

The Good Shepherd

[Part 4]

Psalms 23:5 [NIV] “... *You anoint my head with oil ...*”

Sheep are especially troubled by the nose fly, these little flies buzz about the sheep's head, attempting to deposit their eggs on the damp mucus membranes of the sheep's nose. If they are successful, the eggs will hatch in a few days to form slender, worm-like larvae. These larvae worm their way up the nasal passages into the sheep's head. There they burrow into the flesh and set up an intense irritation and inflammation. In an attempt to find relief the sheep will beat their heads against trees, rocks, or rub them in the soil. In the advance stages of this infestation the sheep will become blind.

The only way to avoid this infestation was the anointing of their heads with olive oil, sulphur and spices.

Once the oil mixture is applied the sheep is safe from this infestation, but this anointing has to be on a regular basis throughout the summer.

In our spiritual Christian life the anointing of oil is symbolic of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and setting a person apart for a special task or position. [1 Samuel 16:1 [NIV]; Acts 10:38 [NIV]; 1 John 2:20, 27 [NIV]]

2 Corinthians 4:16 [NIV] “*Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.*”

This is referring to the daily work of the Holy Spirit within us, renewing our minds. [Romans 12:2]

Luke 11:13 [NIV] “*If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*”

This requesting for the active presence of the Holy Spirit should be part of our daily prayers.

The Holy Spirit is an essential part of every aspect of our Christian life.

John 16:7-8 [NIV] “*But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:*”

It is the Holy Spirit that convicts us of sin and thus brings us to a position of repentance.

It is the Holy Spirit that reminds us that our own righteousness is not acceptable to God the Father, [Isaiah 4:6] only the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ that is ours only through faith is what God the Father has done for us through His Son Jesus Christ. [Romans 4:23-24]

It is the Holy Spirit which reminds us that we will all face Jesus Christ on our day of judgement to give account of how we have used the life we have been given on loan by the Creator God. [2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Peter 4:17; Ecclesiastes 12:14]

The Holy Spirit will guide our minds to reveal to us the reason why we have life and what our future can be. [Romans 16:13]

The Holy Spirit will, through our intimate relationship with Him, develop within us eternal fruits that reflect the very character of the Creator God. [Galatians 5:22-25]

The Holy Spirit will bring to remembrance all the words of Jesus Christ that we have read and studied. [John 14:26; Luke 12:11-12]

We must allow the Holy Spirit to flow through us and prompt acts of love for other human beings. [John 7:38-39]

The Holy Spirit will assist us in our prayers. [Romans 8:26]

Always remember certain conditions that are related to our receiving and being empowered by the Holy Spirit.

- a) Given only to those who obey the Creator God. [Acts 5:32]
- b) We have to ask God for the active presence of the Holy Spirit. [Luke 11:13]
- c) We must never put out the fire of enthusiasm that the Holy Spirit generates in us to fulfil the work that God has given to us personally to do for Him. [1 Thessalonians 5:19]
- d) We must never grieve the Holy Spirit by allowing ungodly attitudes to dwell in our mind and life. [Ephesians 4:30-31]
- e) Only those who are led by the Holy Spirit are created children of God, that is Christians. [Romans 8:12-14; Galatians 5:25; Romans 8:8-9]
- f) It is the Holy Spirit who will raise us from the dead if He is working within our human spirit. [Romans 8:11]

This is how it is so important for our eternal future that we allow the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, work in and through our lives now on a day-to-day basis.

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

This is **not** referring to the goodness and love that we receive from our Creator God, **but the trail of goodness and love our living a Christian life will leave in the lives of other human beings.**

Matthew 5:13-16 [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. “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.”*

Salt, because our life will savour the community in which we live.

Light, because as we reflect the life of Jesus Christ in our day-to-day actions and responses to our personal contact with other human beings.

This is **not** something we can do of our own strength or ability.

John 15:5-8 [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. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”*

This is the only way we can fulfil the very purpose of our life and being called at this time to be a Christian.

John 5:30 [NIV] *“By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”*

Even Jesus Christ, in His human form as the Son of Man, could do nothing of His own strength. [Hebrews 9:14]

Romans 7:18-19; 24-25 [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.” ... “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.”*

The apostle Paul knew that he did not have the power or ability within himself to do anything of real value, only through the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit working in and through him.

Sheep can, left to themselves, be the most destructive of livestock. Very quickly they can ravage and ruin pasture almost beyond remedy.

In bold contrast, sheep well managed can be most beneficial to the land.

Sheep’s manure, scattered effectively by them over pastures, proves to be of enormous benefit to the soil.

The sheep’s habit of seeking the highest ground to rest, ensures that the fertility from the rich lowlands is re-deposited on less productive higher ground. No other livestock will consume as wide a range of herbage, eating all sorts of weeds and plants which may otherwise invade and take over good pasture. **Well managed sheep are highly regarded and esteemed for their beneficial effect on the land.**

Do you and I leave behind us a trail of destruction or benefits?

Do we leave behind –

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|--------------------------------|--------|---------------------------|
| Peace in our and others’ lives | | or turmoil? |
| Forgiveness of others | | or bitterness? |
| Contentment in others’ lives | | or conflict? |
| Joy and happiness | | or frustration? |
| Love and compassion | | or spitefulness and hate? |

Isaiah 52:7 [NIV] *“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!”*

The Hebrew word translated “*feet*” by implication means the journey that our feet make in our life.

Does the trail we leave behind us describe that of a sheep who is managed by the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, by the active indwelling of His Spirit, the Holy Spirit?

Psalms 23:6 [NIV] *“... and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”*

The Hebrew word translated “*house*” is “*bayith*”, which encompasses the people who live in that house and their extended family.

This world is full of people who have never experienced the management of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Saviour and High Priest.

Mark 6:34 [NIV] *“When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.”*

Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, recognised this lack of a shepherd and His compassionate response was to teach them many things.

Matthew 9:36-38 [NIV] *“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”*

The responsibility for teaching the sheep without a shepherd was passed onto the disciples of Jesus Christ, and continues to be the task we have as Christians in every generation. [1 Peter 3:15-16]

All the problems we see in this world today are the result of people being managed by the bad shepherd [Satan – Revelation 12:9; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19] or no shepherd at all.

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.”*

Jesus Christ is the only Good Shepherd who out of compassion and love for all humanity was willing to lay down His life for all sheep, not just Christians but those who are as yet not part of His flock. [John 3:16-17]

John 10:7-10 [NIV] *“Therefore Jesus said again, “I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*

It is only those who accept Jesus Christ as their Shepherd of their lives who will have life to the full, eternal life.

Who is shepherding your life?