

Who is Your Shepherd?

Joe Slater

Early in his life David tended his father's sheep. As a shepherd boy he learned all about meeting the needs of critters that weren't necessarily the brightest bulbs in the chandelier. His experience served him well as God entrusted him with His "sheep", the kingdom of Israel.

As an adult, David learned to appreciate the Lord's role as his own shepherd. We find a well-known expression of this in Psalm 23.

"The Lord is my shepherd" (Psalm 23:1a). Did you know that "shepherd" in that sentence is not a noun, but a verb? We could accurately read it, "The Lord is shepherding me." The Lord was doing for David what a good shepherd does for one of his sheep. In short, He was providing everything David needed. Therefore, David continued, *"I shall not want"* (23:1b). That is, he would not lack or have need of anything. With the entire universe at His disposal, the Lord was fully able and willing to provide every necessity.

Hebrews 13:20 refers to Jesus the Son of God as *"that great shepherd of the sheep."* Jesus Himself said, *"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own"* (John 10:14). All who are in fellowship with Jesus through faith and obedience to His word receive *"all things pertaining to life and godliness"* (2 Peter 1:3). That includes the fulfillment of both material and spiritual needs. *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things (food, clothing, et. al.) will be added to you"* (Matthew 6:33). *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls"* (Matthew 11:29).

With Jesus you lack nothing. (More next week!)

Examining Ourselves

"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

In Pierre Boulle's World War II classic, "Bridge Over the River Kwai," amid the dark loneliness of the enemy infested jungle, the guard of the bridge converses with himself as he paces back and forth. "How have I used the years at my disposal? Have I accomplished anything of note and worth? Has the world been better for my having lived?" This was real soul searching, and these questions are worthy of personal reflection.

First, it is easy for us to deceive ourselves about our spiritual strength, and our own goodness. Despite Peter's assumed confidence, he denied the Lord three times the night Jesus was arrested. It can happen to any of us.

Second, we must form an objective understanding of our real person. We cannot do this if we depend on others for our self-esteem. If we are always looking for praise from others, we will never see ourselves as we really are.

Third, we must examine our own lives rather than others. We are easily deceived into thinking that all the good works are highly visible. In great accomplishments there are many behind the scenes making it possible for others to receive the praise. Lee Greenwood's song, "The Wind Beneath My Wings" reminds us of this truth.

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)

Your citizenship is in Heaven

***You only have a work visa for earth
(Philippians 2:20)***

--Jon Rowe (via Facebook)

In the Lord's Army

"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed" (Acts 4:26, ESV).

The kings and rulers of the earth were not the only ones who set themselves against Jesus. Acts 4:27 continues, *"for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the people of Israel."*

Jesus stood all alone that day. The One who led God's host in heaven fought the battle that defeated Satan by Himself. If the rulers, Israelites, and Romans who killed Jesus had known who He was, they would not have crucified Him (1 Corinthians 2:8). But Jesus knew that His death would end Satan's chances.

Jesus did it to enroll us in His army, a band of loyal defenders of the faith. He *"leads us in triumphal procession, and through us He spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere... We are commissioned by God"* (2 Corinthians 2:14,17).

In spite of the wars, the famines, the pandemics, the crime, and the natural disasters that can destroy our faith and hope, we fight on, knowing that "our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. 3:5). *"If God is for us, who can be against us? We are more than conquerors through him who loved us"* (Rom. 8:31, 37).

We are God's people who are redeemed from Satan's clutches, His army who are zealous of good works. We strive to spread the blessed hope of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We may not win every battle for the hearts of sinners, but neither does God. But He will win the war. When our King returns, He will vanquish Satan and evil. And we will live in glory with Him.

--Donna Wittlif (Ft. Worth, TX)