

(Matt. 18:10) – We cannot overstate how precious the Lord’s children are to Him. To reject and to “*DESPISE*” or look down upon “*ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES*” is to reject and despise Christ Himself (Matt. 18:5-6; cp. Matt. 25:31-46). Think about it! Christ loved (and loves) His own (God’s elect given to Christ before the world began) unto the end, i.e. all the way to suffer and die for them to finish the work of righteousness for them (John 13:1). He gave His very life for the salvation of His people. “*THAT IN HEAVEN THEIR ANGELS DO ALWAYS BEHOLD THE FACE OF MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN*” – Christ charges His angels to watch over and protect us. It is in the salvation of Christ’s children that the angels behold the glory of God in Christ (1 Pet. 1:11-12).

(Matt. 18:11) – “*FOR THE SON OF MAN IS COME ...*” – The Messiah, Christ Himself (God manifest in the flesh), came into this fallen, sin-cursed world “*TO SAVE THAT WHICH WAS LOST.*” The point is that we who are saved by God’s grace were fallen in Adam, spiritually dead and depraved in our sins, and lost. This is the kind of people that Christ came to save. None of us deserve His mercy, love, and grace, and none of us can earn His mercy, love and grace. Christ in His mercy, love, and grace did not despise us but chose to save us from our sins and glorify Himself as the Lord our Righteousness. How, then, can we imagine that we have any excuse or right to despise any of His people?! If the Lord God of heaven and earth loved His children so much that He gave His only begotten Son for us to save us (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 8:32; 1 John 4:10), let us be warned not to injure, reject, or despise any of His true children.

(Matt. 18:12-13) – These verses remind us of the words of our Savior in Luke 15:4-7. Christ is often called the Shepherd of the sheep. In the Old Testament, Jacob was the first to speak of the coming of “*the shepherd, the stone of Israel*” (Gen. 49:24). It was from Jacob that Joseph came and became to his family as a shepherd to feed and nourish them and as a stone to uphold and support them. Joseph was a great type of Christ the Shepherd of His Father’s flock and the Stone that is laid upon which the church is built. Consider:

(1) Christ is the covenant Shepherd into Whose care God’s people were entrusted in the covenant of grace (Ezek. 34:22-25). Unlike the shepherds (religious leaders) of Israel whose only concern was themselves (Ezek. 34:1-10), the Lord Jesus was the faithful and loving Shepherd to Whom the entire flock of God was committed before the world began (Eph. 1:1-14).

(2) Christ is the Shepherd Who owns His sheep as they are His by the purchase price of His own blood (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-19), and they are identified as His sheep

by the effectual calling when He calls them by name (John 10:3) and calls them into the sheepfold by the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit (John 10:27; Gal. 3:26-29).

(3) Christ is the Good Shepherd Who came to lay down His life for His sheep (God's chosen people) (John 10:11,14). He is the Shepherd appointed and approved by the Father and upon Whom the whole salvation of His sheep was entrusted. He is responsible and accountable for all of the people given to Him in covenant mercy (John 6:37-40). That He is the Good Shepherd is evident in that He is God, and there is none good but God (Matt. 19:17). Being good, He leads His sheep into the good and green pasture of the Word of God (Ezek. 34:14). He teaches the sheep good doctrine (1 Tim. 4:16). He brings them into the good fold of salvation (Ezek. 34:14). He gives them a good hope through grace (2 Thes. 2:16), and He begins within the sheep a good work which will be consummated in heavenly glory (Php. 1:6).

(4) Christ is the smitten Shepherd Who died under the wrath of God in the stead of His people having their sins imputed to Him (Zech. 13:7). In order to save His sheep from their sins, the Shepherd had to be smitten by divine justice to pay for the sins of those in whose stead He died and arose. By His death, all His sheep were justified based on His righteousness imputed to them, and by His death, His sheep were healed of all their spiritual diseases (Isa. 53:5; 1 Pet. 2:24).

(5) Christ is the Great Shepherd Who was raised again from the dead because He had accomplished the justification of His sheep (Rom. 4:25; Heb. 13:20). This magnificent Shepherd is the salvation of all His people (Isa. 12:2; Luke 2:30).

(6) Christ is the seeking Shepherd Who has set Himself to seek, find, and save all of His lost sheep (Ezek. 34:12-13). His sheep are scattered among all nations, and He seeks, finds, and brings them into one fold (John 10:16). By means of Gospel preaching, Christ searches for, finds, and rescues His lost sheep wherever they are. The illustration states, *"IF SO BE THAT HE FIND IT."* This is not to imply that Christ could possibly fail to find His lost sheep. He will find and bring ALL of them to Himself, and they will all find Him, as He always gives His sheep spiritual life and a heart to seek and believe in Him (John 6:37-45). He then provides and cares for His sheep to bring them all to glory.

(7) Christ is the Chief Shepherd Who will come the second time to receive all His sheep and bring them to the glory of eternal life and blessedness (1 Pet. 5:4).

(Matt. 18:14) – As Peter wrote, God is not willing that any of His chosen people, Christ's sheep, *"THESE LITTLE ONES SHOULD PERISH"* (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9). It is God's sovereign will, based on Christ's merits alone, to seek, save, preserve, and glorify all His sheep whom He chose by His grace and whom He entrusted to Christ as their Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, Life-Giver, and Preserver. Not one will perish in their sins!