

Finishing Well

Lesson #35 Sheep Gate: The Shorning of God's Perfect Lamb Sept. 22, 2021

God's Perfect Lamb Was Spotless

The Bible is clear: There was no sin in the perfect Lamb that God provided for sacrifice.

I Pet. 2:22 He committed no sin. I John 3:5 In Him is no sin. II Cor. 5:21 He knew no sin.

Day and night, for ~ 33 years, God's Lamb was tested and proved in the field of human life, with all its afflictions and attractions - "*yet He was without sin*" [Heb. 4:15].

Then came the focal day of history when the Lamb of God "*offered Himself without blemish to God*" [Heb. 9:14] - so we might be cleansed from sin.

God's Perfect Lamb Was Silent

The silence of God's Lamb was predicted 700 years before His coming.

- Oppressed, afflicted > yet He opened not His mouth

Isa. 53:7b He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.

- Sheep are silent on their way to shearing or to slaughter because they're not aware of what is about to happen.

But God's Lamb was fully aware that in the prime of His life, He was about to be "*cut off out of the land of the living*" (Isa. 53:8). Yet He was like a lamb led to slaughter - silent!

God's Perfect Lamb Was Sacrificed

The death of Jesus Christ was no "accident of history." From the human perspective, it appeared that Jesus of Nazareth just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

If only He had stayed in Galilee! If only He had spoken up and defended Himself!

If only He had escaped when He had the chance!

But from the divine perspective, everything was according to plan and right on schedule.

[Acts 2:23] Jesus Christ was God's Lamb, brought to the place of sacrifice. About 1800 years earlier, God provided Abraham with a special lamb for sacrifice at just the right time.

Gen. 22:8a "*God will provide Himself a Lamb for the burnt offering.*"

- Now God was providing His one-and-only special Lamb for the once-for-all sacrifice for sin. Jesus Christ was the ultimate fulfillment of the promise.

God's Perfect Lamb Was Completely Submissive

Christ gave up His whole being unto God, that He might perfectly offer Himself without spot for our redemption.

- The sacrifice did not need binding with cords to the horns of the altar.

- He stood there willing to suffer, to be spit upon, to be shamefully entreated, and to die.

Ultimately the "shearing" process involved Jesus becoming the sin bearer. Jesus never became anything less than perfectly righteous in His own intrinsic personal essence.

- But as our substitute on the cross He took our sin upon Himself.

II Cor. 5:21 For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

- The full wrath of God against sin fell on Jesus Christ.

God's Perfect Lamb Was Slain

Even in His glorified body, Jesus retains His scars. The disciples saw the nail prints after His resurrection. His scars will be an eternal reminder to us in heaven of His sacrifice for us, and how much we are loved.

I Pet. 1:19-20 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Rev. 13:8b ...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

God's Perfect Lamb Is Standing

Hebrews 1:3 and 10:12 inform us that the Lord Jesus is seated at the right hand of God.

Christ sat down: His sacrifice for our sins was complete and sufficient. His sacrificial work as our substitute is finished! The question of our sin is settled, and there is no further need for blood sacrifice. Praise God!

In his vision of the future, the apostle John saw a Lamb standing [Rev. 5:6].

This is not a contradiction in the Bible - it's figurative language used to convey the same idea. The vision of the Lamb standing in Rev. 5 conveys the same truth.

His work is finished. God's Lamb no longer lies slain on the altar.

He was slain, once and for all - but He now stands in resurrection triumph!

As we continue in Revelation 5, we catch a glorious glimpse of God's Lamb receiving universal praise and honor. The special Lamb who was born in the town of Bethlehem will stand forever as the central focus of eternal attention, honor, praise and worship!

Truth: Jesus' death was the path to His glory. For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross. The cross was the birthplace of His everlasting glory.

Jesus Likened To A Sheep

Recall: Long before Isaiah's writings, Jesus was typified by the lamb of the Passover.

Key Point: John the Baptist declared Jesus as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

Slaughtered Like The Passover Lamb:

Isa. 53:8: By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off from the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the blow was due?

Like all the other lambs of the Passover or the sin offerings of Israel, He was slaughtered for the transgressions of His people.

Isa. 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray

Isa. 53:7 He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth:

He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth.

- After saying Christ is The Shepherd and we are the sheep, the Bible makes a 180 degree turn and likens the Lord Jesus Christ as a lamb or sheep.

We can understand how we are the sheep and Jesus is the Good Shepherd, but to liken the Son of God to a sheep would be unthinkable except His own Spirit inspired the comparison.

Spurgeon: It is amazing how complete was the interchange of positions between Christ and His people so that He became what they were so they might become what He is.

Jesus: As A Sheep Dumb Before His Shearers

Our Lord Was Shorn, Sheared: Having the hair or wool cut off or sheared; as a shorn lamb

- Deprived; as a prince shorn of his honors

Isa. 53:7b As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.

Jesus knew His prophecy. He knew His calling. He was the Servant of the LORD.

He was the Messiah. He was the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. Therefore, I Pet. 2:23 Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judges righteously:

Patience Of Our Lord: Manifested before Pilate, Herod, Caiaphas, and on the cross.

- At the mock trial in the middle of the night at Caiaphas' house when Jesus was accused by false witnesses, the high priest said, "Do you make no answer? What is this that these men are testifying against you?" Jesus was silent. [Matt. 26:62-63]
- When He was afflicted and attacked, He didn't complain or speak bitterly.
- He didn't cry out for immediate retribution upon those who treated Him unjustly - even though it was always in His power to do so. [Matt. 26:53] Jesus was silent.

Luke 23:9-10 Then he [Herod] questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing.

¹⁰ And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him.

- Jesus remained silent to FULLY bear our shame.
- How amazingly different from us! All too often we're full of self-pity, and so bent on self-justification that we find it impossible to keep our mouths shut.

John 18:37 Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. I was born for this purpose, and I have come into the world for this cause, that I might bear witness to the truth.

Phil. 2:5-8 Our Lord was "sheared." shorned

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

- He voluntarily stripped Himself of His "heavenly robes" of glory and majesty when He came to earth and took on humanity.
- He was divested of His rightful honor throughout His public ministry.
- The nation of Israel continually dishonored Him when they rejected Him as Messiah - even after He presented all the necessary credentials. Their dishonor actually reached the depths when they accused Him of being in league with the devil!

- For our sake, He was "shorn" of everything that was rightfully His on His way to the cross.
- Our Lord underwent the shearing of personal dignity during His trials and His crucifixion. He was mocked and spit on. He was despised and treated as "a worm and not human." Ps.22:6
- He was stripped of His clothing, a shame that was particularly humiliating in that culture. No one has ever been as naked as Jesus on the cross of Calvary.

Spurgeon: "No doubt He looked across the ages; for that eye of His was not dim, even when bloodshot on the tree: He must have foreseen your indifference and mine, our coldness of heart, and base unfaithfulness, and He might have left on record some such words as these: "I am suffering for those who are utterly unworthy of My regard; their love will be a miserable return for mine. Though I give my whole heart for them, how lukewarm is their love to me! I am sick of them, I am weary of them, and it is woe to Me that I should be laying down my heart's blood for such a worthless race as these my people are."

But there is not a hint of such a feeling. No. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end," and He did not utter a syllable that looked like murmuring at His suffering on their behalf or regretting that He had commenced the work."

There was not a word against his Father. Consider the severity of the chastisement laid upon Him for our sakes. It is quite impossible for us to conceive how the Father pressed and bruised Him, yet in His mouth were no complaints.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is an exclamation of astonished grief, but it is not the voice of complaint. Jesus wept, and He sweat great drops of blood, but He never murmured nor felt rebellion in his heart.

Key Thought: Jesus was brought to the shearers to be shorn of His comfort, His honor, His good name and of His life itself.

- His response was an amazing silence, patience, acceptance.

Consider: The unselfish silence of the Lamb of God through a lifetime of shearing stands out in marked contrast to our constant bleating and complaining.

Behold your Lord and Savior lying in passive resignation beneath the shearers, as they take away everything that is dear to Him, and yet He opened not His mouth.

Jesus was a sheep under the shearers. As He is, so are we also in this world.

Rom. 8:36-37 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. [quoted Ps. 44:22]

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

- Nothing can separate us from Christ's love for us. Struggles in this life are not a sign that God has abandoned us. They are hardships He works to see us through. [Heb. 12:3-11]
- God's people have faced persecution and hardship for generations.
- The Christians in Rome needed the right perspective on their circumstances.

- Good or hard circumstances > God's love for us does not change.
- God is working to fulfill His purpose in us. He will succeed in bringing us to glory.
- BUT! We need to be ready for trouble in this life. Don't be surprised when it comes.
- We should be ready to be killed, slaughtered like sheep, for Christ's sake. *John 6:1-2; 16:33*

Spurgeon: There are no crown-wearers in heaven who were not cross-bearers here below.

Shorning or Shearing Of Sheep

1. A sheep yields to his shepherd for all his care and trouble by being shorn.

As His sheep, we are to render up our fleece. When He calls upon us to suffer, we are to submissively yield to be shorn. Difficult times in our lives call for patient endurance. Heb. 6:12

Affliction is often used as the big shears:

- Loss of our spouse or child
- Loss of good health
- Sometimes the shears cut off our good name > slander follows

Consider: Most sheep are shorn annually to:

- Harvest the fiber at the appropriate length for spinning into yarn.

Our trials and afflictions are to glorify Christ. We should surrender ourselves to the "shorning."

Spurgeon: "I lay myself down with this intent, that thou shouldst take from me anything and everything, and do what thou wilt with me; for I am not mine own, I am bought with a price."

2. The Sheep Benefits By The Process Of Shearing.

Before they begin to shear the sheep, the wool is long and old.

Every bush and thorn tear off a bit of the wool, until the sheep looks ragged and forlorn.

Shorning must be practiced for the health and hygiene of each sheep.

- Excess wool impedes the ability of sheep to regulate their body temperature.
- They can become overheated and die.
- Since sheep are unable to shed, shearing allows adequate wool regrowth to improve their ability to control its body temperature during extreme heat and cold conditions.
- Prevent buildup of manure and urine that becomes trapped in the wool.
- Attracts flies and maggots: leads to parasitic infection and endanger their health
- Sheep with large amounts of wool can become immobilized by physical obstacles in their path. They are more susceptible to predator attacks.

Baarack the sheep captured the world's attention for looking like a gigantic ball of wool with a nose and legs. He was close to passing away. His wool was such a heavy burden on him.

He couldn't see. He was exhausted from years of struggling to find food and water.

A job that usually takes a few minutes required almost an hour. The wool was all matted and really dense. They had to monitor his heart throughout to make sure he didn't suffer a heart attack, with the shock of having all this burden taken off him.

How did he react to his new hairdo? He had spent so much time walking with all that wool, he'd grown used to it. When he stood up without it, he struggled to walk at first.

But as he took more steps, it was like, "Oh, oh, I feel better now."

They found Baarack with 35 kilos [77 pounds] of wool on his back. How did he survive?

- Sheep can't breathe with all that warmth on their back.
- It's difficult for them to see and find food.
- Sheep are herd animals. He didn't have any of his kind around him which was very stressful for him. He had to make do with the company of wild animals.
- There's not much grass in the forest. There's barely any water. He'd just been finding puddles to drink water for his thirst.

3. Before Sheep Are Shorn, They Are Always Washed.

Men are placed in rows, leading to the shepherd who stands in the water. The sheep are driven down, and the men seize them, throw them into the pool, keeping their faces above water, and swirl them round and round to wash the wool before they clip it off.

They come out on the other side frightened to death, wondering what is coming.

Spurgeon: "When a trial threatens to overtake you: If the good Shepherd is going to clip your wool, ask Him to wash it before He takes it off; ask to be cleansed in spirit, soul, and body.

Why not ask a blessing on the cup of bitterness as well as upon the cup of thanksgiving?

Ask to be washed before you are shorn.

If the shearing must come, let it be your chief concern to yield clean wool."

4. When the sheep has been dried, it actually *loses what was its comfort*.

Spurgeon: Nothing is our own except our God. Sin was our own, but Jesus has taken it upon himself, and it is gone. There is nothing our own but our God, for all his gifts are held on lease, terminable at his sovereign will. We foolishly consider that our mercies belong to us, and when the Lord takes them away we half grumble. All our possessions are but brief favors borrowed for the hour. As the sheep yields up its wool and so loses its comfort, so must we yield up all our earthly properties; or if they remain with us till we die, we shall part with them then, we shall not take so much as one of them across the stream of death.

5. The Shearers Take Care To Not Hurt The Sheep

They clip as close as they can, but they do not cut the skin. If they make a gash, it is because the sheep does not lie still: but a careful shearer has bloodless shears.

It is the kicking and the struggling that make the shearing work hard, but if we are dumb before the shearers no harm can come. The Lord may clip us so close that we feel there is not a bit of wool left. We may feel stripped entirely, even as Job when he cried,

"Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." Like Job, we must add: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

6. The Shearers Always Shear At A Suitable Time.

It would be wicked, cruel, and unwise to begin sheepshearing in wintertime.

There is a proverb which says: "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." [Laurence Sterne]

Sheep are shorn when it is warm, genial weather, when they can afford to lose their fleeces, and are all the better for being relieved of them.

Spurgeon: "God doesn't send us our worst troubles at our worst times. If your soul is depressed the Lord does not send you a very heavy burden; He reserves such a load for times when you have joy in the Lord to be your strength. It has come to be a kind of feeling with us that when we have much delight a trial is near, but when sorrow thickens deliverance is approaching. The Lord does not send us two burdens at a time; or, if He does, He sends double strength. His shearing time is chosen with tender discretion."

7. Just Like The Sheep, There Is New Wool Coming.

When the Lord takes away our earthly comforts with one hand, He restores with the other hand six, a score, a hundred. We tend to cry and whine about the little loss.

Yet it is necessary in order that we may be able to receive a greater gain.

Joshua 5:12 And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna anymore; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

Spurgeon: "O sheep of the Lord's fold, there is new wool coming; therefore, do not fret at the shearing."

Application: When it is my turn to be shorned, I should be "dumb before the Shearer," obedient and submissive. [Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. Phil. 2:5]

- My reaction ➤ This is too painful. I cannot bear it.
- Does my mouth utter complaining and whining?

Truth: I can only respond with Christ's attitude in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Spurgeon: "By the blueness of the wound the heart will be made better. Do not repine because your trial seems strange and sharp."

I Pet. 4:12-13 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

Consider: God alone judges what sort of trial each of us needs to address our weakness.

Truth: God is at the bottom of all your tribulation.

Spurgeon: "Lie passive in the hands of God! Yield thee, and struggle not! There is no use in struggling, for our great Shearer, if He means to shear, will do it. If we struggle against God, we will get two strokes instead of one; and after all there is not half so much trouble in a trouble as there is in kicking against the trouble. We shall endure much more pain by rebelling than would have come if we had yielded to the Divine will.

Greek proverb: "It is hard for you to kick against the pricks [goads]." An ox goad was a stick with a pointed piece of iron on its tip used to prod the oxen when plowing.

The farmer would prick the animal to steer it in the right direction. Sometimes the animal would rebel by kicking out at the prick, and this would result in the prick being driven even further into its flesh.

The more an ox rebelled, the more it suffered.

Jesus' words to Saul on the road to Damascus: And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you persecute: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks [goads].

⁶ And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

When we choose to disobey God, we become like the rebellious ox—driving the goad deeper and deeper.

Prov. 13:15 "The way of the unfaithful is hard." [like barren, dry soil].

Prov. 15:10 "Correction is grievous unto him that forsakes the way:

Ps. 119:67 Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

Ps. 119:71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

Spurgeon: I would go to the deeps a hundred times to cheer a downcast spirit. It is good for me to have been afflicted, that I might know how to speak a word in season to one who is weary.

According to an article in USA Today, 1,500 sheep fell off a cliff to their deaths in Turkey in 2005. One sheep fell, so the others followed suit and jumped. In the end, 450 sheep died.

The ones that survived only lived because they were cushioned by landing on top of their fellow herd members.

Shrek, a Merino sheep who lived in New Zealand, became famous because he managed to avoid being captured and shorn for six years. His wool continued to grow and thicken, and his eyes were eventually hidden behind the thick coat.

Shrek dodged the sheering by hiding in caves and running from his master.

Shrek was finally captured and shorn. He had been carrying 60 pounds of wool on his body.

We are often like Shrek the sheep as well. We hide from God, clinging to the things that need to be shorn from us. We become weighed down with the burdens God could easily remove from us.

We often follow the crowd, even when it leads to our own demise. We stray from the shepherd who loves us and seeks to protect us. We don't appreciate when God disciplines us. But if we surrender to Him, we learn through the discipline that God can be trusted.

The image of the lamb wrapped around the neck of Jesus: Because sheep tend to stray and will also follow wherever they are led, shepherds often had to discipline lambs that would stray from their shepherd. The shepherd would use his rod to break the leg of a wandering lamb.

After binding the break, the shepherd would carry the lamb on his shoulders while the wound healed. If the lamb struggled and fought, it would quickly realize that the broken leg wouldn't allow it to flee.

The lamb learned during the healing process that the shepherd could be trusted.

The lamb needed the shepherd to provide food, transportation and protection.

Once the wound was completely healed, the lamb was fiercely loyal to the shepherd and wouldn't stray from the shepherd's leading.