

## A Matter of Choice

God made man a free moral agent. We are creatures of choice. We have the right and the power to choose day to day activities. This power of choice is expressed in the Bible over and over. Both Moses (**Deut. 30:19**) and Joshua (**24:15**) put choices before Israel. But the choices they followed had consequences. They would likely make the choice that suited their own desires at the time, that would best serve their interests. But the choice would set in order chains of events that would not be to their liking.

Today we choose each day the kind of life we want to live, the rule of ethics to govern us, the people we wish to associate with. We usually do this out of selfish concern. But when we do, we also set in order chains of events that bring about end products that we may not like. The social drinker does not choose to be an alcoholic, to lose his job, family and friends, nor to have a damaged liver, but all too often that is what he gets. The criminal does not choose to go to jail when he robs or kills, but that's where he winds up.

When the prodigal son left home to enjoy spending his inheritance, he did not intend to end up in the hog pen, starving and friendless, but it was inevitable with that choice he made. Lot chose to pitch his tent toward

By Morris D. Norman

Sodom because of the personal advantages it held for him and his family. He did not intend to choose to end up on a mountain having sons born by acts of incest with his own daughters. He did not intend to lose his wife and all his possessions in the destruction of Sodom. But all this he did, because "he pitched his tent toward Sodom" (**Gen. 13:12**).

We do not intend to lose our children when we become too deeply involved in economic and social affairs to love, train and mature them, but that's the end product of the choice. We do not intend to have delinquent, rebellious children when we chose not to discipline them, to teach them respect for God, parents and others.

No one chooses divorce from the beginning, it is a hard, heart rending experience. But that's the end product of *self-centered neglect*. We all want happy occasions with exciting mates but in our day to day choices we ourselves are not contributing to that end. We blame others when we are at fault. We made choices long ago that resulted in the end product. We like to sow but we don't like to reap.



Sick			
Brad Marshall (Allie Hosey's Cousin)	Owen Mauldin (Seth and Summer Mauldin's Son)	Frank Hand (Laura Humphrey's dad)	Sandlyn Fultz (Davis Fultz's Sister)
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier)	David Hartsell (Holly and Brad's Father)	Kate Miller (Daughter of Brandon and Erin Miller)
Betty Mcareavey (Mary Ann Roberts' mom)	Neal May (Manna Jones' Mother)	Mark Dean (Father of Logan Dean)	Jerry Foropoulos (Anna Jean's Uncle)
Jon Jon Henderson (Suzanne Stagner's cousin)	Quinton Addison (April Jerkins Grandfather)	Danny Weldon (Rusty Weldon's brother)	Bob Cannon (Friend of Holly Law)
Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)	Amy Baswell Hall	Emily Stallings (Anna's sister)	John Marvin Rhodes (Toni Herd's cousin)
Lisa Carter (Josh and Luke Carter's mother)	Joe Perkins (Scott Perkin's Dad)	Toni and William Herd	Tom Davis (Walker Davis' Uncle)

### January Birthdays

- 1-Luke Carter
- 1-David Ogle
- 2-Savannah Spohn
- 2-Chuck Hunt
- 4-Phillip Box
- 6-Erica Seymore
- 7-Sarah Darby
- 9-Jordan Oldag
- 9-Liseth Aragon
- 9-Tyler Hudson
- 10-Mallory Randolph
- 11-Spencer Hall
- 11-Shepherd Hall
- 13-Meredith McCray
- 14-Kendall Parker
- 15-Michael Bassie
- 18-Scott Vaughn
- 21-Jacob Jerkins
- 23-Connor Godwin
- 25-Caleb Daniels
- 25-Sara Lail
- 27-Blake Bagents
- 30-Kayla Garlock
- 30-Kristi Garlock
- 31-Jennifer Daniels

### News and Notes

- ☑ - Lets keep in our prayers our expectant mothers, Laura Humphrey, Brittany Bagents and Jana Hall!
- ☑ - There is a meal list on the bulletin board in foyer for the meeting.
- ☑ - David Hartsell will see doctor tomorrow and learn more about the new tumor.
- ☑ - Remember Tim Morton in your prayers as he is deployed to Afghanistan.
- ☑ - Let us welcome a new student, Matthew Cavender!
- ☑ - Tonight there will be a meeting for those writing lessons for the new OSH-N.T. material in the 3rd-5th grade classroom. On Wed, after services is a meeting for those interested in editing these lessons
- ☑ - There will be a Ladies' class on Thursday - 7:00 p.m. at the Rouse's home. Sally Perz will teach "Cultivating a Merry Heart"
- ☑ - There will be a ladies' study at RYC (Russellville) on Jan 30-31 with Jane Bragwell. See Yvette for flyer with more details.
- ☑ - The student study is this weekend, Jan 16-17! (Both Students and adults are invited)
- ☑ - Our meeting with David Maxson starts Sunday! This includes our next college devotional/singing on Sunday night Jan 18th!

# The Auburn Beacon

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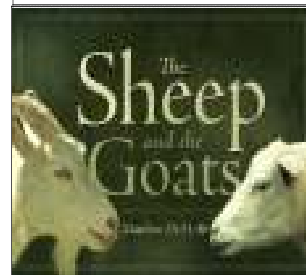
Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (**Matthew 5:16**)

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## Goats Among Sheep

By Al Diestelkamp



### Thoughts to Ponder

"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.  
(John 10:14)

The judgment scene depicted by Jesus has Him separating sheep from goats and inviting the sheep into the eternal kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world (**Matt. 25:31-34**). Then He explains why the sheep in His flock were invited and the goats were not.

From this we should not be surprised when there are those who portray themselves as part of the flock of God while not fully submitting to the Good Shepherd.

In exhorting elders, Peter described local churches as "the flock of God which is among you" (**1 Pet. 5:2**). If there are "goats" among the Chief Shepherd's flock, there no doubt will be "goats" in local churches.

I'm not an expert on farm animals, but some research has taught me that while there are some similarities between sheep and goats there are also some significant differences. To the casual observer, some goats look like sheep and are often in the same pasture, but they behave quite differently.

A shepherd will guide the sheep

The goat-like church member often has that independent attitude which is resistant to correction or conformity. If things aren't to his liking, he is likely to find another local flock where his independence is tolerated. .... In some cases, he may even find a whole flock of goats who pride themselves in their non-conformity, even to the point of extending fellowship to some wolves.

to "green pastures" and the goats will tag along, but they are willing to eat just about any trash they find along the way. Sheep have a reputation for being submissive and willing to be led, while goats are more independent and sometimes have to be driven. Goats tend to be more stubborn and occasionally combative. To the casual observer, goats may even seem more playful, making the sheep appear somewhat boring.

Of course, when it comes to "sheep" and "goats" in the church, the Lord has no problem distin-

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### SCHEDULE OF SERVICES Sunday

Bible Class .....9:30 AM  
Worship .....10:20 AM  
Evening Worship ..... 6:00 PM

### Wednesday

Bible Classes.....7:00 PM

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guishing between them; but the task is a bit more difficult for shepherds in a local flock. Unlike the animal version, the distinction cannot be determined by appearance.

Jesus warns about other intruders whom he describes as “ravenous wolves” dressed “in sheep’s clothing” (**Matt. 7:15**). (That’s another animal!) It’s by their fruits we can identify them (**v.16**). It’s not that easy to identify the “goats” among us, especially if we see them doing many “works” (**cp. Matt. 7:22**).

The goat-like church member often has that independent attitude which is resistant to correction or conformity. If things aren’t to his liking, he is likely to find another local flock where his independence is tolerated. Because of his independent nature, he is liable just to slip away quietly and resist any effort to bring him back into the fold. In some cases, he may even find a whole flock of goats who pride themselves in their non-conformity, even to the point of extending fellowship to some wolves.

The “goats” among the sheep will swallow the doctrines of “wolves” who give lip-service to the authority of the scriptures but find ways of interpreting them to fit their own views of “fairness.” They discount an increasing number of scriptures as not being applicable today by claiming that they were written based on the cultural norms of the first century.

In case you think that I am just being paranoid, let me give you an example of teaching that is being endorsed by some among us. There is a movement among some of our brethren which is being promoted by popular authors and internet bloggers. One such blogger who claims to be an elder in a local church in Alabama has written a 205-page book dedicated to refuting what he calls “legalism” which denies women the right to serve as preachers and elders. Imagine that! A book of that length attempting to explain away what the Holy Spirit clearly said is

“shameful” (**1 Cor. 14:34-35**) and one of the inspired qualifications of an elder (**1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6**). Of course, it doesn’t stop with a single issue. The so-called “progressive movement” is anxious to open the floodgates to many more digressions from God’s word. Hopefully “sheep” will not be moved by such attempts, but I fear for “goats” who may be attracted to such trash.

In the physical world, no matter how much it tries, a goat cannot be transformed into a sheep; but in the spiritual realm, it is possible. It requires being “transformed by the renewing of the mind” (**Rom. 12:2**) and being “clothed with humility” (**1 Pet. 5:5**). For proud Americans this does not come without effort, for we love our “rights”—almost to a fault. The founding fathers of our nation issued a “Declaration of Independence” that must not be applied to our spiritual lives. When it comes to following the Good Shepherd, we need to issue a “Declaration of Dependence.”

The Chief Shepherd sent the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth, including how we ought to conduct ourselves in the church (**1 Tim. 3:15**). This includes obeying and submitting to those who lead us in our local congregations (**Heb. 13:17**). To do this, we must act like sheep—not like goats.

I have to wonder if one of the reasons more good men don’t “desire the office of a bishop” (**1 Tim. 3:1**) is that they see the flock among them acting more like goats than sheep and can’t imagine being able to shepherd those who have not demonstrated a willingness to submit to their leadership. However, even if my suspicion is correct, it’s not an excuse for failing to “set in order the things that are lacking” (**Tit. 1:5**).

Perhaps we would all do well to heed the message in the lyrics of a children’s song: “I don’t want to be a goat...nope! ’Cause a goat ain’t got no hope!” - **Think on These Things, Jan 2015**



## A Reasonable Doubt?

By Bubba Garner

How would you like it if someone spoke about your life based on one thing you said or did? Without any input from you, they chose a phrase or event that they thought best summed up how you should be remembered? That’s what we have with the apostle we often refer to as “doubting” Thomas. Even in nonreligious settings, wherever there is a dissenting voice or a lone skeptic, that person is called a “doubting Thomas.”

Thomas was not viewed that way by his fellow apostles. According to John’s gospel, the only thing they called him was Didymus or “the Twin” (**John 11:16, 20:24, 21:2**). Not only that, but when Jesus insisted that He and the apostles go to Jerusalem, a place where they were afraid for the Lord’s safety, it was Thomas who insisted, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him” (**John 11:16**). In other words, if the enemies took Jesus, they would have to go through Thomas first. Yet, no one ever refers to him as “fearless Thomas.”

His unfortunate nickname comes from the statement he later made after hearing about Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. “Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe” (**John 20:25**). Instead of casting doubt on his faith, what are some lessons we can learn that will help us in our own belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God?

It is not wrong to demand evidence. As one of the chosen twelve, Thomas had been “all in” before. Remember, he was prepared to fight to the death for Jesus. When the Lord did die, the apostles were so convinced that the cause was over that the first report of His resurrection “appeared to them as nonsense” (**Luke 24:11**). Before Thomas could consider himself “all in” again, he wanted to see and handle the evidence.

The Lord does not ask His disciples to follow Him with a blind faith. When Jesus appeared to Thomas, He did not withhold proof from him. Rather, He invited careful investigation: “Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing” (**John 20:27**). Luke also wrote about the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, that He “presented Himself alive...by many convincing proofs” (**Acts 1:3**). The truth has nothing to hide. The more we look into it, the stronger our convictions become.

Each person must have their own faith. Thomas’ request to examine the Lord was not an unreasonable one. He simply wanted the same opportunity that was made available to the other apostles. A week earlier, Jesus

appeared to them when Thomas was not present and “showed them both His hands and His side” (**John 20:20**). When they later told Thomas, “We have seen the Lord” (**20:25**), he didn’t just take their word for it. He wanted to see it for himself. He wanted to have his own faith.

While we certainly learn about the gospel from other people, we must eventually reach the point where we stand on our own convictions. This very attitude is seen in the Queen of Sheba’s statement after testing the wisdom of Solomon. “It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. Nevertheless I did not believe the reports, until I came and my eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me” (**1 Kings 10:6-7**). How much more ready will we be to give an answer for our faith when we can reason from that which we have personally experienced? No longer is it based on what our parents or our preacher knows. It is rooted in “for the Bible tells me so.” It is our own.

Honest evaluation calls for a humble confession. Thomas asked to see all the evidence; Jesus held nothing back. There is no record of the apostle following through with his request to put his finger in the nail prints or his hand into the wounded side. What is recorded are the words he spoke: “My Lord and my God” (**John 20:28**)! Having seen for himself the proof of Jesus’ resurrection, he could do no less than to confess His deity. Any other response would have been dishonest to the facts of the case.

Many people are like Thomas in that they ask for proof from the word of God. But when they are confronted with the inescapable truth, their conclusions do not follow the evidence. “That’s your opinion.” “I don’t believe that.” “That’s just your interpretation.” “My God is bigger than that.” It takes honesty to want to see things for yourself. It takes humility to go wherever the truth leads you and confess, “My Lord and my God!”

The ability to physically see and touch Jesus after the resurrection was limited to a 40-day window. But we can still see Him through the testimony of those who did and come to believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God. In fact, Jesus said we are “blessed” (**John 20:29**) when this happens. Without a doubt.

