

# Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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## *“Lessons on Freedom From the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm”*

**January 25, 2015**

**Sermon Text:** Psalm 23

**Scripture Reading:** Psalms 95; 100

### **Introduction-**

Last week we spent our time together considering our Lord’s instruction to us that we beware of the scribes.

Mark 12:38-40 And in his teaching he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces (39) and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, (40) who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

We were reminded that the scribes are with us today, setting themselves up as our shepherds, our teachers and leaders of the church, but in fact the Lord has not sent them. So it has always been:

Jeremiah 23:1-5 "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!" declares the LORD. (2) Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: "You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the LORD. (3) Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. (4) I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the LORD. (5) "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king

and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Shepherd of His people. He is the true Shepherd of His flock, and His ministry is therefore a *pastoral* ministry. A pastor and a true church led by Christ will necessarily reflect the qualities of the Chief Pastor of the flock, Jesus Christ.

This morning we are going to consider this famous Psalm of David the shepherd king, and perhaps look at it as we never have before. It is a picture of what every Christian should be experiencing in a church, in contrast to flocks where the shepherds are scribes. The Psalm describes true religion in other words, in contrast to the bondage of false religion.

**Psalms 23:1-6** A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. (2) He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. (3) He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. (4) Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (5) You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup

overflows. (6) Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

### **The Lord is My Shepherd**

A shepherd's concern is for the welfare of the flock. Scripture is filled with these kinds of pastoral examples:

**Matthew 18:12-13** What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? (13) And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray.

The Lord is YOUR Shepherd, Christian. We entertain many false thoughts about the Lord, and about how He views us, and that false thinking is often promoted by scribes. But notice here how David, the shepherd-king, describes Christ as our Shepherd:

#### **1. We shall not want,**

--He makes me lie down in green pastures

--He leads me beside still waters

--He restores my soul

So David is speaking here of the LEADING that Christ does. We spoke last time about the leading of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8) in the Christian. How do I recognize that leading? This week someone asked me about *leaders* in Hebrews 13 –

Hebrews 13:7 Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

How do you recognize them? Well, their job description is given here in Psalm 23. Christ leads us into soul restoring, life-giving peace. He leads us into real peace in which we can rest. He does not keep us in constant turmoil, anxiety, or agitation or fear or guilt. His shepherding is characterized by *restoration and rest*. He provides for the hunger and thirst of our souls. The religion of the scribes does not do so. The religion of the legalist does not do so.

Let me ask you to ask yourself a question, Christian.

***Is my religion refreshing and restoring my soul, leading me into peace and rest?***

Because if the answer is “no,” then (assuming you are not a hypocrite walking in habitual, unrepentant sin, assuming you are a genuine sheep in Christ’s flock)...if the answer is “no,” then somewhere, somehow, your thinking has been shaped to a degree by false religion and false shepherds.

John 10:10-11 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. (11) I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Life. Abundant life. Christ is the GOOD shepherd who gives Himself for us.

**2. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.**

Neither is Christ our Shepherd a *libertine*. We can identify false shepherds by their burdensome, soul-destroying legalism, and we can identify their counterparts when we see them trying to lead us in paths of UN-righteousness, not to the glory of Christ.

Ezekiel 20:13-14 But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness. They did not walk in my statutes but rejected my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live; and my Sabbaths they greatly profaned. "Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them in the wilderness, to make a full end of them. (14) But I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I had brought them out.

Christ leads us in the good and right way. The way to life, not the way to death. His Spirit leads us:

Romans 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

### **The Lord Our Shepherd Vindicates Me in the Presence of Our Enemies**

(4) Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (5) You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

This is my favorite part of the Psalm. The Lord our Shepherd is WITH us.

He is with us in trying times, but I think specifically the Psalmist has in mind here *Christ the Good Shepherd is with us when our enemy is trying to destroy us*. He stands with us. He has our backs. He comforts us. He does not take the side of our enemy on any point. Because He is our righteousness, and there is no condemnation for us now in Him. In fact, what He does is – right in front of our accusers (in the presence of my enemies) He honors me. He invites me into His banqueting hall, while the enemies watch but cannot enter. He owns me. He pronounces me just – He anoints my head with oil. He gives me a double and triple and even infinite portion – my cup overflows.

If you are a Christian, then you are hated. If you are a friend of the world, and the world is a friend to you, then you are not a Christian:

John 15:18-19 "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. (19) If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Therefore, one of the chief ways to identify false shepherds and false religion is to consider this matter of Christ's *validation* of His people.

Validation. In the face of all the accusations leveled against us, Christ vindicates us and validates us *right in front of our enemies*. He does this now, but He will do it openly and literally one Day when He comes as Judge. True religion and true shepherds of Christ vindicate and validate us before our enemies and their accusations.

Now this is vital to understand. I am going to illustrate this principle now by giving you an “advance special showing” of a three-part series that is going to be published on our blog in a few weeks. It is an account of one of Christ’s sheep miserably and wickedly oppressed by false religion and false shepherds. You will see the absolute contrast between what she, at the time, thought was true religion, and Christ’s shepherding of His own as we see described here in Psalm 23. As such, eventually, she came to realize that her church was a false church and a notable “Christian” ministry was not of Christ at all. Listen and learn:

Having been raised in a combative and dysfunctional family, my husband had been prone to angry outbursts and unpredictable behavior from the onset of our marriage. At times, he was wonderful to be with, attentive, kind and fun. Initially, I thought he had anger management issues and if I loved him

enough, things would work out, but in actuality, the course of our marriage could be described as the living [Cycle of Violence](#). Round and round it went from tension, to explosion, to lavish gifts and acts of kindness, a never ending and damaging cycle.

I earnestly tried to respect him, but because he was so hurtful and volatile, I learned to focus my attention on my children and kept busy with household repairs, gardening, etc. As the years went on, I felt drawn to learn about the Scriptures and that created a gulf between us. He absolutely hated that I found rest for my soul in Christ and he seemed intent on punishing me by ever increasing emotional detachment, insults, crude mocking, and frequent temper tantrums.

Influenced by R. C. Sproul, I read a lot of theology books during those years. I began with Luther’s *Bondage of the Will*, and his commentaries on Romans and Galatians. These lifted my spirit way above the abuse to a great love for Jesus. I found comfort in the Puritan writers and their godly advice for those suffering so I acquired an extensive library of Puritan works with my favorites being Thomas Watson, Jeremiah Burroughs, and Dutch Puritans such as Taffin and Teellinck. My lifeline was William Gurnell’s three volume set, *The Christian in Complete*

*Armour*. That set still sits on my bookshelf, dog-eared and worn from reading and meditation. No wonder, because some chapter designations are: Satan as Accuser of Sin, The Saint's Proper Response to Satan's Accusations, The Saint's Fortification, Satan's Intentions and God's Intervention, Why Saints Must Wrestle, How to..How Not to Wrestle, Stand — Do Not Flee or Yield, How to Use the Sword Against Persecutors, Spiritual Promises for Believer's Sorrows, etc.

Despite my husband's brooding and tantrums, the children and I tried to keep positive in the time we spent together. The older children and I perceived that there was genuine spiritual warfare present in our home just as the Puritan books described so vividly. When he pulled up in the driveway, we knew we needed to disperse from whatever activities we were enjoying if we could see that he had "that look," which was most of the time. Over time, his behavior grew more and more frightening. He disappeared frequently and refused to tell me where he was going. His cliché response was, "It's for me to know and for you to find out."

Knowing how important the church was to me, he threatened repeatedly that if I told the church (about the abuse), it

would be the worst thing I ever did. He did come to church, sometimes arguing with people there, but other than that he had no interest in the things of God. Realistically, while trying to view our afflictions as necessary in the life of a Christian, living in the abuse was taking its toll on us. My health deteriorated through various autoimmune diseases and the unpredictability of my husband's actions had robbed the household of peace. I have come to realize that the situation was more damaging to my children and myself than I had thought, due to what is aptly referred to as the "fog" of abuse.

My husband had chosen to take voluntary layoff and after that he was home frequently. We realized that it had been better when he was habitually disappearing because now he became intent on mentoring one of the children in his madness. As I saw this child's personality dramatically changing, I knew that I had to get help. After 20 years of marriage, and a household full of children, I confided in my PCA pastor about the terrible situation we were enduring, my conscience directing me especially for the child's soul that was perilously at stake. The pastor asked me to make a list of incidents so I presented him with a ten page list giving examples of reckless, high speed driving with

children in the car, his screaming profanities at me while pregnant in a crowded Lowe's store, public acts of vandalism, assaulting a man at another church, and much more. The possibility of divorce had not crossed my mind at that point, possibly because I had become so indoctrinated in the Puritan idea of suffering.

Knowing the Westminster Confession of Faith well, I thought that the issue of my husband assaulting a man during a public event would facilitate disciplinary action, hopefully affording help to the certain child he was corrupting. In the document I compiled for my pastor with the ten page list of abusive incidents, I cited this part of the Westminster Confession:

CHAPTER XXX Of Church Censures  
Paragraph 3. Church censures are necessary, for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren, for deferring of others from like offenses, for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honour of Christ, and the holy profession of the Gospel, and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer His covenant, and the seals thereof, to be profaned by **notorious and obstinate offenders.**

The pastor took my husband out to lunch, and he told me that my husband looked nervous but they kept to small talk about sports. I provided the pastor a list of witnesses which included people from another church who witnessed the assault, people from our previous church who observed him fighting at the church picnic, and my adult children.

Additionally, the pastor himself said that three members at his church had expressed concerns or complaints about my husband's behavior. I did not hear anything more from the pastor as he took the lead role in the town musical, *Bye Bye Birdie*, and seemed occupied thereafter, but providentially in a surprising turn of events, my husband abruptly decided to become an over the road truck driver and left the state for training. I believe this occurred because he thought that the church was on his trail and certainly because of God's great mercy towards us.

Unfortunately, he did come home on some weekends, fully enraged that I called the church for assistance and with the intent of punishing me. Because I contacted the church, the verbal and emotional abuse escalated to unbelievable levels. He ranted, "Where's the church, you loser?" and "She called the church!" in a shrill, mocking voice like a lunatic. The last time that he was at my house, he spent a great deal of time sharpening axes

on a grinder while making threatening looks and shaking his fists at me with our child by his side.

Shortly after he left again, I noticed that he had used an exceptionally high number of minutes on our cell phone plan.

Investigation revealed that he had used 6000 minutes a month, for the past six months, speaking to a woman from his previous workplace. I found her hair in our vehicle and later photographs surfaced of them together, through which I determined that this relationship had been ongoing for at least two years. His statement, “It’s for me to know and you to find out” seemed hauntingly prophetic.

## **Part 2 –**

With the discovery of the other woman, I contacted the pastor a year after our initial discussion, and told him of my new desire to divorce. I felt that my husband had listened to the Word preached for years, and if it had not effected change, nothing would. His years of hate and cruelty caused me to fear that if he returned, he might kill someone, and my adult children concurred. My conscience did not condemn me for my resolve and I felt that Jesus himself was leading us along a clear path out of the turmoil.

The pastor stated that he would initiate “the process”, but in my study of

Reformed theology, I had never encountered that term, nor did I know what it meant. He avoided defining the term or explaining what would happen next, so I reasoned that it probably was a church discipline procedure pertaining to the assault issue I previously reported.

In what became a confusing turn back into the fog, the pastor stated that what I experienced was really not that bad, that he’d seen worse, and hair and phone logs did not prove that physical adultery took place. I was told to keep this quiet in the church, as my husband would be coming back, and as a result he restricted any Christian comfort that I might have otherwise received from friends at church. He mentioned that I would have to take my husband back even though I would not love him — like Hosea took back the unfaithful spouse. He confidently asserted that there were always two people to blame for marriage problems, and that I was a trigger. His words left me dazed and bewildered. I truly felt like the floor dropped out from under me and was in such a fog at that point that I did not comprehend the direction this was taking. Knowing that the safety of my family relied on the church, I still trusted in my heart that they would help me. I really thought that once the facts of the case were examined, and with the likelihood that my husband’s explosive temper



would blow under scrutiny, the church would support my decision.

I called my husband and notified him that I had discovered his affair. Rather than scream profanities at me as in other phone calls, he suggested that we start over and take a trip to Hawaii. I rejected the offer. Instead, I erected a clear boundary by telling him he was not permitted to return home which led to his unbridled screaming and ranting at me over the phone. I thought that this would be the church's opportunity to confront my husband for his behavior and either send him for psychological evaluation or bring God's Law down on him with the hope of repentance through church discipline. Instead, the pastor tried to persuade me to allow my husband back into the house for a short visit, and out of fear of what my husband might do, I refused, and the pastor seemed frustrated with me.

The elders decided to send the matter to Peacemakers Counseling for mediation. I had done some research and discovered that mediation was not advised in cases of abuse and I told them that I believed that it would only be appropriate if he was confronted by the church and repentant. However, the pastor seemed detached and unconcerned. My input was completely ignored and I felt that I had no voice in

the decisions being made for me. He offered no other option but to proceed in the undefined church process and the thought of leaving the church did not cross my mind. My usual clear focus was becoming muddled at this point and nothing seemed to make logical sense anymore.

Because of my husband's screaming at me on the phone and his violent tendencies, my family was fearful that mediation would be unsafe and pleaded with me not to go to Peacemakers. Once again the pastor was stern and emotionless causing me to doubt my own decision making capabilities. Because my husband was laid off for so long and now an apprentice truck driver, I did not have the \$2800 for mediation, so the pastor said that if I paid the first \$1035, the church would pay the rest. I reaffirmed our agreement by asking him twice if this was all that I would have to pay and he agreed. Still believing that the problem was that my husband was abusive because he was unregenerate, I reasoned that this would be a waste of money and likened it to a tax that I needed to pay to get through this nightmarish situation. Three months passed with little contact from the pastor. Throughout those months, my husband continued to rant and scream at me on the phone and threaten to come

back to the house. By God's mercy he did not.

### **Preparing for Mediation**

The Peacemaker counselor did phone consultations with both my husband and me individually. She asked me what the issues were and I sent her the ten page list of abusive incidents that I previously sent the pastor. She, like the pastor, never validated any of the incidents, nor showed any compassion to my plight. At one point she insensitively responded with, "Awwwww" in a condescending manner to an abusive incident I discussed with her. I was required to read Ken Sande's book, *The Peacemaker*, which I felt was totally inapplicable to my situation. The book focused on conflict resolution between Christians. Domestic abuse was not addressed in the book, and it struck me as a manual for spiritually immature people with petty issues. In a follow-up phone discussion with her (with the pastor listening in), she perhaps perceiving that I was serious about Reformed theology, threw Calvin's quote of the human heart being an idol factory at me and questioned if I wanted other men. She also accused me of being "no saint" because there are always two people contributing to marriage problems. I found these comments extremely offensive, confusing, and

hurtful. Her allegations were unsubstantiated, and I perceived that she was attempting to find some sin to charge against me. Suddenly I found myself on the defensive despite all of the abuse that I had endured and documented.

She called again prior to the mediation and I voiced my concerns that mediation did not seem proper because only recently he was yelling obscenities at me on the phone and also made the absurd statement that this was all because I was going through the "change of life" in that strange, shrill voice he mocked me with. I told her I thought he had narcissistic personality disorder and frankly stated that I didn't like him or love him. Perhaps thinking that I would not come to the mediation, she changed her tone. She said that there were consequences for one's actions and that I could use the mediation time to discuss divorce issues, which I did not think I needed as I had already consulted with an attorney. I could gather no clear sense of the purpose of the mediation or how any of this was biblical, but I wanted to get past this hurdle to complete the "process".

Somewhere between the urgency to protect my family, and the growing confusion of what the right thing to do was, the fact that I had misplaced my trust in the church leadership had not

registered in my mind. Having now left my decision to divorce on the backburner, I was now redirected to an ambiguous course, absent of reason, and followed solely due to submission to church authority.

### **The Mediation Takes Place**

Present at the three day mediation were my husband, one ruling elder, the pastor, the Peacemaker counselor, a counseling trainee and myself. We sat around a table and spent some time going over the Peacemakers rules and their wheel of conflict. (I'll talk more about that wheel in a subsequent post in this series.) The Scripture about Lazarus rising from the dead was read. Both my husband and I were asked to give a history of our relationship. I carefully wrote out and read my story which took approximately 45 minutes. My husband, rather than contribute his story, proceeded to spend the next several hours talking about himself and refuting my statements unhindered. He was center stage and I thought quite noxious. Blank stares were fixed upon him by the others in the room, and I assumed that they would come to the same conclusion that I had, and someone would reel him. No one did.

Throughout the mediation sessions he was not confronted for any of the issues that brought us there. I had waited for the

abusive incidents that I submitted to be discussed but they never were. No mention of the verbal or emotional abuse, reckless driving, disappearing, fighting, or civil disobedience and no mention of the wellbeing of children living in the abuse at all. I brought fifteen pages of itemized phone records proving he talked 6000 minutes to his girlfriend the previous June and they just lay on the table. However, there was one particular incident of great interest to the group. Sometime during the last visit home, (the one when he was raging and sharpening axes), my husband secretly took an expensive item from my jewelry box. When I noticed it missing, I called him to ask if he knew of its whereabouts and apparently that was deemed an issue to explore in-depth. I was harshly questioned pertaining my motives of why I was concerned about the bracelet and was I being submissive to ask him about it. I was also faulted for discussing my husband's abuse and asking for advice from my adult children, which I think revealed the extent of disconnect of the people who were sitting at that table with me. The abuse affected everyone in the household and didn't happen in a vacuum as it seems they supposed. No opportunity was afforded to discuss divorce settlement issues although I brought legal paperwork with me.

On the final day, my husband became irritated with the counselor trainee who made the only negative comment about him. She had said something like, “When will he grow up?” Although he had his face partially covered by his ball cap, from my vantage point, I could see that he was angry, shaking his head, and muttering under his breath. With an air of victory, the counselor pointed out that my husband was repentant and crying. I should have refuted her, but I was emotionally drained and exhausted, having myself wept on and off out of frustration throughout the mediation. As the session wrapped up, the counselor quickly made an agreement that we both consented to in which my husband would continue counseling with her, and I would orchestrate conference calls between the children and him. As she typed out the agreement, the pastor made jokes and informal arrangements to travel with my husband in the truck. When the counselor asked for a check, credit card or promissory note to pay the balance due, I informed her that the pastor previously agreed to pay the remainder. He emphatically pushed his chair away from the table and threw his hands in the air denying any financial responsibility, so the remaining balance wound up as marital debt.

## **Second Thoughts**

Alarmed that I somehow allowed my boundaries be penetrated, I couldn't sleep and called the Peacemaker counselor the next day, telling her that I would not sign the agreement. I did not want to conduct conference calls with my husband and although I did not tell her, I felt that she lacked adequate skills to deal with his serious issues. Concerning the mediation, I told her that I felt my husband was not held accountable for anything. She said, “Yes, he was. Someone said that he should have been talking to his wife instead of that woman.” She had a good point, but the person who said that was me. She also said that he looked sorry.

As a result of Peacemakers mediation, my husband again began calling me with new threats that he had fantasies about seeing me dead and that he was going to financially ruin me. I was at the absolute lowest point in my life, full of despair, feeling just barely alive, and wondering if I had lost my mind. Maybe I really was “no saint” and maybe God hated me the way the church did. These dark thoughts tumbled around in my mind along with all of the other problems this series of events brought. I considered that maybe I wasn't a Christian, but I really believed that God is faithful and although I was crushed, I believed that He still loved me.

### Part 3 –

As I shared in Part 1 (add link) of this series, I had lived with an abusive and adulterous husband for years, and the ambiguous direction of the church “process” coupled with the safety risk due to my husband’s increasing anger, left me in a vulnerable state. I was given no solid information of what to expect prior to Peacemaker mediation and I felt that the pastor, elders, and Peacemaker counselor were all deceptively, perhaps deliberately vague, so I really didn’t comprehend what I was getting into.

In Part 2 of this series I relayed my personal experience of what an abuse victim can expect in the Peacemaker sessions. As a consequence of the abuse, and most certainly the irrational church intervention, I was diagnosed with PTSD. Thankfully, I received guidance from a competent life coach who helped me to see through the confusion. Three months later, although I still did not comprehend how the mediation was biblical and what its purpose was, I wrote a letter of complaint to Judy Dabler author of the book *Peacemaking Women: Biblical Hope for Resolving Conflict*, and the founder/supervisor of the Peacemaker center that I attended. In the letter I told her that my husband was abusive and adulterous and that I had documented

events that were easily verifiable, yet he was not held accountable for anything. I explained that I thought he should have been psychologically evaluated before mediation, that I never received validation but blame, my concerns were trivialized, there was no concern for my children’s wellbeing at all, and that after the mediation, the abuse escalated.

Following are some excerpts from my letter:

In actuality, the services at Peacemaker Ministries have only made matters worse. My husband is angry at me for the cost, that embarrassing situations were brought out, and he mocks me about the events from the history I read — it was all my fault. Recently, he has said on two occasions that he wants to see me dead. I have now sought help from the local abuse center and they are taking all of this very seriously — something Peacemaker Ministry would not do. I am embarrassed that the church lags far behind the secular world in dealing with the reality of abuse and helping people. This should not be.

. . .no mention of the welfare of the children ever came up. At least four times the discussion of payment (check, promissory note or credit card to Peacemakers were focused on. . .

All of this seems to be a very opportunistic and irresponsible way to

exploit a lot of money from distressed people for absolutely nothing in return. I believe that this is a ministry in name only, some Scripture was read, but I have found no genuine love or compassion, no spiritual or psychological knowledge imparted, no validation, only a trivialization of sins against someone seeking help and guidance. . . I will be paying for this debt for a long time on a credit card, but actually, I am in a better position than someone who makes a great deal of money at the expense of Christ's suffering people. It will be frightening to be found conducting a ministry in his name that he never approved of.

I explained that the nearly \$3000 was excessive and financially burdened my family at an already difficult time. Since my hope was that she would become educated about abuse, I closed the letter by telling her that I finally found validation through Jeff Crippen's sermons and Barbara Robert's book, Not Under Bondage . In the following weeks I left messages with her staff to follow up and discuss these issues.

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You see it then? This is not the religion of the Good Shepherd. This is not the promise of the closing verse of this Psalm –

**Psalms 23:6** Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Ultimately, this is where the Good Shepherd leads us – into the ultimate green pastures and still waters, the house of the Lord, the New Heavens and the New Earth. Beware of the scribes. Beware of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

**Galatians 5:1** For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.