

“All Like Sheep Have Gone Astray”

[Isaiah 53:6]

Isaiah 53:6 [NIV] *“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”*

How can we apply this scriptural statement to our own lives?

Romans 1:20 [NIV] *“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”*

This is the key that unlocks the very mind of God to finite human beings.

Romans 1:20 [Living Bible] *“Since earliest times men have seen the earth and sky and all God made and have known of His existence and great eternal power. So they will have no excuse, when they stand before God at judgement day.”*

God has given us this wonderful physical creation to help us understand His great wisdom and personality.

To understand what God is saying to us, about ourselves, this verse in Isaiah is telling us to look at sheep and their characteristics.

Quotation from a book on sheep management:-

“Sheep are notorious creatures of habit. [Doesn’t that sound familiar about most human beings?] If left to themselves they follow the same trails until these same trails have become deep ruts. Sheep will graze the same hill sides until they are turned into desert wastes. Sheep will pollute their own ground until it is corrupt with disease and parasites. Many of the world’s finest sheep ranges have been ruined beyond repair by over grazing, and poor management of indifferent or ignorant sheep owners.”

Proverbs 14:12 [NIV] *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”*

This is true of all who depend on their own wisdom.

Proverbs 16:25 [NIV] *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”*

God had this statement recorded twice to show how important it is.

Jesus Christ introduces Himself in the Christian Bible as the Good Shepherd of human beings.

John 10:11-16 [NIV] *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.”*

What difference can a good shepherd make to the lives and value of sheep.

Quotation from book on sheep management [continued]:-

“But in bold contrast sheep can be the most beneficial of all livestock if properly managed by a good shepherd. Their manure is the best balanced of any produced by domestic stock, the greatest in value for the productivity of the soil.

“When scattered effectively by good management over the pastures it proves of enormous benefit to the soil. The sheep’s habit of seeking the higher ground on which to rest insures the fertility of the rich lower pastures is re-deposited on the less productive higher ground. No other livestock will consume as wide a range of herbage. Sheep will eat all types of weed and other plants which might invade and take over a field.

“In a few years a flock of sheep, well managed, will clean up and restore a piece of ravaged land as no other creature can do.

“In ancient literature, sheep were referred to as ‘Those of golden hooves’ simply because they were regarded and esteemed so highly for their beneficial effect on the land.”

Romans 7:18-25 [NIV] *“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. **For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing.** Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. **What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!** So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.”*

Paul knew, as do all true Christians, that by himself, without the management of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, he could do nothing of any lasting value.

John 15:5 [NIV] *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; **apart from me you can do nothing.**”*

The management of the Good Shepherd in our lives is essential for any lasting success.

How do we test to see if we are well or poorly managed sheep?

Psalms 23:6 [NIV] *“Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life...”*

Do we leave behind us a trail of destruction or benefits for other people to enjoy?

Do we leave behind:-

Peace in other’s lives or turmoil?

Forgiveness and mercy or bitterness?

Contentment and harmony or conflict?

Joy or frustration?

Love or resentment and anger?

A sheep that is subject to the personal management of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, will live a life that brings benefits to all they meet with.

Matthew 5:13 [NIV] *“**You are the salt of the earth.** But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.”*

Our lives should savour the community in which we live.

Matthew 5:14-16 [NIV] *“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*

Our good deeds, that benefit the lives of other people, should be a light to others to follow our example.

Ephesians 2:8-10 [NIV] *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith., and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no-one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

Our salvation from eternal death is by the grace of the Good Shepherd Jesus Christ, so that our lives may be moulded by God to fulfil the good works that God has prepared for us to do, before we even existed.

Matthew 25:21 [NIV] *“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’“*

If we fail to be well managed sheep of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, will we fail to hear Him direct these words towards us on our judgement day?

Matthew 25:26-30 [NIV] *“His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. “Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”“*

Or as poorly managed sheep will these be the last words we ever hear from the lips of the Good Shepherd before we enter into oblivion?

The choice is ours.

Let us learn from the example given to us by the lives of sheep, and a Good Shepherd.