



THE
SHEEP
of
HIS
PASTURE

Discerning the
Differences
Between
Sheep & Goats

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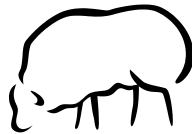
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SHEEP or GOATS?

Matthew 25:31-33 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: (32) And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: (33) And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.



A PASTORAL SCENE.

Without a doubt, the most beloved symbolism of the relationship between the Lord and His people is that of the shepherd and his sheep. The most well known passage in the entire Bible, the 23rd Psalm, states it with majestic simplicity:

✚ **“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. (2) He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. (3) He restoreth my soul: he leadeth 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 thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. (5) Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth 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 for ever.”**

Many other passages of scripture in the Old Testament lift up this wonderful symbolism:

✚ **Psa 100:3 Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.**

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✚ Ezekiel 34:11-12 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. (12) As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

The New Testament identifies the Shepherd of the 23rd Psalm with our wonderful Lord Jesus Christ, Who is called:

1. The Good Shepherd Who gave His life for the sheep. ***Joh 10:11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.***
2. The Chief Shepherd – the Lord of the “under-shepherds” or pastors of the churches. ***1 Peter 5:3-4 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. (4) And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye***

shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

3. The Great Shepherd. ***Heb 13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant...***
4. The Shepherd of our souls. ***1Pe 2:25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.***

The symbolism is crystal clear and simple. The Lord is the Shepherd. His people are the “*sheep of His pasture.*” As the Shepherd, He owns us, leads us, feeds us, protects us, and nurtures our lives. He does this personally, and He does it through the faithful ministry of His under-shepherds (pastors) in the local flocks, the churches. These men are not to be hirelings, serving selfishly and for material gain, but

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are to have the heart of the Shepherd for His sheep. They are to see their ministries as to the Lord, to whom they must one day give an account.

The Bible does not speak well of **hireling** shepherds. They are typically short-term shepherds:

- ❖ **Isa 16:14** But now the LORD hath spoken, saying, Within three years, as the years of an hireling...
- ❖ **Isa 21:16** For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Within a year, according to the years of an hireling...

A hireling will usually only stay with the flock for a year, maybe two, usually no more than three. It is no surprise to find out that the average pastor stays with one church for about three years before either quitting the ministry or moving on to “greener pastures.”

Hirelings, as their name suggests, are in it for their “hire” or reward. ***“As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work” (Job 7:2).*** The hireling never takes a personal responsibility for the sheep; he does not care about their safety, and will quickly flee when danger or trouble comes.

❖ **John 10:12-13** But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. (13) The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

The hireling is not a good representative of the Great Shepherd, Who gave His life for the sheep. The church that has a truehearted pastor, a man who loves God, loves the Bible, loves lost souls, and loves the church

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that has been entrusted to his stewardship, is a truly blessed church.

In the pastoral scenery, we see the Shepherd, His under-shepherds, and the sheep. The Bible also warns us of **“grievous wolves”** that want to destroy the flock. Paul warned the faithful pastors of Ephesus:

- ❖ **Acts 20:28-30 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (29) For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. (30) Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.**

The Lord Jesus also warned of false prophets and false teachers, describing them as wolves that would infiltrate the flock in sheep’s clothing (Mt. 7:15). He

also told His *“little flock”* that He was sending them out as *“sheep in the midst of wolves”* (Mt. 10:16).

The pastoral scene seems complete. We have the Good Shepherd, His faithful under-shepherds (and sometimes some hirelings), the sheep of His pasture, and grievous wolves, lurking around the flock, trying to get within the flock to destroy it.

In Matthew 25, the Lord introduced another pastoral symbol into the equation. In a parable describing His Second Coming, He stated that when He comes, he will separate the nations one from another as sheep are separated from the goats. The righteous here are represented as sheep while the unrighteous are represented as goats. So, into our pastoral scene steps another symbolic creature: the goat.

Now, there is nothing inherently evil about goats. Sheep and goats were often herded together, to be separated at “roundup time” for shearing or slaughter. However, the distinction between these

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animals, as symbolized in separating the righteous from the unrighteous, is worthy of our attention. When the Lord compares His people to sheep, He is pointing out qualities that are both good and bad. And when the Lord compares the unrighteous to goats, He is warning us of certain characteristics or behaviors that ought not be found among His people.

SHEEP, NOT SHEEPISH.

Like most men, I have to admit to having a little problem with thinking of myself as a *sheep*. Sheepishness is not considered a manly quality. In fact, the world often thinks of sheepishness as being a mindless, cowardly follower. This is not an inaccurate comparison, for sheep are not the smartest of animals, they are followers, and they are not nearly as “cool” or “manly” as their predatory enemies (i.e., wolves and lions). I doubt that there is a High School

football team or Special Forces unit anywhere whose symbol is a white, wooly sheep.

We must understand that God's comparison of His people to sheep has to do primarily with our status under the Shepherd, our place in His flock, and our behavior amongst each other. God is also revealing to us certain unfavorable characteristics that sheep possess which we should *avoid*.

The same Bible that compares us to sheep also tells us to be as bold as a lion, to mount up with wings as an eagle, and to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ. I also draw further comfort from the fact that though my Saviour is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the King of kings, the Captain of the Lord's hosts, and the greatest Man to ever live, He is also called **the Lamb of God**. Yet, though He as the Lamb willingly laid down His life, there was nothing sheepish about the Lord as far as masculinity, courage, or strength was concerned.

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Christian men can relax on this point. God is not telling us to be *sheepish* – except in certain areas, which we will discuss. We are the sheep of His pasture, and the comparison is meant to encourage as well as admonish us.

A DIFFERENCE IN NATURE, NOT MERELY BEHAVIOR.

When God compares us to sheep, He is pointing out some of our *weaknesses* as well as some of our *strengths*. He is giving us an illustration of some characteristics that God's people ought to have. When He points out the goat as representing the unsaved or unrighteous, He is warning us of bad behavioral traits that we ought to avoid.

The fact is that though sheep and goats are two very different animals, sheep can sometimes act like goats. In addition, sometimes Christians can show some real

goat like characteristics. Goats can act like sheep. Goats like to mingle among the sheep, as we will discuss. However, a goat is not a sheep, even if it acts like one.


Sheep and goats are two entirely different creatures. A saved person is an entirely different creature than an unsaved person. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, ***“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*** The difference between the Christian and an unsaved person is not merely *behavior*. It is a fundamental difference of nature.

The saved person has partaken of the divine nature through the new birth (Jn. 3). The saved person is a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ. The saved person has been translated from Satan’s kingdom into God’s family. It is not merely a matter of *acting* like a Christian. You have to be genuinely ***born again*** to be one of God’s sheep.

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Sadly, I fear that many calling themselves Christians are misidentified goats. They have never been born again. They mingle with the sheep, but everything about their lives reflects a goat's nature, and not that of a sheep.

THE BIGGEST BEHAVIORAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SHEEP AND GOATS IS HOW AND WHAT THEY EAT.

 **Psa 23:2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.**

Sheep are *grazers*. They are picky eaters. They eat grass and small plants close to the ground. They love “green pastures.”

Goats are *browsers*. They will eat leaves, shrubs, trees, leftovers, and garbage. While this preacher was in Jerusalem, I saw a house in the Arab quarter with a goat tied up on the roof. The Arabs would pile their

trash outside for the goat to eat. He was their “garbage disposal.” Goats will eat anything they can eat and taste and chew on anything they cannot eat. Though they cannot actually eat tin cans, they have been seen chewing on them. Goats can also eat plants that are poisonous to sheep.

What makes up your diet? Some people say that they are saved, but all week long, they are *browsing* in the world – eating the late night comedian’s dirty humor, watching the worldly TV shows, visiting wicked websites, reading bad magazines and books. They have spent the week indulging in garbage! Then they come to church and they say they do not get anything out of the message! When they are led into the “green pastures” of God’s Word, they do not have an appetite.

Another interesting fact is that healthy sheep are hungry all the time. Healthy sheep are always eager to eat. One of the surest sign that a sheep is unhealthy is

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when it does not have an appetite. Some people look for reasons to miss church. Some do not care if they come or not. For some, one thirty-minute sermon a week is “enough.” When they come to church, they sit their and dare you to bless them. When the sermon meal is presented, they turn their nose up at it and walk away without taking a bite – and then complain that they are not being “fed” at church!

Sheep are always hungry. They want the “*green pastures*” that the Shepherd has to offer. Are you hungry for the word of God? Or are you satisfied with the garbage and leftovers of this world?

SHEEP HAVE A TREMENDOUS INSTINCT TO FLOCK TOGETHER.

Sheep are among the most social and gregarious of animals. God hardwired them to flock together. For one thing, there is safety in numbers. When faced by

a predator, sheep close in together and face the danger together, as a body. The united front intimidates their stronger enemies. Wolves get the *stragglers*, those who are away from the flock - those who run away from the safety of the group. In fact, wolves will approach a flock with a particular posture and stare that says, "RUN!" The wise sheep stay with the flock. The foolish run, and are quickly killed.

When danger comes, a church ought to stand together and face that danger together. Satan wants to divide the flock and pick up the stragglers. It is *always* the straggler, always the one who bolts, who is in the greatest danger.

Sheep **enjoy** being together. They usually feed side by side, while goats will spread out in a field. Christians ought to be sociable with each other. Truly saved people should desire the company of God's people. We are the sheep of His pasture. We are His flock. And the local church is my flock. That is where God

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put me for my own benefit and safety, and to help strengthen the rest of the group.

There is something wrong with the Christian who does not want to be with the flock. Goats do not mind being alone. However, if a sheep finds itself separated from the flock and alone, it becomes very agitated. They become disconcerted and anxious when alone. They NEED the company of other sheep. They need close fellowship.

There is something wrong with an antisocial Christian who does not want to be around anyone or participate in anything with the church. There is something goat like about the Christian who would rather spend time with worldly people *outside* the church than with the people of God *within* the church.

Christians need each other. God left us churches for fellowship, for protection, for edification, for service, and yes, for fun together. I love the people of God. We are imperfect and full of flaws. We need to grow

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in grace and knowledge. We disappoint each other and sometimes hurt each other. However, a Christian without a church is a sheep without a flock – and that is a sad, dangerous place to be.

SHEEP REPRESENT SOME OF THE BEST QUALITIES SEEN AMONG CHURCH MEMBERS.

When you think of sheep, you do not think of animals that are naturally contentious, hard to manage, violent, dangerous, quarrelsome, stubborn, or mean-spirited. Sheep are, most of the time, peaceful animals. They are docile, not easily provoked.

If you heard a report that a lion had escaped the local zoo and was last seen in your neighborhood, you would be justifiably concerned! A lion is a dangerous animal! However, if you heard that some sheep escaped from the local farm, you would not be worried.

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Sheep are not typically destructive or harmful animals. Sheep are not by nature the kind of animals that just get into trouble, destroying people's property, being a menace to the community. Nobody calls in a riot squad if a herd of sheep escapes from their field. Sheep are, most of the time, harmless animals.

Sheep follow the shepherd and are easily cared for. They usually get along well with each other and love the company of other sheep. These are great qualities inside the church. The New Testament commands us to behave in this way towards each other:

- ❖ **Ephesians 4:1-3 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, (2) With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; (3) Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

- ❖ **Ephesians 4:31-32** Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: (32) And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.
- ❖ **1Th_5:13** ...And be at peace among yourselves.

It would be a wonderful thing if Christians acted like the sheep that they are supposed to be inside the Lord's fold!

HOWEVER, SHEEP SOMETIMES DEMONSTRATE DEFINITE GOAT-LIKE QUALITIES.

The fact is that sheep can act a lot like goats. They share some of the same bad behavioral traits! So do Christians that do not crucify the flesh and walk in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. We must remember that

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though we are saved, the old nature is still a part of us. The old nature was NOT eradicated when we were saved. A new nature was quickened within us, but the old nature is still there. The Christian life is a daily battle to crucify the old nature and live by the new nature. This is what Paul referred to in this passage:

- ❖ **Ephesians 4:22-24 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; (23) And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; (24) And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.**

When I allow the old nature to have its way, I will find myself behaving more like a goat than a sheep. The gentle, easily led, peaceful disposition of the sheep will give way to a contentious, rebellious, stubborn, prideful, worldly behavior that is not pleasing to my

Shepherd. The following are some facts concerning the negative nature of goats.

Goats *hate* fences. They will test them constantly, either intentionally or simply because they are handy to climb on. If any of the fencing can be spread, pushed over or down, or otherwise be overcome, the goats will escape. Being very intelligent, once a weakness in the fence has been discovered, it will be exploited repeatedly. Goats are very coordinated and can climb and hold their balance in the most precarious places.

Goats do not like rules or restrictions. They do not like submitting to authority. They want to teach Sunday School but they do not want to go by the rules of the pastor. They want to serve, but they do not want any restrictions on their service. Goats do not like standards, dress codes, or restrictions of any kind. These rules chafe and irritate the goat. He will look for

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any opportunity to push the rules and escape whenever possible.

Goats do not like shepherds. They like to hang out and mingle with the sheep but they cannot stand the shepherd, unless he is giving them a handout. Some Christians want nothing to do with the pastor – unless they need or want something, or need his approval to do what they want to do inside the church. Most of the time, they like to keep the pastor at a distance and view him with unending suspicion. The average Christian might be surprised to know how many “upstanding pillars” in the church will not even speak to the pastor if they can possibly help it.

Goats go wherever the food is, and they are not picky about the food. They will go here for a while, and then over there, and then somewhere else. They will go wherever there is a handout, but there is no loyalty to a flock or a shepherd. This goat like quality is found in our modern “church hoppers,” Christians

who never seem to stay in one place for very long, and who are easily pulled from one church to another with “bigger programs, thrills, and frills.”

Goats are very curious, and this curiosity gets them into trouble. They have an intensely inquisitive and intelligent nature and will explore anything new or unfamiliar in their surroundings. This is often to their detriment. Some Christians have weak moral standards. They will explore anything. Some things are forbidden ground for God’s people. We are not supposed to know about them. However, some goat-like Christians are curious. They are always getting into things, and they end up getting themselves into trouble.

Goats readily revert to the wild (become feral) if given the opportunity. The only domestic animals known to return to feral life as swiftly as a goat are cats and hogs. The goat’s nature is close to the wild. It is always just a step away from the wilderness.

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Some Christians have reverted to the world far too easily. Too many of our young people have graduated from High School, left home, and went immediately into the wild. Others have quickly and easily left the flock of God to live in the world. This should not be an easy thing for a Christian to do. Sheep are too domesticated to return to the wild. They need the flock and they need the shepherd.

Goats are quarrelsome animals. They like to butt heads. Why? This is how they establish dominance.

Sheep often display this goat-like behavior. They butt heads for the same reasons that goats do – to establish dominance in the flock. This is exactly why some Christians are contentious. They are consistently butting heads with others, and especially anyone with a position of authority in their lives.

The reason they do this is to establish dominance. They are power plays. Wives butt heads with their husbands as a power play. Children do the same to

their parents, to try to establish dominance. I know homes that are most definitely ruled by the children. The parents back down any time the child decides to rear up and butt heads with their authority. Church members do the same things to their pastor. They manipulate or intimidate to take the position of “power” in a relationship.

Sheep are not supposed to fight to establish a “pecking order.” I have seen Christians act like goats when someone else got a position they wanted, and they felt like they needed to shove some people around and butt heads to show dominance. That is not sheep-like. That is goat-like.

❖ Rom 12:10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

A person can be saved forever and still evidence goat-like qualities from time to time if we are not disciplined to live in the Spirit.

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DUE TO MORE AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR, GOATS TEND TO DOMINATE SHEEP WHEN TOGETHER.

There are two interlopers that sometimes come into the church flock: **wolves** in sheep's clothing, who desire to destroy the flock, and **goats**, who desire to mislead or control the flock.

Sometimes goats and sheep run together. When they do, goats almost always dominate the sheep because they are more aggressive, and because sheep are more trusting. Goats are natural leaders - sheep are natural followers.

The average church has many sweet, kind, loving, humble, peaceful Christians. They just want to go to church, love each other, raise their children, worship the Lord, and serve in ministry. They are not looking to dominate anything; they are not looking for selfish promotions; they are not looking to push an agenda; they just want to go to church and serve the Lord. They are usually trusting – and often, unfortunately,

easily mislead by the other kind of Christian (if they are truly even born again) – the aggressive person in the church who has an agenda, who wants power, who wants a position, and who is looking for selfish promotion. These goats sometimes cause church splits; sometimes they cripple churches; and sometimes they kill them altogether. Some churches have never recovered from a split caused by a self-righteous but rebellious goat.

Diotrephes was a goat in the flock.

❖ **3 John 1:9-10** I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. (10) Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

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Diotrephes was not the pastor – he was the head billy goat. He refused the apostle John! He wanted to show his dominance. If anyone stood against him, he head butted them and threw them out of the flock.

Sometimes, these goats are deacons. Sometimes, they are deacon's wives! Sometimes, they are "ex-preachers" who never could build a church of their own but want to dominate one that God used another man to build! Sometimes, they have been in the flock for a long time. Regardless, they are a negative, harmful force inside the church. Often, the pastor is the only one who even recognizes the goat for what he or she really is. The trusting church members do not often recognize it, because the goat will show them a very different side than what the pastor sees.

If, for example, the church saw the rolled eyes or rude facial expressions that these church members sometimes give the preacher while he is preaching; or read the emails that he wrote, or that his wife wrote;

or heard the things said in private, or had talked to their previous pastor, they would understand what the pastor has already seen. Trust me – the pastor sees a side to some people that is very different from what they portray to the general church membership!

Sometimes, however, a good sheep can put a goat in his place! Not all sheep are wooly pushovers. A big ram can be a dangerous creature when stirred up. Goats are more aggressive, but if a ram stands up to a goat, the ram wins nine out of ten times. When the goat rears up for his head butt, the ram simply rushes straight in to its exposed stomach, knocking the wind out of him!

When my pastor, now retired, was pastoring in Louisiana, God blessed his ministry mightily. However, some goats began stirring up trouble in the church. One of the deacons, who is now the pastor of one of the largest independent Baptist churches in America, decided to call a men's meeting one Sunday night

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while the pastor was away preaching a revival. When all the men gathered in, this deacon called out the two troublemakers and exposed them in front of all the men – giving all the details of what they had been saying behind the pastor’s back. He stood up to those goats and knocked the wind out of them. He may well have stopped a potential church split.

When goats rise up in the church, it is okay to stand up on the side of the church and pastor. One blow to the gut is usually all it takes to quiet these cowards down. However, often there are no rams in the church. The goats take over, the pastor and his family suffers, and the church is hindered.

I decided when I was a church member that I was going to stand with my pastor, and if people did not like the pastor, they were not going to like me. When troublemakers talked, they did not talk to me – more than once. Every church needs some he-rams to stand

up when goats try to cause dissension and discord within the church!

SHEEP ARE EASILY LED, WHICH IS BOTH A GOOD QUALITY AND A DANGEROUS ONE.

Sheep are natural followers. They have even been known to follow each other off a cliff! If one sheep starts walking away, the entire flock is liable to follow. Of course, the following instinct is wonderful as long as sheep are following the Shepherd. The New Testament teaches us to be GOOD FOLLOWERS:

- ❖ **1Co 11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.**
- ❖ **Eph 5:1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;**
- ❖ **Php 3:17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.**

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- ❖ **1Th 2:14** For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews:

However, we have to make sure that we are following those who are following Christ, our Shepherd.

The danger is that sheep will follow goats *away from the Shepherd and His under-shepherds*. In Galatia, the sheep began following goats. Those goats led them away from Paul and into apostasy, a false gospel. The devil uses goats to infiltrate the flock and lead people astray – into false doctrine, sinful decisions, or foolish behavior.

There is a goat used in slaughterhouses called a Judas goat. Jesus, the Lamb of God, was led to slaughter by the original Judas goat. These goats are trained to lead the sheep from the pen to the slaughterhouse door. After leading them inside, the

Judas goat is rewarded and released to repeat his performance.

Beware, folks, beware of people with goat-like tendencies. Beware of people that are rebellious and contentious, that like the church but not the pastor of the church. Beware of people that fight the rules, fences and restrictions. Beware of people that have caused trouble in church after church after church.

Young people, beware of goats that want to lead you away from your parents. Spouses, beware of goats that want to lead you away from your mate. Church members, beware of goats that want to lead you away from your pastor. Beware of goats that would lead you away from God's calling, ministry, or purpose for your life. They might be leading you right into a slaughterhouse!

Be careful whom you follow. Follow divinely appointed authorities. Follow the Bible and its commands concerning authority in your life.

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LEADERSHEEP.

A unique breed of sheep developed in Iceland, where the severe conditions required grazing in winter. This breed of sheep, known as ***leadersheep***, actually developed the ability to help the shepherds in managing the rest of their flocks – even guarding them and protecting them from predators.

As their name implies, leadersheep lead the flock. Unlike goats, however, they do not *mislead* the flock. With a phenomenal sense for weather changes, they would stand guard over the flock, immediately rounding them up and taking them back to the fold at the first sign of dangerous weather. In a land where sunshine could turn into a blizzard in less than an hour, many flocks and shepherds were spared a freezing death by the unerring guidance of leadersheep back to the safety of home.

A church needs good leadersheep! We need faithful Sunday School teachers, deacons, ministry leaders,

and Godly members who lead by example and use their influence to bring people to Jesus Christ! This pastor is thankful for the faithful leaders that I have the privilege of serving with! What a blessing strong leadersheep are to their flock!

SHEEP WALK CIRCUMSPECTLY.

Sheep watch very carefully to avoid predators. Their greatest defense against predators, other than their flocking instinct, is their eyesight. They can see predators afar off, because they walk circumspectly.

Sheep never walk in a straight line. They zigzag as they walk. Why? Because their eyes, like all prey animals, are on the sides of their head. When they zig, they look around and behind with the left eye. When they zag, they look around with the right eye. They are constantly looking around with nearly 360-degree vision.

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The Bible tells us, ***“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,” (Eph. 5:15).***

Predators are out to get us. There is a lion roaming abroad, seeking whom he may devour. There are ravenous wolves that desire to destroy us and scatter the flock. We have to be wise as serpents, harmless as doves. We must walk circumspectly.

SHEEP LOVE AND FOLLOW THE SHEPHERD & DEPEND UPON HIS MINISTRY.

The Lord, our Shepherd, said:

- ❖ **John 10:2-5** But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. (3) To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. (4) And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they

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know his voice. (5) And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

The sheep know the voice of their Shepherd. Mary Magdalene knew the Lord. However, when she saw Him in His glorified body after His resurrection, she thought He was the gardener! Until He said, ***“Mary”*** (Jn. 20:16). She knew the Shepherd’s voice.

I hear strange voices today. As soon as I hear their voice, I know they are not my Shepherd. It is sad that so many professing Christians are following the voices of false shepherds, leading them into a worldly and wicked version of Christianity.

Sheep love the shepherd. They know his voice, and they follow Him. He does not have to cattle prod them. ***“He goeth before them, and the sheep follow him.”*** I wonder about those that have to be cattle prodded into church. I wonder about those who flee the voice of the Lord. I worry about those who do not

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want to hear the voice of their undershepherd. They joined the church and said, “You are our pastor,” but they refuse his phone calls, will not open the door when he visits, and pretend as if they do not see him when they run into him out in public. We have to wonder about those who do not listen to what the undershepherd preaches from the Word of God.

Sheep are so domesticated that they need the shepherd. They need his ministry. God would not have put us into the church and put over us pastors and teachers if we did not need their ministry. Sheep require the ministry of the shepherd. Goats can go on their own right back to the world, but not sheep.

THE CAST SHEEP.

Sometimes a sheep can get ‘cast.’ This means that their wool is so thick that they roll over on their backs and cannot get back on their feet! Their wool is so

thick that they end up stuck, with their skinny little legs kicking at the air! Though this sounds humorous, it is actually very dangerous. A cast sheep is not only helpless against predators. They also cannot breath. If the shepherd does not get to them quickly, they will die of suffocation.

Sometimes, we can get too “wooly.” We tend to get proud of ourselves, especially if we have had a little success in God’s service. Our wool gets nice and thick – and then we end up stuck on our own pride.

Just as the branch needs to be pruned to produce much fruit, sheep need to be shorn for their wellbeing. Periodically, God has to shear us down and humble us for our own good and for future usefulness. He takes all of our beautiful wool and leaves us bare to the world! Yet it is better to be shorn than to end up stuck in pride, snared by the devil, and suffocating in self! Paul reminded us that chastening is for our profit:

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- ❖ **Hebrews 12:10-13** For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. (11) Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. (12) Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; (13) And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

THE LOST SHEEP.

The Bible compares the unsaved man to a sheep that has gone astray.

- ❖ **Isa 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.**

We are sinners by birth and sinners by choice; like dumb sheep, we have followed the god and course of this world towards eternal destruction (Eph 2:1-3). The unsaved man is lost and cannot find his way. He must be found.

The Lord came to save that which was lost. He came as the Shepherd, seeking the lost sheep:

- ❖ **Luke 15:4-7 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? (5) And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. (6) And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying**

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unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. (7) I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

The Shepherd's pursuit led Him to a grisly death on the old rugged cross. That was the price He had to pay to save His lost sheep. Now, all the lost person has to do is receive the Shepherd by faith as his personal Saviour.

Are you a lost sheep? The Shepherd is seeking for you. Turn to Jesus Christ today, confessing that you are a sinner that needs to be saved, and ask Him to forgive you of all your sins, trusting that His sacrifice on the cross and resurrection from the dead are sufficient for your salvation.

Perhaps you would like to pray something like this from your heart:

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✚ *“Dear God, I know that I am a sinner. I need to be saved. I know that my good works, church membership, baptism, and religion cannot save me. I ask you, based on the blood of Jesus Christ, to forgive me of my sins. Dear Jesus, please come into my heart. As best I know how, by faith I receive you as my personal Saviour. Amen.”*

Luk 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

***“For ye were as sheep
going astray; but are
now returned unto the
Shepherd and Bishop of
your souls.”***

1Pe 2:25

By Dr. James Rasbeary