

The Marked Sheep

Being raised in rural Northern Ireland, I had occasion to notice how shepherds took care of their sheep. One of the things they did was to mark certain ones with various coloured dyes. When I asked the reason for this, I was told that the sheep were marked to show to whom they belonged. Apparently, a good shepherd marked His sheep.

The Lord Jesus Christ is our Good Shepherd, and in John 10:28 He puts three marks upon us.

The First mark is: He gives us eternal life.

The Second is: We shall never perish.

The Third is: No one shall pluck us out of His hand.

Jesus is the Shepherd, who, in love and compassion, came to seek and to save His lost sheep. (See Luke 19:10; Ezekiel 34:12). We, like sheep, had gone astray. We had all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. There was none of us righteous, no, not one. (See Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:23; Romans 3:10-19). But the Great Shepherd stepped in and saved us with his blood. It is the precious blood of Christ, the Great Shepherd, that alone cleanses from all sin and shelters us from all judgment.

“Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wand’ring from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.”

Here’s a personal question, “Have you been found by the Great Shepherd? Have you been rescued and marked by Him?” No? Then listen carefully, He is still seeking, and saving the lost. He is still saying, ‘Come unto me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ (Matthew 11:28). You will be safe in His hands. He will never lose you (Philippians 1:6).

The " Great Shepherd" gave His life for His sheep and we may depend upon it, He values and cares for us accordingly. Do we really think He will ever give us up or let us go? No, never! We have cost Him too much for that! He died and rose again for us. We have been marked. And here are the marks,

We have "ETERNAL LIFE: "

We "SHALL NEVER PERISH: "

"NEITHER SHALL ANY MAN PLUCK US OUT OF HIS HAND."

In this life, we are either under the power of Satan, the wolf, who came to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10), or we are safe in the hands of the heavenly Shepherd who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. (Revelation 1:5). This, of course, does not mean we can’t go astray. Sheep have an innate genius when it comes to straying. John McNeill, the Scottish preacher of another generation described the straying abilities of sheep thus,

“Here’s one going on three legs and saving the fourth for future use. And poor-spindle-shanks needs the four!

Here's another that has got its neck twisted, tangled up in a wire fence. If it would only give its woolly neck a half a turn the right way, It would be free; but that's just the half-turn it won't take. And when friend-shepherd comes forward to release it, the silly thing gets frantic. "Here's the butcher, before the time!"

"How like us; scared of God; though He comes to save us!"

"Another has gone through a hole in the hedge, out of the pasture field, into a bare earthen field. It's starving; But if you give it a mouth it couldn't get the same hole to come back again.

How easily we go wrong, gentle, or simple, cultured, or ignorant; How beyond us to come right!" (John McNeill: The Twenty-Third Psalm: Cpt 3).

That's why we need a Shepherd who never loses a sheep!

As sheep, we enjoy being saved ... when that is, we are not out there straying. But Jesus says to us, "I am the door; by me if any man enters in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture." (John 10:9). As His sheep, we can say with the Psalmist, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: he leads me beside the still waters" (Psalm 23:1-2); and we can say with hymn-writer, Thomas Kelly,

"We'll sing of the Shepherd that died,

That died for the sake of the flock;

His love to the utmost was tried,

But firmly endured as a rock."

Jesus is seeking for His lost sheep. And here's more good news, He always finds the ones He seeks, and saves the ones He finds and saves them to the uttermost (Hebrews 7:25).

We are safe!

He always finds,

He always saves, and

He always keeps.

An old-time preacher, John Brown of Haddington, Scotland visited a godly old woman who was on her deathbed. As they talked, the pastor asked, "Janet, what would you say if, after all He has done for you, God should let you drop into Hell?"

"Even as He wills," was the answer. "But, if He does" she continued, "He'll lose more than I will. I would lose my soul, but He would lose His character and faithfulness to His Word."

Our Lord's promise stands unchanged: "I give unto my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." We have been marked.

We are safe!