

## Who is Your Shepherd? (#3)

Joe Slater

The Lord, David's shepherd, provided spiritual as well as physical care. *"He restores my soul"* (Psalm 23:3a). Both before and during his time as king of Israel David had occasions of discouragement and despair. Some of these were his own fault; others were thrust upon him by his enemies. We don't know what circumstances prompted him to write, *"My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue clings to my jaws; You have brought me to the dust of death"* (Psalm 22:15). Those words would find fulfillment in the suffering of Jesus on the cross, but David also experienced them to a lesser degree.

As Thomas Paine would later write regarding the American Revolution, "These are the times that try men's souls." Fortunately, David, unlike the Deist skeptic Paine, sought and received relief from his trials through faith in the Lord – *"He restores my soul."* Even in the most devastating situations God could and did deliver David from the crisis, giving him a new lease on life.

Christians aren't immune from the same sort of trials David experienced. Paul and his fellow workers, for example, *"were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that he will still deliver us"* (2 Corinthians 1:8-10).

Jesus, the Good shepherd, invites: *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28). Let Him restore your soul!

(More next week!)

## Biblical Unity

The unity of all believers in Christ is more than just wishful thinking on the part of of people – it is the ardent desire of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In the last hours of His earthly life, Jesus prayed for the unity of those who would come to believe in Him through the words of the apostles. He prayed, *"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me"* (John 17:20–21).

Jesus said the receptivity of a lost world to the Gospel would be enhanced by the unity and harmony exhibited by those who are His disciples. In a world of religious division, where hundreds of different denominations all claim to follow Jesus, His desire for unity has been largely unheeded.

The foremost essential producing religious unity and harmony is not compromise, but acceptance of the Bible as the sole authority in religious matters. Division and strife result when men give their own writings and commandments equal place with the word of God. We are told to *"Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus"* (2 Timothy 1:12). When we cast aside the shackles of humanly originated creeds and dogmas and hold forth God's words as our absolute standard in religious matters, then we will have taken a big step toward fulfilling Christ's prayer for unity.

--Glen Elliott (Greenbriar, AR)

*Positions are temporary.*

*Ranks and titles are limited.*

*But the way you treat people will always be remembered.*

## Love Potion Number Nine: Really?

**"But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love" –1 Corinthians 13:10)**

Do you remember this hit song? It was released in 1959. Desperate people do desperate things. In this song, a man desperate for love goes to a gypsy to help him find love. She gives him a bottle of potion promising him love. Instead, he gets high and kisses a police officer! And the officer breaks the bottle.

The number nine is revered in many spiritual and mystical traditions as a symbol of spiritual enlightenment and completion. I don't think the desperate man in this song was seeking those things.

Many are "looking for love in all the wrong places." They go to bars, and other worldly places where most have lost the true meaning of love. I've seen this in many people's lives. They keep making the same bad choices because they find their partners in the wrong places. There is no guarantee that you'll find a godly mate in a church singles group, but it certainly increases the odds!

It is obvious to a Christian of maturity that one must know love in its purist form to find lasting love. We must know what love is from God and give up the worldly and fraudulent notions of love.

It is tragic that young Christians often confuse "romance" with love. Such confusion blinds one to the worldly flaws of the object of their love. And often this leads to a tragic outcome.

We first must work on ourselves. Develop a biblical view of love and produce the fruit of the Spirit. Paul ends a letter with these words: *"Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love"* (Ephesians 6:24). I would translate this "a never diminishing love." This is where it begins and ends - the true pursuit of genuine love.

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)