

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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September 19, 2010

Volume 30, # 38

The Shepherd and His Sheep

Modern sheep herding, especially in Europe and America, is very different from the way sheep were managed in bible times. While the trained sheep dog is a fixture on ranches in our world, it was not the case in the time of our Lord.

We must look to the word of God to understand the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep in order to understand our relationship to the Good Shepherd as the sheep of his flock.

When sheep were not in the pasture with the shepherd they were kept in a common pen with sheep from other flocks. They were watched over by a hired person. When the shepherd came to the pen he was allowed in by the doorkeeper.

The shepherd carried a staff or shepherd's crook which was long and had a hooked end that could be used for pulling individual sheep out of a group or to discipline a sheep that constantly went astray. They also carried a rod or some kind of defensive weapon to use as personal protection and to prevent predators from attacking the flock. In some cases they carried a sling like the one used by David in his encounter with Goliath. The shepherd used the sling to cast rocks in front of

straying sheep to guide them back to the flock and to cast stones at predators.

Consider the first 4 verses of the 23rd psalm, Psalm 95:7-9, and the words of Christ from John 10. These passages show us how to understand this relationship.

Psalm 23:1-4: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Psalm 95:7-9: "For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work."

John 10 (selected verses): "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers... I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pastures... I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. 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... 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... But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. 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 any man pluck them out of my hand."

The shepherd knows his sheep, calls his sheep out of a common pen to his own place where he cares for them, protects them and provides them with pasture and water.

The sheep hear the shepherd's voice and come to him. They follow him as he leads them by his word to pasture and water. The sheep submit to the care and correction of the shepherd. They pass under his staff and he corrects their flaws and wounds. The sheep are not scattered by predators because they have the shepherd who will lay down his life to protect them.

Our role as the sheep of his flock is to come out of the world according to his word. We must follow him through his word as he feeds us and provides us with living water. He provides us with correction and even discipline through the provisions he has made for us. We must submit to that in order to be safe and free from defects that would work us harm. He has warned us about all the things in this world that would lead us astray. We must heed his warnings to remain safe. He has laid down his life to save us from our worst enemy, our own sin.

Blessed be the Good Shepherd.

—Glenn Bollman

Hide It Under A Bushel? No!

The book of Acts is a book of conversions. It is the historical record of the apostles fulfilling the Great Commission of Christ, "go into all the world and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15). They did so in Jerusalem, Samaria, Caesarea, and in the uttermost parts of the world. They did so with great success.

In Acts 16, Paul and Silas were on the Second Missionary Journey and came to Troas. There, Paul received a vision in the night of a man who said, "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9). They set course immediately. While in Philippi, a leading city of Macedonia, they taught and baptized Lydia and her household. This initial success was quickly countered with an altercation with the local law enforcement. Though Paul and Silas were put in jail, they were not set free from their responsibility to preach the gospel of Christ.

Jesus said to "let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). Everyone has a light, one that is not meant for hiding but shining. Never is this more clearly seen than through Paul and Silas' behavior in their dark prison cell.

What can we learn from their shining example?

You will face many temptations to turn your off your light. Paul and Silas had every right to be discouraged. Their robes torn off of them, they were beaten with rods with "many blows," thrown into the inner prison, the most secure cell, and their feet fastened in stocks (Acts 16:22-24). This was a device used to spread the legs as far apart as possible, to ensure cramps and discomfort. What was their reaction in all of this? Did they grumble and complain? Did they threaten to quit or surrender? "But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God" (Acts 16:25). Their candles were literally burning the midnight oil.

The darkest times are when you must shine even brighter. Your attitude reveals a great deal about your character. Christians ought to be people who respond differently to tragedy and calamity than the rest of the world. We see the bigger picture. We know God is still in control. We believe He has the power to work everything together for good.

Paul and Silas were singing "hymns of praise" in prison. It's as if they were thanking God for the privilege of persecution. When disaster strikes, don't look for the "off" switch. Press "on."

You never know who can see your light. The Lord was not the only one hearing their prayers and songs. "And the prisoners were listening to them" (Acts 16:25). The sounds in their cell were as important as the words of their sermons on the streets. Remember, Paul and Silas had received a vision to go to Macedonia,

concluding that God had called them to go preach the gospel there. And they were not about to quit preaching. Even in jail, they saw an opportunity to turn these prisoners into bond-servants of Jesus Christ.

People are watching you, too. In your neighborhood, in your classes, on your team, at your work. They notice that you are different. They don't hear the same words coming out of your mouth that they hear from other people. They don't see you going the same places and participating in the same activities as those in the world. Or do they...?

God has called all of us to preach. Not just with our words but with our example, how we live our lives. The purpose of letting your light shine is so men will "see your good works and glorify your Father" (Matt. 5:16). They've already seen plenty of bad ones. Give them something good to watch. Let them see Him who is source of light.

You can't be a light without sending the light. Souls were saved the night Paul and Silas shone. After the earthquake that shook the foundations of the prison, the jailer awoke to find all the doors opened. When he learned that none of the prisoners had escaped, he ran and fell before the feet of Paul and Silas and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved" (Acts 16:30)? The jailer must have been listening to their songs and prayers along with the prisoners. He went to them with a question he knew they could answer. He could see that they were living the kind of life they were preaching about.

You have souls to rescue, souls to save. Make sure that people know where to find you. If they can make no distinction between you and the rest of the world enslaved to sin, what reason would they have to ask you about salvation (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15)? And make certain you're prepared for the opportunity. Paul and Silas "spoke the word of the Lord to him" that night (Acts 16:32). How much would their flame had been extinguished had they not been able to answer his question of eternal life?

There are some people whom you alone can reach. Be sure to leave the light on for them.

The same jailer who had fastened the feet of Paul and Silas in the stocks was baptized and set free from the bondage of sin. Think about him the next time you are tempted to hide your light under a bushel.

—Bubba Garner

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- > It is better to be faithful than famous.
 - > Lost time is never found again.
 - > To be almost saved is to be totally lost.
 - > Nothing ruins the truth like stretching it.
 - > Ships never sent out never come in.
 - > Some folks' minds are like concrete, thoroughly mixed up and permanently set.
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