

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The Good Shepherd John 10:17-21 Part 3

This past week my mother-in-law died. Some of you, I know, knew her. She was quiet spoken but a wonderful woman.

Since she was a widow, Lynn and I had included her in nearly all our family vacations since 1972. And then in 1996, when she asked if she could come live with us, we welcomed her with open arms. So I think you can see that she was not simply my mother-in-law but a very integral part of our family for over 30 years.

And even though she was 89 years old, I truly thought she would continue to be a part of our family for many years to come. In fact, I shared with my wife just a few weeks ago that I thought she would live to be 100. Obviously I am not a prophet.

She was admitted to the hospital last Friday and went down hill very quickly. When my wife was called and was told that her mother had passed, I felt a tremendous sense of loss but this sense of loss was tempered. How was it tempered?

I truly viewed my mother-in-law as no longer trapped in a body that had failed her, but rather I viewed her as standing face to face with Christ in the glory of heaven. This thought filled me with an overwhelming sense of joy. I am not making this up for dramatic effect. This is actually what I experienced.

This sense of overwhelming joy in the midst of personal loss, I don't believe, is unusual for Christians. I believe that this is the natural outflow of our faith. This is why when fellow believers die, such as my mother-in-law, we do not grieve in the same way as the world grieves, which was Paul's point in **1 Thessalonians 4:13**. We do not grieve in the way the world grieves because that Scriptures teach us that Christians, at the point of their death, enter into the presence of Christ.

But where did 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 us listening to the word of God and responding accordingly. Sometimes it is one grand leap, but at other times it is a matter of incremental positive steps.

We see an instance of this positive movement toward faith in the passage that we will be considering this weekend.

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**.

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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 this week we will see that the good shepherd takes up His life again (John 10:17-21).

My hope for this message is that the words of Jesus might be used by the Spirit of God to help us to see how 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.

Let us begin by reading **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.

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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 resurrection of Christ the death of Christ would have been worthless (1 Corinthians 15:14, 17).

Listen to the words of Paul to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15:14. "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."**

This is an amazing statement. And it is not so amazing because He told His audience that His Father loves Him for His willingness to lay His life down in order to take it up again, but rather it is amazing by virtue of the fact that He is prophesying His resurrection.

This prophecy by Christ is mind-boggling. Listen to the words of Wilbur M. Smith. **"If you or I should say to any group of friends that we expected to die, either by violence or naturally, at a certain time, but that, three days after death, we would rise again, we would be quietly taken away by friends, and confined to an institution until our minds became clear and sound again. This would be right, for only a foolish man would go around talking about rising from the dead on the third day, only a foolish man, unless he knew that this was going to take place, and no one in the world has ever known that about himself except One Christ, the Son of God."**

Did Christ prophesy His resurrection absolutely? Jesus did not prophesy His resurrection only in John 10:17. He did it many times (Matthew 12:38-40; Mark 9:9; Luke 9:21-22). Let me just give you a sampling of those times recorded for us by other Gospel writers.

First of all, let me read for you just one account from the Gospel of Matthew. **Matthew 12:38-40, "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him, saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.' (39) But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; (40) for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son**

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of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.’”

Now let me read to you just one account from the Gospel of Mark. **Mark 9:9**, "And as they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man should rise from the dead."

Now let me read to you just one account from the Gospel of Luke. **Luke 9:21-22**, "But He warned them, and instructed them not to tell this to anyone, (22) saying, ‘The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.’”

These passages that I have read to you are only a sampling of the many times that Christ prophesied His resurrection in all four Gospels. We cannot underestimate the significance of this fact.

Bernard Ramm said the following: "Taking the Gospel record as faithful history there can be no doubt that Christ Himself anticipated His death and resurrection, and plainly declared it to His disciples.... The gospel writers are quite frank to admit that such predictions really did not penetrate their minds till the resurrection was a fact (John 20:9). But the evidence is there from the mouth of our Lord that He would come back from the dead after three days. He told them that he would be put to death violently, through the cause of hatred, and would rise the third day. All this came to pass." Did Christ actually tell people that after His death He would rise again? I believe that any fair-minded individual would have to conclude that He did, in fact, do this in light of the many different accounts by all four Gospel writers. I certainly believe that He did.

There are many different reasons for believing in the gospel message, but certainly one of the reasons is the incredible boldness of Christ in *predicting* His resurrection.

"Christ Himself, as B.B. Warfield puts it, "deliberately staked His whole claim to the credit of men upon His resurrection. When asked for a sign He pointed to this sign as His single and sufficient credential."

And did He pull it off? It certainly seems like He did based on all the eyewitness accounts that we find not only in the Gospels but throughout the epistles as well! In fact, He so successfully pulled it off that His small group of disciples, going forth in the power of the Holy Spirit and based on their own personal experience with their living Lord, turned the world upside down with this very simple but glorious message that Christ, through His death, burial, and resurrection, had not only won a victory over the grave but had won a victory over sin itself.

Have we followed cunningly devised fables? No! Our faith is rooted in credible evidence. In **John 10:17** we see one small piece of that evidence. And what was that one small piece of evidence. Christ boldly predicted that after His death He would rise again.

But Jesus did not say that He simply would die and later rise. He said more than this. Let me read **John 10:17** for you once again. "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again." Jesus did not simply predict that He would die and then rise again. He predicted that He himself would lay His life down and then would later take His life back up again.

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The significance of this personal emphasis begins with Him predicting that He would lay His life down. What did this clearly imply?

In speaking about His future death, Jesus implied that no one would be able to take His life from Him if He, in fact, did not lay it down (John 10:17). The voluntary nature of Christ's death in **John 10:17** was stressed in order that His followers later would understand that Christ was not nailed to the cross because He was overpowered by sinful men, but rather He was nailed to the cross because He personally chose to be nailed to the cross.

And what evidence would He give to them that this was, in fact, the case? The voluntary nature of Christ's death on the cross would later be confirmed in His resurrection when He took up His life again. Doesn't this make sense? Certainly if Christ was able to take His life back up again, then certainly no one would have been able to take it from Him if He Himself did not allow them to do so.

The voluntary nature of Christ's death, which was confirmed by the resurrection, is emphasized for us once again in **John 10:18**.

Let me read this verse for you. **"No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again."**

This cannot help but remind us of Christ's conversation with Pilate in **John 19** where Pilate said to Christ, "Don't You know I have authority to take Your life?" And do you remember how Jesus responded? "You have no authority over Me, unless it has been given you from above." In essence, He said to Pilate, "You think you are in charge, but you are not in charge." But if Pilate was not in charge then who was in charge in respect to whether Christ was going to die? Jesus was in charge. Jesus was the one calling the shots both in regards to His death and His resurrection.

Though Christ was in complete control of all the events surrounding His death and resurrection, He only did those things which were consistent with His Father's will. Let us read the last phrase of **verse 18. "This commandment I received from my Father."**

What an amazing thing. Christ not only predicted His death and resurrection but He told those listening to Him, in essence, that there was absolutely nothing that could keep this from happening because He Himself, according to the will of His Father, had the authority to lay His life down, and He had the authority to take His life back up again.

Predicting His death and resurrection, based on his own authority to bring these things about, caused a *division* among those listening to Christ (John 10:19-21).

Let me read for you **John 10:19-21. "There arose a division again among the Jews because of these words. (20) And many of them were saying, 'He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?' (21) Others were saying, 'These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?'"**

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As always, Jesus' words caused a division. What did **John 10:19** say? "**There arose a division again among the Jews because of His word's.**" And what was the nature of this division?

John gives the view of Christ's opponents first. Let me read for you **John 10:20**. "**And many of them were saying, 'He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?'**" They totally rejected His prediction about His death and resurrection and His ability to control the events surrounding those events. In fact, that, in essence, said He was crazy and obviously controlled by a demon. This, of course, is not a new response by Christ's enemies. We have seen this before in **John 7:20; 8:48, 52**.

But there was another group of Jews who were more open. Let me read for you **John 10:21**. "**Others were saying 'These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?'**" Obviously, this group of Jews was impressed both by Jesus' words and by His deeds. They were far more open than the first group to what Jesus had to say.

Were they, at this point in time, disciples of Christ? No! But they certainly were moving in the right direction.

Did Christ prophesy that He would lay His life down and would later take it up again? It certainly seems like He did. Was this important? Absolutely!

When Christ predicted His death and resurrection, He was preparing His sheep to *believe* the eyewitness accounts of those very events.

My mother-in-law was one of those sheep. Did she follow cunningly devised fables? Absolutely not! She chose, by faith, to embrace Jesus as her Lord and Savior, and now the Lord, the good shepherd, has now embraced her. What do the Scriptures tell us happen to Christ's sheep when they physically die? "Absent from the body present with the Lord."