

Intimacy

by H.J. Vine

The sermon explores the profound intimacy between Christ and His followers, highlighting the assurance of eternal life and the transformative power of divine love.

Scripture: Ezekiel 34:31, John 10:14, John 20:17, 1 John 5:13, 1 John 5:20

Topics: "Divine Love", "Eternal Security"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the deep ties of Divine love that bind the Lord to His people and His people to Him, emphasizing the intimate oneness believers have with Jesus as their Head, Brother, and Shepherd. Through Ezekiel and the teachings of Jesus, the message of oneness with Christ in His resurrection life is conveyed, highlighting the secure and abundant life His death and resurrection have provided for His flock. Believers are encouraged to understand and embrace the living bonds that unite them to Jesus, knowing that He intimately knows and loves each one, ensuring their eternal security and care as His sheep.

Transcript

The ties of Divine love which bind the Lord to His own and His own to Him are close, and real, and living. Whether we view Him as the Head of His body, the assembly, and our oneness with Him thus, as the Spirit shows us through Paul, or as the risen Son of God who speaks of us as His brethren, made known through both John and Paul; or as the Shepherd of the flock of God, so vividly revealed in John 10; we are assured of the desire of His loving heart that we on our side should enter consciously into the close and vital oneness which actually exists between Himself and us, for it is no mere figure of speech.

In Ezekiel's day the Lord said, "And ye, My flock, the flock of My pasture, are men: I am your God, says the Lord Jehovah" (34:31). Yes, and when Jesus rose from among the dead, He said to Mary, "Go to My brethren and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God." They too were men, to whom this new message of Oneness with Himself, in risen life and relationship, was sent. So are we today, and He is not ashamed to call us brethren. In John 10:14-16 His words are thus recorded, "I am the good Shepherd; and I know those that are Mine, and am known of those that are Mine, as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And I have other sheep which are not of this fold: those also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one flock, one Shepherd" (N.Tr.). Here again the sheep are men, but what great and blessed things are said of them!--things not found in the Old Testament!--things that could only be brought to pass by the coming of

the Son of God!--by His dying and rising again! Ezekiel spoke much of bad shepherds, but Jesus is three times designated the good Shepherd in this chapter; in the above passage, and when He said, "I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly. I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep" (v. 11).

His death as the good Shepherd, and His resurrection as the great Shepherd of the sheep, have secured life, and life abundantly, for His own. That explains how it is we know Him, and hear His voice, and can enter into the things connected with the present oneness. The life and nature for it are ours; and He came in view of our possessing this in abundance; not with undeveloped paucity, but with liberal profusion all the sheep and lambs of the flock have life, for He has said, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (v. 28). He can therefore say concerning all, "I am known of those that are Mine," however varied may be the measures of that knowledge in the living naturalness of new life--new to us at our conversion, but eternal nevertheless. It has been seen in all its deep perfection in the Son of the Father, and John says we "report to you the eternal life which was with the Father and has been manifested to us" (1 John 1:2); and again, "These things have I written to you that ye may know that ye have eternal life who believe on the name of the Son of God" (5:13, N.Tr.). All this plainly shows the way we are encouraged to an increasing understanding of the living bonds which unite us to Him.

The feeblest believer finds no difficulty when the Son of God says, "I KNOW THOSE THAT ARE MINE" and, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me!" We are sure that He knows us. He knows all things, and all men; and we have an inbred consciousness that He knows and loves His own. This is the blessed assurance and encouragement given to us in 2 Timothy 2, in view of the corrupt practices and teachings of Christendom, when "every one who names the name of the Lord" is told to "withdraw from iniquity," and to "follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart," for there we are strengthened with these words, "The Lord knows those that are His"! What a stay this is to all who trust in Him! Not one of His sheep ever escapes the vigilance of His watchful eyes! Not one is ever forgotten for one moment by His loving heart! His omniscience, His love, and His omnipotence ever tend the flock for which He died! Yes, He knows us all! Blessed be His name! Blessed be our good and great Shepherd!

But it is equally true that "I am known of those that are Mine." Mark He did not say, "I ought to be known by them" No, nor did He say, "I ought to know Mine own." He said emphatically, He knows them, and just as emphatically, They know Him.

The simple explanation of this lies in the new life with its holy desires and capabilities. This life is in the Son of God. We know that He has come, and "has given us an understanding that we should know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20). The sheep of His pasture know Him, and have the Divinely given ability to know Him increasingly. To the new life winch is theirs sin does not attach, nor does it turn to the corruptions of lust and pride, for "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world" (1 John 5:4) which is made up of lust and pride (2:16). If a true believer does sin, provision for restored communion is made for him in the advocacy of Jesus Christ the righteous, but viewed as born of God he does "not practise sin, because His seed abides in him, and he cannot sin, because he has been begotten of God" (3:9, N.Tr.). The life that loves what is of God is his. On the other hand, a mere professor has inwardly nothing but the old life and nature. The Spirit uses the types of a dog and a sow to illustrate such, both in the Old and New Testaments. Washed in the waters of religion, and outwardly going in the right way, the dog turns back to his vomit, and

the sow to her wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 2:22). The very nature of the sheep makes it avoid such things. The dog and the sow are unclean animals, but the sheep is clean.

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, but this new life and nature have become ours in the Son of God, through His death and resurrection. He could therefore say, I am known of Mine. As we said before, The measures may vary, but oh, how wonderful is the character of that knowledge--"as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father." This is indeed glorious! The measure of the intimacy between the Father and the Son must necessarily be infinite--the character of it vital and holy and blessed. We could not have the same measure, but the same character of knowledge is ours, blessed be God. No wonder John speaks so often of our joy being full. "This is My beloved Son," the Father said. "No one knows the Son but the Father," said the Son; He alone could fully comprehend that One, who, like Himself, is infinite. Nevertheless His own truly know Him, as He said, even though their measure be limited. And then, what unspeakable love characterizes this intimacy. Could it be greater than it is? Let us ponder the good Shepherd's words. "I lay down My life for the sheep." Could His love for us be expressed more fully? And then He said, "I love the Father," and as He had received commandment from the Father to lay down His life and take it again, so He did. This supplied a fresh motive for the Father to love Him, as He said, "Therefore doth My Father love Me."

What a circle of life and love we are introduced into! There is the Father's love for the Son, and the Son's love for the Father; the Father's love for us--"the Father Himself loves you," and the Son's love for us also; and then "we love because He first loved us." It all began with Him, and Divine love produced a response, completing in this way the circle of holy intimacy, in living relationships, of which the Spirit is the power. It takes in all the saints, for Jesus added, "I have other sheep which are not of this (Jewish) fold: those also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be ONE FLOCK, ONE SHEPHERD."

If the Holy Spirit of truth through Paul spoke of the one body composed of the out-called from Jews and Gentiles, and of the new, intimate and vital bonds which unite them to one another and to the glorious Head in heaven, of the "great mystery" of Christ and the assembly; here are the same persons seen as the one flock, brought into close and intimate and living relationships with their good Shepherd who died for them, with their great Shepherd who lives and cares for them with ceaseless love--Jesus, the Son of the Father.

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