

## **The Great Shepherd**

“The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in 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. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Amen.

Hebrews 13 is the last chapter of that book, in which he is giving the last salutations or last words of the letter. It is right before “grace to you” or right after this where he says, “I have written just a few exhortations, bear the word of this exhortation.” To us it seems like a long book in the Bible, but to him there is so much more to say. So in this concluding concept where he is thinking about everything that has been shared, there is a phrase in verse 20 that I wanted to use today. The description of the Lord is that He is the great Shepherd, and we will see that in this passage.

V. 20-21: “But the God of peace, who brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, in the power of the blood of the eternal covenant, perfect you in every good work in the doing of his will, doing in you what is pleasing before him through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for the ages of ages. Amen.

In the passage in John 10 there is a certain part of it that he is saying there are other folds, but he is going to bring them altogether into one flock. One thing that he says is, “There will be one flock and one Shepherd,” just as we read in Psalm 23: “The Lord is my shepherd.”

Let’s pray together:

Lord, we bring Your Word to You and to our hearts. Lord, we pray as you are near to our hearts and near to our mouths and not far from us and not difficult that You would feed us. You would break the bread, and You would distribute to us that we would be fully satisfied with our Lord, and we could find You and feed on You. We pray that you would meet with us today in all of our various places and all of our needs and all of our spots where You are leading us. Lord, we pray that You would lead us as our great Shepherd, that You would meet with us in this time and fellowship with us. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

In this Hebrew 13 passage, as he is concluding and talking about the God of peace, this is the Father. It is the Father who brought the Son from the dead. So now the God of peace who raised Him from the dead and the way He describes Him is that He is the great Shepherd. It says that He brought Him, our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd, from the dead, and He did this by the power of the blood of the eternal covenant.

## **The Person of Our Lord**

As we consider our Lord as the great Shepherd, the first aspect of it is in the Person of our Lord Himself. I think we would all agree that He is great. In a way when you think of great, and

we know from the book of Hebrews there is this struggle between what is good and what is better. There are good things even from the old covenant, but this eternal covenant that the Lord has brought in is better. There are some good shepherds from the past, such as Moses, who was a shepherd, and he did well. And there are many who have done this work, but there is the great Shepherd. There is something different with what the Lord has done. There is the covenant that was from God, such as the covenant with Israel, but there is the eternal covenant, this new covenant. Even with Israel they found out that they did not fulfill their part of the covenant so well. In Jeremiah 31 he mentions that a new covenant is coming, and this covenant depends on the Lord one hundred percent. If they choose Him as their God, then He will be their God. But instead this One is all based on Him, and because of His blood of that eternal covenant He can bring us into something not by anything that we have done, not by us keeping ourselves there, but this eternal covenant is all packaged in the great Shepherd. So because of the greatness of His work on the cross the blood that He shed is better than Abel's blood as it says in the book of Hebrews. It speaks to us better because Abel's blood can condemn you. "You slew Abel, and now his blood is buried in the ground, and it cries out from the ground, letting God know that murder has happened." It is the type of blood that shows unrighteousness has happened, but that is not wrong to expose unrighteousness. But the Lord's blood forgives unrighteousness. He died for our sins. So this great Shepherd of ours is not just who He is and how He rose from the dead, and He is greater than all because He is alive and He does not die, but He is also bringing us into His eternal covenant. So we experience Him as our great Shepherd. We experience Him in a different way than if anyone else tried to be our shepherd.

### **The Great High Priest**

Hebrews 7 is talking about the Lord and comparing Him as the great High Priest. Just before verse 25 it is describing the other priests, but they kept dying. However, the Lord has been raised from the dead and He ever lives. He is always alive, and He is able to save us a hundred percent, to save us completely. Whoever approaches God by Him, He is able to save completely because He is alive and He is interceding for us. So part of His greatness in this way is that not only in the past did He provide the eternal covenant and die for us with the blood, but by the blood of the eternal covenant God raised Him from the dead, and He is alive right now. And part of His greatness is that He is currently shepherding us. There is one flock right now and one Shepherd. Our Lord is our Shepherd.

### **The Shepherd Prays for Our Complete Salvation**

When we say the Lord is my Shepherd, it is actually true, and He is alive and has been praying for us today. He has been praying for us this week. It is amazing when you hear of somebody you barely know, and they were praying for you. How much it encourages you! But when you know that the Lord, who does know you really well and you are getting to know Him pretty well, He is praying for you, and He actually knows what He is praying. He is praying for us to come through to a complete salvation. There is such a great salvation that He has prepared for us. Actually, in the book of Hebrews He uses that term: "Don't neglect so great of a salvation." But in His prayers for us as the great High Priest He is praying, and He is working and shepherding us, leading us into something that is beyond us. He has on His mind something so great that He is after.

Another part of His greatness is how He is shepherding us. It is actually amazing because the salvation that He has for us is so great that it is not just a past thing that I am saved from hell. That is pretty good; that is pretty great, we would say. But He is saving us right now if you use the word like the Bible does; He is delivering us. He is freeing us and delivering us from regular things that come up in our lives: "The Lord just snatched me out of that little bit of fire, so He must have been praying for me and preserving me right then." He is currently saving us all the time. He is praying and delivering us, and He is working in us that eternal salvation. He is bringing it to the forefront of our lives. He is actually delivering us not just in our spirit from eternal death, but He is also delivering all of that oddness in our souls that does not match up with God. He is delivering us from all of those things that are so corrupted with sin and darkness; He is saving our souls. He is working and working to fix our emotional mess, our mental distress, and our stubborn wills. He is working with us and delivering us. He is currently this great Shepherd, working right now. He has a staff with the hook, and He is holding us back sometimes from falling into a ditch. He has His shepherd's rod that He discipline us with, but He is also blocking off the wolves and lions and other things that come in against us. He is protecting us. The Lord is the Warrior who fights for us. We just stand still and watch Him as our great Shepherd who is saving us and shepherding us right now.

He also has this plan in mind in eternity. Sometimes you think this is the life, but it never matches up all the way. You are always thinking this is not the life. This cannot be what God has in mind all the way. It is the life when I am in His presence and I feel, "Yes, this is the life." But then when it gets back down to daily living and problems are happening, and we see all of these sad things happening in the earth, we realize this is not what God intended for this world or for me. This is not heaven; this is not it. This is not even earth in eternity. This is a mess.

So we see that in His great salvation, in His great plan, there is a future salvation. Even the word 'salvation' is used that way. There is a redemption of our bodies that is coming. Our bodies begin to break down or we have problems and limitations. There is a salvation that is so great that in the future He delivers us from this body that is going to die one day. He delivers us completely from that and gives us a new body, a resurrection body like His that will never die.

Along with that package He removes even our sin problem. There is a time coming when we will not struggle with sin, and surely that is a great Shepherd. He is leading us into a future that is so great that we will be able to live the way inwardly that we so desire. It is so amazing where He is taking us, and there is a time coming where you will be delivered all the way from all struggles. It will not just be by His grace that you overcame; it will be that the whole temptation is removed. In that new body that old sin nature is just gone. All that we have inherited from Adam, all that we have been born into originally, and all that we have been overcoming and learning, He is delivering us from daily; all of that is gone. We have made our eternal choice that we are going to follow the Lord, and in that day there is no turning back, there is no temptation. What an amazing Shepherd! That is where He is taking us.

### **The Lord's People are Created for Good Works**

Let's take a step back of where He is taking us. "May the God of peace, the One who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, ..." All that is in view here is the great Shepherd, but what the

God of peace is going to do is perfect us, to mature us unto every good work. He is going to so mature us and work in us to do these good works to the doing of His will. And in the doing of His will right here it says, "It is what is pleasing before God through Jesus Christ." There is something that He is doing in us. This is like in Ephesians 2:10, "You are his workmanship, you are created in Christ Jesus to do good works." The salvation is great; our Shepherd is great, but He is also working something in us; there is something for us to do. He is maturing us to do something that is according to His will. This great Shepherd is so great that the shepherding work He is doing is to bring us into doing it with Him.

The things for us to do as the body of Christ have to do with our great Shepherd bringing His one flock all the way through in this eternal covenant. There is something that He has for us to do. We are created in Christ Jesus, therefore we are going to do it through Jesus Christ. It is going to please the Father because it is the great Shepherd's work. It is His eternal work that He is doing. He has got this plan, and He actually has an end goal that He is going after, and He wants us to be part of it. In a way, if you see Him as the great Shepherd, if I can borrow it for a second, He is not just talking about this passage, but in a sense He wants us to understand what He is after. It is almost like in I Corinthians 12 where it is describing the body of Christ and he says, "This is *the* Christ." There are many members, many parts and they are all working together just so is *the* Christ. It is not just the body of Christ; it is the body and the Head altogether, and you see this whole package of Christ, not just Christ the Man in glory who is at the right hand of the Father in the third heaven, ruling over all, but He is the Head over His body, the body of Christ, and we are all part of Christ, and thus we have *the* Christ. We have the great Shepherd. If I can use that phrase in that way to see that in His greatness He has brought us into Himself, and through Him we have something to do with His great work of shepherding. We have some part to play. We are actually part of Him. That is kind of what He is doing with all of this. This is what pleases the Father. It is for a reason; it is for the will of God. We are working our works unto the will of God, and the way that we are doing our works, as He is maturing us, is through Jesus Christ. It is Him through us, and if you can see that, then you see how great He is. It is actually one Shepherd, but He works through us. That was Him as the Shepherd, but it came through a person. The Lord has shepherded us all of our Christian lives, and even before that He was seeking us and saving us as the good Shepherd.

The way He has been shepherding us we feel is so direct, but it is because He is the one Shepherd. If you take a look back you see that much of it has been through people, through His church or through some individuals. If ones have done it right, either way the Lord is going to work it to where we recognize it as the great Shepherd doing His work. If we work with the Lord the right way, all of us will see the one Shepherd, and we will not be caught up in the people that help us no matter how great they are and however much they reflect the Shepherd. What we notice is Christ and Him helping us. We can say the Lord gave me grace through what this person shared, through this prayer that this one prayed, but it was the Lord as the great Shepherd because we know it is through Jesus Christ to whom be the glory for the ages of ages. By recognizing that He is the great Shepherd working through people, He actually gains the glory over all, and that is how it works because we see that He that Shepherd.

## **The Lord is the Chief Shepherd**

A while back we looked into this term from I Peter, 'the chief Shepherd.' I want to get a little more specific for a second just to show how great our great Shepherd is. The concept that we got into with the chief Shepherd was that He is the main Shepherd; He is the Chief. He is the Lord over all who does any kind of shepherding. He is the chief Shepherd; He is the King Shepherd. So even though others are called to do shepherding, we are all called to help each other and care for one another, and some are called to do a lot more shepherding or a greater measure of it. Nevertheless, we are always finding Him as the Chief. There is an aspect of a shepherd in which the sheep know his voice and they follow him. That part of it only belongs to the chief Shepherd. You get to recognize His voice through other people, but it is His voice when they talk. That is my chief Shepherd. Even though the Lord is using them as His body, and they are doing something, My sheep hear My voice, and my sheep follow Me. We are only following Him, we are never following another person who is being used to do some shepherding. So that was some of that concept. And it is especially important that the place where that phrase is mentioned in I Peter is because Peter is talking to other fellow elders. You know, Peter was like an elder in Jerusalem. He said, "Elders, I have this exhortation to you as shepherds; don't do it as lording it over them because the one Lord is the chief Shepherd. Don't do it like that or in some selfish way." As he goes on to encourage them to shepherd, he mentions the chief Shepherd. Now earlier in I Peter he also talked about the Lord as the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. So that term is also used.

## **Overseers**

Now overseer is something used as a description or another name for what we call elders. In the King James Bible it says, 'bishop', but bishops are overseers. That is just another term used interchangeably for elders. Even there you see that work of the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. The overseer concept is that we use the term 'responsible.' It is that thought of overseeing or caring for what is going on, but it is like a shepherd's concept; He is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. So it should be linked together with shepherding. So there is this thought with that term 'overseer' that is used more for the action of an elder. The title of elder is used more like a title of authority, and what it means has more to do with being spiritually mature, at least more mature than the rest of us. But the overseeing is more of that function, and it is especially tied to shepherding, as they are exhorted there with Peter.

Also, when Paul talked to the elders in Ephesus, he gave them some last words in Acts 20: "I am not going to see you again." But he did exhort them to shepherd the flock: "Watch out for the wolves." So that call to shepherd went to them.

Sometimes with us in the church, we may see a person, who is overseeing, shepherding and caring, but the temptation is to miss the chief Shepherd, the chief Overseer. Now this is something specific I wanted to mention because I think it shows the greatness of our Shepherd. When we go through and study church leaders in the Bible, what we find is a group of elders or a presbytery or elderhood set up in different churches. And there is a reason for it because the temptation to find one shepherd is really in us to latch onto a person and expect all of the goodness to come from him. But it will actually ruin the Lord's sheep because we would become

lazy and expect all of the work of shepherding to come from one leader. A lot of times we would call a church leader such as the pastor, which is a term for a shepherd, and unfortunately whoever gets that title also gets all of the burden with it. They get the chief Shepherd burden, and those poor guys work their hearts out. Even if they do not have a second job, even if they are not working forty hours a week, there is just not enough time. If you have fifty believers there is not enough time to do the work of the chief Shepherd. It is just impossible, and it is always that way. They are always worn out and spent because the unfortunate carnal mind-set of us believers is that we want a king instead of the Lord as the King. We want someone whom we can call 'my shepherd.' "There is my shepherd right there." But it is no shame to tell somebody that the Lord is my Pastor, the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. I am not lacking because I do not have a shepherd because I do have many shepherds. There are many shepherds, but they are all under the chief Shepherd. It is actually the higher ground. It is the more scriptural ground.

I was talking to some people in another church, and there was some embarrassment among them because people kept visiting their church and saying, "Where is your shepherd? Where is your pastor? You all are missing something." But when they stayed for a church meeting, there was a guy who was a leader over pastors that was visiting. He was in a certain denomination, and he was there to help, but he walked away saying, "I think you all have found something better." He did not know how to explain it, but he found that they did have a Shepherd, and they were being shepherded even though no one was named as the chief shepherd. No one had that title except the Lord, and that is how they explained it to him. I think that is something absolutely beautiful in the Scriptures of the greatness of our Shepherd while He is working. Even though He needs to raise up leaders in the church because He needs to call them to do an extra measure of shepherding of the more difficult stuff. While He does that, He does it with a team. He does it with a group of them so that way the burden of the chief Shepherd never falls on just one. And that greatness of our Lord, in which He wants to work through all of us, is always happening on a church level. It is always in His greatness that He reserves His right to be the one Shepherd. He will not entrust anyone of us to another person even if for three months you are helping a believer really thoroughly, and the Lord is using you a lot in shepherding work. Hopefully you are doing it by the Lord's grace. You are praying for them and doing it through Jesus Christ. But the greatness of our Shepherd is that you are just temporary in all that you are doing in constantly leading them to the great Shepherd. You are constantly leading them to Christ. Where are you taking them to? If you are shepherding them, where are they going? you are taking them to Christ. They are feeding on Christ. They are discovering that the Lord is my Shepherd. Once they have discovered that and they start to directly work with the Lord, they are a little bit in what the Scriptures call 'established,' and they are beginning to follow the Shepherd. Therefore, you can back off just a little bit.

Even in church groups in the New Testament, part of the establishing of these church groups was that they found a way to the Shepherd. They needed some help right in the beginning, a lot of help sometimes, but in the establishing of them there was also the establishing of those church leaders. It is because they were set up to where some have found *the* Shepherd and He is shepherding through them. That is why they are established. Some are connected to the Shepherd, and He is working through them so they no longer require that temporary help.

Instead if we work according to our own style, it is like one who starts a business and then leaves it for someone else to enjoy. Or you start a business and then you grow your empire. Who starts a church and then goes somewhere else? Who is doing all that work like the apostle Paul, and then he is just gone entrusting it to who? He entrusts it to the Lord Himself because it was never his to begin with. The Lord is always the Shepherd. Part of this greatness is that however much we are involved, it is the Lord through us, and He is the great Shepherd. He has been shepherding us, and He is wanting to shepherd through us.

So the other person in the Scriptures that you might argue in name as a pastor is in Ephesians 4. I mentioned this briefly, but I just want to mention it in a more specific way. I think this shows how great the Shepherd is in that He does not entrust His sheep to anyone as a shepherd in a titled way, in a sense. So even in Ephesians 4 there is this revelation of the growth of the body of Christ growing up to the Head. This is part of God's purpose that as we mature into the Head He is using the whole body to minister to itself, building itself up to the Head. So there is this work through everyone in the church.

### **Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds, Teachers**

Before that, it says that He has given some to equip those saints. That is when he mentions the apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers. He says, some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers. We can say that the evangelists do evangelism, but they also inspire us or equip us. If you are around an evangelist preaching the Gospel, you get swept up into their flow and anointing and say, "I want to preach the Gospel too." And then us non evangelists just start doing it a little because they equip us. We get encouraged, even when you watch a video of an evangelistic outreach or somebody witnessing, you are like: "Yes," you are equipped a little bit.

Even with the prophets, there are odd times when an Agrabus is going through giving a futuristic prophecy, and he tells about a famine that is coming. The Lord uses that in a special way in order for the saints to prepare. But most of the prophesying happens through us believers as it says in I Corinthians 14, "All may prophesy." And he explains that what you are doing is sharing comforting words; you are sharing edifying words. You are consoling by sharing the words of the Lord that are helpful for this moment. What is the voice of the Lord right now?

So what are those prophets in Ephesians 4 doing? They are equipping, and hopefully in all of their prophesying like with Barnabas as they are sharing with him it is such encouragement and he is called the son of encouragement. So the saints also learn how to share encouraging words with each other which means we are all doing a little bit. I just bring that up because with those shepherds and teachers the point is not to give these shepherds and then scatter them around so there is a shepherd in every church. The point is that there is some equipping going on with some who have some measure of gifting that has to do with shepherding and teaching.

Now it seems like from the Scripture because the word 'some' is not there all the way through, that the last two are packaged together. So maybe there are four kind of things mentioned here. But I think also it is helpful to distinguish shepherds and teachers. So there is a reason why there is two words there. Maybe it is kind of like a range almost. It is one package

that is meant to always go together, but it is not like a perfect balance almost. Some you can see are really of a greater measure on the side of shepherding. But in order to do that in a gifted way there needs to be a little bit of teaching that is with clarity to actually get to those green pastures that are really green. But in that case it has to be more one on one or small groups especially. It does not need to be in a place like Solomon's Porch and a longer teaching or where Paul teaches all night or something like that. But probably there has to be a little bit of teaching. For example, all of the elders in the Scriptures are exhorted to shepherd. So it seems likely that some measure of that gifting is always there with those called into that elderhood.

Also, one of the requirements mentioned among them is that they should be apt to teach, able to teach. Now I would say if the gifting of shepherding is there, there has to be on that spectrum of teaching at least the ability to teach. That means like one on one to help somebody come through into a teaching. It has more to do with a shepherding type of thing. It is helping someone to understand it in a dialogue type of way and not always where you are explaining for five or ten minutes. It is like a back and forth in a shepherding type of way. So with that range there may be some who are elders, and they have at least some bit of shepherding. If you are teaching something without a little bit of a shepherding heart or that shepherding flavor to it, it will be like dry grass. Sometimes we think of teaching like that; it is a dead teaching. "Please don't teach." It is like pulling a book off the shelf that is a teaching, but it is not the living word for this time. It is not according to our needs for grass. It is something like Bermuda grass. I used to mow grass and spray it a lot, but Bermuda grass is really rough and hard to mow. It is not the grass for the saints at the moment, but when there is that gifting of teaching, it should be coupled with at least a flavor of shepherding where they have in mind the saints they have been praying for. This is the teaching for the moment even if that is not the main thing they are always doing. But there has to be some bit of it because when you step down from the teaching, maybe for ten minutes, can you not dialogue with someone through that teaching. When it comes down to the one on one you cannot help somebody through that understanding, then something is missing. So these gifts of shepherds and teachers are given to the church leaders to equip the saints or maybe just on the side like in Antioch where there were prophets and teachers ministering the Word in Antioch. We remember in Acts 13 when Barnabas and Saul were called to be apostles, and they were ministering to the Lord with some other prophets and teachers. So those groups of people that were locally ministering the Word were seeking the Lord together which shows that some teachers were local and helping out. They may or may not have been elders; it does not mention that. It does not say they were church leaders; it just says that they were teachers and prophets.

I am getting into all of this because to me I find this fascinating how great the Shepherd is, and the way that he has set this up. He has not given the evangelists to do all of the evangelism; He is giving them to equip the saints. He is not giving the prophets to do all the prophesying; He is giving them to equip the saints to be able to speak forth the encouraging, edifying words of God. And He has not given the shepherds and teachers to the church to do all the shepherding and teaching; He has given them to equip the saints, and we can share in this greatness of the ministry of shepherding.

## **The Ninety-nine and the One**

I want to clarify something that I brought up last time to do with the good Shepherd because I said something that maybe was a little bit bold and could be misunderstood. I said that we are not called to be the ninety-nine; this is from Luke 15. We are not the ninety-nine; we are that one sheep. He leaves the ninety-nine and goes after the one. According to the passage the ninety-nine represents those that were standing on the side at the beginning of Luke 15 saying, "Why is he doing this with all of these sinners?" They are bothered that He is going after the lost sheep. So they are huddled together as righteous ones condemning His action as a Shepherd for going after those sheep. They are like the brother who is at home with the father, who cares about the lost son, but the brother did not care. Those leaders of Israel really had the history of being in the house of God; they had the history of being with the Father who cares for all humanity. All of these people were lost, and the Father wanted them to be found. However, those who had been around Him just wanted Him to focus on them because they had become selfish. So we mentioned that, but it does not mean (and this is the part I wanted to clarify) that we are always staying in a lost state, and every week He is going out after us and finding us. It does not mean that. He brings the sheep into His home, and because their feet get fixed, He heals them to where they can walk again.

I helped a sheep out of a fence one time in Greece, and it was very scary because the shepherd would shoot anyone who came on his farm, but this sheep was just crying out. A brother and I snuck over to the sheep that was caught in a wire, and it was bleeding. I was a little afraid to do it, but my friend did it, and we untangled the sheep and together helped the sheep get out so he could go. I do not know if this shepherd did the right thing for the sheep because he would get drunk a lot and throw rocks at them. But that sheep hobbled off, and I think he was repairable and healable with a little anointing oil. He probably got repaired enough to where he could wander around again with the flock.

What I meant was that you are not always being lost and then always being found. The whole Christian life is about mercy upon mercy and grace upon grace. It is actually about getting established to where now you can hear His voice and follow Him and stay with the one flock. There will be one flock and one Shepherd, and in that sense we get together with the Lord. But in that picture from Luke 15 I was just trying to say that the place we have is as the friends of the woman who found the coin. We rejoice with the Lord because we care about the lost. Or we are the brother at home who has been praying with the father, and we rejoice in the party when he is brought home. Or it is almost like the shepherd rejoicing when He finds the lost sheep, but it is also like in the great Shepherd concept we are usually the way that the Lord brings His lost sheep in. Sometimes He will save a lost soul directly. I know a brother who got saved from staring at a leaf. Weird stuff happens, even dreams or something like that. But if we put it all on that it would be really sad, and it is not the Lord's heart.

How can they believe unless they have heard? (see Romans 10). How can they call upon the Lord if they haven't believed? They cannot believe if they have not heard. How can they hear unless someone talks? And He sends us with those feet that are ready with the Gospel shoes of peace, and we go. The Lord sends us and we share. So He uses us as His feet and legs, and as the

hands that pick up and help and heal, as the mouth that can speak the very words of the Gospel of peace. He uses us as those eyes of compassion that see sheep without a shepherd, just scattered in a crowd. He uses us to have ears to hear the cries of the sheep. He wants to use us in that way. That is the great Shepherd concept. In all of this way we are not left behind as the ninety-nine. We are actually part of the Shepherd, walking with Him, and He wants to use us to bring in the lost sheep. So that is what He is doing with all of this, and that is the largeness of His shepherding.

Now as we experience the Lord, so the Lord will work in us to do something, and it is always in that way. Ephesians 2:10 says that we are His workmanship. First, we have already been saved by grace and not by our works, but then we are His workmanship, and He is working in us. He is creating us in Christ Jesus. We are being conformed to the image of Christ to do something. In Philippians 2 you may find that you are not even willing; you may not even care. You do not have the will, you do not have the heart for it, but it is God who works in you the willing and the doing.

This is actually what helped me recently. I realized that in the great Shepherd I can care about some people that I do not really care about. But in the great Shepherd's heart, and inside of you and me He has given us a new heart, and in that new heart is the great Shepherd's heart. We said before that our capacity should be at least one person that we can pray for. We start there because we are waiting, and as we touch the Lord's heart then we realize His capacity is really large. It is not to put anything on us, but it frees you from that largeness of capacity. It is only that you are joining in His heart's capacity. So we will surprise ourselves at who we could pray for and even the number of people we could pray for or care about, but only as we touch the heart of the great Shepherd. If you by yourself, without the Lord's great Shepherd-heart, have such care for many people it may be something that ends up going through the cross in order to come out in resurrection. So that way a hundred percent stays connected to His heart because if you naturally have a large shepherd type of heart, loving heart, it is something that has to go through some self-denial, and in that way we make sure that we are leading people to the Shepherd. So it is okay if you are not naturally that loving or caring, if you do not really like a lot of people. It is okay because you have a new heart, and in that new heart none of that old damage is done, none of those old hurts are there. In the new heart we have the capacity of the great Shepherd, and He cares about all of these people. As He works in us then He works through us.

### **One Shepherd**

So we have experienced that the Lord is my Shepherd. We experience this quite regularly. Sometimes Christians have come under something else, a lot of baggage and rules. It may have been something in your past like a lot of legalism or even somebody commanding you all the time and telling you how to do your Christian life. However, there is a freedom when you come through and find, "No, the Lord is my Shepherd," and you learn to directly follow the Lord. And in that you have learned that there is one Shepherd. If we have all been learning that, then we can help any believer to realize that there is one Shepherd. It is really kind of the first lesson or the first major event that needs to be established as we are doing any work with helping other people, whether it is a brand new believer or a broken believer, you help them realize that the Lord is their Shepherd. Someone who is lost and is just coming into salvation, there is a wrong

way to do it when you try to bring them into the church. What I mean is, "Please show up; please come." And you feel satisfied when they show up enough. Now what ends up happening accidentally is that somehow by being among us they get saved, and that is really good. But remember what you are doing is bringing people to find Christ. I think we see that good news is Christ.

Another thing that happens sometimes and I fell into this early as a Christian is that I wanted to bring them to believe this kind of ABC type of truth of the Gospel. If they could just agree to these points then they will become Christians. But if they do not actually find their Shepherd, if they do not find Christ, if they do not believe in Jesus, they do not really become Christians. They agree with the Gospel teaching, but no life was received. They do not have eternal life, and when they meet the Lord, their name is not in the Book of Life, and their destiny is still the lake of fire, even though they agreed.

I tried to trick somebody and get them to say, "Jesus is Lord." But the passage says that you cannot except by the Holy Spirit. It just did not work. "No, you are tricking me." It just does not work. They have to find Christ directly.

If we have before us the Lord is our Shepherd when we are helping somebody, It means that we are asking Him, "Lord, what is going on here? How are You shepherding? How is the Lord shepherding?" I want to come alongside and do that. I do this with witnessing also. "How is the Lord bringing that lost sheep in?" It is not just sharing the one thing that you have memorized for Gospel preaching. You have so much more to offer along with Gospel preaching. Every single thing the Lord has ever done with you are your tools for Gospel preaching because everything that is Christ is savable for people. It is salvation. If you have met Christ in any way, such as meeting Him when you were lonely. People can be saved by coming to Him because they are lonely. Everything the Lord has worked with you is your gospel message. So as you found Him as your Shepherd, that is your package. It is not just these four verses which you memorized that you could work with. Every verse that you have ever experienced and found Christ in, you can help others find Christ. So you are equipped, and you are equipped with whatever you have received from the great Shepherd. He has worked in you as His workmanship so much to the spot you are at, that He will work greatly through you in shepherding work if you connect to Him as the Shepherd. Then you sense this is what is going on with them, and you found the Lord as your Shepherd in this way also. Sometimes that is how He actually leads us to help others to find the Lord as their Shepherd. It is always that way. I find Him as my Shepherd, whether it is initial salvation or it is helping a believer just find more of the Lord as their Shepherd. It is always like that.

### **I Shall not Want**

It says in Psalm 23, "I shall not want." If you have discovered that, it is not just that He has met all my needs today." No, it is more like I have given my life to the Lord, and He has fully satisfied me. With a brand new believer, a little lamb that you are shepherding is not enough to get them into heaven. They need to find that they shall not want. They need to find that their whole package is found in the Shepherd. He is my Shepherd, I have no other needs. The response of a good conscience is to be baptized. As they give their lives to the Lord and want to follow Him

as a disciple, you help them into that. That is why we urge a new believer, who has met the Lord as their Shepherd, to come and give their all to the Lord. As they do that, it is their first step or expression of it.

They also find, "I shall not want." All those other things that satisfied them or searching after things that they wanted do not work, but they have found Him now, and they shall not want. If you find another believer who is desiring other things, and because we have given ourselves to the Lord in those areas, we can help them find that is not really what they want. Now here in this area, sometimes there is an extra price to pay for the sake of others more than just for your sake. That is why there is that calling to the young men in I John 2: "Do not love the world because if you love the world the love of the Father is not in you." The love of the Father is the Shepherd's love, and that care for others is removed because you found other things that you want. You are tempted by these other things, and they fill your needs, or you think they do, but you are always missing something. So that desire to care about other people actually helps us more and more to find that the Lord is everything, and I do not want anything else. Sometimes the Lord calls you to give up some things. They are not necessarily sins, but He calls you into a greater measure of Christ. And sometimes you do not even recognize it until you are helping someone else. For the sake of this person I am willing to lose some of my freedom. That is what Paul said about some of the believers. He gave up some of his freedom of good things that were not bad, but they were not necessary. So he said, "I can do this. I do not need to be as free as God has given me freedom for their sakes." Because all of his wants are not in the things that he is free to do. All of his wants are found in the Shepherd. Everything that he wants is found there. The only way we can help people to discover that is if we have given our lives to the Lord. When something else creeps in and you really covet it, and you really want that, you have to bring it to the Lord and just say, "Lord, only your will be done, and if the desire of my heart matches Your heart, okay, but I shall not want." So you recognize part of our help is that the great Shepherd is working something that He has done with us for His shepherding hands and feet and body. If He works Himself in us, created in Christ Jesus, then the way that you recognize the needs of the moment in the Lord's people is just by that sensitivity to what is missing of Christ.

For example, you could be thinking: "I want this stuff to happen with the believer. The Lord wants to bring them along this path." That is actually pretty good, but in the moment we are connected to the great Shepherd, and you have to know that He knows that path better than we do. He has a clear and sharper knowledge, and He knows the roots along the way that is going to stumble these people. So at this moment He is the only one who really knows what they need. So we get a little quieter and a little more connected to the great Shepherd.

As we are fellowshiping with someone, encouraging them by counseling or comforting, we have to allow the Lord to just use us almost like a tool of diagnosis. You may recognize where something is wrong, and as someone shares you recognize the missing part of Christ, and then the Lord may bubble that up in a life-giving way. Or He may give you a word, and you find that is where the great Shepherd is working with them. So we do not need to be nervous as to what we are going to say to someone or help them. We also do not need to be a machine. "Okay, if they say this, I am going to give them this verse." Some of that is cool to have in your materials, but it is not cool at the moment. At the moment it may be your odd Ezekiel verse that the Lord uses

that you had this morning in your morning watch, and not your normal verse you would use for that problem. It is just because He is the great Shepherd, and He knows how to actually help at the moment. But He has given us some sensitivity to Christ. You know His voice; you have followed Him a little bit, and that is why you are able to recognize where this person is missing the Shepherd.

### **Lie Down in Green Pastures**

The other thing that is happening as the Lord is our Shepherd and we shall not want, He makes us to lie down in green pastures. This comes back to that whole dead grass teaching concept, but when the Lord is doing it, He has in mind the type of pasture that they actually need to be fed at the moment.

I remember learning a teaching as a brand new believer, and any time someone had a problem, I actually just gave him that teaching because that is all I had been helped with. And then I remember getting the second teaching which was I could be forgiven by the blood of Jesus right now. This was the most amazing teaching I had ever heard. When I caught that, I had helped ones almost in everything by being cleansed by the blood, getting right with the Lord. I was just seventeen and brand new saved, So everyone who came to me with a problem, let's get the blood. But that was my grass; that was all I had. However, eventually I found that is not the answer to everything. It does not make you lie down, although for a while it does. You are fed, you are satisfied, and you lie down. But the Lord has different pastures; He has many teachings, many helps where we find Christ. He has many varieties of things, and He has a variety of different people helping us in different ways. But He does it to where you are so satisfied and so fed that you lie down. You are filled. It is like a Thanksgiving meal, and you just need to sit afterwards and fall asleep. It is just like that.

When Paul was with the Ephesians, He said, "I did not hold back on any of those teachings I gave. I shared the full counsel of God with you" (see Acts 20). You see, it is that wide range of things. Sometimes as Christians ones may get a great way of teaching something, and we like it, but that is all they teach. So that is all we get. Therefore, you have whole groups of Christians that all the grass they eat is that, and so they get oddly shaped because they are eating weird. They are only eating carrots. But the Lord has this great treasury of David in which to build His church. He has many servants with many different bits of grass, but it is all Christ that we feed upon. It is all the Lord, but there is a variety. Paul would go to Corinth and help them, so you would think that Paul's teaching would be enough, but that is not what the Lord thinks. The great Shepherd sends Apollos to Corinth, and He sends Peter to Corinth. Then He has all the Corinthians helping Him with different varieties of ways. Some are coming with a Psalm, some with a teaching, some with a prophecy, and some with a tongue and interpretation. That is the different green pastures.

With that in mind, Paul said to Timothy, "Have an outline of sound words which you have heard of me. It is like equipping yourself even to understand so you can share these with others and equip some others, but have an outline of sound words, if I can borrow that for a second. This is a good thing. For example, in I Corinthians he said, "You need milk right now not meat." Now there is a basic outline of different types of grass. So he is saying that you are in the baby

phase of eating right now, so I need to share with you words of grace. You need to understand about your salvation. You need to eat some easy food right now. Do you know that you have the Holy Spirit inside of you? Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. That is the type of the graceful word. The same thing was said to the Hebrews. In Hebrews 5, "I wanted to share some meat with you about Melchizedek but you need milk right now because you are stumbling on the very foundation of your salvation. You are thinking you need to crucify Christ again and again, and it is just impossible. You cannot renew that type of repentance ever. You are just saved, and he shares with them those teachings.

Now this is a good outline of sound words, but this is just part of the milk. These are the elementary teachings: you repent from dead works, you have faith in God, you have the teachings of baptism and of laying on of hands. You have this understanding of eternal judgments and resurrection. But for someone who is just beginning you need the basic of where they are going. What type of grass do they need right now? But there is this other part of it. There is this word of righteousness as it is called in Hebrews. You need to do something with the Christian life that you have received. There is something more than just the grace you have received. There is grace upon grace. Now this grass that this person needs to eat is not like fescue grass which is not as tender, it is a little tougher to chew. That cud you are going to chew you are going to have to lay down and have to chew it for a while. It is a different type of thing. Chewing meat is harder than drinking milk. So as you are sharing, "Don't be hearers of the Word but doers of the Word," you are encouraging them to walk in righteousness. It is not just the righteousness of being saved because Christ is your righteousness, but now that you are saved and righteous before God, do something that is right. There is the righteousnesses of the saints we find in Revelation, and it is different from the saints being righteous. You do something. So these are the types of things.

It is not even having an outline of something. He did not say, "Remember that piece of paper I left with you which is the outline of sound words." The Lord develops it in you. There are some general principals you find in the Scriptures, like faith, hope and love, these pillars. And you can kind of guide around with stuff like that with milk and meat or whatever. But in general the Lord works the outline with you, and He shows you a path of life that He has worked, and it is going to be a little bit different. So even the great men and women of old when they received their teachings for new believers, there are a lot of similarities with basic lessons or Green Letters or one by Andrew Murray. There are a lot of these books for new believers, and you can see what they are doing, and this is their outline of sound words. It is the green pastures, but they are doing something in a guiding type of way. I am just bringing this up to say, "The more we touch on the great Shepherd's heart, the more we realize that He has a whole span of a path that He wants to take us on. As He takes us along this path, realize that what the Lord is speaking to you today is not necessarily what He is using for you to help another person today. When you are a new believer, it does work like that because that is all you have. The Lord just met me, and I am going to share that with everyone; that is edifying. But whatever the Lord met you with today might destroy another person because they are not there yet. It is not their grass. They need to chew on something a little bit different. So the Lord wants to use us that way.

## **Still Waters**

He is not only making us lie down in those green pastures, but He is also leading us beside the still waters. It is like that still small voice of the Holy Spirit. A really important thing that the Lord has been teaching us is to quiet our hearts and listen to His voice. It is almost like the whole package of the great Shepherd is that He is my Shepherd, and I can hear Him. I know His voice, but it is quiet; it is still water. It is friendly to walk up to because you are not going to get drowned. He just speaks so quietly and still that sometimes you are not sure if that was the Lord or your own thought. We are all learning this, but because this is the way the Lord has worked with us to hear that quiet still voice, the intuitive leading of the Lord, we dare not lead others. As the great Shepherd is working with us to shepherd the flock, why would we answer everyone's question? Why would we tell people the will of God in their lives if they can hear the still small instead? The way the Lord shepherds is to lead us to the still quiet waters. So when we are helping somebody, always hesitate. It does not mean you are not answering a difficult question in the Bible or something like that, but sometimes you can answer, "What did you try to study? Did you even try?"

I know one brother was talking to somebody, and he asked him a question: "How often do you read the Bible?" That was his answer. This young brother told me, "You know what, I started reading ten chapters a day after that, and he got his own answer, but that was the question brought to him. "Have you even searched? Have you even tried?" If you would ask brother Kaung a question in the past he would say, "Did you ask the Lord?" It is almost like there is this need even though it hurts you sometimes. I know the answer, but have you even tried to go to those waters that are still? More than anything you want to help somebody find the answer, but you definitely want them to get the answer by going to the living waters which is more important because they find the Shepherd there. They find His living life, that eternal life of living waters that always satisfies our thirst. Otherwise, they will keep coming back to you, like the well of Jacob, to keep finding more and more water in the heat of the day, and it is a struggle for you and them; it is hard. In that way they get trained the wrong way. Of course, sometimes we have to help them. Okay, they are trying to hear from the Lord, and that is partially right, but it does not match with the Scriptures. As they are being lead you can help a little bit, but never take the place of the still small voice. That makes you the shepherd instead of the great Shepherd.

## **He Restores My Soul**

"He restores my soul." We have experienced this so many times. It is not just when you are far away as the lost sheep that is getting found and restored. That is a big part of it. In the Bible when He says if someone sins against you, you go after them, work with them and try to gain your brother. That is a restoring of the soul also in which you are like an ambassador of the Lord restoring somebody to the Lord. Or in Jude if someone is trapped up in something, help them but do it in such a way that you are afraid to even touch the filth. Do it in such a way that you will not get trapped in what they are trapped in. In Galatians Paul says, "Bear one another's burdens, and you who are mature should especially help, but he also says be careful and do not be proud because you could fall just like them." So there is this kind of restoring.

There is also a regular restoring of our souls that all of us keep experiencing almost daily, but definitely weekly. You have experienced having your feet washed in the presence of the Lord, and then you come with the saints, and you think, “Oh yes, Christ, I forgot. I remember Him now.” Or maybe you just need a quiet moment in your day in which everything had gotten a little bit hectic. You did not sin, and you are not far from God. It is not that you have wandered, but you just got bombarded by life, and you take a minute and your soul is restored because—Christ. He restores my soul. If we are experiencing that, it is a big part of our shepherding ministry. It is not always majoring in drastic things like we are restoring someone who is actually walking with the Lord. But much of the time it is just a friendly fellowship. You have no idea what is going on, but because you are refreshed in the Lord’s presence, you just restored someone’s soul. I have had my soul restored by so many in this room so many times. You would not even know because I do not put on my sinner face or I am feeling like I am dead today. Maybe I am just acting normal, but I did not even realize it. But as we talked for a few minutes, ‘Oh yeah Christ, that’s right.’

Somebody might talk about a certain topic also. For example, I heard someone talking about abiding recently, and as they were talking I was thinking that this is always so good to hear. I do not even know how well the preaching was going or how well the talking was going; I just know that when they mentioned abiding, I was brought back—yes, abiding in Christ, that is right. My soul is restored. It is kind of like that sometimes. Or maybe somebody just mentions Jesus, and it touches our spirit. Somebody handed out a track recently, and it just restored my soul. It was like, yes, that’s it! That is the way. So that is part of our ministry; it is a ministry of just being fresh before the Lord. You prepare a little bit, you are with the Lord, you are in His presence, and that is a large part of shepherding.

### **Paths of Righteousness**

He leads me on paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. We talked about the sheep that are not always lost, but they are walking with the Lord, and they are established. So that is the doing about the grass that you are teaching. That is the doing of righteous things. There are paths, there are things to do, and sometimes you find a believer that has been restored. They are right with the Lord, but for them to go on, it actually requires a little bit of meat now. It requires a little bit of encouraging: “Let’s do something.”

When you see some believers, their whole walk is stumbling and stumbling. You know why? It is because the Lord wants to call them to do something, and until they hear that call they are going to be trapped in the world. They are going to be trapped in sin because it is all bound up with His shepherding. Their path right now must be righteous paths. They have to do something or else they are going to starve. So this is the path that He is leading them on. It is not for them to be amazing for their name’s sake, for them to think that I am a righteous person now. None of us need to think that way even if you are doing right things, even if you are serving the Lord. You never think that way because it is for His name’s sake. It is always to the glory of God; it is always that way. When you do a righteous work with the Lord, you step back and say, “That was the Lord. Praise be to God.” The Lord blessed, the Lord worked in me, the Lord worked through me. Hallelujah! It is not for my name that we are building the house of God. We are not building the

tower of Babel to make a name for ourselves; we are always glorifying His name. So whatever we do, we do it to the glory of God, but these are righteous things that we do.

When we are fellowshiping with one another, sometimes we recognize that the Lord has led us into some of these things to do. Most of us Christians have been led into these things to do, but you are not doing it. You are walking another way. So we can go to the great Shepherd and ask Him, "Is this something for me to do?" Some have been delivered from their sins not by help from someone about their sin, and not by a Scripture dealing with their sin, but because they were called to do something for the Lord. They got distracted from their sin by doing a path of righteousness, but in that path of righteousness there are so many temptations blocked off by walls, and so much has stopped.

I was delivered from a lot of sin in high school because I took a path of righteousness to preach the Gospel. As soon as I let them know I was a Christian most of my temptations were removed from me. So as I am talking to a Christian who is so tempted by their friends, it is time to take a step with my Gospel shoes and let them know about Jesus. As soon as you do that, they are going to stop inviting you to that party. You just get delivered from so much. For you to grow there is a path of righteousness; there is something to do. That is why when you repent, like John the Baptist said, "Produce fruit worthy of repentance." There is a doing with your repentance because it actually has to do with keeping you from falling back into your sins. Remember from where you have fallen and repent, and do the first works. If you stop doing those things with the Lord and you fall back into the same stuff, He leads you in those paths of righteousness.

### **The Valley of the Shadow of Death**

In this case you find yourself with the Lord, and we find that this world becomes like a valley of the shadow of death. But even though we are involved in this, and we are walking in this valley of the shadow of death, that fear that should be there is removed only because He is with us. The Lord is with us.

Now something for us to catch from the great Shepherd of how He has worked with us is that He does not answer our difficult questions in the midst of the valley usually or He answers it in a specific way. He answers it with His presence. The time to understand the sovereignty of God or how it works with evil and Him working everything for good is usually not when someone is in the midst of a horrific evil dramatic event. Usually at that moment what is needed is not the reasoning or the understanding but the presence. I will fear no evil. I am here, everything is dark, it does not make sense. It is not bright and green. If there are green pastures I cannot see the color. It is dark, but I do not fear because You are with me. It is like Job's friends were with him for seven days. That was really good until they started talking, and then it became bad. The ministry that we have is to weep with those who weep. Like in Romans 12: "Rejoice with those that rejoice but weep with those who weep." You are just with them.

### **I Will Fear No Evil**

In that case with shepherding it is more to do with the presence. "I will fear no evil for Your presence is with me." Now in comes His rod and staff that comfort us, that is true. And His rod is protecting us from evil; it is also disciplining us sometimes. So at some point if you are not carnal

like Job's friends maybe after seven days, sometimes there is a word to say but not your words. The word of the Lord's rod or the word of the Lord's shepherding staff pulling is you out of a ditch. Sometimes in your dark path, your valley of the shadow of death, you are there for the wrong reason. Sometimes you are there because you fell into a ditch, and the Lord, in His shepherding way, wants to pull you out. And He may use some of us to help each other come out of that mirey dirt that we have gotten ourselves into. So there is a little bit of sharing, a little bit of hooking and pulling back to Christ, but the main thing is His presence. The main thing that answers our difficult questions is that His presence is with us. Then if there are real enemies around us, His rod is always there to comfort us. But if there are real enemies that are part of our dark valley or anything like that, He prepares a victory table right there before me in the presence of my enemies. It is like when the spies saw those giants in the land and said, They will be our food. There are enemies, there are difficulties, but the Lord helps us to eat these difficulties as food. It is like a table in the presence of our enemies. There is a victory in Christ that we have been finding. There are some things that are really too difficult.

I was just talking to a sister this week about her mountain or enemy situation which was some angry people that she had to talk to. It was the worst thing in her life to be around it or to deal with. But in our talking we found that if we do it with Christ, then all of that enemy surrounding her, all of that difficulty actually became our spiritual food, and she had need of food right then; she had need of finding Christ. As we fellowshiped I think she found a table set before her. She found that if she went to the Lord with this, and if He blocks my enemies, if He covers my heart, if He is a shield about me, then it will be food to me. However, the real food is that she found Christ, and she found more of Christ as her victory. As that was happening the next thing we know, He had anointed our heads with oil, and our cup was running over.

The Lord has this outpouring oil that He has poured upon the church. The Head of the great Shepherd has been anointed with oil, but for us we are also to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We are not to be filled with our own things, but to actually be in the victory of Christ. We are not to be filled with ourselves or the world or other things, but to find ourselves as part of this great Shepherd, part of this great High Priest whose anointing oil is upon us. The Head has been anointed with oil, and we see that instead of filling us with other things, He has filled us with the Holy Spirit. There is joy in the Lord, and there is boldness in Gospel preaching, and there is this ability to share Christ with the saints. Even while we are helping each other, there is something that we have to do in helping each other to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

### **Be Filled with the Holy Spirit**

In Ephesians he is saying not be drunk but be filled with the Holy Spirit; don't get immersed in anything else. Don't get consumed by anything else. Don't let anything else overcome you, except for the Holy Spirit. Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Sometimes that means there is a deeper emptying of you. Sometimes your emptying is not to do with sin; it is not always about my walk with the Lord. In order to help someone else be filled with the Holy Spirit, be so immersed in Him that their head is anointed with oil in order for them to come into that anointing of the Lord. Sometimes the Lord does a deeper dealing in you and removes some parts of your life that are not sins in order for you to have that larger measure to help other people, in order for you to

have just a little bit more supply of oil in order to help other people. Now is the time to help other people. There comes a day when there is no ability like those ten virgins, and no one can share their oil with the other five at that point. But now is the time when your cup is overflowing, and the Lord is so filling us as we are drinking of Christ, as He is abundantly supplied to us, it is overflowing from others.

### **Goodness and Mercy Will Be with Me**

Then come this experience as believers. Our great Shepherd has brought us into something we call assurance: surely goodness and mercy, lovingkindness will always be with me. It is going to follow me all of my days. This is the assurance that comes when you know that the Lord is your Shepherd. When we are not sure, and we are unstable, it is because we are not living in the good of “the Lord is my Shepherd.”

Surely goodness and lovingkindness, goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life. This is my stance. If you know a believer who is nervous, who is worried, they can come to Him, and the peace of God which is beyond understanding will help them, will guard their hearts and their thoughts. He will bring them into this assurance like this, and they find ourselves brought into this greatness of the great Shepherd where we are going to dwell in the house of the Lord forever. This is His whole course in bringing us to this. We sit back and we see this great Shepherd, and how He found us lost once and brought us into His home. And now we experience His house with His presence. But we also look for the future with that new Jerusalem, that ultimate house of God where we will dwell forever. As we pray for other people, what is the Lord doing in the end? He is conforming them to be like Christ. What is He doing in the end? He is building them into the new Jerusalem. As we have that in mind we can see that we will experience this. The great Shepherd is doing this, so we can commit ourselves to Him as our great Shepherd to be used by Him in this shepherding work.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer:

*Lord, we can say how great is Your love, how great is our God who has done all of these things for us! Lord, we come to You and we offer ourselves to You as living sacrifices. Lord, we pray wherever we are and with whatever You are doing right now that You would bring us out of ourselves and out of our selfishness, that You would bring us into the greatness of what You are doing. Lord, in our hearts bring us a step back to behold You and to see You and to see You and Your church, and to see You in eternity, and to see the new Jerusalem, and even to see where You are going with us in conforming us to the image of Christ. Lord, we give ourselves to You. We pray for each other that You would work with us, that You would work through us, and that You would care for us. Lord, we just connect ourselves to You, and we can also confess that we believe and we know and we have experienced the goodness that has been following us, that loving kindness and mercy has been with us all of these days. And today we just declare that You are our Lord and that we love You for You have been taking care of us. We offer ourselves to You; we hear Your voice, and we give ourselves to follow You as our one Shepherd. In Jesus' name. Amen.*