

John 10: 14-18; “I Lay Down My Life”, Sermon # 58 in the series – “That All May Honor the Son”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall, on December 13th, 2020, in the Morning Worship Service.

It is a very important thing for every person who comes to this church to ask themselves, whether they really have come to know the Lord. Do you really have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you know that His life really in your life? Do you really know the reality of His presence in your life, as the Good Shepherd; watching over you, and shepherding your heart? This really is the most important question of all. For, if you really know Christ personally as Your Good Shepherd, you can really be sure that you have eternal life. That is what this whole passage is about. It is about your really being sure, whether Christ is Your good Shepherd or not. According to these verses which I have just read to you, you must be known by Christ as one of His sheep, and personally, Christ must do certain profound spiritual things for you. And so, what I would like to ask you now, so that you might be saved, or so that you might have greater assurance of your salvation, is this question – What did the Lord Jesus have to know and to do, in order to bring you into His sheepfold; that is, into the fold of the true Universal Church?

It is evident from the way that He words it here, that if you were going to be saved and given eternal life, that there were 3 things that He had to know and to do, in order that you would come to know Him personally, to know that He was your Good Shepherd. 1st of all – Christ had to be known by the Father and the Father had to be known by Him, so that He could die for you particularly. (verses 14 and 15) 2nd – Christ had to bring you, His sheep, most particularly into His fold by your hearing His voice (verse 16) 3rd – Christ willingly lay down His life of Himself, and took it up again for your sake at the command of the Father. (verses 17 and 18) Let’s think together now about how much our salvation depends upon what Christ has done for us particularly.

1st of all – Christ the Son had to be known by the Father and the Father had to be known by Him, so that He could die for you particularly. (verses 14 and 15)

“I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.” “As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.” Now, it is good to slow down here and to ask ourselves some questions. How does the Father know the Lord Jesus? Since He is God, He knows Him perfectly and thoroughly from the beginning of when He was created as a Man, how He, the Father and the Holy Spirit, formed our Lord Jesus in the womb; how He knew the exact purpose for which He was being created as a Man; that is, to send Him into the world to become the Savior of the World, the Prince of Life, the Savior of sinners, the One who would become our Prophet, Priest, and King. Certainly, the humanity of the Lord Jesus was not like our humanity, because His was perfect humanity, as He was the only Man who has ever been born who has come into the world since Adam without sin.

When God created Adam, He created Him upright. He created him with all the faculties of being, as a man; faculties which he would use to serve and worship God with. He was created with the ability to be perfectly righteous and holy if he was faithful, but he was not created perfect in the sense of his being unchangeable. If he was faithful to keep God’s commandment not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would stand. If he was faithful to incline his heart to keep this one good commandment which God gave to him in the garden of Eden, he would be confirmed in perfect righteousness. If by his own free will he chose to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in that day, he would die. Dying he would die the original Hebrew indicates.

When Adam and Eve committed the first sin, they were not only bringing guilt upon themselves, which would involve the punishment of spiritual separation and death, legally brought to their persons. But in their eating of this fruit, sin was digested not only into their body, but it brought sin in to their very nature. Their sinful disobedience brought actual spiritual and physical disease, disorder, and eventual death to them. These awful effects of their fall, were then passed on to all of their descendants through Adam's nature, because he was our Federal Head, and biological father of mankind. This means that every person born into the world is a sinner by nature. Sin is not simply something that we do which brings bad consequences and certain punishment. Sin is something which brings disinclination in the heart and the mind, to trusting in God and doing what He commands. It brings enmity and hostility to what God has declared is true and right.

So every faculty of man's soul and his body have been corrupted by the entrance of sin into the world, and specifically into Adam's heart, mind, soul, and body. This is the doctrine of total depravity, which doctrine must not be rationalized away as though we ourselves can remedy our sinful fallen condition by our own efforts, or make up for the guilt of our sins by our own works, or good intentions. It cannot be shown from the Bible, the word of God, that this can be done. Rather, salvation must be all of grace. God the Father knew that it would take His Son's coming into the world, His own beloved only-begotten Son who was begotten of Him from all eternity, being joined together with perfect sinless human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary; His coming into this world as the God-man, so that He could deal with our sins.

Only God the Father could beget God the Son from all eternity. It was an internal and eternal act. Only God the Father and God the Son knowing each other and perfectly agreeing in the plan of Christ's incarnation could bring about the salvation of sinners. The Lord Jesus Christ would become the good Shepherd of the sheep. Known from all eternity are all of God's works. The Divine Person of the Father knows the Divine Person of the Son, and the Son knows the Father in this same exact way, perfectly. This is because they are One in Nature and Essence. When Jesus says in our text that He, the Son of God, knows His sheep, it means that He knows our sinful and fallen condition perfectly. He knows all that you will need to receive; of His truth, and His grace, and His strength, to become a new creature in Him. From all eternity the Father and the Son knew that it would take His laying down His precious sinless life for you.

Christ also knows very specifically, those who are His own. His own are those who were given Him by the Father in eternity past, in the council of redemption, when the Father and the Son covenanted together to have and to save a particular people; a people whom the Triune God would mercifully save and deliver from sin and death and hell; a people for who were given to the Father by the Son before the foundation of the world. As the Lord Jesus prayed, before He went to the cross, in John chapter 17, verse 1, He said – "Father, the hour has come." "Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him." "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

This is the reason that Christ is known by His own sheep. It is because He has laid down His life for His sheep, each one very specifically, each one very particularly, and because He is one with God the Father and the God the Holy Spirit in purpose, He God the Son is well able to communicate all of the blessings of salvation to their minds and their hearts; to lead them and guide them as their Good Shepherd into all the truth, and giving them everything that they need for life and godliness. All of the promises of God are yes and amen in Him, for He died to purchase these blessings, and He ever lives to apply them to all of God's elect people. The foundation of the Lord stands, having this seal: The Lord knows those who are His. And therefore let everyone who names the name of Christ, depart from iniquity. Why? Because Jesus as Your Good Shepherd, died for this.

Dear Christian, see how much Christ values you as one of His sheep; that He gave His life for you, so that He might give His life to you, in all the reality of His giving you real spiritual blessings; in giving you righteousness and strength to live the Christian life. He has given you His Spirit when you first believed. By faith in Him, you are in union with Him. Even as the Father knows the Son, you know them both in the sense of experiencing their love. And you grow in grace by experiencing the Triune God's loving care toward you, each and every day in relation to the promises of His word. I will never leave you nor forsake you. Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. This is the blessed reality of the Christian life and experience.

2nd – Christ had to bring you, His sheep, most particularly into His fold by your hearing His voice. (verse 16)

Verse 16 says – And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.” In the words – them also I must bring, we hear the words of electing love. “In love He predestinated us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” Jesus says does not say – I might bring them, or I want to bring them, but I must bring them. Christ was saying that He must because it was the Father's designed will. Christ says that He has sheep which are not of this fold. How does He know this? He knew it because He knew the Father and the Father's purpose perfectly. And since He had come to do, not His own will, but the will of the Father, and because the Father was pleased with His perfect obedience, and His laying down His life for the sheep, then the Lord Jesus would be able to most certainly bring them to Himself, and to the Father, giving them eternal life, because of His work in laying down His life for them.

These “other sheep” are all the elect Gentiles who God has purposed to save. Notice that Jesus says – “They will hear My voice”. Again, notice the definiteness, not only of the atonement, but of the application of the benefits of salvation, including their hearing His voice. Jesus does not say that that they might hear His voice. But, He says that they will hear it, and they will respond to it, by believing in His word, by faith. Let us understand the wonderful Biblical truth that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10: 16) But this “hearing” is not merely an outward hearing, but it is a hearing which comes about by the working of the Holy Spirit to bring about the spiritual hearing and the saving response, and this, without at all violating that person's will.

The Bible here in this passage, as well as many others, clearly sets forth the doctrines of grace. The doctrines of grace are that all men are totally depraved by nature, and they will because of the blindness and deafness of their heart, resist the truth of the gospel, and they will refuse to believe that they are really that bad, and that they need to be saved. Since they, by nature, are always resisting the Holy Spirit, it is apparent that God must act to save them, or they will not be saved at all. He must bring them through the mighty working and power of the Spirit to the place where they will not resist the gospel, but be turned to look at the beauty and glory of Christ and what He alone has done for them; what He alone has accomplished through His death, to save them from their sins. He must give them ears to hear and eyes to see.

According to God's eternal purpose, the word concerning Christ is being preached, the Spirit moves to open the heart and open the ears, spiritually speaking, while the word is being preached or shared. “The Lord opened Lydia's heart to respond (to heed, to pay attention to) the things which were spoken to her by Paul”, it says in Acts 16:14. In the word being preached she

heard the voice of Christ calling her to Himself. The Lord brought her to Himself and brought her into His fold, the Church. I am trying to show you that Christ Himself must undertake to become your Good Shepherd. The appeal that He makes to you, by His Holy Spirit, is always made to the truth concerning Himself and what He has done in laying down His life for you, and that He will always be faithful to you and to God's purpose, that you will be cared for, spiritually speaking. Christ is the Door, and so He is the One who opens the door of salvation to you. If you will enter by Him you will be saved, and you will go in and out and find pasture. You will have life and that more abundantly. You will hear His voice, not only in the call to receive Him and to be saved, but also to be watched over and led and guided in relation to your following Him, and learning what is right in a thousand different situations in life.

His Shepherdly intercession in your life will be the means to help you on to learn to please God and make progress in righteousness and holiness as you listen to His voice speaking to you in His word. In Hebrews 13: 20 and 21 we find these words – “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. God the Father is the God of peace toward you in Christ. His righteous wrath was removed from you and placed on Christ when He went to the cross. It is true that you were a child of wrath for a time in your life, even as those of the rest of mankind who have not trusted in the Savior. But Christ's work there made peace between you and Him.

You are now under the covenant of grace, not the covenant of works. In fact, Christ's is the blood of the everlasting covenant; that blood which the Father and the Son purposed should be shed by the Lord Jesus for your soul, and applied going forward, to all of the elect in every generation since He died and rose again. God the Father and the Holy Spirit brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead because He was the great Shepherd of the sheep, laid down His life for the sheep; was raised for their justification, their sanctification and their glorification. For it says here that God will make you complete, through Christ, in every good work, to do His will. He will work that which is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ.

This means that as you go about to do good works and to keep God's commandments, that where you fall short of perfection in the way that you do those good works, and in the way that you keep His commandments, that Christ by His the merits of His righteousness and by supplying His grace to you, He will make you complete, so that your works will be accepted. What a great, great blessing this is to the sincere believer who knows his own heart, and who sees himself falling short of perfection in many ways. Christ's perfection is continually being imputed, and this is not a reason for Christians to think that they can sin in order that grace abound. It is a reason to learn to walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the desires of the flesh. Your works have the blood of Christ applied to them continually in order to cleanse you from all sin wherever and whenever you fall short of perfection. This comes because of Christ's faithful intercession. This is why Paul ends his benediction here in Hebrews 13: 21 with these words – To Him, that is to our great Triune God, be glory forever!

3rd – Christ willingly lay down His life of Himself, and took it up again for your sake, at the command of the Father. (verses 17 and 18)

“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.” “No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.” “I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” “This command I have received from My Father.” We need to always remember, and glory in the fact, that Christ, when He went to the cross, did not go as a helpless victim. He actually went as a King going out to a great battle. For it was the greatest of battles; the defeat of the Devil, and the satisfaction of the Father's justice on our behalf, and His redeeming a vast multitude of people, to save them from their sins and bring them everlasting

life. He went willingly to lay down His life for the sheep. He was, and He is, the mighty Shepherd-King who saved us, and washed us from our sins by His blood. The Father loves the Son because of this; because He so willingly undertook our salvation. He loved Him in eternity past as His only-begotten Son, who was in His bosom. He loved Him in His sending of Him into this fallen world of woe, because He knew that He would not fail in His mission to accomplish redemption on our behalf. No one took His life from Him, but He laid it down of Himself. You see this in the Garden of Gethsemane in John chapter 18, if you will turn over there with me.

It says here – “When Jesus had spoken these words, (words to His Father in prayer), He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered.” “And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with his disciples.” “then Judas, having received a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons.” “Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, ‘Whom are you seeking?’ They answered Him, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’” “Jesus said to them, ‘I am He.’” “And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them.” “Now when He said to them, ‘I am He, they drew back and fell to the ground.’” “Then He asked them again, ‘Whom are you seeking?’” “And they said, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’” “Jesus answered, ‘I have told you that I am He.’” “Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way,’ that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, ‘Of those whom You gave Me I have lost nothing.’”

Very wonderful wasn't it? That no one could have taken Jesus away to the false trial and the death of the cross, if He had not been willing? But He was willing, and the Father loved Him for it. The Father had given Him commandment, and He had agreed to appoint to the Person of the Son of God, that independence of His using His own Divine Power as the Son of Man that would enable Him to lay down His life for the sheep. Even at that moment, this great invisible hand of the Father and the Spirit came upon these wicked men and shoved them to the ground, those who wanted to apprehend Jesus. God was saying – You could never take my only-begotten, My dearly beloved Son, away to the death of the cross unless I permitted it; unless I ordained it, unless I sent Him to that place. Oh, how thankful we believers ought to be, that all of these events were orchestrated in this very way that they were, in order to show us how sovereign God was, in Christ's going to the cross, and how sovereign He is in our salvation.

No one can come to Me, Jesus says, unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise Him up. And in John 8, verse 24, Jesus said to the Jews who did not believe in Him, “For if you do not believe in Me that I am He, (that is, that He was the Christ) you will die in your sins.” “Then they said to Him, ‘Who are You?’” “And Jesus said to them, ‘Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning.’” “I have many things to say and judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things I heard from Him.” “They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father.” “Then Jesus said to them, ‘When you lift up the son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.’” “And He who sent Me is with Me.” “The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.” “As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.”

This is what you and I need to remember to be faithful witnesses. If we love God and what He has done for us through Jesus Christ our Lord, we must learn to speak of the love of the Father for the Son's going forth to accomplish redemption, to purchase a people for His own possession. You and I ought to glory in this, and speak of it to others. The essence of a strong and powerful witness to Christ, is when we share with people the gospel; that Father so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son. But that witness will be better established if we also will share the fact that the Father loved the Son because He would lay down His life as the Good Shepherd of the sheep. More Christians need to come to see that redemption is very particular.

Christ did not simply die, just in a general sense, for the world, although there is nothing wrong with saying that. It is the basis of the free offer of God to lost sinners everywhere.

But God's plan to save a certain and definite number out of the mass of mankind who created, was purposed by Him in light of the fact that He knew that left to himself and his own free-will, that Adam would fall, and that man would not be able to save himself. And so, the Lord Jesus was sent and He tells people who were opposing Him here, that He had power to lay down His life for all of the sheep of God's choosing, all of those elect sheep who were Jew or Gentile; all of those sheep who were from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation, who would believe in Him for eternal life. People in our day need to understand that when Christ died He was dying for a particular chosen people; a people from every race and every walk of life; a people not known particularly to us, but known particularly to Him.

Were they worthy of being predestined and chosen to eternal life? No. But in saving them particularly, our God gets glory for Himself. And the glory of how He would accomplish this great salvation should show us something about God's wisdom and His power. When our Lord Jesus was brought before Pilate, the Roman Governor, he said to Jesus – "Do you not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?" And Jesus answered him – "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above." You can see, from this, can't you, that it is true that men in authority have power over other men. But even as Pilate did not have any power at all against Jesus unless it had been given him from above, even so, dear Christian, people in authority in this country, in our day, do not have any power to do anything to any of us, unless it is given to them from above.

Therefore, if power is given to wicked and unrighteous men, to rule in an unjust way over us, let us be sure that we have taken steps in prayer, personally and privately, to lay the matter before God, and to ask for His help in our learning to suffer for His name's sake. This was what our Lord Jesus did, in relation to His sufferings for our sake. Let us do the same, joyfully, for His sake, and for the sake of the advance of truth and righteous in this fallen world of woe. Let us remember that the Father loved His Son for laying down His life. And let us remember that it was for the joy that was set before Him, that Christ endured the cross and despised the shame and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Let us understand that the Father and the Son perfectly well know what we are facing at this time, in our generation, and let us remember that since He died very particularly for us, that He will also watch very particularly over us.

"And now the Lord says, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, So that Israel is gathered to Him (For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and My God shall be My strength), indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel: I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be my salvation to the ends of the earth.'" (Isaiah 49: 5 and 6.) My brethren, we are some of those Gentiles who Christ died for. Let us be His faithful witnesses.