

neighboring swamps, then a thick layer of reed, and finally a foot or more of clay to exclude the rains of winter and the heat of summer.

"The household furniture was simple, differing but little from that employed by the dwellers of Mesopotamia. The mill-stone,

the sack of barley meal, the stone knives, the reed mats, the few clay dishes, the olive-oil lamp, the stone weight, a crotched stick for a plow, a baked-clay chicken-coop, and perhaps one or two other objects, completed the effects of the Jew."—Dr. Edgar James Banks

THE LESSON APPLIED

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"The Lord is my shepherd, that's all I want," once misquoted a little girl. Her words find an echo in our hearts as we read this passage that speaks so appealingly of God's great shepherd love.

Our God is a God who goes out in search of the lost. The sheep are very dear to the shepherd's heart. He loves them one by one and knows them by name. If even one wanders he misses it and goes after it. Their straying brings him the sense of great loss. They have missed the way and got scattered, are perhaps hungry and cold and afraid. Their condition moves him to compassion and action. And so out over the mountains and across the burning plains one is searching, ever searching. To quote from Marcus Dods: "We go astray, and get so torn with thorns, so fouled with mire, that few can tell to what fold we belong—our owner's marks are obliterated; but the Good Shepherd in telling his sheep has missed us, and come after us, and recognizes and claims us even in our pitiable state." Wherever there is a soul that has lost the way, love is out in pursuit. Every perilous ravine, every dark haunt, every place where sheep may have strayed knows the footprints of the Good Shepherd. "I, even I"—for to no other will God entrust this task. And the God who misses all has missed me, knows my wanderings, and this very moment is searching for me.

Our God is a God that makes rich provision for the recovered. He gives them fat pastures in which to feed, cool watercourses from which to drink, and furnishes places where they may lie down to rest in perfect security. When Christian, in *Pilgrim's Progress*, had endured many trials he came to a river. "Their way lay just upon the brink of this river: here therefore Christian and his companion walked with great delight. They

drank also of the water of the river which was pleasant and enlivening to their weary spirits. . . On the other side of the river was also a meadow, curiously beautified with lilies, and it was green all the year long. In this meadow they lay down and slept, for here they might lie down safely." God cannot do enough for those whom he has brought back to the fold. He surrounds the redeemed life with many gracious ministries, and there is not a real need that he cannot and will not supply. We can trust God utterly.

Our God shows a very tender care for his own. "I . . . will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." He anticipates all our wants, not simply those great needs that we have in common with others, such as food and shelter, but also those needs that are peculiarly personal. He deals with us individually, and no sickness, no sorrow, no pain is too insignificant to gain his attention. The gospel is good news to all who are broken or bruised or bound, for it tells of a shepherd's loving care of those who need that care most.

Where there is most sorrow and most sin
There most is he, for there is he
Most needed.

Our God is strong to protect those under his care. He is able to do all that his love prompts. No beasts are too powerful for him to overcome, no bars too strong for him to break, and no enemy too mighty for him to put to flight. "I the Lord will be their God." The Good Shepherd is the Lord of all. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Infinite love is joined to infinite power. No foe can hurt us. No harm can befall us. We can face life unafraid.