

The Shepherd Knows His Sheep

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Almighty God has made the most full and the most brilliant display of all of His glorious attributes in the work of rescuing sinners through the person and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. God has many theaters in which He displays His attributes. His attributes are simply the outshining of who He is as a glorious and a magnificent God. They are not little parts which all together make up God. They are God in all of His glorious unity shining forth in various ways displaying who He is: His beauty, His intricate wisdom seen in the complexity of a snowflake, His majestic power seen in mighty snowcapped mountains, something of God's magnificence and something of the overwhelmingness of His being seen in the pictures sent back from the Hubble spacecraft and the vastness of the galaxies of the universe. But I have asserted in my opening sentence that God's most glorious display of all of His attributes is made in conjunction not with the vastness of the cosmos, the intricacy of the snowflake and all of the other things that manifest God's beauty, God's wisdom, God's power, His overwhelmingness, but they are manifested in conjunction with the salvation which God has both planned, procured, and applied to guilty, hell-deserving sinners. And one of the most marvelous aspects of that salvation which most fully displays God's glorious attributes is the absolute certainty of that salvation with respect to all for whom it was planned, for whom it was procured, and to whom it is applied. And whenever we begin to be acquainted with this wonderful aspect of that salvation, namely, that once brought within its orbit, we are forever within its orbit. Whenever we begin to be acquainted with that truth, often called the perseverance or the preservation of the saints, there's a text that one will find in systematic theologies, in devotional books, and in other ways in which this aspect of God's glorious salvation is set forth in Scripture. There is a text that again and again comes to fore. And it is that text to which I want to direct your attention tonight in the time allotted. It is found in John 10, and I shall read something of the immediate context. Verses 22-30:

"And it was the feast of the dedication at Jerusalem: it was winter; and Jesus was walking in the temple in Solomon's porch. The Jews therefore came round about Him, and said unto Him, How long dost Thou hold us in suspense? If Thou art the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believe not: the works that I do in My Father's name, these bear witness of Me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who hath given them unto Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

Now it is verses 27 to 30 that in a very special way are one of those epitomizing texts in holy Scripture which state in unmistakable language that once we are brought within the orbit of the salvation planned, procured, and applied by the triune God--once there, we are forever there. And I want us to spend a few moments looking at this passage under three very simple headings.

First of all, the imagery employed. In this passage, the Lord Jesus likens Himself to a shepherd. And all who have presently embraced His salvation are likened to sheep. "My sheep hear My voice." And this imagery of sheep and shepherd was introduced earlier in this chapter. In the beginning of the chapter, you have what for some is a difficult thing to sort out because we are not personally acquainted with the practices of Middle Eastern shepherds in the first century, where He refers to Himself as the Door. And then later on, He refers to Himself as the Shepherd. Verses 4 and 5: "When He hath put forth all His own, 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." Verse 11: "I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep." And then right on through that section, He is likening Himself to a shepherd and His people to sheep. And in our text in particular (v. 27), He speaks of the sheep as His sheep whom He knows and to whom He gives eternal life. So from this passage, we know the sheep are those who come into this personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. And according to the context, they come into that relationship to Him as the good Shepherd, particularly the good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. Note again verse 11: "I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep." Verse 15: "even as the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep." Verses 17 and 18: "Therefore doth the Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down...."

In this short compass of verses, four or five times in this context of setting Himself forth as the good Shepherd of His sheep, He wants us to think of Him as the Shepherd who supremely lays down His life for the sheep. So as the sheep are related to Him in this personal, intimate way, it is a personal, intimate relationship founded upon the shepherd's act of laying down His life for the sheep. Whoever the sheep are, they are related to Jesus the good and the great Shepherd in the context of His voluntary laying down of His life. That is, they are related to Him on the basis of His voluntary, substitutionary death in the room and stead of His people (voluntary, vicarious curse-bearing under the wrath of God) so that we should never think of such glorious passages as Psalm 23 as some kind of general, ubiquitous relationship that all men have to the great Shepherd ("The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want"). There is but one way in which sheep become bonded to the Shepherd, and that is in the embrace of His cross. So the imagery employed is that of Christ the Shepherd, His people the sheep; the sheep bonded to Him in a very special way in the context of the Shepherd who lays down His life.

But then having noted the imagery employed, note with me secondly, the security affirmed. And it is affirmed both positively and negatively. Notice the positive affirmation in verse 28: "I give unto them [that is, My sheep] eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand." On the basis of His laying down His life for His sheep, that which He grants to them as the donation of His grace is nothing less than eternal life. And according to the Scriptures, eternal life is both a quality of life and a duration of life. Eternal life is a distinctive kind of life. And what is the distinctiveness of that life which is eternal. Jesus Himself defines it for us in chapter 17 of this same Gospel. Verses 2 and 3: "even as Thou gavest Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom Thou hast given Him, He should give eternal life. And this is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." Eternal life is a quality of life. And that quality is nothing less than a heart acquaintance with the one true and living God and

with His Son Jesus Christ. "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee [not know about Thee, be acquainted with Thee, but know Thee as a man knows his wife, and there is interpenetration of mind, soul, will, body, and knowledge at the deepest level]." This is life eternal, not to have God paraded by us in a collection of notions and concepts that never touch and win and woo and capture the heart. "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." Not know much about Him, His church, His ways, His people, but to know Him as a living, loving person knows another person. This is life eternal. It is a quality of life, but it is also a duration of life. We turn back to John 4, and we find these words from the lips of our Lord Jesus in verse 14. In speaking to the Samaritan woman, offering her eternal life under the image of living water, He says,

"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life. [What I give them here now of Myself and My salvation is like an artesian well that will spring up from within them bubbling forever and ever and ever. It is a well springing up into eternal life.]"

And here the security of all the sheep is wonderfully, positively affirmed:

"I'll give them not a temporal taste and experience of eternal life. I give to them eternal life, life that begins here and now as they come into a saving knowledge of My Father and of Myself, of My Father through Myself, for no one comes to the Father but by Me. And He that has seen Me has seen the Father. He that does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him."

He says that this into which we enter now is not only a quality of life, but a duration. And in so stating, our Lord affirms positively the security of all who truly experience eternal life. "I give unto them nothing less than eternal life in quality and in duration." But then three times He makes the affirmation negatively. Notice it: "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish." Throughout the rest of their earthly pilgrimage and life and on through death and resurrection and judgment, and as one ion rolls upon another in the endless ages of eternity, they shall never perish. And second negation: "No one shall snatch them out of My hand. [As the great and the good shepherd who lays down My life for the sheep, I gather My sheep to Myself; I hold them, I protect them, I encompass them with My own protective grace.]" A third negation: "My Father, who hath given them unto Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (v. 29).

I actually heard someone say cheaply, "Ah yes, none can snatch them out of Christ's hands; none can snatch them out of the Father's hands, but it doesn't say they can't jump out of His hands", trying to prove that this eternal life is not really eternal life. But it is life that we may possess if ultimately we continue to make sure that we possess it. But the words of our Lord Jesus do not point us in that direction at all. For under the imagery employed, there is this security affirmed. And the marvelous capstone to that security is verse 30: "I and the Father are one [one in our Godness in nature, in what we are as Father and Son in the mystery of the triune Godhead; one in purpose, that we should confer nothing less than eternal life]." As Jesus said in John 6:38-40:

"For I am come down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that of all that which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on Him, should have eternal life; and will raise him up at the last day."

This is the indefectible will of the Father that Jesus came to fulfill. So we've looked at the imagery employed: Christ the Shepherd, all the possessors of His salvation likened unto sheep. There is a security affirmed. But now thirdly, note with me their identity described. What is the precise identity of these people who are in this unspeakably glorious position of being Christ's sheep, those for whom He died, those whom He has brought to Himself, those whom He and the Father hold so that they can never, never perish? How are they identified? Look at the text. Verse 27: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." And everything that follows is with respect to these described. "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand." Who is the "they" and the "them"? It is the sheep. But what is their precise identity as described by the Lord Jesus Himself? And surely, none knows better the distinguishing marks of the sheep than the great Shepherd who dies and who lives to make them His sheep. Well, there are two very identifying marks simply stated in these words: "My sheep are hearing [present tense verb] My voice." The identifying mark of the sheep is the hearing ear. "They are hearing My voice." Our Lord already asserted this in chapter 10 in verse 3: "To Him the porter openeth; and the sheep [are hearing] His voice: and He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." Who are His own sheep? Those who hear His voice.

Now in what sense are the sheep identified as those who are hearing the voice of Christ? Well, first of all, they hear His voice when the great Shepherd who laid down His life for them in the course of their life history effectually calls them to Himself, speaking to them through the word and promise of the Gospel. Look at verse 16 of this chapter: "And other sheep I have, [they are already sheep in the Father's eternal electing love and purpose, in the Father's donation to Me; all that the Father gives Me] which are not of this fold [that is, the fold within Israel]: them also I must bring." The good Shepherd, the great Shepherd is not to lose any of the sheep. Those whom the Father has marked out in His eternal electing love and given to Him as the donation of grace, given to Him the responsibility of doing all that was necessary that they should enjoy a righteously founded, a justly procured salvation (He must lay down His life), these He must bring. And how are they brought? Look at the rest of the text: "They shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock under one Shepherd." They shall hear; they shall become.

No one can claim to be a sheep of Christ because somehow he has pried into the Father's eternal electing love and has laid bare before him for himself or for another: "Ah yes, that's one of those who are already Christ's sheep." No! None of us can know he is Christ's sheep in terms of prying into God's secret electing purposes. We can only know when we have heard and have become.

"The other sheep I know. They don't know themselves. But when I come, and in the word and the promise of the Gospel, I declare to them their desperate need of what I have done on behalf of sinners. And when I come in the word and the promise of the Gospel and declare to them that as the good Shepherd, I've laid down my life for

wondering, hell-deserving sinners who are like Isaiah's vast flock of sheep that has gone astray, each one having turned to his own way."

They hear the word of promise, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." "Come, come!" He says, "They hear My voice." He is not saying that in gathering His sheep among the nations outside of Israel throughout the entire age of the church that He is going to come and personally in His glorified being speak with an audible, physical voice. No. But it is nonetheless Christ's voice that is heard in the proclamation of the Gospel. And that's why Paul can say in Romans 10 in that tightly knit chain of argumentation that if people are to be saved, they must believe on Christ. And how shall they believe on Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher. And when a preacher comes in the authority of Christ with the word of Christ proclaiming the truth of the salvation of Christ, His true sheep are gathered into that one fold when they hear His voice. Beyond the explanations the preacher gives, beyond the illustrations, beyond the entreaties, beyond the appeals, the earnestness, the tears, the pleading, they hear the voice. It captures them, and they can no longer resist. And they say, "O Lord Jesus, You who love sinners and poured out Your life's blood on behalf of sinners, how can I go on in the folly of clinging to that which can only damn me by refusing that which only intends to give me life, and that eternal?" And they capitulate gladly and joyfully. And in the disposition of repentance and faith, they turn from their sin and their self-will and their self-determination. And they embrace One whose love conquers them and subdues them, woos and wins them.

The identifying mark of the sheep is, "They hear My voice." They hear it initially, powerfully, efficaciously in the proclamation of the Gospel. But then it's a present tense verb. It doesn't say, "My sheep heard My voice calling them, promising them rest, forgiveness, eternal life, adoption into the family of God, the gift of the Spirit, and all the blessings of grace. It doesn't say, "My sheep heard." Look at the text: "My sheep [are hearing] My voice." The mark of the true sheep of Christ is that they have a fundamental, internal disposition of utter openness to the Word of Christ. To the word of Christ when it is promising, to the word of Christ when it is commanding, to the word of Christ when it is comforting, to the word of Christ when it is convicting, to the word of Christ when it distills like gentle dew upon upturned flowers, to the word of Christ when it breaks in upon them like jagged lightning; nails them to the pew and says, "You are the man. It's your sin, and yours and yours that must be dealt with." If it's the voice of Christ, they hear it. "My sheep are hearing My voice." It is the infallible, identifying mark of the sheep. They are hearing the voice of Christ. And that voice calls them to humble themselves, confess their sins one to another. When that voice calls them to cut off right hands and pluck out right eyes to maintain moral purity, they hear His voice. When that voice calls them to rear back on their hind legs and resist the spirit of this world when the voice of Christ says, "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind", they are hearing the voice of Christ. Have I beat it thin enough at the edges? That's the identifying mark, not some of them (the real dedicated ones, the real super duper, fat, healthy sheep). "My sheep are hearing My voice."

But then notice the second identifying mark: "And they are following Me." What they hear goes right down to their feet. And what their feet do have a direct relationship to the person of the great and good Shepherd. Notice, He doesn't say, "They hear My voice and obey the commands. They hear My voice and obey the precepts." That's

true, but you see, our Lord makes it intimate and personal. "They hear My voice, and they are following Me." Not following their parents and doing just enough to get Mom and Dad off their back or just enough to persuade their elders that maybe the root of the matter is in them so they can get baptized and come into the church and get a Christian husband or a Christian wife because they don't want a worldly scoundrel for a life's partner. No. "They hear My voice, and they are following Me." They are enamored and attached to a person who loved them and laid down His life for them. So it's not the naked Word. It's the Word dropping from the lips of the good Shepherd who laid down His life for them, who was committed to preserve and keep everyone of them so that none of them will perish.

"They follow Me, as by My Word I lead them into the kind of personal life that marks them out as My sheep, as My Word leads them into the kind of domestic life that marks them out as My sheep with husbands loving, sensitive, sacrificial, self-denying love that treats their wives as their own flesh, as solicitous for the wife's well-being emotionally, physically, spiritually as they are for their own bodies."

I've never met a man yet who had a sliver rammed up under his fingernail and said, "O, it's just a sliver under my fingernail; I'll take care of it three month's from now." No, no. I don't care what his job is or how important he is, you get a sliver under your fingernail, and I tell you, everything stops till you get it out. That's how you're to love your wife. Her slivers are yours. You love her as being your own flesh. Is it an emotional sliver under the nail of her soul? "That's her problem. Let her work it out." That's not following the voice of Christ who said love her as Christ loves the church. "O yes, but...." No "yes, buts". "My Sheep hear; they follow." "O but I didn't have a good example in my father." Who cares what your father's example was? You have Christ as your model. Love her as Christ loved and gave. Are you following Him then?

Are you following Him in domestic relationships? "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." In social relationships? In church relationships? In every area addressed by the great Shepherd, the mark of His sheep is they not only hear and say, "O, this is wonderful, we've heard the voice of Jesus today"--they are not only marked by the open ear, but by the obedient and willing foot. And that foot moves at the direction of the Person who has won them by His grace. In fact, it is only such who have any grounds Biblically to say they are His.

Hebrews 5:9, one of the few verses that uses the term eternal salvation in all of the New Testament, and notice what the writer to Hebrews says about that eternal salvation and who has it. Speaking of our Lord Jesus in verse 8 and 9 of Hebrews 5:

"Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered; and having been made perfect [that is, having been made a perfect Savior, not from imperfection to perfection, but from the perfection of unspotted sinless humanity to the perfection of empathetic humanity joined to deity in the theanthropic person], He became unto all them that [are obeying] Him the author of eternal salvation"

O, you say you have that eternal salvation. "O I love the truth, 'My sheep are in My hand. None can snatch them, and the Father's hand is over My hand and none can snatch them from the Father's hand.'" The onus is on you to demonstrate the identifying mark. "He is the author of eternal life to all who are obeying Him." Our obedience does not procure the salvation, nor does it ultimately secure the salvation.

It is the manifestation that we possess it. We're His sheep. "My sheep are hearing; My sheep are following Me." The language is clear and unmistakable, and the Lord Jesus knows better than any of you how to describe His true sheep. And He's described them. Their identity is described.

Then you see nestled in the midst of those two identifying marks, Jesus said, "And I know them [that is, the ones to whom I am related in intimate, personal, saving relationship, the ones I know that I am prepared to say, 'Ah, that's one of mine--open ear and willing foot]." If you're not sitting here tonight marked by open ear and willing foot, Jesus does not claim to know you. He does a better job of saving than He's doing in some of you who say you're saved. If His love cannot conquer your love of the world and your love of self and your love of your own will and your own way, what kind of love is it that leaves you wedded to the very things that nailed Him to the cross? "I lay down My life for the sheep, [and the way that I give them the identifying marks of the sheep is by the revelation of My love that breaks them and subdues them and brings them into the orbit of being willing, hearing, obeying sheep]." That's what the text says. The imagery employed: He is the Shepherd; His people are the sheep. The security affirmed: "I give to them eternal life [a life of quality, a life of duration]." Their identity described: "They are hearing My voice, and they are following Me."

I say by way of application, and I want to underscore so that none can mistake what I'm saying, the ground of our position as sheep is nothing in us. It's what He has done, and it is all in Him. He lays down His life for the sheep. Why? Because the sheep are human beings who are guilty in Adam, who are dead, who are deserving of the wrath of God. And there is no omnipotence in God Himself that can bring such people into an intimate relationship or fellowship without the issue of sin being dealt with. And so the ground of our being His sheep is not in our hearing or in our following or in our obeying. The ground is in His laying down His life for us. But the proof that we have embraced Him as the good Shepherd who has laid down His life is that His love in sacrificial self-giving for us has conquered us and brought us to the place where we love to hear His voice and we love to follow Him. It's 2 Corinthians 5 in different language. The Apostle says in verses 14 to 18,

"For the love of Christ constraineth us [it holds us in its grip]; because we thus judge, that One died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again. Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more. Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new. But all things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation."

That's Pauline language for the very truth we have in John 10. The ground of our acceptance is the laying down of His life. The proof of our acceptance is that we've become part of the flock that He says He recognizes and He's glad to be identified with. "I know them [those who are hearing, those who are following]." They do not follow perfectly, but they do so purposely. They do not follow with equal zeal, but they follow, as the old writers said, universally. They do not mark out any area of life and say, "If Jesus has anything to say about that, I could care less. I don't want to know what He says."

And that's the problem with some of you young people, and I want to get very blunt. You have marked out the area of your music and your entertainment and said, "I don't care what Jesus has to say, if anything, about that area. That's my music, That's my entertainment, That's my delight. Keep Your hands off." And you know it and I know it. How can you claim to be His sheep until you're ready to take every single CD, every single video and put it on the table and get down on your knees in front of it and say, "Lord Jesus, Shepherd who laid down Your life, who died for sin, the sins of listening to things I ought not, looking at things I ought not--Lord Jesus, whatever is in these CDs that's displeasing to You, help me to see it. Help me to recognize it; may I be willing to smash it." Are you willing to do that? "O no, I've got...." Yeah, I know you can biff and you can rationalize. But the issue is you're not willing for the cross of the great Shepherd to be laid over your CDs and over your videos. And until you are, don't kid yourself that you're one of His sheep. With many of you, that's going to be the rubbing point.

You live in a media obsessed generation. And the devil has his hooks in a whole generation with the sounds and sights produced by all the gadgetry. And if you're going to be real and count for Christ, this issue you've got to settle. I know you can go out of here and say, "Pastor Martin is on his hobby horse." That's a copout because you're not going home and doing what I said. I've got no fear to go home and take every CD I have, even one that's got the best of Johnny Cash on it. OK? "You listen to his opera and hymns." What do you know I listen to? Take every one of them and say, "Lord Jesus, if listening to any of that puts any distance between You and me, in anyway fills my mind with things it ought to be filled with, Lord Jesus, I don't want it. I want You. I want nothing to disturb my communion." I'm ready to take every DVD (there aren't many; most of them have been given to me) and every video and lay it before Him. Are you? Are you ready to do it?

You young women, are you ready to go to your closet and stand before every piece of clothing and say, "Lord Jesus, You say the thing that should mark me as a woman...." The first thing God addresses when He gives particular directives to women in 1 Timothy where He's dealing with behavior in the church is not your heart but your clothes. "I will therefore that the women dress modestly." You stand in front of your closet with every piece of clothing and say, "Lord Jesus, I want to hear Your voice and I'm ready to follow. Is this modest?" And if you don't know, find an honest dad. And if you haven't got an honest dad, find one. There are a lot of us here in the church, and we'll tell you. Until you're ready to do this folks, your Christianity is floating around on the issues that don't really touch where you live. Are you ready to do that? Are you ready to do that with every facet of your life?

Dear folks, this is Christianity--attachment to Jesus that we do not willfully, knowingly seek to detach in any area. "My sheep are hearing My voice, and they are following Me." It's not rules and regulations; it's a person who's won us by His love. And as we heard this morning, we want an alternate, thorough-going Christian lifestyle that makes the world look and say, "Wait a minute, we need this, this, and this to find a little sweetness in life to suck a little meaning. They are not worshipping at the shrine of this, this, and this. And they've got a joy that we know nothing about. What in the world makes these people tick." And then we have the joy of giving answer to everyone who asks a reason of the hope that is in us. Dear folks, that's Christianity. When you worship at the same shrine as the worldlings, what in the world is there about your Christianity that would ever whet their appetite?

You can sit as my daughter and my sister did the evening after the Lord took my beloved home. Someone had given to my wife and me months ago some--whatever you call them when you go out to restaurants and spend them there. My wife and me were not able to use it. So because we had been under a lot of stress, I said to Heidi and Joyce, "Let's go out to Steak and Ale and celebrate my loved one's home going." And we sat at that table and a young waiter came, and he saw that we were a happy bunch. And I told him, "You know what we're here for?" He said, "What?" I said, "We're celebrating the fact that my wife went home today. She's in the presence of Jesus." And through my tears, I told him of what our joy was. I tell you, we had the ears of that young man. I got a chance to speak to him about the Savior. He's newly married, and I told him, "God never intended your marriage should be a two way affair. He intended that Christ should be at the center of it." We had his ears because he saw something that he couldn't explain.

Does the world see anything in you that they can't explain? Or do you just blend in with the idea that you've got to be like them to win them. No. If you're like them, you've got nothing to win them to that's worth anything. That's the curse of this notion: "We've got to bebop our music, and we've got to modernize our worship so the unconverted person comes and can feel at home. We'll play his kind of music; we'll talk his kind of jive talk--nonsense! Let the worldling come in, see our joyous, God-centered worship and say, "What in the world do these people got? It's something I know nothing about." And then we're able to tell them of the hope that is within us.

Dear people, if you're going to tolerate me here as your pastor (I think I've got a few more sermons left in me), this is where we're going by the grace of God. Are you with me? "My sheep hear My voice. They follow Me. I give to them eternal life, and they shall never perish." Blessed assurance that once in Christ, always in Christ. And at the end of the day, not because we have so resolved and so mortified and so determined to press on that we make it, but because we've got a great and a good Shepherd who's committed to keeping us and bringing us safely at last into His blessed presence.

O, sitting here tonight, are you one of His sheep? You say, "Well, if the sheep are what you've described in the Bible, Pastor Martin, I'm not one of them." Listen, Jesus said, "Other sheep I have. They are not yet of this fold; they shall hear My voice." Have you heard the voice of Christ in the preaching? Have you heard something that's gone beyond what any human voice could do in reaching into the inner chambers of your soul and causing you to say, "O God, I want to know the forgiveness of sin; I want to know what it is to possess eternal life. I want to be able to look death straight in the eye and say, 'Death, you're the last enemy, but all you can do is chase me up to heaven'"? My friend, that's waiting for you in Christ if you go to Him. He's promised to receive all who come unto Him. May God grant that you go to Him, and you'll find Him a gracious, welcoming Savior. And you'll become part of that one flock under the rule and governance of that one great Shepherd.