

God as Our Shepherd

Key Verse: “*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*”
—*Psalms 23:1*

Selected Scripture:
Psalms 23

AS WE CONSIDER THESE familiar words from the Psalmist David, our minds immediately contemplate the inner peace, comfort and assurance which lay in them. They speak directly of the Heavenly Father’s providential care as the greatest of all shepherds over his vast flock—all creation. We gain added strength and encouragement in the realization that God has appointed his son, Christ Jesus, to be the “good shepherd” of his sheep.—John 10:11,14-16

All who are striving to follow in the footsteps of Jesus are identified as his sheep, and are to trust fully in the guidance of the good shepherd. (vs. 4) Such trust in our shepherd should help relieve us from many of the anxieties that the rest of the world finds itself encumbered with at the present time. We recall these comforting words of Jesus: “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.” (Luke 12:6,7) Though God may not hinder us from experiencing pain and suffering, he will be with us and help us endure these experiences, if we “trust in the name of the LORD,” and “stay upon” him.—Isa. 50:9,10

Our Key Verse says, “I shall not want.” David realized, and we should likewise, that the Heavenly Father, the great shepherd, stands ready to assist and overrule in

providing our needs, both temporal and spiritual. In doing so, God orders our life in such a way that we will not “want,” or lack, anything needful for our use in serving him and the cause of truth and righteousness. He leads us to “green pastures,” “still waters,” and into the “paths of righteousness.”—Ps. 23:2,3

We have a further promise from God to those who strive to walk uprightly: “Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.” (Isa. 33:16) Although we may properly understand this promise with regard to our physical needs, its primary focus is to be spiritual. As sheep of the Lord’s pasture, we have been provided with the bread of life, and the water of truth, by which we are to grow as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. Each day we should pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” (Matt. 6:11) Here again, the most important meaning is spiritual. We should have a desire to daily feed upon the Word of Truth, knowing that it is by this that we will be sanctified, “meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”—John 17:17; II Tim. 2:21

The Scriptures warn us concerning those who may seek to “destroy and scatter the sheep” of God’s pasture. (Jer. 23:1) Other supposed shepherds, Jesus says, flee when they see a wolf coming, leaving the sheep to be hurt or destroyed. (John 10:12) Thus, we understand that only God and his son Christ Jesus are true shepherds, and can be entrusted with all our interests, temporal and spiritual.

To remain under the constant care of our shepherd, we must be desirous of his leading, as well as have a sheep-like disposition. Some of the special characteristics of sheep are meekness, the desire to be with the other sheep of the flock, and obedience to the shepherd. Sheep will listen intently to the sound of the shepherd’s voice, and will trust it implicitly. They will respond quickly to his call, and watch for his guidance. Let each of us keep close to our heavenly shepherd, that we might “dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”—Ps. 23:6 ■