

# The Shepherd's Heart

## A good heart

Our focus in this article now turns to the good heart of our shepherd. Our Lord Jesus Christ describes Himself in this way twice in John chapter ten. He states, *"I am the good shepherd."* However, this word "good" is not the usual word translated in the new testament as "good," nor does it express our normal usage of good. At times we think of a child being good. In this context it means that they have behaved well. At other times, a child's work may be described as good. The teacher really means that it is above average but could do better. However, Jesus describes Himself as good in a different way. His heart is good in a more significant respect.

The word translated good here, essentially means: worthy, noble, beautiful, excellent. The heart of Jesus is THE ideal. It is in a class of its own. He has a truly excellent and beautiful heart. How is this expressed?

## A heart that is sacrificial

In John 10v11 Jesus says, *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."* In contrast to the selfish, self-seeking hirelings who leave the sheep to the ravages of the wolves, Jesus says that He gives His life for the sheep. This is one of the great out workings of His excellent heart that puts it into a class of its own. There are very few who would be prepared to give their lives for others. We may find some sort of sacrificial spirit in some people in times of war or great need. However, Jesus not only is prepared to give His life, but is also determined to lay it down for the sheep. In His beautiful heart, He only desires the good of His sheep. Therefore, he pays the ultimate price, laying down His life for them as a sacrifice for sin. He bears the suffering, indeed the wrath of God that they deserve. Christian, what a good shepherd you have. How He has loved you. How He has saved you.

Ponder Christian, as you now turn your mind back to Psalm 23. When you are going through the valley of the shadow of death, what sort of shepherd would you like to have at your side? Surely one with a good heart. One who because he has the ideal heart, has actually been through death in your place. One that has endured it in love for you. This is what you have. Jesus, the beautiful shepherd, has promised to be with you in the shadow of death. His presence is there, to guide, strengthen and comfort you in your hour of greatest need. He will fulfil this precious ministry in a class of His own. For He is able to help you in your need beyond what you could ever imagine. Be comforted that your shepherd has an excellent heart.

## **A heart that knows**

In John 10v14 Jesus says, *“I am the good shepherd; and I know my sheep, and am known by my own.”* Now our attention is turned to the knowledge and the relationship that is between the sheep and the shepherd. This relationship is not like one between a disconnected thing and its owner. We may say that we love our new car, but at the end of the day it is just a bit of metal, and no relationship can be struck up. The relationship between a human shepherd and his sheep is more than this. To us all sheep look the same! The true shepherd knows each one, and the sheep respond to his voice. However, the relationship between the good shepherd and his sheep, is far more special. Indeed, it is modelled on the perfect relationship between the Father and the Son. As Jesus says in John 10v15, *“As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.”* Between the God the Father and God the Son there is perfect knowledge and intimacy of relationship. Therefore, between the good shepherd and His sheep, there is a preciousness in the relationship, which like Jesus’ heart, is in a class of its own.

Christian, Jesus knows you. From the excellency of His heart, He has such knowledge of you that should blow your mind. He knows your name, what you look like, your circumstances, your needs, your weaknesses, etc. In fact, He knows you better than you know yourself. With such a shepherd leading you, what need have you to fear? He will provide for all that you need. He will protect you from all evil. He will deliver you from all your enemies. Praise God for such a beautiful shepherd.

In addition, you also know Him. True, it is not a perfect knowledge. However, you are in fellowship with Him. You know Him through His precious word. When you hear Him speaking through that word read and preached, you realise it is His voice. As you know Him to have a most excellent and worthy heart, you trust Him. Who else can you trust? There is so much confusion concerning what is right and wrong in every department of life these days. Often the cry, “Fake news” is heard. Often opinions change. However, Jesus’ heart does not change. His word does not change. That word satisfies our souls. For our excellent hearted shepherd, *“Makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters”* (Psalm 23v2). Rest in Him beloved sheep. Feed on Christ and His word. Find peace and contentment in the beautiful shepherd alone.