

What can we point to in order to illustrate the depth of our commitment to Him? We should be able to point to our willingness to live for Him?

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; (15) and He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."

Certainly, I understand that we may not be as successful as we would like in living for Him, but the bottom line is that our commitment to Him as His sheep will be mature enough, perfect enough, by His grace that listening and responding to His voice will not be the exception, but the rule.

Christ and His sheep are not like two ships passing in the night. Their relationship with each other is described in the same terms that Christ used to describe His relationship with His Father and His Father's relationship to Him in John 10:15.

How likely is it that Christ will continue to shepherd His sheep and that His sheep will continue to follow Him? It is totally likely, in fact, it is absolutely certain. It is absolutely certain because of the special loving intimacy that exists between the shepherd and His sheep. What did John 10:14-But there is more. The good shepherd not only lays down His life for His sheep, the good shepherd not only knows His sheep, but the good shepherd brings other sheep into the flock (John 10:16). "And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd."

Jesus has other sheep, who are not of this fold? What does He mean by this?

The sheepfold in John 10:1 consisted exclusively of Jews. But there is another sheepfold that is represented in the world and the other sheepfold consists of Gentiles who are outside the covenants of Israel according to Ephesians 2:11-22.

In our Lord's early ministry, He concentrated on the "lost sheep of the house of Israel," which we see Him doing in His earthly ministry in Matthew 10:5-6 and in

Matthew 15:24-27. And in the early days of the early church, again the Jews were the focal point of ministry. We see this on the day of Pentecost when the people, converted through Peter's proclamation of the Word, were Jews and Jewish proselytes according to Acts 2:5 and Acts 2:14, but the church did not to remain a "Jewish flock."

Peter eventually took the gospel to the Gentiles, which we see in Acts 10-11, and Paul carried the message of the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles throughout the Roman Empire, which is recorded for us beginning in Acts 13 going through Acts 28. Therefore, when Jesus referred to having sheep which are not of this fold in John 10:16, He was most likely referring to Gentiles who would later come to Him. In other words, He is most likely referring to people such as ourselves who the Father had chosen before the foundation of world for salvation and who had not yet been given the opportunity to respond to the gospel message.

Does this excite you in respect to getting out and sharing the gospel? It should. I would have to assume that there are people in our community who are Christ's sheep who have been chosen before the foundation of the world for salvation, who will respond to that message if they are given the chance. Or, in other words, who will hear the voice of Christ calling out to them through the gospel and will, in fact, come to Him.

Should this knowledge, that there are people in this community who are, in fact, Christ's sheep but who have not yet come to Him, empower us to share? It should!

Acts 18:5-10. "But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. (6) And when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be upon your own heads! I am clean. From now on I shall go to the Gentiles.' (7) And he departed from there and went to the house of a certain man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue. (8) And Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized. (9) And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, 'Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; (10) for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.'"

This is the message that we should also hear. "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for the Lord is with us and He has many people in this city."

If we together do this, those who respond to that message will become members of Christ's church, or in other words, they will become members of His flock. Let us continue to read John 10:16. "And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd."

In light of this truth, we should not be afraid how people respond when we share the gospel with them. Rather, we should be more afraid that we have not given them the opportunity to respond. **Note: I Cor. 1-3**

So, hopefully each of us are committed to searching out Christ's sheep who have not yet come to Him and do this fearlessly knowing that there are those who will, in fact, respond if we do this faithfully.

We are statistically located in the midst of a very difficult group people to reach. Or in other words, our neighbors are retired or nearly retired. How difficult is this group?

The Barna Group, which is, in effect, a Christian statistical clearing-house, reports that of all professing Christians, 43% of them say that they made professions of faith before their preteen years, another 21% said that they made profession of faith during their teenage years, and the remaining 23% that gave an answer to their survey said that they made a profession of faith after 20 years of age.

I am concerned for the church. I am not only concerned for the church that we forget Christ's example and expectation in terms of our love and therefore our commitment to one another, but that we would also forget the purpose of the gospel being entrusted to us, and that purpose is that the gospel might be proclaimed to a lost world so that those that are His sheep, who have not already come, would come.

May we believe Him when He tells us that there are sheep that have not yet come to him by faith through grace and search them out through the faithful proclamation of the gospel.

But where will this faith come from? The Bible tells us "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Where does our faith come from? It comes from listening to the word of God and responding accordingly.

We are presently studying John 10, which explains for us a great deal about why a former blind man responded as He did to a group of Pharisees in contrast to the way he responded to Christ in John 9.

In helping us understand this former blind man's response, we have considered Christ the true Shepherd in John 10:1-6. We considered Christ the gate in John 10:7-10. And we are now considering Christ the good shepherd in John 10:11-21.

So far in our examination of this section of Scripture:

We have seen that the good shepherd dies for His sheep (John 10:11-13).

We have seen that the good shepherd knows His sheep (John 10:14-15).

We have seen that the good shepherd brings other sheep (John 10:16).

And the good shepherd takes up His life again (John 10:17-21).

Christ prepared His sheep to believe the eyewitness accounts of His death and resurrection. And hopefully, seeing these things, be once more impressed with the credibility of our faith.

John 10:17. "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again." Jesus begins this verse by telling us that the Father loves Him because He was willing to lay down His life for the purpose of taking it up again.

We need to be careful at this point not to conclude that His willingness to lay down His life for the purpose of taking it up again was necessary in order to win His Father's love.

The Father has always and will always love His Son (John 17:24). Let me read for you John 17:24. "Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world."

Did Jesus, through His death, burial, and resurrection, win the love of His Father? Absolutely not! The Father, even before the foundation of the world, has always loved Jesus

If this is not what He meant, then what did He mean when He said, "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again?"

Though the Father has always loved the Son, Jesus knew that His willingness to lay down His life and then take it up again would call forth His Father's love once more.

Sometimes, when people have been married for many years or have been friends for many years, one will do something that wins the approval of the other and will get the response, "I love you for that!" The love was there before the deed. But the deed calls forth the love yet once more. This was the case here. Christ is simply acknowledging the fact that His Father was not a detached uninterested third party when He laid His life down in order to take His life up again, but rather He was fully engaged and involved, thoroughly excited and pleased about what His Son was about to do.

In speaking of His Father's love for what He was about to do in John 10:17, Jesus links His approaching death with His future resurrection. Jesus did not simply say that the Father loves Him because of His willingness to lay down His life, but Jesus also made it very clear that the Father loves Him because He was prepared to take His life back up again. Christ's death was not an end in itself nor was His resurrection an afterthought.

Christ died in order that He might rise again. He needed to do this so that He might ascend to the Father and subsequently offer, through the outpouring of His Spirit, the gift of life to everyone who would place their faith in Him. If Christ had not risen, none

of these things would have taken place.

Christ's resurrection is essential to the gospel message. Without the 10/11

"And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain." And now listen to the words of Paul to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15:17. "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins."

Is Christ's resurrection essential to the gospel message? Absolutely! The death and resurrection of Christ are linked. And certainly we see Christ linking His death with His resurrection here in John 10:17 when He said, "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again."