

The Lord is my Shepherd – Part 1

Talk given by Guy Kasongo at The Bridge Christian Fellowship – 17/08/2008

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Main reading: **Psalm 23**

God's people is likened to a flock. This flock is made of cattle, namely sheep. The sheep are people who believe in God and have been saved through the blood of Jesus Christ. He Himself is the Leader of this people or the Shepherd of the flock. In the Bible, He is also called the Lamb of God. Hence, all those who become His sheep, will also share His nature, as they have now received His life through the Holy Spirit; the Spirit of Christ. In fact, we read in Romans 8.9 that "if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His". In John 10.11 and 1 Peter 2.25, we learn that the Lord is the Good / Chief Shepherd and the Overseer of our souls. He also declared: "I am the door of the sheep"!

Hence, the relationship between the shepherd and the flock is the most vital for the life of the sheep. Therefore, it is crucial that the sheep understand without any shade of doubt this relationship. "The Lord is my shepherd" is a great statement and the starting point for the sheep's journey. It is also an expression of the sheep's trust and expectations from the shepherd in the daily life; "I shall not want"!

The sheep anticipates its complete satisfaction in declaring: "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever". We learn from the Bible that the good Shepherd has also appointed local shepherds to lead His flock. According to Ephesians 4.11, these are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. These are to shepherd the flock and serve as overseers. This can only be possible if the Chief Shepherd is confident that He will provide these shepherds with all what is needed to fulfil these tasks; they will have to share the same heart of compassion for the sheep and work together to achieve to same goal, which is abundant life for the sheep or eternal life.

With this structure of the sheepfold in mind, we can now summarise different relationships as follows:

- 1 – The *Good / Chief Shepherd* and the *local shepherds* (who are also sheep in their nature)
- 2 – The *local shepherds* and the *sheep*
- 3 – The *Good /Chief Shepherd* and the *sheep*
- 4 – The *local shepherds* between them
- 5 – The *sheep* between them

The Bible also speaks of other animals. Some of them are outside the sheepfold and some others can be found accidentally, temporarily or subtly infiltrating in the local sheepfold. For instance, we are told of a *dog returning to his own vomit*; a *sow having washed, to her wallowing in the mire*; *the goats who will be sent into the lake of fire*; then we have *fox, vipers, wolves*, etc.

However, since these animals are all types of people not having the life of Christ in them, there is always an opportunity to become a sheep through the process of *metamorphosis* that is called *repentance* and the *new birth*.

In contrast to these of animals, the word sheep used in John 10 is derived from the Greek word *probaton*. It means something that is walking forward. Thus,

- the sheep walks forward and follows his Shepherd;
- there is no confusion whatsoever as to who is his Leader;
- the sheep knows and hears his Shepherd's voice;
- the sheep does by no mean follow a stranger but flees from him;
- the sheep is satisfied with the Shepherd's provision;
- the sheep dwells in the sheepfold and love the companionship of the Shepherd;
- the sheep depends entirely on the Shepherd's pastoral care;
- the sheep gets in the sheepfold through the door

Especially in these last days, it is vital that we all understand the nature of these relationships. We have now false ministers who are in charge of the flock in many places. These false ministers have never undergone a *metamorphosis* to acquire the Shepherd's life.

Reading 2: John 10.1-5; 11-14

1 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. 2 "But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 "And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. 5 "Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." [...] 11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. 12 "But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. 13 "The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. 14 "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.

V.14 – I know my sheep and I am known by my own!

This declaration is in perfect harmony with the sheep's declaration: "the Lord is my Shepherd"!

From this passage in John, we learn of a new type of relationship that is worth considering:

- The *hireling* and the *wolf*

What can we learn from these types?

In Acts 20.18-24, we find the following exhortation from Paul to the Ephesians Elders:

18 And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, 19 "serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; 20 "how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, 21 "testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 "except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. 24 "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Then he goes on to say in verses 28-30 of the same chapter 20 what follows:

28 "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 "For I know this, that after my departure *savage wolves* will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 "Also *from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.*

Now, we have *savage wolves* coming from outside the church and *hireling* rising from within church, in which they have been operating under sheep's clothes, only waiting handover things to the wolves and then flee from the sheep. In fact, the hireling is actually working to get things ready for the wolves to come and fulfil their agenda.

Question 1: What do wolves and hirelings do?

- **Wolves:**

Zechariah 22.27 provides us with a good picture in this respect:

"Her princes in her midst are like *wolves* tearing the prey, to shed blood, to destroy people, and to *get dishonest gain*. (Does this sounds like the one thief who comes only to steal, and to kill, and to destroy in John 10.10?)

- **Hireling:**

The Greek word is *misthotos*, which means wage-worker. The dictionary defines a hireling as someone who is only interested in money, even though he is employed to carry out unpleasant work!

Question 2: How can any one start as a sheep and ends up to be a wolf?

Reading 3: **Matthew 7.15-16**

15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 "You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?"

These are hirelings who have disguised themselves under sheep's appearance but inwardly, they are ravenous wolves. It seems quite clear that hirelings and wolves are actually of the same nature, except that the former operate from within and the latter from outside, to achieve the same goal, that is to *steal*, to *kill* and to *destroy* as well as their common appetite for *dishonest gain*. They achieve these goals by claiming so many *signs and wonders* in the name of the Lord and by disguising themselves. These are unmistakable fruit by which we shall know them!

In **Matthew 7.22-23**, we now have the verdict:

22 "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

This means that they have actually never been sheep at all. Surely, apparent signs and wonders are not in any way absolute guarantee of one's ministry approval by God.

Question 3: if the false ministers are not known by God and they still claim to perform signs and wonders in His name, then what is the source of their deception?

Again, the Bible answers this question in the clearest possible way that leaves no room for any confusion or doubt. It says in **2 Corinthians 11.13-15**:

13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an *angel* of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

Clearly, this is a very serious issue to consider when we see people who call themselves Christians and reject God's warning against these things. In fact, false miracles prepare the world to embrace the culture of the antichrist and the false prophet who are yet to come.

Let us also consider the following warning from **2 Thessalonians 2.9-10**:

9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

These things are so essential to the antichrist, as he will need to convince people of his divine power. When John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask the Lord whether or not He was the Messiah, the Lord responded by showing them His work in people's lives; this seems to be one of the qualifying criteria for any one claiming to be the Messiah.

We are told in **Revelation 13** that the false prophet "**performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. 14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. 15 He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. 16 He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, 17 and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.**" His number is six hundred and sixty-six.

Psalm 23 : 1 **The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.** 2 **He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.** 3 **He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.** 4 **Yea, 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. a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.** 6 **Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.**

- Psalm 23.3: He restores my soul.

- Ps 32.1- blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven and sin covered

- Ps 94.19- In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul.

- Psalm 23.4-6: Even through the valley of shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me [...]

The opposite of fear is faith in God. The Lord told Jairus (Luke 8.50): “do not be afraid, only believe”!

A wonderful promise is in **Psalm 121**:

The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in From this time forth, and even forevermore.

Also remember: **Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints! (Psalm 116.15)**

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want!