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BIBLE READING LEAFLET.

BY HANNAH WHITALL SMITH,

Superintendent of the Bible Reading Work of the W. N. C. T. U.,

4653 GERMANTOWN AVE., PHILADELPHIA, PA.

Vol. 1. No. 4.

CHICAGO, JUNE, 1882.

Published Monthly.

SUBJECT—KEEPING.

Foundation Text: 2 Tim. 1-12.

Speak on the felt need there is in every heart of being *kept* by a power outside of ourselves; of the earnest but vain efforts so many of us have made to keep ourselves, and of the hopelessness that has perhaps overwhelmed some of us. And prove from this text that Paul knew of One who is able to keep safely anything that is committed to Him. Illustrate by some familiar incident of a child committing the keeping of some treasure to its mother, the child so unable, the mother so able to keep it safe. Turn to

1 Pet. iv. 19.

Speak of the fact that He is a *faithful* Creator, and that therefore it is safe to trust Him. Men whom we trust often prove unfaithful, but He never can. Show how it grieves us to have our faithfulness doubted when we undertake any trust, and how much more it must grieve our faithful God. Strengthen this point by referring to

2 Thess. iii. 3.

Show that He will thus keep not only from the evil to come in the next world, but also from the evil in this present world *now*, by turning to

John xvii. 11, 15.

Emphasize the fact that what our Lord Himself prayed for, must be a possible thing to be done. Strengthen this by

1 Pet. i. 5.
Jude 24.

Speak of the continual danger we are in of falling, especially those in your audience who are tempted with drink, and show how the Lord is like a mother who holds the hand of her little child, as they walk together, in order to keep it from falling over the stones lying in the way. Illustrate this by

Psalms xci. 11, 12.

Show how it is the mother holding the child that makes it safe, and not the child holding the mother. Speak on the words "bear thee up," and illustrate by the infant in the mother's arms, safe because of her upholding; and show how its little frightened grasps when danger is nigh do not make it any safer. It is the mother

who keeps the baby, not the baby the mother, and just so it is our God who keeps us, and not we who keep Him. People say, "If I get religion, I am afraid I cannot keep it." No, you cannot, but if you get the right kind of religion, it will keep you. Illustrate this by referring to the next text—

Isaiah xxvii. 3.

Show how our hearts are like a garden, with enemies seeking to enter on every side, and we ourselves powerless to hinder. Show how there is no safety but in the keeping-power of the Divine Husbandman, but how in His care there can be nothing but perfect safety. Appeal to the experience of those of your audience who are trying to keep themselves, and ask if it has not always been a failure, and urge them to try God's keeping. Illustrate if possible by some incident which has come to your own knowledge.

Show *how* God keeps by referring to the next text—

Isaiah xxvi. 3.

Emphasize the words "perfect peace," and illustrate them by the peace that comes when we have entrusted any precious thing to safe keeping. A bank for instance. Show how we are continually trusting banks, and how comfortable we feel when we have transferred our money from our own keeping to that of some safe bank. Illustrate what trust in God ought to be by the nature of our trust in the bank. Show the folly of doubt by speaking of the folly of every hour running back to the bank to see if our money is safe. And, by the indignation of the bank officers at such a course, show how our doubts and fears must grieve our God.

Show what He keeps and how He keeps, by referring to the following texts, one after another, making such remarks as are suggested on each:

Ps. cxli. 9.	1 Sam. ii. 9.
Prov. iii. 26.	Ps. xxxii. 7.
Ps. xvii. 8.	Ps. xcvi. 10.
Ps. xcvi. 10.	Prov. ii. 8.
Ps. cxvi. 6.	Rev. iii. 10.

Turn to the next link in your chain of texts—

Psalms cxi.

Speak of this Psalm as the Bible Keep, and ex

plain your meaning by referring to the Keeps in ancient castles which were always the strongest and best protected rooms in the castle, and in which all the weak things and the precious things were put in time of danger. Show that the qualification for entrance into this Keep was always weakness and not strength, and illustrate the folly of saying, "I am too weak for the Lord to keep me," by showing how foolish it would have been for a child or a helpless woman to have stood outside the Keep when the castle was attacked by enemies, saying, "I am too weak to go into this Keep."

Emphasize the words, "The Lord is thy Keeper," and suggest they should be repeated with the emphasis on each different word, as follows: The *Lord* is thy Keeper; The *Lord* is thy Keeper; The *Lord* is thy Keeper. Let the emphasis bring out the meaning.

Notice the fact that this Divine Keeper never slumbers nor sleeps, that is, never neglects those for whom He cares. Speak of the fatal consequences of sleep on the part of keepers of a prison, or keepers of a flock of sheep, or keepers of a vineyard on a frosty night, or sentinels keeping a dangerous outpost, and show by contrast what sort of a Keeper our Lord is.

Speak of the responsibilities of a keeper to whose care any thing has been committed, and prove from our high ideals in this respect, what

the Divine Keeper must necessarily do. Illustrate by the shepherd keeping his sheep; and read the next text—

Jeremiah xxxi. 10.

Teach your audience what they must do in order to realize this keeping in their own individual experiences, by turning to your last reference—

Phil. iv. 6, 7.

Show that perfect trust in the Lord and entire abandonment to Him, with a definite committing of all our interests to His keeping, are the necessary steps to this realization. And show that if these steps are honestly taken, the result will unfailingly be that the peace of God will keep us with a garrison the hearts and minds of all who thus commit themselves to Him.

Finally illustrate by the story of the children of Israel, who were so marvelously kept by the Lord in their perilous journeys through the wilderness and into the promised land; and read in reference to this—

Gen. xxviii. 15. Deut. xxxii. 9 10 11, 12.

Ex. xxiii. 20. Joshua xx.v. 17.

Close by referring to the opening text, and ask yourself and all present whether they have committed the keeping of themselves and all their interests to the Lord's Keep, and urge immediate action.

How to Prepare Bible Readings.

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- III. A blank-book that can be ruled in columns.
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BY HANNAH WHITALL SMITH,

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Vol. 1. No. 5.

CHICAGO, JULY, 1882.

Published Monthly.

SUBJECT—REST OF SOUL.

Foundation Text: Matt. xi. 28-30.

Speak of the need there is in every human heart of *rest*, and of the fruitless struggles continually made to secure it. Show what rest is by the illustration of our resting in bed at night—the delightful relaxing of every muscle, and the letting the body go in a perfect abandonment of ease and comfort. Draw the contrast of how it would be to lie down in a bed that was broken and liable to fall, and show the impossibility of resting if there were any such doubt as to the stability of your resting place. Ask what would be thought of a man who should be found lying in bed holding himself up by ropes attached to the ceiling. And then show how Christ is a resting place that cannot fail, and how to those who have come to Him there ought to be no fear of falling, and no strain to hold one's self safe. Turn to—

Isaiah xiv. 3.

Show what it is we are to have rest from—"sorrow," "fear," "hard bondage." Draw a picture of the sorrow and fear and hard bondage caused by sin, especially by the sin of drunkenness; and show your audience the joy of a rest from it all, by reading—

Isaiah xiv. 7.

Ask them if they have known such an inward rest as this, where from very joy they would break forth into singing. Explain why they have not realized this rest, by reading—

Heb. iv. 1-3.

Show that this rest has been promised us by One whose promises never fail, and that therefore if we have not entered into it, the failure must be ours. Emphasize "entered in:" not purchased, nor worked for by ourselves, but simply provided for us by Another, and offered to us as a gift. How do we get rest in the earthly sense? Only by taking it, entering into it, and so also in the heavenly sense. Enforce this by turning to—

Heb. iii. 18, 19.

Illustrate what unbelief is by supposing a person getting into bed, but refusing to believe the bed would support him; or crossing a bridge expecting every moment that it would give way under him. Show how impossible in the very nature of things it would be to *rest* under such

circumstances, and contrast the utter rest that perfect confidence in the thing trusted cannot fail to bring. And dwell upon the entire trustworthiness of our God as being a sure foundation for our most unlimited confidence. Turn to

Isaiah xxxii. 17, 18.

Emphasize "shall dwell in a peaceable habitation and in sure dwellings," and show that it is not to be an intermittent rest, coming on the Sabbath only, or during revival meetings, or in times of peculiar favor, but is to be the dwelling place of the soul under all circumstances and at every moment. Turn to

Heb. iv. 9-11.

Speak on the expression "let us *labor* to enter into that rest," and explain it by showing what a real "labor" it is for the soul to cease from its own works, and trust its safety to another. Speak of the natural thought of the human heart that salvation is to be gained by our efforts, that our own works are to procure it; and declare the truth by turning to—

Rom. iv. 2-5

Rom. iii. 27, 28.

Refer back to the marginal reading in Heb. iv. 9, where "rest" is rendered "keeping of a Sabbath," and bring out the truth concerning the true soul-rest by referring to the type in—

Gen. ii. 3, with Ex. xx 9-11 and Ex. xxxi. 13-17.

Show the results of breaking these commandments by—

Exodus xvi. 23-30.

Num. xv. 32-36.

Speak of the spiritual deadness that always follows the spirit of legality, *i. e.*, the dependence on our own efforts to procure blessing. And illustrate further by

Jer. xvii. 21-27.

Show how this answers the natural question as to how the soul can expect blessing if it does not "bear burdens." When we "bear burdens," deadness and loss follow; when we rest in the Lord, riches and victory. Confirm this by

Isaiah lviii. 13, 14.

Psalms xxxvii. 3-7.

1 Chron. xxii. 8, 9, and 18, 19.

Show from the reference in Chronicles that

the inward temple of the heart is not prepared for the Lord's indwelling presence while the Christian's experience is only one of conflict; but that an interior rest must be realized before this inward divine union can be known.

Illustrate the subject further by

Leviticus xxv.

Show how this typifies the quietude of faith, when the full rest is reached for everything, cattle, servants, strangers and land. Notice the question of unbelief in verse 20 and the answer in verse 22, typifying a store laid up for us in Christ, who is our "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Notice verse 6, "the Sabbath of the land shall be meat for you." Show what this typifies for us by speaking of the fact that in Divine things our resting from our own works is the source of our richest blessings, our weakness is our greatest strength; and in confirmation of this turn to

2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

Show how the Lord delights to have us rest in Him just as a mother delights to have her little child rest in her love and care, and illustrate by

Lev. xxiii. 3, 7, 8, 21, 25, 28, 30, 31, 35, 36.

Call attention to the words "ye shall do no servile work therein" repeated so often. Speak of the fact that we cannot enjoy a feast while those we love are toiling, and that neither also can our God.

Make it clear to your audience, however, that you are not declaring a religion without good

works, but only one where the good works are the result of salvation, and not the cause of it. Refer in proof of this to

Rom. iii. 31.

Rom. viii. 1-4.

Rom. ix. 31-33.

2 Cor. vii. 1.

Show that there are two conditions to entering into this soul rest—the one faith, the other obedience, as expressed in the two verses—"We which have believed do enter into rest," and—"Take my yoke upon you and learn of me and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Explain why these are necessary conditions, by the illustration of the child believing unquestioningly in the mother's love and care, and yielding unquestioning submission to her control, and therefore being at perfect rest about its life. Show how the slightest doubt of its mother, or the least chafing at her control would disturb the child's rest. Contrast the rest of the oxen trusting their master and yielding to the yoke, and the unrest of the young bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, and afraid to yield to it.

Refer back to the opening verse, and urge your audience to an immediate surrender and an immediate faith, and make them understand that this is what "coming to Christ" means. Notice the words "shall find rest," and show that this soul-rest is found, not earned, nor bought. All who thus come to Christ in the way of consecration and faith, find it without any effort. They "enter into rest."

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Superintendent of the Evangelistic Department of the National W. C. T. U.,

4653 GERMANTOWN AVE., PHILADELPHIA, PA.

Vol. 1. No. 9.

JANUARY, 1893.

Published Monthly.

SUBJECT—GOD AS OUR MOTHER.

Foundation Text. Isa. 66:13.

"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem."

We all know how a mother comforts her children, and have most of us tasted the sweetness of this comforting. Notice then the "as" and "so" in this declaration, and accept the Divine Comforter and the heavenly comfort. See

Isa. 40:1, 2.

John 14:16-18.

In what other ways is God like a mother?

I. The mother runs when the child cries, and listens to the story of its sorrows and its needs, and relieves them.

Isa. 58:9 (first part).

Psalms 138:3; 77:1.

Psalms 107:6, 13, 19, 28.

John 16:24; Isa. 65:24.

How alert is the ear of the mother to the feeblest cry of the tiniest infant. We sometimes are tempted to think that God does not hear our cries. But let the mother teach us. Perhaps the child hardly knows why it cries, and can not tell what is the matter with it. But the mother does not because of this refuse to listen to its call. She only seeks all the more to discover the cause of the discomfort, and to remedy it. And just so does our God.

II. The mother carries the child in her arms, and folds it to her bosom. See

Isa. 40:11; 46:4.

Deut. 33:27; 32:11.

Do we not act sometimes as though we thought we were carrying the Lord, rather than that He was carrying us? And do we not go bowed down under the heavy burden, when we ought to be resting peacefully in His arms? A baby safe in its mother's arms, will sometimes make little clutches of fright, as though its safety depended upon the strength of its tiny grasp of the mother's neck. But the mother knows how useless these are, and that it is *her* grasp, and not the baby's, that secures its safety. And surely this is true of our God.

Isa. 63:9.

III The mother wipes away the tears of her little one. See

Isa. 25:8; Rev. 7:17.

Ps. 116:8; Ps. 61:3.

2 Kings 20:5.

Have we not sometimes seen children who

saved their cry until the mother came, because they have felt instinctively that only a mother could wipe the tears away? And shall we not let our God wipe away our tears, and give us the oil of joy for mourning, in just as literal a sense as the mothers do?

IV. The mother watches over her children in sickness, and does all she can to heal.

Ps. 41:3.

Matt. 4:23; 8:17.

V. The mother bears with the naughty child as no one else can, and finds excuses for it, and loves it freely through all.

Matt. 9:10-13.

Acts 13:38.

Rom. 5:8.

1 Tim. 1:15.

* There's a wideness in God's mercy.

Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in his justice
That is more than liberty.

There's no place where earthly sorrows
Are more felt than up in heaven;
There's no place where earthly failings
Have such kindly judgment given.

Only mothers can be just to their children, for they alone know their temptations. And only God can be just toward us, for "He knoweth our frame. He remembereth that we are dust."

VI. The mother will lay down her life for her child.

1 John 3:16.

John 10:11, 15.

Even the wild tiger mother goes forth to pour out her life for her own. And also the little Bantam hen. In all ranges of being, the beautiful law of motherhood leads to the grandeur of an utter self sacrifice. And He who conceived and created motherhood, can not Himself do less than the mothers He has made.

Shall it be all in vain? Shall we refuse to accept the deliverance He has thus wrought?

VII. The mother holds the hand of her child to lead it in the right path, and lifts it over the rough places, that it may not stumble.

Ps. 91:11, 12.

Jude 24.

Prov. 3:26.

Deut. 32:9, 10.

1 Sam. 2:9.

It is the mother who holds the child, not the child the mother. It is the mother who watches the path, and lifts the baby feet over the stones

and snares that obstruct the way. The responsibility is all hers. The child has only to abandon itself to her leading, and trust her fully. And our God "knoweth the way we take," and will "direct all our steps," if we do but commit ourselves to his care.

VIII. The mother gives her child food to satisfy its hunger.

Ps. 107: 9.
Matt. 5: 6.
Luke 11: 11-13.
Ps. 63: 5.
Ps. 145: 16.

It is not always the food the child asks for, that the wise mother gives. Sometimes such food would be fatal to its health. But it is always the food that is best for it, up to the mother's light, and ability to procure. And we may be perfectly sure that our God always gives us that which is best, whether it is what we ask for or not. Therefore we must be satisfied.

Ps. 81: 10-16.

IX. The mother takes pleasure in her child, and loves to dress it beautifully and to keep it clean.

Ps. 149: 4; 147: 11.
Jer. 32: 41.
Eze. 16: 9-14.
Ps. 45: 13, 14.
Isa. 61: 10.
Isa. 1: 18.
1 John 1: 7, 9.
Mal. 3: 2, 3; with Eph. 5: 25-27.

What joy in the world is equal to the joy of a mother in her child! And what employment is sweeter to her than to prepare dainty garments for its adorning.

Can not we, who understand the mother's

heart towards her little ones, understand also something of the heart of our God towards us? And shall we not respond with a perfect child's surrender?

X. The mother feels the hurts and sufferings of her child as though they were her own.

Zech. 2: 8.
Matt. 35: 35, 40, 42, 45.
Isa. 63: 9.
Heb. 4: 15.

XI. The mother can not forget her child, nor forsake it.

Isa. 49: 14-16.
Heb. 13: 5, 6, with Deut. 31: 6, 8.

XII. The mother stays beside her child when it is in danger, even though all others may abandon it.

John 10: 11-13.

Have we ever thought of Christ as though He were an hireling, leaving us in the time of danger? Are we not often more ready even to trust "hirelings" than we are to trust Christ?

XIII. If the child is lost, the mother leaves all else to find it, and never gives up until it is found.

Luke 15: 3-10.
Matt. 18: 11-14.
Ezek. 34: 11, 12.

What, then, is the summing up of the whole matter? Simply this: If God is only as good as the mothers He has made, where can there be any room left for a thought of care or of fear? And if He is as much truer to the ideal of motherhood than an earthly mother can be, as His infiniteness is above hers, then what oceans and continents of bliss are ours for the taking!

Shall we take it now?

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4653 GERMANTOWN AVE., PHILADELPHIA, PA.

Vol. 1, No. 11.

MARCH, 1883.

Published Monthly.

SUBJECT—ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

Foundation Text.—Heb. 10: 22.

By assurance of faith is meant a clear and definite knowledge of the forgiveness of sins, of reconciliation with God, and of our relationship with him as our Father. This assurance is necessary for all right living. It ought to be the first step in the Christian life. In the absence of this assurance lies the secret of much of the failure of Christians. They present the strange anomaly of children who doubt their parentage, of heirs who are afraid to take possession of their inheritance, of a bride who is not sure she has been really married. What could we expect from such doubts in earthly relationships but indifference, fear, anxiety, unkindness, sorrow and rebellion? And is not this what we find too often in the Christian's heart?

Can we suppose for a moment that this was God's plan? Does the Bible say it was? No, a thousand times, no!

The Old Testament never contemplated the idea of Israelites who did not know whether they were Israelites or not. Every law given to them or promise made was founded on the previously acknowledged and understood fact, that they did in very truth belong to the family of Israel, and were indeed the people of God. See

Num. 1: 18.

Before they could fight, they had to "declare their pedigree." Also

Ezra 2: 62, with Num. 3: 10.

Before they could exercise the office of priest they had to "find their register" and "reckon their genealogy." And we can neither fight our enemies, nor enjoy communion with God, until we also can "declare our pedigree" and "reckon our genealogy," that we are the children of God and belong to His family.

Our Lord himself always speaks to His disciples in terms of absolute certainty as to His relation to them and their relation to Him.

Luke 10: 20; 12: 32.

John 14: 1-3; 15: 19; 17: 6, 16, 22, 23.

John 20: 17.

Again, the Epistles are all addressed to people of whom it was taken for granted that they knew their standing as the reconciled and forgiven children of God.

Rom. 1: 7; 1 Cor. 1: 2; 2 Cor. 1: 1, 2.

Gal. 1: 2; Eph. 1: 1, 2; Phil. 1: 1-6.

Col. 1: 1-6; 1 Thess. 1: 1-4, etc., etc.

Again, if we glance through the Epistles we shall find that the writers continually speak of themselves and of those to whom they write, as persons who know they are forgiven, and who recognize their position as children of God, and as heirs of eternal life.

Rom. 5: 1, 2; 6: 14, 20, 22; Rom. 5: 10.

Gal. 4: 3-7; Eph. 1: 3, 4, 6; Eph. 4: 32.

Notice "hath blessed," "hath chosen," "hath made us accepted." Also

Eph. 1: 7, 11, 13; 2: 1; Col. 2: 13.

1 John 2: 12, 13, 14; 3: 1, 2; 1 Pet. 2: 9.

1 Pet. 1: 3-5, 18, 19; Eph. 2: 18-22.

Notice the present tense of possession in all of these passages—"are," "have," "hath," etc.

Again, all the exhortations to holiness are based on this assured knowledge of our reconciliation with God.

2 Cor. 7: 1; 1 John 3: 8.

Eph. 4: 30-32; Gal. 3: 1-5.

God wants the service of a son, not of a servant only. A servant works for wages, a son from love. The servant works to gain something; the son because all has been given him. How can we render the son's service unless we know that we are sons?

Eph. 5: 1, 2, 8; Heb. 12: 5.

1 Pet. 1: 13-16; Gal. 4: 1-7.

How can this assurance of faith be arrived at? We answer that it comes simply by believing God. He says certain things about Himself and about us, faith believes them, and assurance follows. Notice that in the Scriptures "believing" and "having" are always joined together. "He that believeth, hath," is the continual declaration!

John 5: 24; 3: 16, 18, 36.

John 6: 35, 40; 11: 25, 26.

John 20: 31; 1: 12.

Our feelings are no guide whatever here. In matters of fact we never take our feelings as guides, but we always first find out the facts, and then our feelings will depend upon these. God's

order, and the order of good common sense as well, is always I. Fact, II. Faith, III. Feeling. But in matters of religion man reverses this order, and says I. Feeling, II. Faith, III. Fact.

But who would enter a railroad depot and take by chance the first car at hand, and then sit down and try to "feel" whether it was the right car? The only way to settle this question would be to ask some one who knows. In order for assurance of faith, then, as to our relations with the Lord, we must hear and believe what He says about it, not what we feel.

1 John 5: 9-11.

We receive the "witness of men" continually without a question or doubt; shall we be less ready to receive the "witness of God"? In verse 10 notice that it is not he that hath the witness in himself shall believe, but he that believeth shall have the witness in himself. First, the fact, second, the faith, third, the feeling.

What are we to believe then?

Answer—John 6: 28, 29.

First.—What God says concerning Christ.

Matt. 1: 21; John 1: 29; 1 John 2: 2.

2 Cor. 5: 18-21; Eph. 5: 2.

1 John 4: 9, 10, 14; 1 Pet. 2: 24.

Isa. 53: 5, 6, 11; Rom. 5: 6-10.

Acts 5: 31; Luke 19: 10; Matt. 18: 11.

Gal. 1: 4; 4: 4, 5; Rom. 5: 18, 19.

Second.—What he says concerning us.

Rom. 4: 24, 25; Acts 13: 38, 39.

Acts 10: 43; John 6: 40.

Rom. 10: 9, 10; 12: 44-46.

1 Cor. 1: 21; Rom. 3: 21, 22.

In order for the assurance of faith we must believe both of these testimonies—the testimony concerning Christ, and the testimony concerning ourselves. It is not really believing a person if we only believe half he says; and yet many who would consider it the worst of sins to disbelieve God's testimony concerning Christ, consider it no sin at all, but in fact rather virtuous humility, to doubt His testimony concerning themselves. They dare not doubt that Jesus is the Christ, but find no difficulty in doubting whether they are themselves "born of God." And yet God joins the two inseparably together.

1 John 5: 1; 4: 15; John 6: 47.

What should we think of a child who should doubt whether she was really the mother's own child; who should say "Well, I have a trembling hope I am, but that is all"? Would not such expressions be equivalent to casting a doubt on the mother's word? And do not our doubts of God "make Him a liar"?

1 John 5: 1.

Did not Christ teach us to call God "our Father," and would He have done this if it were not true? Can God be our Father without our being His children?

Matt. 6: 9 with 1 John. 3: 1, 2.

In conclusion, read

1 John 5: 13.

And let us each one make the personal application; and join for ourselves in the triumphant declaration of the apostle in

Rom. 8: 38, 39.

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BIBLE READING LEAFLET.

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SUBJECT—THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD.

Foundation Texts.—Psalm 23: 1, with John 10: 11.

Who is it that is your Shepherd? The Lord! What a wonderful announcement! The Lord God of heaven and earth, the almighty Creator of all things, He who holds the universe in His hand as though it were a very little thing,—HE is your Shepherd, and has charged Himself with the care and keeping of you, as a shepherd is charged with the care and keeping of his sheep. If your hearts could really take in this thought, you would never have a fear or a care again: for with such a Shepherd, how could it be possible for you ever to want any good thing?

Notice some passages where he is called the Shepherd,—

John 10: 14; Heb. 13: 20; 1 Pet. 5: 4,
Ezek. 34: 23.

Also some passages where we are called sheep,—

Ps. 95: 7; Ezek. 34: 31.
Ps. 100: 3; Mark 6: 34.
John 21: 16; Matt. 10: 16.

In calling us thus His sheep, and Himself our Shepherd, the Lord means to teach us that He assumes all the responsibilities that belong to the Shepherd's position, and that He leaves to us only the responsibilities that belong to the sheep.

He declares that He is a "good Shepherd," and He holds up for condemnation the shepherds who are not good.

Zech. 11: 17; with John 10: 12, 13.
Ezek. 34: 2-10.

A great many Christians look upon the Lord Jesus as though He fled when trouble came, and did not care for the sheep: as though in the dark and gloomy hours, when storms rage, or enemies seek to devour us, He would leave us alone, and would stay with us only in the sunshiny and peaceful days. We act as though we were the shepherds and the Lord was the sheep, and as though, instead of His keeping us, we had to keep Him, and instead of His watching us and running after us, and finding us when we were lost, we had to run after Him and find Him, and watch Him.

What are the responsibilities of a shepherd? He must keep his flock in safety from all dangers.

Jer. 31: 10; John 10: 27, 28.
Ezek. 34: 28; John 6: 39.

He must feed them with suitable food, and supply all their needs.

Ps. 78: 72; Ezek. 34: 14, 15, 23.
Isa. 40: 11; Phil. 4: 19.

He must lead and guide them day by day.

Ps. 80: 1; Ps. 78: 52, 53.
Ps. 77: 20.

If any of his flock are lost, he must seek them until he finds them and brings them home.

Matt. 18: 11-14; Ezek. 34: 6, 11, 12, 16, with
Matt. 12: 11, 12, and Luke 15: 4, 6.
Jer. 50: 6 17-19, with 1 Peter 2: 25, and
Ps. 119: 176; Micah 2: 12.

He must lay down his life to save his sheep.

John 10: 11, 15.

1 John 3: 16; John 15: 13; Rom. 5: 8; Isa.
53: 4-6;

We all understand this responsibility of the shepherd in the case of earthly sheep; but the moment we transfer the figure to ourselves and the Lord, we at once shift all the responsibility off from our Shepherd's shoulders and lay it upon our own; and thus demand of the poor human sheep, the wisdom, and care, and power to provide, that can only belong to the divine Shepherd, and be met by Him.

I freely confess there is a difference between sheep and ourselves, in this, that *they* have neither the intelligence nor the power to withdraw themselves from the care of their shepherd, while we have. We cannot imagine one of them saying, "Oh yes, we have a good shepherd who wants to care for us, but then, we do not feel worthy of his care, and we are afraid to trust him. He has, it is true, provided us with green pastures, and a safe and comfortable fold. But we do not deserve such care, and therefore we have held back and have refused to feed in the pastures or to lie down in the fold. We felt it would be presumption, and so we have been trying to do the best we could for ourselves. It is true we have had a very hard time of it, and are in a sad and forlorn condition: but then we are such poor unworthy creatures, that we must expect this and try to be resigned to it."

Silly as sheep are, we know well no sheep could be so silly as to talk in this way. And here comes in the difference. *We* are so much wiser than sheep in our own estimation, that we think the sort of trust sheep exercise will not do for us, and in our superior intelligence we presume to take matters into our own hands, and so shut ourselves out from the Shepherd's care.

What, then, must the sheep do?

They must give themselves up to the Shepherd's care, and then have only to trust and to follow.

John 10: 4, 5, 27; 12: 26.

Matt. 16: 24, with Eph. 5: 1.

The part of the sheep is very simple. It is only to trust and to follow. The shepherd does all the rest. He leads the sheep by a right way. He chooses their paths for them, and sees that those paths are paths where the sheep can walk in safety. When he putteth forth his sheep, he goeth before them. The sheep have none of the planning to do, none of the decisions to make, none of the forethought or wisdom to exercise; they have absolutely nothing to do but to trust and to follow. And surely it can never be difficult to trust such a Shepherd as ours is, for with the Lord for our Shepherd we cannot conceive of any lack in the care He will take of us, nor the provision He will make. Neither can it be any hardship to follow Him whithersoever He leads, for he always leads His sheep into green pastures and beside still waters, for all His pastures are green, and all His waters are still.

Ps. 23: 2, 3; with Ps. 81: 13-16.

Ezek. 34: 25.

The Shepherd knows what pastures are best for His sheep, and they must not question nor doubt, but trustingly follow Him. Perhaps He sees that the best pastures for some of us are to be found in the midst of opposition or of earthly trials. If He leads you there, you may be sure they are green for you, and you will grow and be made strong by feeding there. Perhaps He sees that the best waters for you to walk beside, will be raging waves of trouble and sorrow. If this should be the case, He will make them still

waters for you, and you must go and lie down beside them, and let them have all their blessed influences upon you.

The sheep must have no fears when the Shepherd is by.

Ps. 23: 4, with Luke 12: 32.

Ezek. 34: 28; 1 John 4: 18.

And now a few words as to how you may get the Lord to be your Shepherd. Dear friend, He is your Shepherd, and it only needs for you to recognize this fact and yield yourselves up to His care. Go back to your nursery psalm—the one you used to repeat at your mother's knee, and repeat it over again with the old childish faith. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." Say it over with the emphasis on a different word each time.

The Lord is my Shepherd.

The Lord is my Shepherd.

The Lord is my Shepherd.

The Lord is my Shepherd.

But we must not forget that while sheep trust unconsciously and by instinct, we shall need to trust intelligently and of purpose; for our instincts, alas, are all against trusting. We shall have to make an effort to trust. We shall have to choose to do it. And we can do this, however weak and ignorant we may be. We may not understand all it means to be a sheep of such a Shepherd. But He knows. And if our faith will but claim Him in this blessed and wondrous relationship, He will care for us according to His love, and His wisdom, and His power, and not according to our poor comprehension of it.

And then finally we can make the language of the Psalmist our own.

Ps. 79: 13

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