

The Promises of God: He Protects

John 10:11–12

March 30, 2025

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I haven't decided yet, but I might a twelve years old. I spend too much time looking at my phone. I read the news and sports on my phone. I watch news clips on my phone. I read my Bible on my phone. I look for sports videos on my phone. My devotions are on my phone. The authors I trust have books and articles I can find on my phone.

I've accused twelve year olds of losing their soul to their phone. I have to give Jesus control over my phone. I need to let Him lead me away from stuff that's bad for my soul. I have to allow Him to guide away from my phone.

John 10:11–15 (NIV) “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.”

Jesus is the God who protects the most important thing our soul. Shepherds would risk everything to protect their flock. This is a relationship that is sometimes hard to understand. The sheep were a source of income, their wool would be sold. The sheep also provide food for the family. The sheep would be given as a sacrifice for their sins.

Surrender and sacrifice were important values for the Jewish people. They were willing to surrender their possessions to honor God. They were willing to raise animals to be sacrificed to God. This mentality, was a spiritual discipline that helped to guide their daily activities. So they would keep these animals safe that would be given for a sacrifice to God.

It was not unusual for animals and possessions to be dedicated to God. Therefore, they would go to great risk to provide protection for their sheep. The sheep were not merely income. They weren't just possessions. They were for God's service and for God's glory. Whenever a threat came to their flock the shepherd would defend the sheep. They would put themselves at risk to protect the life of one of their animals.

Jesus risked everything for you and me. Jesus risked His place in heaven to come to earth and live as person like you and me. Jesus risked being misunderstood, ridiculed, denied, and betrayed to save us. Jesus risked separation from the Father because of our sin to redeem us from it's punishment.

Your soul, my soul are so important, so valuable to Jesus that He would die in our place to pay the penalty for our sins. Your soul is what is eternal. Not your eyes and ears, but your soul is everlasting. Not your dreams and possessions, but your soul lives forever. Not what you wear or what you eat, but your soul is immortal.

Your soul is the essence, the core of who you are. It is what makes you different than me. But more importantly, your soul contains your commitments, beliefs, values, and you. Without a soul you are nothing. Without a soul you are merely a bundle of nerve-endings and desires. Without a soul you are the same as the branches that are bundled and tossed into the fire.

Jesus risked everything so that you will be with Him forever in heaven.

Back to the sheep, the shepherd, and the hired servants. Someone who is paid to do the job is not committed. They would run away at the first sign of trouble, leaving the sheep to die. We could say that hired hands are the religious people whose faith is very shallow and weak. They can't stay committed to Jesus when there are troubles and problems.

But, they might be too easy. What if hired hands are all lost souls? What if they are those who will spend eternity separated from God? What if they are the individuals that demand to go their own way? What if they are the people who willingly fall into temptations? The Good Shepherd wants to save them.

John 10:12-13 The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

Let's move away from the shepherd and consider why people will sell their soul. You've heard that expression, sell your soul. It's used when a person appears to be owned by the devil, Satan himself. There are books and movies and video games about people selling their soul to the devil. These are the stories when an individual is so enamored by something they will do anything to get that thing.

People sell their soul to get a certain job. Or they want to be popular so they sell their soul. We've heard about people who sell their soul for possessions and wealth. But, unlike books, movies, and video games it doesn't happen in a big dramatic moment. Selling your soul happens more often one small thing at a time. It can be one drink at a time, then your family is having an intervention to get you into rehab. Maybe your thinking about how much you dislike a co-worker and everything small thing they do becomes a crisis for you. You might at anytime think you still own your soul, but it's soul being sold one dollar at a time.

Anyone who isn't following Jesus has lost their soul. That's a harsh statement. We've moved from shepherds and sheep to lost souls. Daily and forever your soul can be lost. Not lost in that it can't be found, but lost from being in relationship with God. Your soul needs to be in a relationship with God, to be near the creator, to be in communication with the Father.

A soul that follows its cravings and desires is lost. A soul that falls to temptation is lost. A soul that rejects where it came from is lost. I could go on and on. You get the point.

Another way of saying this is we sell our souls to find pleasure. We sell our souls to satisfy a desire, what our eyes see. We sell our souls to get what we think we want. Money, possessions, and wealth will cause people to sell their soul. Popularity, people-pleasing will cause people to sell their soul. Fear, anxiety, worry will cause someone to sell their soul. Burdens, suffering, and pain will cause a person to sell their soul.

Too often the selling of our soul is so subtle that we aren't aware of what we're doing. We just keep taking steps away from God, from the shepherd, until we're lost. Our thinking slowly becomes fascinated that we were no longer in familiar territory. But our desires are so strong that we begin to justify our thinking and our actions as being okay. We don't see anything wrong with walking down the dark path, it's fulfilling a desire, a craving. We've got what we would say are sound logical reasons for selling our soul. Anyone on the outside would quickly recognize that you've become something different, in a bad way. Soon we're lost, our soul has been sold, and we can't figure out what to do.

John 10:14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me"

When Jesus is your shepherd you will know Him and trust Him. The relationship between shepherd and sheep goes both ways. Did you see that? Jesus said He knows His sheep. Good, we want that in our Savior and Lord. Jesus said His sheep know Him. The sheep know the shepherd. They know He cares for them. They trust what He is doing.

When you are following Jesus as your shepherd it's more than just pouring out your needs and burdens to Him. Jesus is ready and capable of ministering to all of your needs. Jesus is also ready for you to embrace Him and His needs.

That sounds weird, Jesus having needs. Here is the biggest need of Jesus: His sheep follow Him. Jesus needs us to follow Him not just for food, but also to live in His light, to be in a relationship with Him, to be connected with Him, and to be in His home. What Jesus wants is us, you and me, as His family.

That's not a causal relationship. That's not merely a crisis relationship. That's knowing and trusting Him. In all circumstances, wherever we might be. When we don't trust Him in a specific situation He's ready to accept us back into His family.

Your greatest needs are central to Jesus. You may think you know what your needs are, but you don't. Jesus understands your needs better than you do. Jesus understands my needs better than I do. When I'm in a relationship with Him I want to go where His light is shining. I want the relationship to be genuine and sincere. I want to be connected to His thoughts and actions. I want to be at home with Him.

For sheep that follow Jesus, their shepherd, it means we're looking for Him, we're listening for His voice, we're paying attention to where He's going, we're looking forward to opportunities to talk with Him, we're ready to sit down with Him wherever He is.

When, as His sheep, we follow Him we experience His protection. He is guarding our hearts and minds. He warns us about what we look at and what we listen to. He leads us away from these things that are dangerous. He is providing us with wisdom and knowledge so we can live each day for Him. He's giving us the authority to do what we are afraid to do. He empowers us to go where we need to go. This is living a different life than you did last year or ten years ago or fifty years ago. You will want to follow Him, even when you don't know what's happening or where He's going.

John 10:14-15 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep."

Jesus already knows your name, give Him your soul. Jesus knows the name of each sheep following Him and also those who aren't. Don't be mind-boggled by the knowledge of Jesus. Don't be intimidated that Jesus is aware of your presence on this planet.

He is the good shepherd. Jesus knows that you need Him. Hopefully, you are coming to realize that you need Him. You are a lost soul with Jesus. Your life is headed toward the home of lost souls a place called hell.

Most people don't like to talk about hell. They want to pretend it doesn't exist. They want to think that if it does exist that it can't be any worse than their worst experiences in this life. Most people are wrong. If your soul is lost, hell is a terrible place to spend eternity.

Living in hell forever means being lost forever. It means that there is more pain and suffering than could ever be experienced on this planet. It means wandering without hope or peace with every step that is taken. It means that in hell there is no way to see where to go, because there is no one to lead. Hell is more lonely than lonely, it is separation and desperation. Hell will always mean hunger and thirst.

There is nothing more valuable than your eternal soul. Your body is going into a grave someday. In a hundred years the grave stone will be faded away and so will your body. But your soul will live forever.

Jesus wants your soul, He wants you to not just avoid hell, but to be with Him in heaven forever. He wants to take away the suffering and pain. He wants you to experience an everlasting hope, peace, and joy. He wants to be with you.

Don't give your soul away to the things in this world. Give your soul to Jesus. Spending eternity in with Jesus is all that matters.

Jesus risked everything for you to be with Him in heaven. His coming to earth was a big risk. People doubted His credentials. They argued with Him. They tried to get rid of Him. People wanted Him to be their great miracle worker. It was take away my diseases. It was come to my rescue. It was give me food.

He sacrificed Himself on a cross. He died a horrible death. He carried all of our sins. That is a good shepherd. He knows you by name, by the sound of your voice, the color of your hair, the smell of your breath. He wants to be with you forever.

Today, decide to follow the shepherd who knows and calls you by name. Stop ignoring Him and start trusting Him. Jesus is calling you.