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Is the Lord First in Your Life?

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Jesus asked a man to give up his riches, and come and follow Him. However, "when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich" (Luke 18:23). This man was unwilling to make the necessary sacrifice to serve the Lord, in other words, he loved his money more than he loved Christ. Does the Lord require that we make sacrifices today to serve Him? Yes, He does. Jesus said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

To put Christ FIRST in one's life means making sacrifices. Paul said, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). The very life of a Christian is one of sacrificial service unto God Almighty. Many folks today do not follow Christ because they, like the rich ruler, are unwilling to make the necessary sacrifices. Many love their jobs, sports, ungodly living, and even family more than they do the Lord. Let's notice two great examples of those that made sacrifices to serve God.

Moses gave up wealth, prestige, honor, and possibly the throne of Egypt to serve God. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward" (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Paul gave up his high position in the Jewish religion to serve Christ. Paul says he, "profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers" (Galatians 1:14) and "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (Philippians 3:4-7).

Both Moses and Paul made some serious sacrifices to put the Lord first in their lives. If they could do it, so can we. If a person loves God with all their heart, they can and will put God first in their life, making whatever sacrifice is necessary. Are you willing to make sacrifices to follow Christ? Remember Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). Why not start putting the Lord first in your life today!



The Good Shepherd

Steve Ferguson

"I am the Good Shepherd...and I know My sheep... I call My sheep by name ...and they hear My voice ... and they follow Me because they know My voice... I am the Good Shepherd and I know My own and My own know Me even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father and I lay down My life for the sheep" (John 10).

This scripture reminds us how much the Good Shepherd, Jesus, loves His sheep, you and me, and what He was willing to do to ensure our safe passage home from the evil one. "Like a Shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs and carry them in His bosom ..." (Isaiah 40:11).

The Good Shepherd is the Creator and Sustainer of all life. He is All-knowing, All-present and All-powerful, and He knows exactly what you need physically and spiritually. He knows your strengths and your weaknesses. He knows your thoughts and intentions. He knows if you are listening to His voice or if you are distracted by the voice of the world. He knows if you have wandered off the path of safety and onto the path of darkness and destruction where Satan roams as a roaring lion seeking your soul to devour.

The Good Shepherd knows His sheep and calls them by name (John 10:3) where He provides, protects and has purchased His sheep to rescue us from the evil one.

The Good Shepherd Provides for His sheep.

The Good Shepherd Provides the light to come home – "I AM the Light." He Provides the only door to safety – "I AM the Door." He Provides our daily bread and He Provides the bread of Life – "I AM the Bread of Life." He Provides direction – "I Am the Way." He Provides a solid foundation that will never be shaken or compromised – "I AM the Truth." He Provides an eternal reward where we will never die – "I AM the Resurrection and the Life." He is the Source of All Life where we are completely dependent upon Him for everything, for without Him we will perish – "I AM the Vine." The Good Shepherd ALWAYS Provides a way of escape from temptation and from the evil one. He is the Good Shepherd and the Good Shepherd Provides for His Sheep.

The Good Shepherd Protects His sheep.

Satan's goal is never to build up or care for the sheep. Satan always seeks to destroy. But the Good Shepherd's purpose is to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him (Prov. 30:5), and He Protects us with not just any armor but with the Armor of God (Eph. 6:10-18). He Protects our hearts and our minds as we walk with Him and as we let our request be known unto Him in prayer (Phil. 4:6-7). The Good Shepherd is faithful and will Protect us against the evil one (II Thess. 3:3) and He will rescue us from every evil deed and will bring us safely into His heavenly kingdom (II Tim. 4:18). He will never forsake us or leave us alone. The Good Shepherd Protects His Sheep and calls them by name, and they know His voice and follow him Home.

The Good Shepherd Purchased the sheep.

The value of your sin-stained soul is far more valuable than any gold, silver, bull or goat – not even the best of the best of anything or anyone could redeem the soul of mankind. The Good Shepherd redeemed and reconciled the wandering sheep back to God. Isaiah 53:6 reminds us, "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him". Nothing can cleanse you and set you free from your sin - nothing but the Blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God (Hebrews 10). "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter..." (Isaiah 53:7). He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

The shepherd, upon finding one lost sheep, lays it across his shoulders and rejoices. The Good Shepherd descended from heaven, seeking to save the lost, and laid the cross upon His shoulders and in pain and agony became the sacrificial lamb of God. He not only gave His life FOR the sheep but gave New Life TO the sheep.

May we walk with the Good Shepherd and say as the Psalmist did in Psalm 23:1, "The Lord is My Shepherd, I shall not want;" for The Good Shepherd Provides, Protects and has Purchased our sin-stained souls and set us free from the bondage of sin. May each of us hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and follow Him to dwell in the house of the Lord forever.