

In the Pasture with God's People: The Flock

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I. Introduction

A. God takes Care of His flock Eze 34:15-17

B. God makes a distinction between sheep that He deals with in mercy, and those that He deals with in sternness

C. God makes a distinction between good and bad sheep - "I judge between sheep and sheep."

II. Key Thought – The good sheep acts unselfishly toward the other sheep. and follows the good shepherd

III. The Good Sheep Acts Unselfishly Toward Other Sheep Eze 34:17-22;

A. The Fat and the Strong Sheep are NOT Good sheep

1. Enjoyed the blessings of God and then denied the same blessings to others
Eze 34:18-20

- a. Rich who gathered a large harvest then begrudged the poor the gleanings
- b. What about those who hear the gospel, but do not share it with others?
- c. What about those who are rich with this world's goods, but do not share them with others?

2. Pushed aside and scattered the weak sheep - Eze 34:21-22

a. ILLUSTRATION: Our goats - Belle aggressive, Ginger submissive - Ginger used to "know her place" but now both are aggressive

b. The church of God is NOT A PLACE where MIGHT MAKES RIGHT

- i. Not seniority
- ii. Not popularity
- iii. Not skill with scriptures
- iv. Not skill in argument
- v. Not social standing
- vi. Not economic standing
- vii. All that matters is God's will, and all our desires must come second to that

c. Because a person is strong does not mean that he or she is more important to God

- i. The opinions of the strong do not merit extra consideration -
- ii. The strong do not receive additional honor
- iii. The strong have a duty to others

d. On the contrary, God takes a special interest in the weak Eze 34:16

B. Who are the weak? Spiritually sensitive, emotionally vulnerable. The way they are treated by the children of God may determine whether they grow strong with the people of God, or wander off into the wilderness to be devoured by wolves and lions.

1. Those who are new in the faith

2. Those who are hindered by incomplete Spiritual knowledge

3. Those who are hindered by scruples - Romans 14:1 NKJV Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.

4. Those who are hindered by sin
 5. Those who have trials of this life that they are struggling with
 6. Those who have fewer or less obvious talents
 7. Those who are not fully comfortable among God's people, or in this congregation
- C. God intends for the needs of the weak to trump the needs of the other members of the flock.

- i. Act 20:35; - Elders have special obligation
 - a. They are not just strong sheep
 - b. They are the shepherds of the flock
 - c. Woe to the shepherds who do not look after the sheep the way God intends
 - d. Another lesson to that effect
 - ii. Rom 15:1-2; 1Th 5:14 Not just elders, but all members
 - iii. Mat 25:31-46 Physical as well as spiritual needs
- D. In some senses, it doesn't matter who the weak are
1. Not necessarily obvious who is weak and strong
 2. All who are strong were once weak!
 3. All are susceptible to moments of weakness, periods of weakness
 4. We are all weak compared to God
 5. If we are not weak maybe we should be 1Co 9:22-23
 6. Our interaction with each other is always taking care of each other Phi 2:1-4

- E. Application
1. Do we make sure that everyone feels welcome among us?
 2. After services, do we talk to the people we know best, or do we go out of our way to welcome the visitors? MERGE - Do we make the effort to get to know members that we hadn't worshipped with before the congregations joined? ILLUSTRATION: Robert Parchman not Richard, Trisha Cole, not Dana! Sarah not Joy!!
 3. When we are not at services, do we think about our brethren and take action to be of service to each other?
 4. Do we regularly pray for our brothers and sisters who are facing difficulties?
 5. Do we notice when one of our members is not here? Do we do anything about it? ILLUSTRATION: If it was feeding time and one of our goats did not show up, it would be VERY unusual. We would go find that goat and make sure she was alright.
 6. Are we aware of our opportunities to be of service to the saints? Do we take advantage of those opportunities?
 7. Do you know of any saints who have left the fold? Have you made any effort to encourage them to return?
 8. When we have a choice between serving others and pleasing ourselves, what do we pick? ILLUSTRATION: Paulo helping me move furniture - "This is the part I enjoy the most"
 9. If you don't know of a way to help someone, ask someone to help you

III. Conclusion

- A The Good Sheep Follows the Good Shepherd Joh 10:1-5; Joh 10:14-15

1. No one has any claim on your spiritual loyalty except the one who died for you
- Jesus Christ

2. If we are following a parent, a grandparent, a spouse, a good friend, a particular preacher or congregation, they may someday go astray from the right path.

3. Certainly, God will give us an opportunity to choose between following Jesus and others, what will we choose?

B. Become a member of God's flock!

1. Hear his voice

2. Believe

3. Repent

4. Confess

5. Be Baptized

6. Follow Jesus faithfully until death