

## DAILY BIBLE READINGS - Week of April , 2018

### THEME: "Jesus: Our Caring Shepherd" THE CHIEF SHEPHERD

**Sunday** .....**Read John 10:11-18**

*" I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."* One of the metaphors that describe our relationship with our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, is that He is our Shepherd, and we are sheep in His flock. This was of particular significance in His day when shepherding was more commonly known. Obviously, God held shepherds in high esteem, and He did whether or not the culture did the same. I say that because God entrusted shepherds with the great responsibility of announcing His Son's birth, because He sent the angel first to tell the shepherds that the Savior of the world was born that day in Bethlehem. We today, as His sheep, are given that same responsibility in our world. The Psalmist detailed this great privilege of having Jesus as our shepherd in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm: *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me...He leads me...He restores me...I will fear no evil."* How true it is that we, with the Lord Jesus as our Shepherd in our walk through life on God's earth, need not fear because He is near. In the gospel account in Luke 16:3-7, we are assured that if we wander away and get lost, He will seek us out and bring us back. As undershepherds in the church, leaders are compelled to provide the same care for the flock assigned to them by the Holy Spirit. Their charge is given in I Peter 3:2-4: *"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly...neither as being lords over the God's heritage, but being examples to the flock, and when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away."* What a joy to know that when Jesus said what He did in John 10:14, He was speaking of us: *"I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep, and am known of mine."* How privileged!

#### OUR PROVIDER

**Monday** .....**Read Philippians 4:13-19**

*"My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus."* A shepherd takes care of the needs of His sheep. Remember the observation of the psalmist because of his Shepherd: *"I shall not want."* Now wayward sheep will have to get back with flock to enjoy this guarantee, but the need has been provided. Jesus did make that point of our needs being met in this conditional promise in Matthew 6:33: *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you."* God's righteousness must be of my highest priority for me to be the beneficiary of that promise. If a child of God places worldly things above their craving for God and His righteousness, he may lose out in this regard. Our Chief Shepherd has also promised to provide wisdom. We read this in James 1:5: *"If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth liberally and upraideth not."* Do notice that we must ask, and then after asking, we must listen. And how do we listen: God has shared His wisdom in the Holy Scriptures, so seeking His truth and His way requires us to be in His Word seeking His wisdom. He also has given us His Spirit to guide us. Yes, the Holy Spirit can and does control the surrounding circumstances to fit God's will for our lives. Our Chief Shepherd provides comfort. He said this in Matthew 11:30: *"Come unto me, all ye that labor, and I will give you rest."* Praise God for His provision!

#### COMPANIONSHIP

**Tuesday** .....**Read I Samuel 18:1-4**

*"The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David."* God did not intend for people to go at it alone. One of the first observations God made after His creation of man was this in Genesis 1:18: *"It is not good that man be alone."* He then created a woman so Adam could have a wife. All babies come into this world with two parents. God intends that the child be brought up in a loving home because it is a need for any person: to have an atmosphere of love. Oh, that all would follow God's ways. In our Bible reading, we see the need for friends, and God provided David with a special friend who turned out to have a major role in David's fulfilling God's plan for his life. We all can testify how vital friends have been in our lives. So it is quite natural for people to develop close relationships outside the home. I think it worthy of note that Jesus chose to call His followers friends in John 15:14: *"I have called you friends."* It is also imperative for God's people to show themselves friendly to unbelievers with the hope

that those friends will become followers and friends with Jesus by the witness of believers. God loves all people in the world and wants them in the family of God. Being friendly may be the means God uses to bring them in.

### OUR PATH MAKER

**Wednesday.....Read Psalm 37:23-31**

*"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delighteth in his way."* The way I understand Scripture is that God has a plan for all, at least for those He knows will become His followers. I see that in Jeremiah 1:5: *"Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee, and before thou camest out of the womb I sanctified thee, and ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."* Since we are told in II Timothy that *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for our instruction,"* I conclude that God made us to fill a role that He has planned. The question is whether we will seek to follow His will. How do we know His will so we can do that for which He molded us in our mother's womb? Well, it begins with the prayer the psalmist used in Psalm 119:133: *"Order my steps in thy word, let not any iniquity have dominion over me."* The first step on God's plan for any life is to get on to the path that leads to life! Jesus spoke of that in Matthew 7:13-14: *"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it."* Obviously then, more people reject Christ than follow Christ: sad! It is an individual decision as the prophet said in Joshua 24:15: *"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."* I think refusing to follow Christ is the most foolish thing anyone can do, but a person must choose.

### SPIRIT'S GUIDANCE

**Thursday .....Read John 16:7-13**

*"He will guide you into all truth."* Jesus said that after He went back to heaven, the Holy Spirit would come to earth to guide people, and that is just what is happening today in the lives of people who have decided to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus. The moment a person invites Jesus into his or her heart as Savior, that individual is in the family of God. He or she has been born of the Spirit and has spiritual life with spiritual awareness. All who have received Christ are indwelt by the God the Holy Spirit to guide them. A critical thing then is for each believer to be a student of the Word of God, daily reading and studying the Bible. It provides spiritual food to feed the soul and spirit, and it is the instruction book for living. Many have said they don't understand the Bible. It takes a lifetime to understand the whole Bible, and then we fall short; but all people are able to understand at least something each time they read. If an individual asks God for guidance for at least one truth each time he reads, I feel confident that something will stand out in the reading, because of what Jesus said. Well, if I learn one thing each day, by the end of the year, I will have learned 365 things. The Holy Spirit is our private tutor, always giving us spiritual food, and many times direction or at least assurance that we are on the right path. Try it!

### OUR PROTECTOR

**Friday .....Read Psalm 28:7-9**

*"The Lord is my strength and my shield."* Another thing for all believers to realize, that as long as we are in this world, we are engaged in spiritual warfare. The enemy of God is the devil and the forces of evil. Satan began his attack on humanity in the garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. He did not come armed with guns and bullets; he was armed with deceptions and lies, the same as he does today. That gun control thing they are talking about to deal with the devil's deeds in our culture do not deter the devil. His success is duping people to think that is the problem. The problem is good vs. evil and the victory is following the One who has conquered the devil and one day will place him in eternal incarceration to end evil. That devil tries to minimize the effectiveness of Christians with his tools of devilish deed: deceptions, distortions and distractions. The psalmist had it right: God is our protector. We are given spiritual armor in Ephesians 6:10-19, and a careful study will reveal that our protection provided by our Lord is faith in the Word of God. To doubt or disregard Biblical truth is to be left wide open to Satanic attack. Our nation is proof!

### ANGELIC OVERSIGHT

**Saturday .....Read Hebrews 1:13-14**

*"To which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? And they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation?"* Another factor in our defense against the forces of evil provided by our Chief Shepherd is

angelic oversight. How wonderful that those same agents of God that dealt with God's servants in things recorded in the Old Testament are still busy. They are the unseen guardians over God's people, so we can be assured that we have their protection against any thing that God does not want us to experience. That does not mean there will be no problems for us to face, but it does mean that God will have the angels prevent those things that would hinder us from doing His will. Many have been the testimonies about God's protection in times of deep trouble, many times unknown to the beneficiaries at that time. They're unseen, but real!