

The Guardian of His Flock

*"When he had finished praying,
Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley.
On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.
Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place,
because Jesus had often met there with his disciples.
So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers
and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees.
They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.
Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them,
"Who is it you want?"
John 18:1-4 (NIV)*

One hot summer's afternoon I was walking with my uncle in search of a black bear that had been terrorizing our cows when they were grazing in the pasture. Suddenly we saw the culprit upwind from us. I quickly stood behind my uncle using him as a shield between me and the dreaded carnivore. My uncle slowly raised his Winchester model '92, 44-40 to his shoulder. With one well placed shot he took care of the animal that had planned to dine on one of our Herford cows that day.

In John 18 a lethal threat of soldiers along with some of the Jewish leaders entered Gethsemane where Jesus and the 11 apostles were. Only in John's description of the scene is it made

clear that our Lord walked forward and shielded the eleven by standing between them and the threat. This action is described in John 10 where our Lord said He was the gate for the sheep.

This act is one more detail in the ministry of Jesus caring for His people. Of course the ultimate act would be on the cross where the Good Shepherd would take all of His people's sins upon Himself and endure the wrath of the Father that His people deserved. So the Saviour shielded us from the threat of eternal death and so we are released from our debt of sins.

We can joyfully sing the hymn written by Horatius Bonar which speaks of this substitution:

Upon a Life
I have not lived,
Upon a Death I did not die,
Another's Life;
Another's Death,
I stake my whole eternity.

Not on the tears
which I have shed,
Not on the sorrows
I have known,
Another's tears;
Another's griefs,
On these I rest,
on these alone.

Lord, I believe;
O deal with me,
As one who has
Thy Word believed!
I take the gift,
Lord, look on me,
As one who has
Thy gift received.

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