

The Lord seeking out and caring for His sheep

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- [0 : 00] We want to speak with the Lord's help again from the prophet Ezekiel, chapter 34, verse 11.
- The prophet Ezekiel, chapter 34, verse 11. For thus saith the Lord God, Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek the mouth.
- For thus saith the Lord God, Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek the mouth.
- To say, Thus saith the Lord that gives such authority to the word of God.
- Thus saith the Lord. And if there be no, Thus saith the Lord in the ministry of the gospel, it lacks its vital power.
- [1 : 10] For if it should be, Thus saith the man, How weak and pure are they could all be.
- Where would you stand if vital godliness were a thing of a man's suggestion? Man's own thought, View, Call it what should be nice.
- Where would it be? Where would you stand? It must have a foundation. It is the word of God.
- Therefore, the ancient prophets, often, by God's inspiration, began their word with its blessed authority.
- Thus saith the Lord. And you know, through understanding things of right, of what infinite value it is to have authority.
- [2 : 23] Not man's authority, or his thoughts, but God's authority. Not man's authority, or his thoughts, but God's authority. And this puts the whole matter in its true perspective.
- And we see it in God's life. To depart from it is utter folly, and indeed death.
- But to be found among those who have ears to hear, and hearts to understand, is a great mercy.
- To receive what God says, in all its wide comfort, both for correction. As Paul says, for Timothy, for instruction.
- Or for improvement. Whatever it may be. For it is a wide-range subject in salvation.
- [3 : 34] It is a dust set to law. By these things, the church of God is edified. She has beneath her feet a firm foundation.
- If they speak not according, as I desire, to the law, and to the testimony of God, it is because there is no life in them.
- Oh, that this word from which we spoke this morning has divine authority. Behold, I, even I, will go search my sheep and seek them out.
- And this is what is going on every day. And this is God's own word. He has sheep. Those sheep are not known until they are found.

That is, by us creatures. They are known to God. In this wide world today, there are undoubtedly those of God's people not yet called.

[5 : 00] Unknown to anyone. Unknown to God. Unknown to God. Predestinated, foreknown, foreordained.

And you won't know where to find them. You could not go and put your hand on them. You might see some of the worst. You might see her who's had five husbands.

As Jesus did by the will of Jacob. You might say to yourself, not her. And yet, you would be wrong.

You might see the chief of the publicans, Zacchaeus. The one who was certainly a great oppressor.

And you might well say to yourself, he's forfeited all claims. Thinking, as you might do, that claim was the right word, which it isn't.

[6 : 09] It isn't by any means. Zacchaeus is found out of curiosity, looking up or climbing up into the tree, to see Jesus as he passed by.

And God, at that particular moment, called him down. Come down, Zacchaeus.

For today I must abide at thy house. The uninvited guests. Not may I, son. Would you like to have me?

No. Come down. For today I must abide at thy house. Then follows the well-known word, as set out in this text.

The son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. And the foremost then of the hated publicans is numbered among the sheep.

[7 : 29] So that this glorious view of salvation is the most encouraging that we can have. And the Lord says, you can't pass by a single person in the street, or meet a single person in your business, or wherever you are, and say, well, they're certainly not a vessel of mercy.

You don't know. It is this glorious truth that is so encouraging to the sowing of the seed.

You know not which shall prosper, says the Lord. And how true that is. Others, therefore, as we said this morning, were made part of the searching which the Lord uses, his holy word.

The inspired word. It inspired word. This is what searches. The preaching of it. It is called the foolishness of preaching.

By this means, one of the most important, God has determined to seek out his sheep by his word.

[8 : 51] And this has proved to be his divine means which has brought so many lovers of the word of God.

And this is what he says. Those who can humbly say that they love the word of God.

And that is what he says. And that is what he says. The word of God. And that is what he says. He says, And yet, it comprises of so many things.

Both as regards promises and prophecies and prayers, to name the three. As well as revelations, assurances, and what I have just said, of apologies.

That says the Lord. That the word of God is the light of a country as it's been to us. Before it came to us, you know, we were a benighted country.

[10 : 10] Where it is excluded today, is darkness. Where it is love today, even in the persecuted nations of the earth, what a treasure it is.

They regard it as the most important treasure they have. Though they have to hide it. Nonetheless, it is the searching word of God.

It is the light to which men come and seek and are being sought.

The glory of this, therefore, is the church's delight. Take out the word of God from the midst. You take everything out.

You might just as well burn the building down and leave it all. Take the Bible unto an oak tree in the new forest and gather a few round you.

[11 : 21] And you have a living seed. You need no bricks and mortar. You have everything that you may require. As did the ancient covenants in Scotland and the Knights.

they met in bazms in the hills and man■lies, gotmash, at the peril of their ■■ and vermuni par cele to the east. Their Bible was always there.

there. The Word of God was there. And that was the center, the sum, the power, the drawing influence. It was God dealing with them. To leave their Bible at home was to leave everything at home. Therefore, Word of God is the greatest of all our national treasures, said our late King, the greatest thing which this world of all, wouldn't it could be said by our Queen and the greatest thing. Nevertheless, it is an indisputable truth, and by this God searches for his people. And we spoke of the Holy Spirit with the Word of God, searching out as we see it in the New Testament, gradually hiding about in all manner of places, Athens for example.

And there you have such a cross-section of people, as you read of in the 17th of Acts, that they believed the Apostle, the Dionysius, the Areopagia, a man of great burden, and Demarius, and certain others with them. Not they, but there they were. You count Aquila and Priscilla, the humble tent-makers, who carried the Word of God in their hearts, who instructed the learned upon us, the ways of God more perfectly. Wherever you look, you see God is perfect. And if this be in our hearts, then undoubtedly we shall understand what it is to be sought after. As I quoted the line of our hymn this morning, Jesus sought me an stranger. Just like he did the Apostle Paul and Thicke and all the others. And they had no desire, any more than Noah did. That dark day when the flood was imminent. And Noah found grace in the sight of God. Divine, sovereign grace. And already set that man to work to build an ark over a period of 120 years.

120 years. I will both search my sheep and seek them now. Come to this world, seek them now. God knows, the Lord Jesus knows, for whom he's looking. The Holy Spirit knows for whom he's looking.

[15 : 28] What peculiar and particular mark, therefore, is there upon these people? Why should it be that, and how can it be that they are foreknown?

We were speaking yesterday at the special prayer meeting concerning those that mourn and sighed for the abominations done in the land. How envisioned, Ezekiel declares the man when the writer's inkhorn was set for to put a mark on their forehead.

We read of a mark upon their forehead. We read of a mark upon their foreheads. We read of a mark upon the foreheads in the revelation of those that feared God. We read of one in the book of Malachi, those that spake often one to another.

The Lord hearkened and heard. The Lord hearkened and heard. The book of remembrance was written before him. How are these people identified then before the strange work of grace is put upon them? Because they were foreknown of God in the eternal covenant of grace.

Paul in the eighth of Romans. Paul in the eighth of Romans. He, having been brought into the experience of it, which he knew not from the feet of Gamaliel. He declared that chain of divine events that whom God did foreknow.

[17 : 28] He declared that he also did predestinate. Whom he did predestinate, whom he also called. Whom he called, whom he also justified. And whom he justified, whom he also glorified.

And whom heeded. And whom he was sanctified. Is link or these links, our prayer question. And once begun, are brought to complete finality and success. The foreknown are glorified eternally.

This is how the Lord seeks out these people for whom he died. Their sins were laid upon him.

The great transaction in the Garden of Gethsemane where iniquity of his people, not of the world, not of the whole world, as he said in his prayer in the 17th of John, I pray not for the world, but for those who thou hast given me out of the world.

Thine they were, and thou gavest them me. And I have lost none save the son of tradition, that the scripture might be fulfilled.

[19 : 23] These are majestic, solemn and holy declarations. And it is this that authorizes the preaching of such a gospel as this, that those that are sought, and after whom the Holy Spirit seeks to put it in human language, are those for whom Christ laid down his life.

I lay down my life for thee. Read the text of John. Again, you see it there in all its beauty.

I am the Good Shepherd. And the Good Shepherd giveth his life for sheep. And this giving of the precious life of Christ was vicarious to his people.

He bore their iniquities. And they were laid upon him by a divine act. They, that is, the sheep, were powerless.

They had no hand whatsoever in him. They devised not this mighty scheme. Indeed, the Lord Jesus was utterly forsaken by his closest friends.

[20 : 56] When he came to this, they were fast asleep. Which is a wonderful comfort. Even the great adversary, the devil himself, cannot enter into this scene in Gethsemane, and say that the disciples took a path.

They didn't. They were asleep. And each disciple in his writing confirmed him. The Lord went, as it were, a stone's cast away, and he cried.

And in that moment and hour, the iniquities of his people were imputed to him.

The proof of it is in the effect of it, that he sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

And this is as thus saith the Lord. And here lies the great source of all comfort.

[22 : 19] Under the old shadow of the law, you know that the well known taker of the scapegoats was huge.

A strange kind of service. Two goats were brought in to the temple or tabernacle. The sins of the people were confessed or laid upon their heads figuratively by the laying of the priest's hand.

One of these goats was slaughtered, sacrificed. The other was taken by the hand of a sick man into the wilderness.

He wasn't. This goat was not just put outside the door of the tabernacle and let go because it was sure to have come back again.

The herd instinct would have brought this scapegoat back into the flock. No, it was given into the custody of a man who could be trusted to take it right out into the desert and lose it.

[23 : 45] And thus God points to the removal of sin as well as the imputation of it by two beasts, not one.

Usually the sacrifices consisted of one solitary animal. A lamb or an ox or a goat.

But in this case, two were used. And in this, the removal of sin from the sinner is most clearly seen.

So that in Gethsemane's garden, the Father laid, the Lord hath laid upon him, says Isaiah 53, the iniquities of us all.

In this, therefore, God has shown the perfection of that ground upon which he seeks those that are his.

[25 : 06] Now how many there are who have been born in sin, run the ways of this world and yet been called, strangely called.

And called to such a position as this. That is, to be found.

What did we read in the 36th chapter? Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean.

What is this clean water? It is the truth. The truth in Jesus. The truth that I've just declared to you.

A separating truth that brings vital godliness into full life. That gives a poor, guilty, unworthy sinner a clear view of the only way in which he can be saved.

[26 : 18] Salvation is not merely a little word to be used, as alas it is so easily used.

God instructs saved sinners as to how they are saved. And by what means and at what cost.

And they are not left at a disadvantage not to know. They are not left at a place and at a place and when they are saved from the word of God.

What salvation really is. In their different measures. According to the purposes of God. But the word saved is not just an easy going expression with them.

They have to learn by this sacred teacher, the Holy Ghost, how they are saved. Therefore, this clean water which is promised here, as Jesus said in his own words the 17th of John again.

[27 : 45] He refers to the washing of water by the word. I have given them thy word. Peter refers to the same thing.

And what a cleansing pure water the gospel is. It cleanses the heart, the mind, to give a clear view as distinct from the muddled view that might well be held of salvation.

That it is something that you can pick up and live with. Whereas it is the gift of God and a precious gift of life.

In this therefore, God seeks. And he does it himself as is set out in this text.

The next thing in the 36th chapter that we read, I'll put a new spirit within. Well, you know that this must of necessity be a remarkable child.

[29 : 04] A new spirit. As distinct from the old. Or to turn over to the explanation in the gospel.

A spiritual instead of a carnal mind. A carnal mind is enmity against God and desperately wicked.

To be desperately wicked. To be desperately wicked, you know, is to gritch a tin. To clench a fist. People that are desperate are desperate.

Will have nothing to do with God or godliness. The heart of man is desperately wicked. But the carnal mind is enmity against God and desperately wicked.

Is subdued. Not taken away. Subdued. And the spiritual mind is given. A new spirit.

[30 : 18] That I put within you. This is the new birth. This is the time when all things pass away. All things become new.

Not instantaneously. Line upon line. You may remember when you heard it for the first time. And were strangely set wondering.

However it could be. And what did the preacher mean? Wherever did he get it from? That there should be a new creation.

A new creature. That it should be diametrically opposed. That the thing was that you once loved, you now hate.

And the thing was that you once hated, you now love. That it should ever be brought in your heart.

[31 : 26] Will stand as a miracle to you. That you should ever be brought to such a place as this. You are being sought out.

The Lord. There is a seeking going on from heaven. Not from earth. The Holy Spirit is seeking. He is looking.

He is finding. He is working. He that hath begun. A good working. Unasked.

Unsought for. This is the fulfilment of the ancient prophets here.

As in so many other cases. A new spirit will I put within you. This is the seeking. This is the seeking. So long ago foretold.

[32 : 30] Already many were participants in this covenant. Ezekiel himself of course was. And all the patriarchs of old.

All given a new spirit. That in the foretelling of gospel days where there should be. Such an outpouring. As there was and ever has been since Pentecost.

The vast issues of the glorious gospel. This has been going on and will go on.

And God will have his own. And those for whom Christ died will never be lost. Never be forgotten. Never overnought.

I shall be silent. In his own time, way and manner. A new spirit will I put within you.

[33 : 39] And to confirm it. Take away the stony heart out of your flesh. And give you a heart of flesh. You are reminded here of the Apostle's view of this.

Where he is speaking in the 2 Corinthians and the 3 chapter. Ye are our own epistles written in your hearts known and read of all men.

And these Corinthians were not long before this absolute heathens. The mighty Corinth, the centre of trade and knowledge and wisdom and all its ancient beauty had heard the gospel.

Before ever Paul set foot in it. The Lord said to him, I have much people in this city. The most encouraging remark that the Lord gave his dear servant to press on.

For those who were not long. The Lord gave his dear servant to the Lord. But Paul did know who they were. The Lord didn't give him a list of names and addresses. All that Paul had to do was to preach the gospel.

[35 : 13] To be instant in season out of season. and out of season. But the outcome was the vital success of putting a new heart, changing their life, bringing them off of their loved idolatry. But when you read history of a mighty not only Corinth, but Ephesus, and these two in particular, where idolatry was a lovely thing. Their beauty is even admired today, especially as the reminds were discovered. And people were embellished. Great is Diana of the Ephesians. But no, says the Apostle, and those of Corinth, that ye are our epistle written in our hearts known and read of all men, for as much as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. And this is the point. Not in tables of stone. Referring to the decalogue, the ten commandments. Not in tables of stone, but in the fleshy tables of your heart. The impressionable part. And this is what God has done, and is doing in his own way as I said, line upon line. Here a little, and there a little. It is a lifetime's worth. He carries on what he has begun. His people are the blessed recipients of his grace, how they walk through many tribulations. They are a tried people. The gift and graces of the Spirit are put to the test.

Faith is tried to the uttermost. And yet, they are the purchased possession of the Lamb of God.

I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh, and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my stature and justice. The thing is, has this been fulfilled?

Is there any stature and justice today that have in them the authority of the Word of God? Has God spoken to his sheep? Has he called them to follow him? Has he put this word before them? If ye love me, keep my commandments? Has he?

Or has he just let them go loose? Give them no real instruction? Not made his mind known clearly? Or has he said, do this in remembrance of me? As regards of what? The ordinance of his table.

[39 : 17] It is so plain that there are judgments, that is, that is, that is, that is, that is, that is, that they are not to be put on one side. That they are holy commands. But one thing is required, and that is love.

Now this is where the graces of this good spirit that are set out in the Word of God, there can be no doubt as to what they are, are clearly set before the Lord's people who are so damned.

They are brought face to face. They are brought face to face. They are brought face to face. They are brought face to face. With God's only request. They are not under the laws I said this morning of Moses.

that is, that is, that is, that is, that is, that is, that is, that is, that is, that they are brought into an entirely new sphere.

Read the 12th of Romans. Read the 12th of Romans. And see there. Read the epistle to the Ephesians in the last part of it. The fruits of the Spirit are love, Gods of Jesus.

[40 : 47] ingenuity and cultural habits of God's evenestion. The fruits of therants martyrdom and the93th of kings. In the lastodle of kings. And is yet still the world of kings.

They are called unto on each. They are given their de Nab■ horror living . obedience. And the obedience of faith, which is an active of grace, without faith it's impossible to please God. Not only so, if you say you have faith, says James, well then prove it by your work. Because faith without work is dead. That is, a professed faith without practices and works is a mockery. It's dead. It's useless. The very Bibles of faith is work, do it, act, follow, obey. Now, I, even I, all breaks out in absolute wonderment in his official to the Romans. Oh, the death, they say, of this grace and mercy. Who can fathom that

God shall call such guilty people? That he shall be such a sovereign, do as he will among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. And yet, is not this obvious and clear? The poor, poor world, and you and I among it, as God left us to ourselves, goes past hasty to destruction. Many there be which go in there, said Jesus, of the broad way. Straight is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that findeth. Awful dogmatism from the lips of a man.

But not from the lips of Christ. Far upon it, solemn truth. And it is this, that the gospel makes known, with regard to God's wisdom, I, even I, will do it. Now, in conclusion, this takes out the big eye of self.

This is the beauty of it. This erases self from the whole matter. It isn't come and see what I have done. But what God has done. And this is the strangeness of it. That such a one, to go back to Zacchaeus, in the tree, or the woman by the well, to say, that she's a man, to come, to come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did. She was amazed, that this stranger should know her past history.

[44 : 40] He was taken utterly unawares and unaware. And yet, God had a purpose. He turned around to that poor prostitute woman.

Right down to the net did his arm reach out. Not only so, but he spoke to her words that had never been spoken before.

As if he'd taken from the sacred treasury of heaven a scroll and unfolded it before this poor sinful woman and said to her, ye know not what she worships.

God is a spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

It seemed like throwing water on the ground to talk to a woman like that. Never. Never. There was salvation in it.

[45 : 52] There was a glory of it, a comfort to any who come this way and thousand had you know. The vilest of sinners have rejoiced in the discovery Christ made to the woman by the well.

There are a score of other cases I could well name on them. But in this vital matter, the seeking out is a slow, gracious one.

It is an appointed time at the beginning. Its duration is an appointed time. Surely there is an appointed time to man upon earth, said Job. An appointed time.

Solomon in the third of the Lord. Solomon in the third of Ecclesiastes says, There is a time to be born and a time to die. The Jainer whom I spoke I think this morning or yesterday was about to fall upon his sword.

But it wasn't the appointed time. Far from it. It was the hour of night and life for him. It was then that the Lord struck him down and guilted him.

[47 : 22] And so if he cried, what must I do to be saved? So the Lord in this ancient prophecy declares that he will seek them out, scattered, worldwide.

They are not confined to one country. What a wonderful thought this is. They are not found among one people. You cannot take a census of the Church of God.

You cannot count the sheep of Christ's fold. No. They are known to him. But they are a flock.

There is something beautiful about a flock of sheep. You can't define it. At least I can't. There is something attractive about a flock of sheep.

There are characteristics of strife. They are called civics. They have the sagacity of other animals.

[48 : 37] They need a shepherd. They need looking after. They are liable to many diseases, many attacks.

They are easy pride. They are defenceless. The Lord Jesus speaks of them being folded. Other sheep I have, says he, which are not of this fold.

Then also, I must bring. Conscious of his solemn responses in the Church, the Lord Jesus says, I must bring the Gentile fold. He has, he is. There shall be one fold and one second. And they shall all be alive. That is, they shall be redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

Their sins will have been laid upon him. He will have borne them away. And they will be blotted out.

And in his blessed word, I think, in the 12th of Luke, he says, fear not, little flock. It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Amen.

[50 : 18] Amen.