

## **"The Lord's Flock"**

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"May brings flocks of little lambs, Skipping by their fleecy dams." [a female animal parent]

Is it not a beautiful sight, this "footprint of the Lord." We learned last week that "the pastures are clothed with flocks" because He "visiteth the earth and watereth it." Think of this now as you see the flocks of sheep, with the dear, happy little lambkins skipping gaily about, so full of joyous new life.

And this beautiful sight is as old as the world, for in the fourth chapter of Genesis we learn that Abel, the son of Adam and Eve, was "keeper" or "feeder of sheep;" and we read also about the "firstlings" or lambs "of his flock."

Some of the noblest men of whom we read in the Bible, those whom God specially used in His work, were shepherds, keepers and feeders of sheep.

For forty years "Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law;" and it was "as he led the flock to the back side of the desert" that "the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush."

Moses' work in caring for the flock of sheep had given him just the lessons that he needed to teach him to do the work that was now given to him, to lead the Lord's great flock, His people Israel, through the desert to the promised land. God "led His people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron."

No doubt you will think too of the shepherd boy, David, who kept his father's sheep so bravely and faithfully. He too was being prepared to lead and feed the Lord's flock; for in Psalm 78 we are told that,

"He chose David also His servant,  
And took him from the sheepfolds;  
From following the ewes He brought him,  
To feed Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance."

Through his shepherd life God taught David many precious lessons of His own love and care for His people; for "we are the sheep of His pasture." David saw how, for the sheep, everything depended upon the shepherd, their food, their comfort, and their safety. And he joyfully sang:—

"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.  
He leadeth me beside the still waters."

A gentleman once asked a shepherd, "When do your sheep lie down?" And the man told him, when they have eaten enough and are quite comfortable, when there is nothing to make them afraid. David knew this, and so you see how much he means when he says that the Lord makes His sheep to "lie down." We may be sure that they will be well fed, and that they will have nothing to fear, because they are so safe in His keeping.

Sometimes David had to lead his flock through dangerous places, where there were wild beasts ready to spring upon them, but the sheep did not need to worry, because their shepherd was keeping them. David afterwards said, "When there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after him and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him."

Then as he thought of the tender watchfulness and great might of his own Shepherd, he sang:—

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the  
shadow of death  
I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

Though Satan, the great enemy of the Lord's flock, "goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," His sheep and lambs need fear no evil, for Satan cannot touch them while their Shepherd is near. He knows that he has no power over them so he tries to draw them away from Jesus, so that he can seize and destroy them.

But a good shepherd keeps watch to see that his sheep do not stray. If one of David's little lambs strayed away from the flock, he went anxiously after it, and brought it back to a place of safety, and led it gently in the right way with the others. This was what taught him to sing:—

"He restoreth my soul:  
He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for  
His name's sake."

He would have felt it to be a disgrace to him as a shepherd to lose one of his flock; for a true shepherd is a keeper of sheep. So he knew that "for His name's sake," for the sake of His own good name, His reputation as a shepherd, the Lord would "restore his soul," and guide him in the right way.

Read the words of Jesus in the tenth chapter of John, verse 11: "I am the Good Shepherd, the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." David risked his life for his sheep, but Jesus gave His, for this was the only way that He could keep them safely, the only way that He could destroy the "roaring lion" who was seeking to kill all His sheep and lambs.

He says: "I lay down My life for the sheep;" but He says also: "I lay down My life that I might take it again." When He took up again the life that He had laid down for His sheep, He showed that He had conquered all the enemies of His flock, so that we need "fear no evil."

Nothing can hurt the Lord's flock without first taking His life, and this is not possible, for He is "alive for evermore." And so long as He lives, His flock are quite safe. So He says, "My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."

Remember that you, dear little ones, are the lambs of the Good Shepherd's flock, and He says of you, "He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom." What a "safe and happy shelter"!

"Gracious Saviour, tender Shepherd,  
Little ones are dear to Thee;  
Gathered in Thine arms and carried  
In Thy bosom may we be;  
Sweetly, fondly, safely tended,  
From all want and danger free.

"Tender Shepherd, never leave us  
From Thy fold to go astray;  
By Thy look of love directed,  
May we walk the narrow way;  
Thus direct us, and protect us,  
Lest we fall an easy prey."