

THE GOSPEL 5

FORGIVENESS AND THE GOOD SHEPHERD

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In John 10.10 we read of the Lord Jesus being the Good Shepherd. He knows every one of His sheep by name and they follow him.

But there are sheep rustlers.

The Lord Jesus said, I am the gate for the sheep. I am the door. I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.

But the sheep has enemies.

Figuratively, we are the sheep if we have Christ as our Saviour and He is our Good Shepherd. He knows each of us individually and wants us to follow Him.

But there is the enemy... Satan, the Devil who wants to sift us as wheat as he did to Peter who consequently denied the Lord three times (Luke 22.31). Satan wants to get his hands on us.

The Lord has plans for us. In Jeremiah 29.11, He has plans for our well-being, our welfare and, in Matthew 6.33, He states, Seek ye the Lord and his righteousness and all (good) things will be added unto you.

However, Satan wants you to give up the faith and abandon Christ and he will discourage all possible new converts.

The Devil creates problems such as

1. Guilt. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3.23) but there is a remedy and that is in the Blood of Christ which, as one modern version puts it, cleanses our conscience (Hebrews 9.13-14)

But it is necessary for us to repent of our sins. Repentance is not saying sorry. It is reviewing our situation and being contrite.

There are many who have an habitual sin which flares up regularly and such repeated sin can defile.

Our guilt is not removed by penance or good works but by God's free gift of salvation and forgiveness.

2. Depression is the second problem. Proverbs 18.14 asks, Who can bear a broken spirit? ...and Psalm 119.25 says, I am laid low. Today many doctors refer to depression as a low mood.

Consider the Bible and those who suffered from depression such as Abraham, Jonah, Job, Elijah, Saul, David and Jeremiah.

Some depression is due to guilt which subject we have addressed and Christians cannot avoid depression. We can suffer from stress, abuse, trouble, anxiety, friends and family and neighbours.

But we must grasp the greatness of God's forgiveness. 1 John 1.7 says that the Blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin.

3. The third problems are loneliness and ill-health. We read that the Holy Spirit is our comforter (John 14.16) but that is not the same as having someone local who can give us comfort and I suppose we would all prefer that. Ill-health is different and we all have different ways of dealing with this. God has not promised us a smooth voyage but he has promised us a safe landing.

Hebrews 4.15 gives us some comfort for we read that the Lord is touched with the feelings of our infirmities. He does care. He is our Good Shepherd. As 1 Peter 5. 7 states we can cast all our cares upon the Lord for He cares for us.

(529)

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