

THE CHURCH AS THE COMMUNITY OF CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS

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SESSION 2 – THE CHURCH'S ALLEGIANCE TO CHRIST

- I. Introduction
- II. Individual and Community Elements in "Following Christ"
 1. Individual Leading/Following

Psalm 23 – ¹ The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. ³ He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. ⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

2. Community Leading/Following

- a. While each of us a sheep of the shepherd, each of us is also a sheep of the sheepfold.

John 10:11–16, 26–27 – ¹¹ "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. ¹² "He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ "He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. ¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, ¹⁵ even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶ "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. . . . ²⁶ "But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. ²⁷ "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;

- b. Real problems come for sheep when one separates from the others.

Luke 15:3–7 – ³ So He told them this parable, saying, ⁴ "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? ⁵ "When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ "And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' ⁷ "I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

- c. Another community element involved in the shepherd/sheep metaphor is the amazing truth that elders of local churches are called “shepherds” of their flock, their sheep.

1 Peter 5:1-4 – ¹ Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, ² shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; ³ nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Notice two things:

- 1) While certain sheep may require special care, the shepherd’s overarching concern is the welfare of the flock.
- 2) Peter’s primary concern here is that these under-shepherds understand why they have been given authority over the flock – not for their personal power or prestige, but for the loving yet firm care of the flock.

III. The Church as a Community of Followers in their Individual and Corporate Allegiance to Christ – Conclusion and Application

A. Knowing the voice of the Shepherd

John 10:4-5 – ⁴ “. . . the sheep follow [their shepherd] because they know his voice. ⁵ A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

B. Embracing the wisdom and direction of the Shepherd

C. Trusting the heart of the Shepherd

D. Loyalty in the allegiance to the Shepherd