

Christ as Leader

Key Verse:
***“Looking unto
Jesus the author
and finisher of our
faith; who for the
joy that was set
before him endured
the cross, despising
the shame, and is
set down at the
right hand of the
throne of
God.”***
—Hebrews 12:2

Selected Scripture:
Hebrews 12:1-13

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT A good leader leads by example. This is especially true when we consider our Lord Jesus. His life exemplifies that of a guiding head, whose ability to lead was proven at a great cost. Remember the words, “The LORD is my shepherd.” (Ps. 23:1) God is ‘shepherd’ in the largest sense of the word, and he appointed Jesus as the Great Shepherd to all of the flock. As our shepherd, he leads his sheep in the “paths of righteousness,” as they pass “through the valley of the shadow of death.”—vss. 3,4

In this beautiful psalm, we have laid out the wonderful arrangement that exists between the shepherd and his flock. He watches over them, uses his staff of guidance and hope, protecting them from those that would harm them, especially the Adversary, Satan. The desire for them is that goodness and mercy will be with them every day, every moment, making “all things work together for good.” (Rom. 8:28) The shepherd continues his care over them until, as faithful footstep followers, they enter into the glorious condition at the end of their journey. For this to be a reality, the followers must “be conformed to the image of his Son.”—vs. 29

We know that this relationship was made possible by the laying down of his life on behalf of his sheep, and giving himself as a ransom for all. Our Lord spoke these words in reference to himself, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." (John 10:11) This was further shown in the verse, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (chap. 15:13) It was his desire to willingly lay his life down, being obedient even unto death, the death of the cross.

Another important aspect of this lesson is that the sheep hear and know the voice of the shepherd, and they willingly, and gladly, follow him. "When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." (John 10:4,5) This results in a life filled with trials, testings, and experiences that involve joys as well as sorrows. However, as the compassionate leader who had gone before to prepare the way, Jesus was a living expression of his Father's love. Through all of his experience he demonstrated that, "Love suffereth long, and is kind." (I Cor. 13:4) He also gives his dear ones the assurance, when you have trials, "be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."—John 16:33

This lesson further reveals to us how the Father rewards faithful obedience, and that he wants his children to remember the meekness, patience, and suffering of Christ as an example. "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again." (I Pet. 2:23) He is 'set down at the right hand of the throne of God.' Jesus committed his all in service to his Father, and to the cause of truth and righteousness. In our own case, we must also faithfully endure to the end, gladly walking in his footsteps, having the same experiences and not becoming "wearied and faint in your minds." (Heb. 12:3) "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."—Phil. 2:5 ■