they know his voice because it is the voice of truth he never deceives them never leaves them out in a way promising them good only to bring them into ill he never directs them towards green pastures which turn out in the end to be a barren wilderness his words his voice has the ring of truth you know some people don't you meet some people their voice just hasn't got the ring of truth about it they're hesitant they're uncertain they're doubtful or they're downright deceitful but the voice of our Lord

Jesus has a ring of truth about it oh it is a clear bell of truth there is no admixture of error or falsehood in anything which the Lord says they know his voice as a voice of truth but they know his voice for the effect which it has upon them other voices bounce on the rock but his voice enters into the heart and they know his voice so the effect which it has no one else can have the effect that the shepherd can have upon them other voices just bounce away but the voice of their

[29 : 36] Lord enters into their heart it provokes a response they might be sleepy at the time drowsy but the voice of the shepherd evokes a response they might be some distance away and the illustration I referred to earlier on the hills where I was walking were those hills you know go up and down and up and down and I noticed some sheep that were two or three ups and downs away and start to run towards him I couldn't hear anything at all but they had and they responded it's now that's the sheep and their shepherd they may be some way off or they may be sleepy at the time but the voice of the shepherd evokes a response and what is a response well it's a response of obedience there's the response of following they follow him it's lovely sight really to see sheep running from every quarter to the shepherd because they heard his voice because they know he's with them because they acknowledge his authority they respond to his love and they delight in his truth what was that your relationship to your shepherds he goes before and the sheep follow they know his voice they know it's safe they know it's alright they know whatever dangers and enemies there may be in the way all will be well because their shepherd is there they have every confidence in their shepherd now have we got confidence in our shepherds

I hope so I hope we aren't quarrelsome argumentative I hope we don't enter into a discussion group with our shepherds but rather that we acknowledge his authority we respond to his love I believe it's not stretching matters too far to say the sheep love the shepherd certainly it's true of God's sheep they love their shepherd love is a wonderful gift isn't it God is love and it's the love of God to us that evokes love in our heart to him and produces the response of love in our hearts to our shepherd they know his voice let's just have a look at the other points now in verse five stranger will they not follow but will flee from him for they know not the voice of strangers

I made a particular point on Saturday and again yesterday of going up for some sheep and talking to them and without any exception the response was the same they all ran off I thought I might get hold of one because it was his eyes were closed they appeared to be fast asleep and I crept very gently up to the sheep but I couldn't get within reach up it went and off it went and I used a number of different calls to try and get the sheep to come to me one little group did stop and look at me and I wondered whether they would come but they didn't they didn't know the voice of a stranger yes the Lord's words are absolutely true one man can command 500 sheep but another man can't command one the difference is one is their shepherd and everybody else is a stranger now a stranger will they not follow everybody else is a stranger but there are strangers who try to attract the attention of the sheep there were those strangers that so troubled that little lamb in the previous chapter the Pharisees but he didn't take any notice of them why should he notice take notice of Jesus and not the Pharisees after all he didn't know who

Jesus was to begin with he was a stranger the Pharisees they were the recognised leaders of all the religious society of the day but he responded to the voice of Jesus but not the strangers why the Lord had opened his eyes the Lord had given him fresh hope fresh purpose in life the Lord had given him the greatest blessing he'd ever had and even that was capped by the blessing of faith which the Lord gave to him now stranger will they not follow what stranger has the blessings that Jesus has any of the strangers that the early Christians encountered who sought to woo them away from the simplicity of Christ and from the gospel preached by his apostles and for time alas in some instances it may appear to succeed so the Galatian churches for instance were troubled by the false shepherds of legalism who went to tell them that there was a certain thing that they had to do if they were to be saved circumcised of course this false teaching provoked quite a bit of perplexity and uncertainty some alas were led astray by it but it was a totally different message to that that had been proclaimed by Paul wasn't it he had not demanded that they should be circumcised he as a spokesman and under shepherd of the

Lord Jesus Christ had made no such demands and he were these strangers so friends the first thing to to be aware of is the voice of strangers runs contrary to the teaching of Jesus those who query and question the word of God and those who add something to it those who make some additional requirement of the sheep that Jesus hasn't himself required those who say it's not enough that you should repent of your sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you must do this as well you must submit to our authority and our ideas and our demands these are the legalistic teachers who are the strangers whom the sheep do not acknowledge they don't know the voice they know the difference between the voice and what a mercy friends if we know the difference between the voice of the shepherd and all others the voice of truth and the admixture of truth and error that is sometimes advanced the stranger will they not follow but will flee from him we're warned of the arrival on the scene of many anti

[39 : 26] Christ Christ those whose spirit and ministry is anti Christ against Christ these are the strangers who would demean the Lord Jesus Christ who would pretend that he whilst there were a good man and so on is not the son of God is not God the son as the scriptures reveal him to be the great thrust of the attack of Satan in the last days is anti Christ he has oh so many ways of doing it one of his ways which I've mentioned before but which has come increasingly into prominence and usage in our own time is the abominable and wretched way in which men women and children use the name of Christ some kind of oath as anti

Christ thou should not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain and yet you hear it in the factory in the shop in the office in the street and I expect the children hear it in the playground of school Christ Jesus people just use this holy and sacred name to make their oaths and curses stranger will they not follow hold these who take the name of the Lord in vain at best are mindless and thoughtless followers of a great evil person and that is

Satan himself he is going to demean the name which is above every name to the lowest level he can get it and how he is succeeding to me debasing the name of Jesus and so the drunkard in his songs will quote his name the blackard with his oaths will use his name the thoughtless and mindless people who are so influenced and by what they see and hear in the world around follow sins but a stranger the sheep will not follow they know not the voice of strangers the world the religious world people who come in the guise of religious leaders and teachers but with another gospel again today much emphasis is made particularly in schools on the various religions which are practiced by the multiracial society which is coming increasingly into being in our land so equally prominently with christianity is to be taught and explained the other faiths and the other religions this is anti-christ because the the claim of the lord jesus christ the teaching of the word of god is that he is the only way to god it's not jesus or muhammad or somebody else it is jesus only and i rather think you know the day is coming when parents of children who are at school and in this kind of teaching will have to insist that their teaching their children are withdrawn from those lessons which purport to have to do with religious topics in my own school days i remember the jews and the catholics always went out when there was assembly or anything of a religious nature well surely the day is coming if it hasn't already arrived when rather than allow our children to have the teaching of antichrist forced upon them we must insist upon our right to withdraw them from those lessons they know not the voice strangers stranger will they not follow the strangers they're strangers to god they're strangers to god's kingdom strangers to the sheep and because they're strange they don't stop because they don't recognize the voice they don't stop now if i had managed to succeed in attracting a sheep i wouldn't have done it any harm at all but that wasn't the point neither should it be the point with us people say

well there's no harm in it no but they're strangers and whether there's any harm in it it's beside the point their sheep do not respond to the voice of strangers the devil and his agents can never do any good to the church of god the strangers can never be any real blessing to god's sheep if you don't know the voice then don't follow if they're not the clear evidence of jesus speaking then ignore what is said i just want to come back finally to acknowledge another point which is made in scripture on this subject and that is the the under shepherds that god places in the churches who have laid upon them the care and the feeding of the flock now we could not construe this passage to mean that jesus will directly personally and without the involvement of anyone else assume responsibility in every individual local church of his no he has ordained in the churches there should be shepherds under shepherds they are completely subservient to him they never override his word or his authority but their privilege and their delight is to to insist on the authority of the chief shepherd in the flock but through the under shepherds the voice of the chief shepherd will be heard now it's a devastating thing to say isn't it for me and yet

I've got to say it that if I am a true under shepherd then as I speak to you in the behalf of the chief shepherd you will hear his voice through my words and if that is not so then I must be a false shepherd if I come with my ideas and my thoughts and my experience and my standards then you can well reject me as a false shepherd indeed but if I come with the standard of the word of God and seek to insist on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and do that which the apostles were exhorted to do to preach the words then it isn't my voice it isn't my will it isn't my thoughts my ideas at all and I will say again what

[49 : 27] I've said before you can safely reject anything that obviously is just my opinion but never never reject any words of the chief shepherds because if you do you haven't got the evidence of being a sheep of his because the sheep follow him for they know his voice God grant them that we all may be among the sheep of this dear loving good chief shepherd amen let us close with 182 if ever it could come to pass that sheep of

Christ might fall away my fickle feeble soul alas for fall a thousand times a day by not thy love as firm as free thou soon would take it lord for me 192 me my the night here I you are its Lord them right Sm Secret Sm SANDivil O people, people, so I'll answer a thousand times a day.

One of my love, as well as me, Thou servant, making love for me.

While my God is blessed, I wish I truly can desire.

Let Thou will love me, only can be with me in temptation.

[52 : 49] Some love will call me, walk and hear me through.

And guide me, I am to bring me through. Father, stay and lie beside.

In peace and wonder, I must call. I look to thee, to be supplied.

With life, with death, with power, with all. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with us all.

Amen.