The Pilgrim's Quest

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and ***confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims*** *on the earth. For they that say such things* ***declare plainly that they seek a country.***" (Heb. 11:13,14)

Pilgrim's Quest Bible Church
Pastor Garry E. Huff

"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

Psalm 23
vs. 3

What a new life sheep find when the LORD, the great and good Shepherd, is leading them! What manifold blessings the Shepherd provides in His ever continual thoughtfulness towards His sheep! Time and time again are the fresh green pastures to feed upon, to rest within, to find tranquil peace throughout in the secure safekeeping of the ever watchfulness of the Shepherd. Time and time again His sheep are thoroughly refreshed in the drinking and cleansing of living still waters. What abundance has been thoughtfully, daily provided for every need of the sheep! How far removed are the dry, desolate, desert mountains of the past! The dangerous ravines, the ever present predators, the hazardous cliffs, all seem to fade as the sheep are in a new realm of living.

A drastic change has made the sheep almost unrecognizable. His flesh is fatter. His wool is cleaner. He is now strong and full of vigor. That life is past that brought starvation, malnutrition, and fear. He is no longer scrawny, puny, dirty, and smelly. He is a different creature - a new creation. What a miraculous transformation that was wrought by the Shepherd!

But this change was not because the Shepherd freed the sheep out of some "jam" or some "desperate" circumstance. The work of

the good Shepherd is to rescue the sheep from the ***life*** of death and restore his soul. Thus, the Shepherd separates the sheep from that past life to a new life with a new path to follow. The work is complete, full, and entire. What more could He have done that He did not do? What greater work to rescue the sheep by laying down His life could He have wrought that would have been greater? ***No not one, not even one!***

Yes, truly the life of the sheep has been restored. The breath of life has been breathed into him and now he is a living soul. His feet are upon a straight path called the path of righteousness. He is living a life new and fresh. His thinking is different! His speech is different! His manner of life is right, true, and blessed! What a blessing it is now to follow the Shepherd each and every day!

The Psalmist is careful to always direct attention to the Shepherd. By the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the writer focuses upon the Shepherd who caused these changes. It is not the green grass or the still waters that has brought about the changes, but only the Shepherd. "***He*** restoreth my soul." "***He*** leadeth me in paths of righteousness for ***his*** name sake." The "pastures" and the "waters" are nothing without the Shepherd. The "blessings" mean nothing without the "Blesser!" It is here that the sheep must thoroughly be acquainted with the Shepherd who is the "Blesser" amidst the many copious "blessings." They must know the Shepherd and know him extremely well. In the New Testament, the Gospel of John, the Lord Jesus emphatically states, "I am the good shepherd." His sheep ***know his voice***, and another *(another different voice - a stranger)* will they not follow.

Some years ago I had the privilege of watching a shepherd with his sheep in the city of Jerusalem. One morning from the view of my balcony, I observed first hand a shepherd with about fifteen sheep navigate the busy highway with its morning traffic. From small scattered patches of grass the sheep kept pace, step by step with their shepherd until they reached the curb. It was evident that the shepherd was going to attempt to cross the street with his flock. Here were fifteen independent sheep with their own instinctive wills and choices faced with the noises of a busy highway. The many sounds of tooting horns, roar of passing motor vehicles, pedestrians on the sidewalk, all were distracting sounds and voices to fill the ears of the sheep. The shepherd stood in the lead with only a staff in his hand, spoke to the sheep and began the

precarious crossing of the highway. I was amazed that the sheep bunched up near the shepherd and followed him safely to the other side. There were no stragglers, wanderers, or wayward sheep in this flock. They heard the voice of the shepherd. They obeyed his command. They stayed near to his side. They followed him without incident. They had come to trust the shepherd, to follow him, and to obey his voice. When he spoke, they obeyed. Where he led, they followed. On that day, the green grass and drinking fountains were not important. The shepherd alone was all important! And, they fully knew their shepherd!

What would we have done if we stood on that curb of a busy street as a member of that flock? Would we allow all the sounds, noises, and voices drown out the voice of the shepherd? Would we have looked back at the green patches of grass and desired the "blessings" more than the provider of the "blessings?" Would we boldly bolt across the street in the pride of our own new found strength and vigor without the shepherd? Or perhaps we would turn aside and wander off away from the shepherd no longer trusting his judgment? If we truly know the "Blesser," He who has restored us to life, He who has led us to paths of righteousness, we will know how to hear Him, trust Him, obey Him, and follow Him all the days of our life. We can only settle this firmly in our minds and heart if we fully know and are personally acquainted with the Shepherd! It is at the curb of the crossing of life that will prove whether we follow the Shepherd for His "blessings" or do we follow Him because He is the "Blesser."

The resolve to faithfully follow the Shepherd enables the sheep to be led without questions of heart, fear, or doubt. It takes the yielding of the will and the choice of obedience to the Shepherd that proves a safe resolve "across the busy street." This also will enable the sheep to face what is ahead as the Shepherd leads His flock to His eternal home!

May we learn to follow the Shepherd not because He gives us multiplied ***blessings***, but because He alone is the ***Giver*** of blessings.

"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

Christ Himself

Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord;
Once it was the feeling, now it is His Word;
Once His gifts I wanted, now the Giver own;
Once I sought for healing, now Himself alone.

Once 't was painful trying, now 't is perfect trust;
Once a half-salvation, now the uttermost;
Once 't was ceaseless holding, now he holds me fast;
Once 't was constant drifting, now my anchor's cast.

Once 't was busy planning, now 't is trustful prayer;
Once 't was anxious caring, now He has the care;
Once 't was what I wanted, now what Jesus says;
Once 't was constant asking, now 't is ceaseless praise.

Once it was my working, His it hence shall be;
Once I tried to use Him, now He uses me;
Once the power I wanted, now the Mighty One;
Once to self I labored, now for Him alone.

A.B. Simpson

Verses for Thought of Heart:

"To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." (John 10:3-5)

"Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." (John 6:67-68)