



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 10:11-15

“The Good Shepherd”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Let’s turn now to John chapter 10 verse 11 through verse 15, and will you listen as I read the Scripture for this morning. There is a part of this particular passage that I want to make special comment upon in just a moment. John 10 verse 11 through verse 15, the Lord Jesus is continuing to tell this rather lengthy, something like an allegory of the work of the shepherd and the sheep.

“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.”

Now if you are reading a modern translation or perhaps if you’re reading a different translation from the Authorized Version you’ll notice that the rendering of verse 14 and verse 15 is somewhat different from that that I have just read. In the first place when we read in verse 14, “And

am known of mine,” and a period is used in punctuation. That period should probably be eliminated, and then in verse 15 instead of “Even so, know I the Father,” we should rather have the word “and.” And the resultant translation is something like this, “I am the good shepherd and know my sheep, and am known of mine as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.” Now you will notice that that conveys a rather interesting series of ideas. “I know my sheep and I am known by my sheep, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.” We’ll talk about that in the exposition that follows, but that is an important idea, and I would like for you to think about it. That probably is the way in which we are to take this text.

[Prayer removed from audio]

The words that we have read in our Scripture reading this morning form part of the third of the series of allegories, or parables, about an eastern shepherd and the life that he lives. This is all said in the light of the healing of the man that was born blind in chapter 9, preceding chapter 10. You remember I’m sure the story of how the blind man who had been born blind was healed by the Lord Jesus and how after his healing, he was brought by the Lord Jesus to a personal trust in him so that finally in verse 38 of chapter 9 he said, “Lord I believe,” and worshiped the Lord Jesus, then this parable or this allegory of the shepherd and the sheep is given in the 10th chapter which in a sense is an illustration of what has happened in the healing of the blind man. He was cast out of the synagogue for his faith, but in being cast out of the synagogue he was thrown into the arms of the good shepherd. So the Lord Jesus tells this parable, this allegory in the light of what has just happened.

You can sense as you read through it that he understands us to think when we think of the hireling and the wolves to think of the religious leaders of the time, and when we are to think of, when we think of the shepherd we are to think of him, and when we think of the sheep who are

brought out of darkness and into light and into relationship to the shepherd, we are to think of that blind man who was brought out of darkness into the marvelous light of the Son of God.

It's very appropriate that the Lord Jesus should use the figure of a shepherd and the sheep because he is so much like a shepherd and we are so much like sheep. The shepherd suggests ownership, and the Lord Jesus makes a great deal of that. The sheep belong to him. One might think that was a rather strange thing in the light of shepherds outside of the east for very frequently shepherds outside of the east are not owners of the sheep, but in the east the shepherds were almost always owners of the flocks, and in fact if you asked an easterner how much money he had, he would say, “Well I have so many sheep,” or “I have so many cattle.” They were ordinarily owners of the sheep. So, the term shepherd suggests ownership. It suggests also fellowship because the shepherd was always with his sheep, and it suggests naturally solicitude, the care that a shepherd would exercise for the sheep. So when we think of the Lord Jesus as a shepherd we think of all of these things.

Now it's so appropriate too that we should be called sheep. This is one of the favorite terms of our great God when he refers to us because we are so much like sheep. Now sheep were clean animals. That is clean from the standpoint of the Levitical cultus. They were regarded as clean animals. Now we know the Lord Jesus speaks of the apostles and disciples as clean. Later on in this same book he will say to the eleven, “Now ye are clean on account of the word which I have spoken to you.” So sheep were clean animals, and they effectively represent then us who have received the benefits of the justifying grace of our great God. Sheep are also helpless. They are some of the most helpless of all of the animals, and in chapter 15 the Lord Jesus will say of the apostles, “Without me ye cannot do anything.” So we are helpless.

And then one other characteristic of sheep is so appropriate for us who are disciples. It is this. Sheep are prone to wander, and if anyone is prone to wander spiritually, it is the child of God. There are many expressive pictures of the lost in the Bible. We are said to be enemies of God before we come to Christ. We are said to be prisoners of our sin. We are said to be prodigals. We are said to be wanderers. But the thing about the term sheep that is so appropriate is that a sheep will wander

and wander and wander so far from the other sheep and from the shepherd that it will lose its sense of its lost condition, and that is characteristic of us. We wander so far from God our shepherd that we lose the sense of our lostness.

There is a story, a true story, of a man who was a shepherd who went out with another man, a friend, and they were talking about various things and as they were talking, the country was hilly. It was the kind of country you might find in Scotland. The shepherd said to his friend, “Look over there on the side of that cliff.” And he strained his eyes because it was some distance away, and he said, “Well I don't see anything. He said, “Well look. Look about halfway down that cliff side there,” and he said, “You'll see a sheep.” And finally the man found the sheep on the cliff. It was a very steep side of the cliff that the sheep had managed to come down and it was steeper still below. And the friend said, “Well what can you do for the sheep? How has this happened?” He said, “If you'll look above carefully you will see that there are some places where there was grass and the sheep has eaten the grass. It's come down the side of that slope nibbling here and nibbling there and finally it has reached that place where it cannot go any further and it cannot return.” The friend said, “Is there anything that you can do for it?” He said, “No there is nothing you can do for it, and furthermore if you will look up above you will see that big bird up above and that big bird is just waiting for the sheep to fall in order that he might feed upon the body of the sheep.”

Well that's a beautiful picture it seems to me of the fact that apart from the Lord God we wander, we wander, and we wander. We are lost. We are in an absolutely impossible situation. In fact we sometimes sing of that. We sing, “Prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love.” So the figure of the shepherd and the sheep is so fitting for us, and it's especially fitting for God's elect. As Peter says, “You were as sheep going astray, but now you have returned unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls.” This explains why God fed Israel as he did in the wilderness and how he fed them. In Deuteronomy chapter 2 and verse 7 Moses describing the way in which God dealt with the children of Israel in the wilderness writes, “For the LORD thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand: he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the

LORD thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing.” And then in chapter 8 and verse 4, he speaks of what he did for Israel in the wilderness. Moses writes, “Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.” So God was a shepherd to the nation Israel in the wilderness.

Well that is the picture that we are to look at now in this particular part of the allegory that Jesus is giving us here in John chapter 10. The evening scene comes before us now because it's in the evening that the wolves come out to attack the sheep. So, Jesus in his address to those, and I'm sure it must have included the blind man, said, “I am the good shepherd the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”

Now I grew up in the city, and I lived in another city, and I've been in Dallas. All of my life I have lived in cities, but you know you don't have to be a person who lives on the farm to appreciate this wonderful metaphor of the shepherd and the sheep. It is something that has instant appeal, even to a city dweller. I'd like for you to notice first what Jesus says about himself. He calls himself a faithful shepherd of course, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” But he describes his person in a very significant way. He says, “I am the good shepherd.” Now there are two kinds of good, and in fact in the Greek there are several words that are used for good in the New Testament, two primary. One of these words is a word that refers to moral rectitude. Another word is a word that refers not so much to moral rectitude or austerity, as it does to the attractiveness of goodness. Now that is the word that is used here because it's possible to be morally up right in an almost repulsive kind of way. In fact one of the translators translates verse 11 something like this, “I am the shepherd, the shepherd beautiful.” Well that probably exaggerates a little bit the force of the Greek work *{kalos}* here, but it should be rendered something like, “I am the shepherd, the noble shepherd.” “The shepherd, or the noble shepherd, giveth his life for the sheep.” So the Lord Jesus is one who is characterized by moral rectitude but not by the kind of moral rectitude that is repulsive. The moral rectitude of the Lord Jesus Christ was very attractive. “I

am the shepherd, the shepherd beautiful.” “The beautiful shepherd, or the noble shepherd, giveth his life for the sheep.”

Now I want you to notice also the way in which the Lord Jesus describes his work. He speaks of himself as one who has given himself for the sheep. That’s the emphasis of this section. He dwells upon his care for the sheep in his dying for them. That would have been fairly rare for the Palestinians because ordinarily their shepherds did not face death constantly in caring for the sheep. We do have some instances of it in the Old Testament. David risked his life to care for the sheep. He was a shepherd. He wrestled with the bears and the lions. That was comparatively rare. Jesus singles this out as something that is unusual. “The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”

I’d like to stop for just a moment and point out the significant features of this reference to himself as one who “lays down his life for the sheep.” First of all when he says, “The good shepherd giveth, or lays down his life,” that’s the sense of the original text: “lays down his life for the sheep.” It is obvious that he is speaking of something that is voluntary. It’s not something he is required to do. It’s something that he himself voluntarily does. And so we can say concerning the death of the Lord Jesus, first of all that it is a voluntary death. It is not something that is forced upon him. He is not compelled to die for us. Of course he is compelled to die for us if he would save us, but the stress of this passage is upon the voluntariness of his death. And that is true of the New Testament as a whole. First of all he, “Lays down his life for the sheep.” That’s stressed. It’s spoken of in three other places, verse 15, “I lay down my life for the sheep,” verse 17, “I lay down my life that I might take it again,” verse 18, “No man taketh it from me. I lay it down of myself, and I have power to take it again.” That’s the first thing about his death that is important. It is voluntary.

Now, secondly he says, he lays down his life for the sheep. Now the preposition that is used and translated here “for the sheep” is a preposition that in some places does not suggest substitution, but most of the commentators, and particularly the recent commentators, have given it that force here, and I think it is correct. He “gives his life for the sheep.” He “lays down his life for the sheep” in the sense that he is a substitute for them. He takes their place in order that they might be

delivered from the penalty of their sin. And he bares all of the judgment of heaven upon their sin, and he exhausts the wrath of God upon sin so that those for whom Jesus Christ dies are in such a position that heaven itself can bring no further charge against them. “I lay down my life in the place of the sheep, in the stead of the sheep, for the benefit of the sheep in the sense that I am their substitute and bare their penalty.

Now notice he does not say he dies for goats. He says he dies for the sheep. He does not say that he dies for angels, or seraphim, but he dies for the sheep. “I lay down my life for the sheep.” Now that is extremely important. Later on I want to say something about it, but notice secondly then is his death is a substitutionary death. Thirdly he says he lays down his life for the sheep. Now that life that he lays down and the laying down of it suggests satisfaction. He satisfies the claims of God against the sheep. In fact the sheep could be rescued in no other way than by the death of the Son of God for them, for they owe God death because of their sin, but they cannot pay that penalty of themselves, and therefore they need someone to pay it for them. And the Lord Jesus is the one who pays their debt for them so that heaven can no longer charge them with the guilt and penalty and condemnation of sin. He lays down his life. It requires his life. No other way can the sheep be rescued than by the laying down of our Lord’s life. And because he is the infinite Son of God, his death has infinite value and thus is sufficient for the sins of all men. When we say that Jesus Christ died a substitutionary death we mean that he died a substitutionary and penal death. That is he bore penalty that was due us. It’s remarkable how people can preach Christ against Christ. And by that I mean they can preach Christ, but deny the truths of Scripture at the same time. That’s remarkable isn't it? It’s a testimony to the way in which the evil one is able to take good things and use them for his own purposes.

A. B. McCauley who was for many years professor of theologian at Trinity College University of Glasgow in Scotland in 1938 published a book called *The Death of Jesus* and in it he gave his mature views on the Doctrine of the Atonement. According to Professor McCauley Jesus did not offer a satisfaction for sin, although he died as a substitute. Now that distinction was never made by

the church historically that he died as a substitute but he did not die as a satisfaction. What did he do according to Professor McCauley? Well he died for sins in the sense that he realized to the full as he alone could, the guilt of sin and the divine reaction to it. In other words, Jesus died for sins in the sense that he realized the debt that sin gives men and also he realized to the fullest extent the divine reaction against sin. He was subject to a perfect consciousness of the divine reaction to sin, so Professor McCauley said. So that his death is a revelation of God in the sense that it reveals how God feels about sin. And it's a mediation of how God feels about sin to men. The cross witnesses to sin and it witnesses to the love of God and that's it. Due to him repentance is awakened in men and the assurance of forgiveness is begotten in their hearts.

Now one might think that is preaching Christ, but I would suggest to you that that is preaching Christ against the Christ of the Bible. For if there is one thing that the Bible makes plain it is that the Lord Jesus is the substitute in the sense that he has born our penalty. Why of course our Lord realized to the full the guilt of sin. And of course he realized the divine reaction to sin. Of course he did that. Being the second person of the Trinity, that is absolutely true. But to realize a debt is not to pay a debt. Let me illustrate. Some of you probably spent a few dollars more than you ought to have spent over the past few weeks. So, I suggest that you go to your department store, Sanger-Harris, Joske's, most of you I'm sure shop in Sakowitz. So you go to Sakowitz and you say to the credit manager, you say, “I just received my bill: \$2,750. 60. I would like for you to know that I realize to the full how much I owe. I really do appreciate also how much you want that money, and now of course in the light of the fact that I realize to the full how much I owe and how much you want it, surely you'll accept that as payment for my debt.” I'd like to see the look on the credit manager's face. [Laughter] I'd like to see what he would say to his fellow workers in his office afterwards. “We just had the biggest kook of the whole Christmas season come in.” [Laughter] “Tried to get out of his debt theologically, saying that he was a Christian and believed in substitution and because he believed in substitution he realized exactly how much he owed us and how much we wanted it, and said he was sure that we would accept that as payment. To realize a debt is not the



same thing as to pay a debt. It is all the difference in the world and I just suggest that the professor ought to have spent a little money at Sakowitz. He wouldn't have written his book like he wrote it.

Well, it's not quite as simple as that, but nevertheless when the Lord Jesus said, “I lay down my life for the sheep,” he means he gave himself voluntarily. He means he gave himself as a substitute, and he means also that he had paid the debt, his life, a satisfaction. He has satisfied the claims of a holy God against men.

Now there are other kinds of people who claim that they are shepherds too. So he speaks of them. He says in verse 12 and verse 13, “He that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.” In the original text at this point, the terms that our Lord uses of these false shepherds are such that you could almost call them no-shepherds. These no-shepherds, what about these no-shepherds? What are they interested in? Well they are interested in what they are paid. Jesus calls them hirelings. There are many people who stand in the pulpit of our churches in many of our independent and in many of our denominational churches who are interested in the money that they obtain from the ministry from the word of God. They are hirelings.

The Lord Jesus had in mind when he spoke about wolves, the Pharisees who were intruders into the priesthood. He had in mind hireling priests who should have stood for the truth and should not have relinquished their position to the Pharisees because the priests were those who were supposed to have knowledge. But they were interested not so much in the sheep as they were interested in what they obtained from the people for the exercise of their office. Jesus calls them hirelings. “He that is a hireling and not the shepherd whose own the sheep are not when he sees the wolf coming,” when he sees those coming who are going to prey on the flock, he flees. He doesn't protect the flock. He doesn't keep preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and proclaiming the message by which men alone can be saved, but he trims his message. He makes it agree with the thought of the time. He makes it the kind of message that men will approve and thus he is unfaithful

to the Lord God and unfaithful to those who are given into his hands. That’s one reason why I hope in Believers Chapel as long as this church exists that from the pulpit shall be preached pure gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. May their never be any hireling preachers who stand behind the pulpit here.

Now Jesus says, “The hireling flees because he is an hireling and careth not for the sheep.” The apostle warned about this too when he was speaking to the Ephesian elders in the 20th chapter of the book of Acts when he called them down to Miletus. He spoke in the 28th verse,

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost has appointed you (bishops or) overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”

So Paul warned the elders and through the elders those who were in the care of the elders that false teachers, wolves, would come in afterwards, not sparing the flock, and furthermore ultimately of themselves would arise those who would speak perverse things in order to draw away disciples after them. Faithless shepherds, the faithful shepherd is the one who gives his life for the sheep.

Now coming to the last two verses of the section, the Lord Jesus lays stress on the fullness of mutual knowledge that exists between the shepherd and the sheep. This is one of the most magnificent portions in the Gospel of John. In fact I had intended to give just one message on this section beginning at verse 11 through verse 21, and then this week after I had already given Ms. Ray the titles for the next two or three weeks, I came in and told her, “No this passage is just too important. We’re going to have a message on verse 11 through verse 15 and then next Sunday, one message on verse 16 which is extremely important eschatologically and also for the total program of God, and finally another on verse 17 through verse 21. But this is a passage in which we have three

important things stressed by the Lord. First of all he stresses again that he is the good shepherd, “I am the good shepherd.” “I’m the beautiful shepherd.” I’m the noble shepherd.” And notice he puts it in the terms of deity. “I am.” He’s the shepherd beautiful. What does that mean?

Well first of all he’s the owner of the sheep. He’s the caretaker of the sheep too. And the thing about the Lord God as shepherd that is so wonderful is this. He is never off duty. He does not have holidays. No holiday weekend, no holiday for Christmas, no holiday for New Years. No eight to five hours. He is always on duty. The shepherd of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. So he’s the noble shepherd, never off duty.

He provides for the sheep. He even provides for the sheep when they don't know they need providing for. Have you ever noticed that statement in Psalm 23? “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures?” It’s so hard to get sheep to lie down. It’s so hard to get Christians to stay quiet for a while and study the word of God. “He maketh me to lie down.” He even cares for me in that way too. He’s the leader of the sheep. He’s the defender of the sheep, and did you notice too he doesn't say, “I am a shepherd,” but “I am the noble shepherd.” There is no other shepherd such as our Lord. And did you notice this too? He does not experience any shame whatsoever in calling himself the shepherd of sheep such as we are. I’ve seen preachers who are embarrassed to say they are they are pastors of a certain congregation. I’ve understood something of what they’ve spoken about because there are some congregations that have groups of people in them that are far from being what God intended flocks should be, but the Lord Jesus is not ashamed to call us his sheep. Imagine it. He’s not ashamed to speak of us as being part of his flock. Now if I looked at us I would say, “Well maybe I better be a little ashamed of being the shepherd of me, but he is not ashamed to be my shepherd. He’s not ashamed to be our shepherd. In fact he seems to delight in it. For about four or five times through this section, and all through it he stresses it. He says that he is the noble shepherd of the flock. No shame about being our shepherd, in fact he seems to rejoice in it. Such a great shepherd we have.

Mr. Spurgeon was right when he said, “Creation is too small a frame in which to hang his likeness. You may square the circle before you can set forth Christ in the language of mortal men. He is inconceivably above our conceptions and unutterably beyond our utterances.” “I am the good shepherd.” That’s the first thing. He’s the complete shepherd.

Notice too that there is a complete knowledge that exists between the shepherd and the sheep. It’s like the knowledge that exists between the shepherd and the Father in heaven. Listen as he says, “I’m the good shepherd and I know my sheep and I am known by my sheep like my Father knows me and like I know the Father.” So I know the sheep and my sheep know me, like I know the Father and like the Father knows me. What an amazing thing. Think about that for a moment. He knows us, first of all, as the Father knows him. Well now there is no question but that the Father knows the Son perfectly. Now he knows us as the Father knows him. That means he knows our number. He didn't have to look down through the years and say, “I see that countless multitudes are going to come to the Son of God by the preaching of the gospel, some out of every kindred tongue and nation. I will choose them.” He knows all of the sheep, all the number of them.

In fact in this very chapter he will say later on, “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, neither shall anyone pluck them out of my hand.” He knows the sheep perfectly. Now he knows us as the Father knows him. The Father knows him perfectly. He knows us perfectly. He knows all of us, and he knows the number of us, and he knows all of our persons. He knows our feelings. He knows our fears. He knows our frights. He knows our trials. In fact every thought that has ever passed through your mind, even that one at the very moment is one that is perfectly known to him, and not only now but from ages past. He knows what sore temptations mean for he has felt the same, but he also knows them because he is the eternal Son. He knows us as the Father knows him.

But now think of this. This is the other side. We know him as he knows the Father. Isn't that amazing? Think about that for a moment. Look at that text. “As the Father knoweth me and I

know the Father.” So I know my sheep and my sheep know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. He knows us as the Father knows him. We know him as he knows the Father.

Now wait a minute, he knows the Father infinitely doesn't he? He knows everything there is about the Father. Do we know everything there is about Christ? No. Then how can he say we know him as he knows the Father. Obviously this is not something quantitative. It must be something qualitative. He means we have the same kind of knowledge of him as the kind of knowledge that he has of the Father. What is the knowledge that he has of the Father? What kind of knowledge is it?

Well they delight in the same things. They have sympathy and empathy with reference to the same things. They have a unity of purpose and design, and there is also the knowledge of infinite trust, trust, the trust that the Son has in the Father. We know him as he knows the Father. We delight in the things of God. Christians delight in the things of God. They are failing believers always. We are always failing. The world can look at us and find many flaws and faults in us, can always find flaws and faults in us. We're always sinful. There are always aspects of our character that need the ministry of the Holy Spirit. But there is one fundamental thing that is different from the saints and the world. It is that there is a relationship with the Lord in heaven. There is a delight in the things of God. And so there is the delight in the things of Christ.

We know him as he knows the Father in that qualitative sense of the knowledge of delight in the holy things of the Lord God, the knowledge of unity, the knowledge of trust. We have that kind of knowledge. It marks out Christians. When the gospel is preached there is a response in the heart of the believer that is different from the response in the heart of the unbeliever. There is a delight in the gospel that Christians manifest that non-Christians know nothing about. There is also a measure of trust in the Lord that is different from the experience of the non-believer. It is that which distinguishes a believer from a non-believer. There is also a love for the brethren, not perfectly expressed, but a love for the brethren that is different from the relationship that the non-believers have to believers. If you were to come in here this morning and you were a true believer, you might

find many things wrong with this sermon, many things wrong with the way in which it was delivered, but it would be possible for you to go out and say, “Well, it was good that I was there because Christ was preached.” But it’s possible for you to enter into a building such as this and hear a message with an open Bible in front, a message beautifully delivered, stylishly delivered, delivered in the best of taste and to go out and say, “It was not good for me to be there because there was no Christ in it.” There is all the difference in the world between a message which is a beautiful message and one in which the Lord Jesus Christ is in it. For the Christian it’s the thing that distinguishes that which is good from that which is not.

I love the story that Mr. Spurgeon tells about a time in his life when he was having trouble with the things of the Lord, about his own faith, and he had taken off for a while to think through things. He had come into a period of time in which he had some self-doubts, and he said he went out to hear a message in a little chapel. He said, “A man got up who was a layman to preach that morning and he preached a sermon,” and he said, “I made my handkerchief sodden with the tears that I wept during that sermon.” He said it really touched my heart and afterwards I went up to the man and shook his hand and just said, “I want to thank you for the message that you’ve given.” The man turned to Mr. Spurgeon and said, “Thank you sir,” and “What’s your name?” He said, “Charles Hadden Spurgeon.” He said the man turned all kinds of colors. He said, “Mr. Spurgeon that was your own sermon.” [Laughter] And Mr. Spurgeon said, “Of course I knew it was my own sermon, but I just want you to know that I received a tremendous blessing from it and it was a tremendous blessing for me to realize that the things that I had preached to others were things that comforted me when I needed comfort too.”

I always think of the story in Spurgeon’s college when one of the students in the homiletics class preached a sermon, and when he finished his sermon the homiletics professor said, “Sir, that sermon you derived from Mr. Spurgeon.” The young man said, “No, I didn’t.” And he said, “Yes you did.” And he said, “No I didn’t.” And the professor was so certain that he was not telling the truth, he said, “I want to take you in and have you speak to Mr. Spurgeon.” So he went in and the

professor explained things, and Mr. Spurgeon turned to the young man and said, “Well son, where did you get the sermon?” He said, “Well I got it,” I’ve forgotten the name of the man, but he said, “I got it from David Dixon,” and Mr. Spurgeon turned to the professor and he said, “He’s right. That’s where I got it.” [Laughter] Well anyway it’s a comforting thing to know that when the Lord Jesus Christ is mentioned in the message it means something to the saints.

Now finally he says in verse 15, “I lay down my life for the sheep.” Any man can die. Only Jesus Christ can lay down his life for the sheep. Four times he says it. It’s almost like it’s the chorus of his personal, pastoral hymn. “I lay down my life for the sheep.” Now I want you to notice that he says he lays down his life for the sheep. Now, I know that there is quite a bit of controversy in the Christian church from time to time on whether the Lord’s death is a general atoning death or whether it’s particular. That is did Jesus Christ come with a purpose design of dying for all men, to save all men or did he come with the design and purpose of saving the elect? Good men have held both positions. I think the better position is that he came to die with the design of saving the elect; otherwise we have a frustrated deity who tries to do something which he is unable to accomplish.

Now there are many plausible reasons why on the supposition of a personal and definite atonement universal expressions might be used. For example, it might be helpful to illustrate the fact that the redemption of Christ is suited for all men, and therefore to say he died for the world, or that it is sufficient for all men and he died for the world, or that it is offered to all men that he died for the world, that the elect are chosen out of every family, kindred, tongue and nation, that the elect are both Jews and Gentiles. So from time to time we should expect these universal expressions to show that his death was not simply for Jews but also for Gentiles. He died for the world. “God so loved the world, (Jews and Gentiles) that he gave his only begotten Son.”

Now we can understand then why general expressions might be used if the Bible teaches a particularly redemption. But we cannot give any plausible reason whatsoever for the use of definite language if the Bible teaches a general atonement. There is no point at all in saying, “If Christ did come to die to save all men, why he should say he died for the sheep.” It’s obvious that if he died

for all he died for the sheep. So to say he died for the sheep is to say nothing at all if the Bible teaches he came with the design and purpose of dying and saving all men. No sense whatsoever in saying he died for the sheep. So when the Scriptures say, “He gave his life for the sheep,” the definiteness and the particular design of the atonement is set out. We do not have a frustrated deity. We have a deity who has accomplished his purpose. He has laid down his life for the sheep. Later on in verse 26 and 27 the Lord Jesus will say, “But ye believe not because ye are not my sheep as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.” So he’s the good shepherd, the shepherd beautiful. He laid down his life for the sheep. Finding the sheep in peril, he has in his atonement given them eternal hope in his sacrificial satisfaction.

Why should anyone refuse to come to a shepherd like this? That is the constant puzzle of humanity. Why anyone should want to turn away from this shepherd, the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep, who covenants to care for them and all of the circumstances of life and finally bring them into the presence of the Triune God for time and eternity, why should not every sheep want such a shepherd? And yet the Bible says there was a division again among the Jews for these sayings.

Where do you stand with reference to the shepherd? Are you one of the sheep? Is there that knowledge of communion and union that means that you delight in the things of the Lord, that you have the sense of the forgiveness of your sins, of relationship to him? If you don't may God help you to come to the shepherd? Perhaps like Peter you'll be able to say, “We were his sheep going astray. I was as a sheep going astray, but I've returned to the shepherd and bishop of my soul.” Come to Christ. Return to the great shepherd, the great overseer of our souls. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father we are so grateful to Thee of these magnificent words of the Lord Jesus Christ, so authoritative for they come from the divine Son, so sufficient for us, for he lays down his life for the sheep, so wonderful in the care and solicitude expressed by them, a shepherd who owns



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and cares for the sheep. We are surely blessed. Lord, if there should be someone here who does not know him as the shepherd, may at this very moment they lift their hearts to Thee and give Thee thanks for the blood that was shed on Calvary’s cross...

**[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**