

Spiritual Growth Lessons

LESSON 15 of 32

THE SHEPHERD AND HIS SHEEP

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

"For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand . . ." (Psalm 95:7).

"For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (I Peter 2:25).

Sheep are animals that are much different from other animals. Every other kind of animal can exist in the wild. There are wild horses, wild goats, wild pigs, wild cats, wild dogs--but there are no wild sheep! A sheep has no sense of direction, and no way to protect itself. A sheep needs a shepherd!

Man is like a sheep. He was created with a need to depend upon God for his preservation and direction. Everything God created during the seven creative days He created for mankind. But man was created for God. That is why, separate and apart from God, man is lonely and easily goes astray:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

David was a shepherd since his early youth, and understood about sheep and shepherds. He knew that his sheep depended upon him for all of their needs and preservation. He also knew that man is like a sheep (Psalm 95:7). What is more important, he knew the Good Shepherd, and we can learn from what he wrote concerning this Good Shepherd in Psalm 23:

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (verses 1-3).

When the Lord is our Shepherd, we can lie down at night and not worry about our needs. We can rest with the assurance that He is our Provider. He is also our Peace, and leads us beside the still waters. Sometimes we stumble along the way, but He gently lifts us up again, and after we sincerely repent, he renews and restores us. He leads us in the path of "right living," because of His great name!



"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (verse 4).

We need not fear evil, or the evil one, when Jesus, our Immanuel, lives within us. Rods and staffs were for two purposes: 1) to correct the sheep, and keep them from

going astray, and 2) they were also used as weapons to protect the sheep from wild animals.

David said, *"Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."* It is a great comfort to me that I can't get by with anything I want to do. If I stray from Him, He will correct me because He loves me.

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Hebrews 12:6).

It is a great comfort also to possess mighty weapons of warfare to defeat the enemy of my soul: *"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)"* (I Corinthians 10:4).

We have the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the girdle of truth, and the shield of faith to defend us from the enemies attack. We also have the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, the blood of Jesus, and the all-powerful name of Jesus to attack and destroy strongholds.

"Thou preparedst a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over" (verse 5).

Oil is symbolic of the Holy Ghost. God often does allow our enemies to see how we are mightily blessed of Him, not only with the anointing of His presence, but also with an overflowing cup that contains all of His blessings to us!

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever" (verse 6).

Someday Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is going to return for us, and we will go with Him to the home He has prepared for us (John 14:1-3).

Jesus, with the eyes of a loving Shepherd, saw the multitudes, and was moved with compassion on them, *"because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd"* (Matthew 9:36).

He ministered to their needs, casting out devils and healing the sick, but he did much more than that - He gave His life for the sheep:

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:11, 14-15).

We have a good Shepherd who loved us so much that He died for us upon the cross of Calvary. We should get to know Him better, and love Him as He is worthy of being loved. We need to follow Him wherever He leads us, because He will lead us in the paths of right living! *ds*