

Sheeplly Benefits

Introduction:

- A. {Where do you normally hear Ps. 23}
 - a. Funerals
 - b. But it is not for the dead, but the living!
 - B. Sheeplly Benefits
 - a. David spent years as a shepherd.
 - b. Follower of a Shepherd – sheep.
 - c. Being compared to sheep:
 - i. Smell bad
 - ii. Eat everything – “Range maggots”
 - iii. Dumb & get lost easily.
 - d. However, when they follow the Shepherd, life is so much different!
 - C. Psalm 23
 - D. “As Christians we really get more out of life when we depend on the Shepherd.”
 - E. Referring to the Lord as Shepherd is a common practice in Scripture.
 - a. Like a shepherd, the Lord tends to His people.
 - b. Jesus identified Himself as the Good Shepherd:
 - i. *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”* – Jn. 10:11
 - ii. *“I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.”* – Jn. 10:14
 - F. What?
 - G. In our text we find 3 benefits from following the Shepherd.
 - I. The Shepherd gives us true Contentment. (vs. 1)
{Contentment is shown in two different ways}
 - a. Only the Lord can provide a content rest. (2)
 - i. “Lying down in green pastures.”
 - 1. For sheep this is a place free from worries, distractions, and need of food.
 - 2. For the believer, the Lord gives us a rest unlike anything else.
 - a. Despite the worries, distractions, and needs we can find rest in our Shepherd.
 - b. When we are truly content with our lives, we can find rest.
 - ii. “Beside still waters”
 - 1. For sheep they will only take a refreshing drink where the water is still and quite.
 - 2. For the believer, the Lord provides refreshing rest.
 - a. When we let the Lord lead us we find times of needed refreshment.
 - b. [**Cold water – working in hay**]
 - c. True contentment brings a satisfaction to the soul.
 - d. This is a satisfaction that only God can provide.
- b. Only the Lord can provide a content heart. (3)
 - i. “He restores my soul”
 - 1. Every Christian experiences times of despair.
 - a. The trials and worries of live beat down on us.
 - b. The uncertainty of tomorrow can bring anguish.
 - 2. However, in our weakness He restores.
 - a. When we are down, He lifts us up.
 - b. When we are in doubt, He brings us hope.
 - 3. A content heart is restored by God.
 - ii. “He leads me in paths of righteousness.”
 - 1. Sheep are not let to wonder but are lead by the Shepherd.
 - 2. Christians are not let to wonder neither.

- a. On our own we are will take selfish paths in life.
- b. **[I 65 will never lead to California]**
- c. But the Lord is leading us down the narrow way.
 - i. A way that loves others.
 - ii. A way that is free from wickedness.
 - iii. A way that looks at life with a renewed perspective.
 - iv. A way that truly follows God’s will.
- 3. We are never more content, than when we know that we are follow a righteous path!

“So we see the gift of contentment, now...”

- II. The Shepherd gives us peace in the trying times.
 - a. Only the Lord can provide safety in the shadow of death. (4)
 - i. “Through the valley”
 - 1. For sheep in Israel there are many times that they have to go through unpleasant valleys.
 - a. It is through the valleys that death could be creeping around every corner.
 - i. Flash floods
 - ii. Avalanches
 - iii. Poisonous plants
 - iv. Predators
 - v. Storms
 - b. However, the sheep go forward due to the presence of the shepherd.
 - 2. The same is true for the believer.
 - a. We will face many valleys.
 - b. The shadow of death may loom heavy over us.

- c. Yet we can boldly claim: “*I will fear no evil, for You are with me!*”
- d. This is the key!
 - i. Notice the change in personal pronouns.
 - ii. David changes from talking about the Lord, to talking to Him.
 - iii. We need to remember today, that we can face any valley, because the Lord is right there with us!
 - iv. **[Child’s courage when daddy’s watching]**
 - v. Through this we have peace!
- ii. “Your rod and Your staff”
 - 1. Why would the rod and staff comfort David?
 - 2. Why would it make him feel safe?
 - 3. “Rod”
 - a. This is a shepherd’s weapon
 - i. It was carved from a single sapling.
 - ii. Is like a club
 - iii. It is used for protection for sheep as well as self
 - 1. Practiced at a young age.
 - 2. Throw it like a missile.
 - iv. It was used for discipline.
 - 1. It is used to correct a straying sheep.
 - 2. It helps keep the fold together.
 - b. What does God’s rod mean to us?

- i. We should take comfort that God is protecting us.
 - ii. We should take comfort that God is correcting us.
 - 4. “Staff”
 - a. This is known as a shepherd’s walking stick.
 - i. It is easily identified with only shepherds.
 - ii. It is long with a crook/hook at one end.
 - iii. It has 2 main uses:
 - 1. To draw sheep to the shepherd.
 - 2. To guide sheep down paths.
 - b. What does God’s staff mean to us?
 - i. We should take comfort that God draws us close to His side.
 - ii. We should take comfort that God is guiding us down the path of life.
 - iii. What peace there is knowing that God is working all around us.
- b. Only the Lord can provide blessings in the presence of enemies. (5)
 - i. This is a verse that points to God’s provisions during the hardships around us.
 - ii. “Table”
 - 1. God bless us with everything we have.
 - 2. He does this despite our enemies.
 - a. Others against us can see that God provides for us.
 - b. They can see that we willingly depend on Him.

- iii. “Oil”
 - 1. This was a customary of treatment to ones guests.
 - 2. We must realize that God is so good to us that He treats us as His guest!
 - 3. **[Little Girl – “I’ve got all I want]**
- iv. “Cup Runs Over”
 - 1. **[Drinking from the saucer]**
 - 2. God has blessed us so much that our cup overflows.
 - 3. When you are ever tempted to think that you have nothing, start counting you blessings.
 - 4. What peace there is realizing that even in the hard times God provides!

“So we see that Shepherd is with us all the time, finally...”

- III. The Shepherd gives us hope for eternity.
 - a. Only the Lord can provide the way to eternity. (6a)
 - i. Goodness and mercy are the Lord’s keys to eternity.
 - 1. It by God’s goodness that He provides a way for eternal life.
 - a. It is by God’s goodness that anyone comes to repentance.
 - b. *“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”* – Rom. 2:4
 - c. God is good because He wants you to come to Christ is faith.
 - 2. It is by God’s mercy that anyone would have eternal life.
 - a. Because God had mercy on us in our sins, we can be saved.

- b. *“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” – Tit. 3:5*
 - c. If you have not received eternal life, remember that God is still having mercy today!
 - ii. However, goodness and mercy pursue us all the way to eternity.
 - 1. Once we are saved it is by these 2 gifts that guide us on our way to eternity.
 - 2. **[Sprugeon – God’s Footmen]**
 - 3. The goodness of God helps guide our steps in this life.
 - 4. The mercy of God is right there every time we stumble.
 - b. Only the Lord can provide the destination for eternity.(6a)
 - i. We have hope because the Lord has given the righteous a home in heaven.
 - 1. *“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” – Jn. 14:1-3*
 - 2. We will live in the house of the Lord.
 - 3. We will be in his presence!
 - 4. We will be free from all that hinders us here.
 - ii. Best of all we will be there forever!
 - 1. Time is limited now...
 - 2. But there will be no limits when we are with Jesus!

- 3. **[Elisabeth Elliot – Little girl with illness – Quote Ps. 23 pinky to thumb.**
The Lord is her shepherd. He has made her to lie down in green pastures. He led her to quite waters. Surely she will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.]

Conclusion

- A. Have you been a good sheep lately?
- B. Do you have hope for eternity?