

Ezekiel 34:1–31 – The False Shepherds, the True Shepherd, and the Heart of God

Ezekiel 34 is God’s direct word to failed spiritual leaders—and a beautiful promise of a coming Shepherd who will do what no one else has done faithfully or perfectly. It speaks to Israel in Ezekiel’s day, but it also reaches forward and finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep.

1. God’s Indictment of False Shepherds (Ezekiel 34:1–6)

“And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, “Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds: ‘Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?’”’” (Ezekiel 34:1–2, NKJV)

God speaks directly to the “shepherds”—the leaders of Israel who were supposed to care for His people spiritually and practically. Instead of serving, they were using their position for personal gain.

God lists their failures:

- They fed themselves instead of feeding the flock (Ezekiel 34:2–3).
- They did not strengthen the weak or heal the sick.
- They did not bind up the broken.
- They did not bring back those who were driven away or seek the lost.
- They ruled with force and cruelty (Ezekiel 34:4).

Because of this, the sheep were scattered and became prey:

“So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered.” (Ezekiel 34:5, NKJV)

God takes it personally when His people are abused, neglected, or exploited by those who claim to represent Him.

Practical Application

This is a sober warning for anyone in spiritual leadership today—pastors, elders, ministry leaders, teachers:

- Leadership in God’s kingdom is not about status; it is about service.
- The ministry is not a platform for ego, wealth, or control. It is a calling to care, to feed, to heal, to seek, to restore.

Jesus told His disciples that the Gentiles love to “lord it over” one another, but “it shall not be so among you” (see Mark 10:42–45, NKJV). He, the Lord, took a towel and washed their feet. That is the pattern.

Challenge for Believers (and especially Leaders)

- If God examined your heart and your ministry, would He say you are feeding His flock—or feeding yourself?
- Are you using people to build your ministry, or using your ministry to build up people?
- Are you more concerned with being honored, or with serving?

God says to the false shepherds:

“Behold, I am against the shepherds... I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them.” (Ezekiel 34:10, NKJV)

When leaders misuse God’s people, God Himself steps in.

2. God Himself Becomes the Shepherd (Ezekiel 34:11–16)

In contrast to the corrupt shepherds, God makes a stunning promise:

“For thus says the Lord God: ‘Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out.’”
(Ezekiel 34:11, NKJV)

Look at what He promises to do:

- *“I will search for My sheep and seek them out.”*
- *“I will deliver them from all the places where they were scattered.”*
- *“I will bring them out... gather them... bring them to their own land.”*
- *“I will feed them... I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down.”*
- *“I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick.”* (see Ezekiel 34:11–16, NKJV)

This is the heart of the true Shepherd: He goes after the scattered, the hurting, the overlooked, the broken.

Jesus takes these words to Himself:

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” (John 10:11, NKJV)

He does what the false shepherds would not do—He lays down His own life. Jesus saved us when He shed His blood on the cross, taking our sin and our judgment upon Himself. His resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord. In Him, this promise of God Himself shepherding His people is fulfilled.

Practical Application

If you belong to Jesus, you are not just a name on a church roll. You are one of His sheep.

- When you feel scattered—He seeks you.
- When you feel wounded—He binds you up.
- When you feel weak—He strengthens you.
- When you feel lost—He comes looking.

He is not a distant overseer who merely checks attendance; He is a Shepherd who knows your name and cares for your soul.

Challenge for Believers

Do you actually let the Shepherd care for you?

- Or do you insist on managing everything alone, running harder, burning out, and wondering why you are exhausted?
- Do you bring Him your broken places, or hide them?

He says, “I will make them lie down” (Ezekiel 34:15, NKJV). Let Him bring you to that place of rest—trusting Him enough to stop striving and to receive His care.

3. God Judges Between the “Fat” and the “Lean” Sheep (Ezekiel 34:17–22)

God not only confronts the leaders; He also confronts those within the flock who are harming others.

“As for you, O My flock... I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats.”
(Ezekiel 34:17, NKJV)

Some of the stronger sheep were trampling the pasture and muddying the water, then leaving the weaker sheep to eat and drink what was ruined. They were pushing and butting the weaker ones, scattering them.

God says:

“Therefore I will save My flock, and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.” (Ezekiel 34:22, NKJV)

He not only deals with corrupt leaders; He also deals with ungodly attitudes and oppression within His people.

Practical Application

Within the church today, it is possible for believers to:

- Use their influence, knowledge, or resources to dominate or shame others
- Make life harder for weaker or younger believers instead of helping them
- Trample the “pasture” (the fellowship, the teaching, the environment) with pride, gossip, or harshness

God cares how we treat each other. The Good Shepherd defends His weaker sheep. He will not allow bullying, manipulation, or spiritual pride to go unchecked forever.

Challenge for Believers

Ask honestly:

- Am I a source of refreshment or a source of damage in the body of Christ?
- Do I leave behind muddy water—confusion, division, wounded people?
- Do I push others aside so I can have my way, my ministry, my recognition?

If the Holy Spirit puts His finger on something, do not argue. Repent. Seek reconciliation. Learn to use your strength to serve, not to push.

4. One Shepherd from David: The Messianic Promise (Ezekiel 34:23–24)

God then makes a beautiful promise:

“I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.” (Ezekiel 34:23–24, NKJV)

This does not mean David himself comes back to rule in his old earthly role. It points to a ruler from David’s line—a promised King with a shepherd’s heart.

Other passages confirm this hope:

- Isaiah speaks of a child born, a Son given, who will sit “upon the throne of David... to order it and establish it with judgment and justice” (see Isaiah 9:6–7, NKJV).
- Jeremiah speaks of a “Branch of righteousness” raised up to David, a King who will “reign and prosper” (see Jeremiah 23:5–6, NKJV).
- Paul tells us Jesus was “of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power” (Romans 1:3–4, NKJV).

Jesus is that Shepherd–King—the Son of David and the Son of God. He rules with the heart of a shepherd, caring for His people, not exploiting them.

Practical Application

Jesus is not just your Savior; He is your Shepherd and your King.

- He does not rule to crush you but to lead you into life.
- His authority is not oppressive; it is protective and life-giving.
- To submit to Him is not to lose yourself; it is to finally be who you were meant to be.

Challenge for Believers

Are you letting Jesus be both Shepherd and King in your life?

- Do you follow His lead, or do you want His comfort without His authority?
- Are you willing to obey Him even when it cuts across your preferences, traditions, or habits?

The One whom God has established as Shepherd over His people is not just a comforter—He is Lord.

5. Covenant of Peace and Showers of Blessing (Ezekiel 34:25–31)

God goes on to describe a future of peace, safety, and blessing for His people:

“I will make a covenant of peace with them, and cause wild beasts to cease from the land; and they will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. I will make them and the places all around My hill a blessing; and I will cause showers to come down in their season; there shall be showers of blessing.” (Ezekiel 34:25–26, NKJV)

He speaks of:

- Security and peace
- Fruitfulness of the land
- Freedom from fear and oppression
- No more being prey for the nations
- No more shame among the nations (Ezekiel 34:27–29)

Ultimately, these blessings find their fulfillment in God’s saving work and in the future He has prepared when all things are brought under Christ.

The chapter closes with these tender words:

“Thus they shall know that I, the Lord their God, am with them, and they, the house of Israel, are My people,” says the Lord God. “You are My flock, the flock of My pasture; you are men, and I am your God,” says the Lord God. (Ezekiel 34:30–31, NKJV)

This is the heart of God:

“I am with you. You are My people. You are My flock. I am your God.”

Through Jesus Christ, this promise extends to all who trust in Him—Jew and Gentile alike—brought into one flock under one Shepherd (see John 10:16, NKJV).

Invitation: Come to the Good Shepherd

Ezekiel 34 exposes false shepherds and failed leaders, but it does not leave us in despair. It points us to the One Shepherd who never fails—Jesus Christ.

He is the One who:

- Seeks the lost
- Brings back the scattered
- Binds up the broken
- Strengthens the weak
- Lays down His life for the sheep

Jesus saved us when He shed His blood on the cross. There He bore our sins, our guilt, and our judgment. His resurrection from the dead declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord. The Good Shepherd became the Lamb of God, slain for us, so that we could be brought safely into His flock.

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:6, NKJV)

If You Have Never Given Your Life to Jesus

The Good Shepherd is calling you. You are not just a face in the crowd. He knows you, He sees you, and He wants you.

You can turn to Him today. There is no magic formula, but you might pray something like this, honestly from your heart:

“Lord Jesus, I confess that I have gone astray. I have sinned against You. I cannot save myself. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins and that Your blood was shed to save me. I believe that You rose from the dead and that You are God, Savior, and Lord. I turn from my sin and surrender my life to You. Please forgive me, make me new, and be my Shepherd and my King. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

If this reflects your heart, then today is the day to step into His flock and follow Him.

For Believers

Ezekiel 34 calls us to respond in three ways:

1. Trust the Shepherd
Bring Him your wounds, your fears, your scattered thoughts. Let Him bind you up and lead you into rest.
2. Reflect the Shepherd
In whatever role you have—at home, at work, in church—treat people the way He treats you: with patience, compassion, and truth.
3. Honor the Shepherd as King
Do not just admire His words; obey them. Do not just sing about Him; follow Him.

He says, *“You are My flock... and I am your God”* (Ezekiel 34:31, NKJV).

There is no safer place, no higher calling, and no greater joy than to live under the care and authority of the Good Shepherd.