

Vicarious Sacrifice: Doctrine of Sheep: The Animal: Douglas MacMillan's Seven Characteristics of Sheep: Wander, Easily Distracted, Herding Instinct, Stubborn, Home Bodies, Stupid, Yearns for a Shepherd; Parable on the Relationship between Sheep & Shepherd: Introduction of John 10:1-18

Doctrine of Sheep

I. The Animal:

1. **The basic habit of sheep is to wander and go astray.** This behavior pattern is assigned to believers in both testaments:

Psalm 119:176a - I have gone astray like a lost sheep.

1 Peter 2:25 - You were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

2. **Sheep always think that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence.** This is reflected by sins of self-centeredness. First is the problem of self-justification designed to justify wrong thoughts, decisions, or actions; for example: jealousy or bitterness.

This leads to self-deception typified by anger and implacability. Uncorrected by rebound, these sins morph into self-absorption which is associated with clusters of sins including hatred, malice, revenge, vituperation, vilification, violence, abuse, and vindictiveness.

The national sin of United States in 2014 is that of envy:

True envy is one of the most insidious evils that can afflict a civilization. Envy is not mere covetousness, not just a desire to steal, or illegally obtain another person's goods; envy is that grinding resentment of another person's advantages. It is a sin that cannot be placated. Envy is a destroyer. Jealousy or covetousness says, 'He's got it. I want it. I'll steal it. I'll use it for myself.' But envy says something worse: 'He's got it. I want it. I know that I can never get it. I'll destroy it so no one else can have it either.' Modern socialism is the politics of envy. The socialist knows that there are not enough rich people to support all the poor people of this world. He knows that government programs of wealth redistribution cannot uplift the vast majority of men. But that doesn't convince him to abandon socialism. He likes socialism because he thinks it will make it impossible for the 'wealth-poverty gap' to exist; not because the poor have risen but because the rich have been pulled down to the level of the poor. Envy is the politics of economic devaluation. When envy becomes the foundation of politics the whole society is threatened. Men lose faith in the ability of civil government to protect their property and their futures. They become secretive. They hide their resources from prying eyes. They reduce their consideration of others, and their concept of brotherly love is abandoned.¹

3. **Sheep follow each other which is called the herding instinct. They crowd together, so when a sheep wanders on its own, something is wrong.**

The Lord comments about the wanderings of a lost sheep in:

Matthew 18:12 - "What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying?"

v. 13 - "If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray."

¹ Gary North, *Successful Investing in the Age of Envy*, 2d ed. (Waterbury, VT: Dominion Press, 1983).

4. **Sheep are stubborn always wanting their own way.** The verse we are now studying expresses this aspect of sheep mentality:

Isaiah 53:6a - All of us like sheep have gone astray; each of us has turned to his own way;

5. **Sheep always want to get back into the area in which it was born.** MacMillan says, "I've known of a sheep to come through mountainous terrains thirty-five miles to find the place of its birth."

The desire to remain in a place of familiarity and comfort can often prevent a person from following divine leadership, direction, and purpose. On seventeen occasions in the four Gospels, the Lord challenged people to "Follow Me."

6. **Sheep are stupid. You cannot teach a sheep a trick. Even cattle don't need a shepherd or sheep dog, but sheep do. They wander or stray with no thought of what is coming next; they have no thought of the future.** The Lord deployed Isaiah to take the message of the Trinity to the rebellious citizens of Judah following the death of King Uzziah, circa 740 B.C.²

Isaiah 6:8 - Then I [Isaiah] heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us [the Trinity]?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

v. 9 - He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening [**mandate to hear & obey**], but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand.'

Isaiah 6:10 - "Render the hearts of this people insensitive [**they are emphasizing the details of life and not the Source**], their ears dull [**they do not listen to teaching**], and their eyes dim [**avoid face-to-face teaching**], otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return [**renovation of the soul**] and be healed [**back inside the bubble**]."

v. 11 - Then I said, "Lord, how long?" And He answered, "Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant, houses are without people and the land is utterly desolate,

v. 12 - "The Lord has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.

v. 13 - Yet there will be a tenth portion [**the Jewish remnant**] in it [**the land**], and it will again be subject to burning [**desolation**], like a terebinth or an oak whose stump remains when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump [**the Pivot will restore the land**].

7. **A sheep yearns for authority and guidance therefore it always needs and wants a shepherd.**³ The Lord provides us with a parable on the relationship between the sheep and their shepherd in John 10:1-18.

It is important to have background on this passage in order to understand the Lord's teachings:

² Also known as Azariah.

³ The quotes by Douglas MacMillan were taken from: R. T. Kendall, *Why Jesus Died: A Meditation on Isaiah 53* (Grand Rapids: Monarch Books, 2011), 110-11.

This Chapter has two messages that Jesus gives. The first message is given at the Sheep's Gate and the background is important to understand. First, in the morning, the shepherd would come to the sheepfold where his sheep and the sheep of the other shepherds were kept for the night. He would be recognized by the guard and would walk through giving out his unique chant. His sheep in the sheepfold would separate themselves and follow their shepherd out. He would continue his chant and they would follow him out the Gate in the Wall of Jerusalem referred to as the Sheep's Gate. The sheep would graze all day in a field and in the evening, the shepherd would give out his chant and they would follow him back in through the gate and through the door to the sheep's fold. One last important point was that hiding in the darkness were always thieves trying to lure one of the sheep away from his shepherd.

In the parable that follows, the door going into the sheep's fold is the incarnation of Christ. He is the shepherd and has the right to enter the sheep's fold (Jerusalem) to gather together His sheep. As Jesus leaves the sheep's fold, the door now represents the cross. Going through that door and out into the fields to graze is a picture of believers grazing in the Church Age under the direction of the Great Shepherd.⁴

⁴ R. B. Thieme, Jr., *John*, R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 424-038, MP3 (1967).