

understand fully the tenderness of thought revealed in the great shepherd passages of the Bible. What are some of the great shepherd chapters? The outline following will indicate the work of the good shepherd in this passage:

1. *Seeking his Lost Sheep*, vs. 11, 12. Refer to Christ's beautiful interpretation of this work of the good shepherd in John 10:1-14, and in Luke 15:3-7, and quote the hymn, *The Ninety and Nine* which has been instrumental in finding many a lost sheep. Make clear that it would often go hard with us if Christ did not seek us out and bring us home.

2. *Feeding his Sheep*, vs. 13-16, 23, 24. Make clear with what care the good shepherd leads his flock in green pastures and beside the still waters. In what sense does God care for us in this way? He provides for us physically and spiritually. He satisfies our mouths with good things, and our minds with good thoughts, and our hearts with good impulses and aspirations, and our souls with his own life and love. Point out that the heart is always hungry till it lives upon the food which God has so richly provided in Christ. Show how fully Christ, as the good shepherd, interprets God's love.

3. *Protecting His Sheep*, vs. 25-27. Show what a beautiful picture we have of safety,—no evil thing to harm the sheep in the wilderness or in the woods, no curse of any kind, nothing but showers of blessing. How tenderly suggestive of God's protecting care. Dwell upon this wonderful thought that no evil thing can harm us when we dwell in the secret place of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Is this in harmony with man's experience? How about sickness and what we call accidents? They can do us nothing but good if we have made a complete surrender of ourselves to God.

### For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

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How often this figure of the shepherd and his sheep is used in the Bible! Five hundred times the shepherd is mentioned, and the boys and girls should be able to tell you some of the most striking passages. Bring out

that such frequent reference implies: (a) that sheep herding was a common occupation in Palestine; and (b) that the relation existing between the shepherd and his sheep illustrates in a significant way the relationship between God and his people.

1. *Who was Ezekiel?* The scholars will tell you that as a boy he saw the reformation under Josiah; that he became a priest at Jerusalem; and that in B.C. 597 he was carried away captive to Babylonia. In the fifth year of his captivity he commenced to prophesy. After the destruction of Jerusalem, he began to encourage the exiles to repent and return to God, bringing to them promises of a return to Jerusalem. The story of the Good Shepherd is one method of inspiring that hope.

2. *The Jews in Exile.* Help the scholars to realize the situation of the exiled Jews to whom Ezekiel spoke, illustrating from the present experience of the Belgians or Serbians. Ps. 137 pictures their hopelessness, and the bitterness of their anger.

3. *Ezekiel's Message of Hope.* The scholars will tell you that the sheep are constantly exposed to the vicissitudes of the weather, in winter and summer,—to frost and drought on the great treeless plains. Constantly they were in danger from wild beasts and robbers. Sometimes a sheep would be injured by falling from a rock, or it would be lost by straying away. Sometimes the lambs would fall with weariness. But always on guard against every danger was the shepherd. From vs. 12-16 bring out his duties, the picture of his life. Show that his three chief duties are: (a) seeking out the scattered sheep; (b) feeding the flock; (c) protecting them. His three great sins would be: (a) selfishness, in thinking first of himself; (b) neglect; (c) positive oppression and cruelty.

Develop the parallel with God and his people: Jehovah, the great shepherd; the exiled Jews, lost and helpless, the sheep for whom he would give his life.

4. *Jesus, the Good Shepherd.* Bring out the fact that we have seen the fulfilment of all God's promises in Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Is Jesus our shepherd? Do we know and obey his voice? Do we follow in his footsteps?