

The Shepherd and Overseer of Our Souls

Introduction

It is really a blessing to be able to worship together with you. I feel very much at home with the saints here, so thank you for your welcome. I want to share from I Peter today, so let us take a look.

I Peter 2:21-25 (NKJV): “For to this you were called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow His steps, who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

Let us have a word of prayer:

Thank you, dear Lord, that we can come before You and praise You for Your everlasting love today. To know, even as we read this word, that You are the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. We pray that You would open up our hearts now to receive the word that You have prepared for us. We pray that there would be good soil today, Lord, to receive even things that may be familiar to us, but You would speak in a fresh and living way. We are so dependent on You for the speaking and for the hearing, so we look to You. In Jesus' name, we pray.

The Transformation of Peter

We in Manhattan have been sharing from the book of I Peter over the last few weeks. This is the portion that I would like to pick up, particularly the last verse there in I Peter 2:25 in this phrase, “the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” It is remarkable to think of and consider the depth of I Peter when you remember the Peter of the Gospels. When you think about Peter of the Gospels, one who was so full of energy and quick to speak, maybe a little too quickly, often putting his foot in his mouth. Yet, he had boldness and faith.

You do not think of Peter when you look at him in the Gospels, as one who is caring and gentle, coming alongside people and encouraging them in their faith. He was more of one leading the charge and saying, “Just come along with me.” It is a different Peter. Something happened in Peter's life. Something was wrought into his life and built into his life to change Peter into the man he was by the time he wrote this letter in I Peter.

You remember the picture at the end of John when the resurrected Jesus met with Peter; a wider call came into his life. Jesus said to him: “Shepherd My sheep.” The call that Jesus gave to Peter, you can see that it came into this first letter that Peter wrote.

The Responsibility of a Shepherd

What is the responsibility of a shepherd? Peter is now living out this call that Jesus gave him to be that shepherd. The primary purpose of a shepherd is to turn us to the Lord. Peter certainly turned the saints to the Lord, but he also turned us to the Lord in this letter. If you go back to chapter 1 of I Peter, just think of the ways that he turns us to the Lord. He reminds the saints of their living hope, of their incorruptible inheritance, of the preciousness of their faith through trials, and of the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls.

When you get to chapter 2, you see how Peter reminds these saints of who they really are. They are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession. Even yesterday at the planning meeting, Kenny brought up that particular verse about God's own possession, His special people. He reminds them of their true calling and who they are.

As you walk through I Peter, you see him giving encouragements about how we ought to live this Christian life. There are many very practical ways that he encourages us as a shepherd to walk through this life. But it is not without this very important verse at the end of chapter 2, where he reminds them of who it is that we are living for—the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. To give you a very simple roadmap, we will talk first about Him being the Shepherd of our souls and then Him being the Overseer of our souls, just two main points.

The Shepherd of Our Souls

Speaking of Jesus being the Shepherd of our souls, let's remember in the gospels how He traveled around cities and villages, teaching and preaching the gospel of the kingdom. He healed diseases, and you saw the compassion of Jesus. You remember in Matthew where He said that He saw the multitudes as sheep without a shepherd. God knows that we are all like sheep who need a shepherd. We really need that Shepherd.

Now, Peter took up this role as shepherd, but even though he was a shepherd, he knew *the* Shepherd. Of course, if you are reading what I am saying right now, that would not come forth, but just to underscore, Peter was a shepherd, but there is *the* Shepherd, and *the* Shepherd is One whom we worship today and look to Him. Our brother even opened up with this passage in Psalm 23, which I will talk about today as well. We look to this Good Shepherd; we look to this great Shepherd; we look to this Chief Shepherd. When we think about Jesus as this good Shepherd, it speaks of His love for us. We look to Him as the great Shepherd, and that speaks of His preeminence. When we think about Him as chief Shepherd, it speaks of his Headship. Let us chew on those for a little bit. These are verses that I am sure many of us in this room know. And I fear in my own walk, having walked with the Lord for many years now, that sometimes we can know things, but those things can become dull over time just because we know them so well. And we need the Lord to give us that refreshing way of seeing Him in a new and living way.

The Good Shepherd

We see this Good Shepherd here in I Peter 2. At the beginning of the passage that I read in I Peter 2:21, it says, “For to this you were called because Christ also suffered for us.” Christ suffered for us. I do not want to get too theological here, but this is actually a very important point. Those words “for us” speak about Christ as the good Shepherd dying in our place. This is His atoning work; He suffered and died in our place. We deserve death, but instead, He went to the cross and died for us. It is like in John when Jesus said, “I am the good Shepherd; I give My life for the sheep.” That is Him as the good Shepherd, giving His life for us. This is the atoning work that Jesus did for us on the cross.

The Great Shepherd

When we look at Him as the Great Shepherd, He suffered as an example for us. Let us continue on in that verse 21. First, it says, “Because Christ also suffered for us.” Then it says, “Leaving us an example that you should follow in His steps.” So as the Shepherd He is the Good Shepherd dying for us. He is the Great Shepherd who gave us this preeminent, this greatest illustration of what it means to be that Shepherd.

In Hebrews, the phrase is used that He is the Great Shepherd. In the book of Hebrews, we know how it goes on from chapter to chapter, speaking about how Christ is better; Christ is better over and over. He is better than the angels. He is better than Moses. He is better than the priesthood. He is the High Priest. He is better than any system. He is better than all. That is what you see building up all the way through the book of Hebrews. Here we have this perfect example in Jesus where it says right after that verse, “Leaving us an example that you should follow Him. He committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth.” He is that perfect example, one whom we can always look to.

The Chief Shepherd

Of course, we see Him as Chief Shepherd. Peter uses this phrase later on in I Peter 5:4: “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.” You see how Peter here is even proclaiming by saying that he is a lowercase “s” shepherd. But there is one who is a capital “S” Shepherd; He is the Chief Shepherd.

I think many of us have this call to shepherd the sheep around us, but there is an overseeing Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd, who is over the shepherds. I think about John the Baptist when he was ministering in the wilderness, and he said, “There is One who comes after me whose sandal strap I am not even worthy to loosen. There is Someone so much better. I am serving God, but there is someone so much greater than who I am.” Even as powerful a ministry that John the Baptist had, he said, “I must decrease, but He must increase.”

Sometimes, when we consider Jesus as this Chief Shepherd, we just make Him so small. It is like we fit Him into a little box of what we have known of who He is, and we neatly put Him in that box. This is what we know of who He is, and we underestimate how awesome He really is. But in considering the wideness and the greatness and the majesty of who He is as Chief Shepherd; we will find that He is the Head of all shepherds; He is the Head of all of us. He is this Great Shepherd, this Good Shepherd.

Psalm 23: The Good Shepherd

What I want to do now is dig into a little bit more of what Him being the Shepherd in all these different ways looks like. I want to read through Psalm 23 that our brother opened up with this morning. I wonder if I asked for a show of hands of how many have hidden Psalm 23 in their heart at some point in their life and could recite it right now, and probably most of the room can.

Let us go through it slowly for a moment just to consider Him as the Shepherd in this threefold way.

Psalm 23 (NKJV):

1. The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
2. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.
3. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.
4. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me.
5. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
6. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.
7. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

This Psalm is full of David praising God. You see, even in these first few verses how David is praising God for all of these committed names that God had revealed to His children over the years. Just look at the names that he shares. The Lord is my Shepherd—Jehovah Rohi, my Shepherd. He is the One in whom I shall not want, Jehovah Jireh, He provides. He is Jehovah Shalom; He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He is peace, that Shalom, that wholeness. He restores my soul; He is Jehovah Rapha, the healer. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake—Jehovah Sidkenu, righteousness. You can see in those first few verses how David is just overflowing with praise unto the Lord for all of the ways that He has revealed Himself to him.

The Promise of His Presence

The point that I would like to take out of Psalm 23 to give us encouragement this morning is from verse four, right in the section that our brother read this morning. It is this phrase in the middle of verse four where it says, “For You are with me.” *“For you are with me.”* Those five words are one of the most wonderful promises that we can ever hold onto in our entire lives— “For You are with me.”

There is that hymn, it is in our hymn book here. It says, “For I am His and He is mine, for You are with me.” You are with me. God loves to be with His children. *He loves to be with His children.*

I will give you a few examples from the Scriptures of how God loved to be with Adam in the cool of the garden. In Exodus He talks about how He called Moses to make Him a sanctuary, a tabernacle that He may dwell among them. He loves to be with His people. In John, of course, we know how Jesus came, and He tabernacled amongst us. John said, “He dwelt amongst us, and we beheld His glory.”

In I John 3:1 he said, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God.” The Father loves to be with us. Our Lord loves to be with us. I think about me being away from my own children for just 36 hours. How I long to be back with them. No offense to you all here, but I love my children, and I want to spend time with them. God, in such a more wonderful way, loves to be with His children. The Shepherd loves to be with us.

The Comfort of His Presence

And of course, Jesus as the Head and we as His body are connected. He is with us as we are His church. He loves to be with us as He is the Bridegroom and we are the bride. We can play this out and give example after example about how God loves to be with us. He is not a God who is far off; He is a God who is very near.

In Acts 17:16-17 when Paul was talking to those Athenians, he was saying, “You who worship this unknown God, but this God whom you do not know, I preach to you.” He says in verses 27-28a, “So that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being.” He is not far from each one of us. He is not like Baal. Remember the story of Elijah when he was with the prophets of Baal on the top of Mount Carmel? The prophets are jumping up and down, hooting and hollering, cutting themselves, and Elijah says to them, “Oh, is Baal asleep? What is the matter with Baal? Is he on vacation? Do you need to wake him up?” He is not some aloof, distant God. Our God loves to be with us. He is so near to us.

And there are times in our lives, and I am sure you have examples when everything seems to be going the wrong way, and He reminds us that He is closer now than ever before. I think about a time, in my own life a couple of months ago, which was probably the hardest 30 days that I have gone through real physical suffering in my whole life, but

God made Himself so near. It was one of the most precious seasons of my entire life, and it was because I saw God come. If He can be even closer during that period when I needed Him the most, I realized that maybe I needed Him even more all the time. He is so close to us. So those times of difficulty, which I am sure many of you have experienced, all of a sudden, the Word became even more living. It is living, but then it becomes even more living; prayer is wonderful, but it becomes even more wonderful. And devotionals are great, but then they become even more alive.

I remember reading through during this season some Streams in the Desert devotionals. It felt like every night that I would read it, it was God speaking directly to me, "This is a word for you because I am with you. I am going to give you a word again. And then tomorrow night I am going to give you another word. And then the next day I am going to give you another word." I will just give you a couple of them. I do not know if you read Streams in the Desert, but this was my first time ever reading through it. I will just quote a couple parts. "Each of us may be sure that if God sends us over rocky paths, He will provide us with sturdy shoes. He will never send us on any journey without equipping us as well."

And then another one said, "Delayed answers to prayers are not refusals." Many prayers are received and recorded, yet underneath are the words, "My time has not yet come." He who controls the limits of our lives also determines the time of our deliverance."

Psalm 46:1-3: "He is a very present help in time of trouble." We have to hold on to that promise that He is with us.

The Valley of the Shadow of Death

Our brother opened up with this thought about going through the valley of the shadow of death. Now, I know that we all want mountains; we love mountains; we love the mountaintop experience. Some of us are with the young people sometimes, and we bounce with the young people from conference to conference, and we get those mountaintop experiences. We just look forward to the next conference and the next conference, but the reality is that most of life is lived in the valley. Sorry to break it to you, but most of life is in the valley. And it is in the valley where the Lord is working out all these things in our lives so we can appreciate the mountaintop even more. Even though we want the mountains, every mountain is surrounded by valleys. And when we are in the valley of the shadow of death, it always has a purpose, no matter how dark. If I can put it this way, He overshadows it. If we are in the shadow, like in the valley of the shadow of death, He overshadows that shadow with His presence. He overshadows it.

What a Good Shepherd! We have a Good Shepherd to walk with us through the valley of the shadow of death, because He is with us. At the end of Psalm 78, this is a psalm of Asaph, it gives this testimony of David. The last verse of Psalm 78 says, "So he (David) shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands."

Now, just zoom out for a second and consider that this is not speaking about David, but it is speaking about our Good Shepherd Himself. He has the purity and the integrity of His heart, and He knows exactly what is best for us. And by the skillfulness of His hands, He weaves into our lives these different trials and tribulations and difficulties, whether it is in relationships or in circumstances, to bring us out on the other side more conformed to His image.

He is a Good Shepherd, and He knows what He is doing. Sometimes we just do not get it, and sometimes we never get it. We may never have the answer of why, but we know Who. And that is the most important thing when you are going through the valley of the shadow of death. Even like Job, who asked those questions over and over again, and his friends were trying to give him all the whys of why it happened. But at the end of Job, what is the answer? It is not, "Why did it happen?" It is, "Who is God?" That is the revelation that Job sees at the end. Psalm 42:5: "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You." Now I know You.

That is the end of the point, for us to see Him as Shepherd. He wants for us to see Him as the Good and the Great and the Chief Shepherd.

The Overseer of Our Souls

This matter of Him being the Chief Shepherd is actually very connected to Jesus as the Overseer of our souls. This word "overseer" here, (I am certainly not a Greek scholar,) but this word is "episcopos", and it literally means "an overlook."

Since I live in the city, maybe for me this would be like going up to the top of the Empire State Building and overlooking the city. Maybe for those of you who live in a more bucolic place like Richmond, you might picture the top of a hill or a mountain or a ridge where there are trees as an overlook. Maybe you think of someone like a commander, who is looking out for enemies, as an overlook, or maybe a leader who is scoping out the best land, something like that. If I could put it this way in making this transition as Shepherd, He cares for us microscopically in all the little details. As Overseer, He cares for us telescopically. He has the big picture of overseeing, a wide picture. We are very myopic; so often, we are very short-sighted in the way that we see things; we are very much in the moment. How can this be? Even though God knows the end from the beginning, He knows where He is taking us through. It may not make sense for us in the moment, but if He is our Shepherd, He is walking us through in those little, microscopic steps, but He has the long view in mind. So, as Overseer, He cares for us telescopically.

The Role of the Overseer

I think about it this way. In a worldly way, many of us have bosses, and then our bosses have a boss. So, I have a boss, and then my boss has a boss. The reality is my boss's boss has no idea what I do on a day-in and day-out basis. They just care that the big picture is done. They do not get into the details; they just want to make sure that overall, well, in my case, they just do not want to be in the newspaper for messing

something up. But Jesus is not just the Overseer, the big Boss, He is also the Shepherd in the details. I am not going to say He is a micromanager, but He is with us in all those micro things. Nevertheless, He is also the big Boss as well. He is both Shepherd and Overseer.

Now, what is the role of an Overseer? Jesus, as the Overseer of our souls keeps us. If you go back to the beginning of I Peter 1:3-5, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

The Keeping Power of God

As Overseer, He keeps us, or we are kept by the power of God. Sometimes I do not know if you have ever considered this. You ever wonder about all the ways that God has kept you? Really, like all the ways that God has kept you. I will give an example. Kenny picked me up from the airport, and there is no offense to you, Kenny, but he picked me up from the airport, and we made a wrong turn as we were leaving. So, we ended up having to spin around to get back to the right road out. Now, we would call it a wrong turn, but I believe that God knew why Kenny made a wrong turn, and He was saving us from something. Now, sometimes we can just say, “Oh, we just made a wrong turn; no big deal, I was just being careless.” But God, as Keeper, knows how to route and reroute us, and He is better than Waze or Google Maps or any of these things. He has His way in these things. Maybe it was a right turn, even though it was a wrong turn. I rarely share with the saints in New York and certainly not with my wife all of the crime that happens in New York City. If you do not know this, I am a prosecutor in New York City. The reason I do not share it is because it is just too much for people to handle. I think if people knew of all the things that happened, nobody would go outside. So, I think in wisdom and discretion, I preserve some of those things, but we underestimate how many times God keeps us when we do not even realize it. Sometimes He shows us and reveals to us that He has kept us from as Overseer. I will never forget some situations when I was wandering from Him and He extracted me from them, and kept me from them, that I am eternally grateful for. Somehow, even though I was not on the right path, He kept me by extracting me from situations to prevent something that would be much worse. What an Overseer to know how to redirect even when we go off the path!

The reality is that we probably will not know until we meet our Lord someday all the way that He kept us over the course of our lives, and all the ways that He has kept our children. All the way that even though things do not seem to be going the right way, He is a keeping Overseer who has kept us all the way through.

The Covering of the Overseer

As Overseer, He covers. Of course, we know that passage in Psalm 91 where it says, "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." So, there is an aspect of covering by the Overseer here. The only safe place, if I can put it that way, is under the covering of the Overseer.

Remember later on in I Peter where Peter is exhorting these saints who have been scattered to resist the devil. But the reality is that the only way to resist the devil is by and through the Overseer. We do not have enough willpower or strength in ourselves to be able to resist the devil. We need to stay under the covering of the Overseer to be protected and safe. So, we stay under His covering. This is as it says in the hymn, "Rock of Ages." "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee." As we are hidden in the Overseer, He keeps us and protects us and gives us that power to resist the devil.

The Lordship of the Overseer

So, He is a coverer as the Overseer. As Overseer, He is Lord. If I can just put it very simply, as Overseer, He is Lord, when we put our faith in Jesus, we put our faith in Him as Savior and Lord. If you look at these two words, Savior and Lord, what is it but Shepherd and Overseer? The Good Shepherd is our Savior. He gave His life for the sheep, and as Overseer, He is the One who is keeping, covering, and directing. He is Lord.

So, you can see that this is kind of a twofold thing right there in our simple proclamation of our faith. This whole passage here that I just borrowed a little section of is in I Peter where he is going on and on about all the ways that even though we are free, right? So, if you just go back with me to, I Peter 2:16 he says, "You are free, yet not using your liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God." He is saying, "You are free, but the call, though, is to submit."

There is submission to government, submission to masters, wives submitting to husbands; there is a whole section here of submission. This section of submission is squarely in the middle of where you see that Jesus is the Overseer of our souls. We submit for the Lord's sake. And verse 13 is the beginning of where it says, "Therefore submit yourself to every ordinance of man or human institution for the Lord's sake." We submit because we are under the rulership, the headship, the authority, and the lordship of the Overseer of our souls, of Jesus Christ. That is where the submission comes from, and it is a reminder right in the middle of this section of submission, that we need to submit to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls.

The Call to Righteous Living

Now, right before this verse 25, where it lays out that He is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls, it says in verse 24: "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we having died to sins, might live for righteousness."

Since He is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls, the question then is, how ought we to live? The answer is found there in verse 24: "to live righteously." Now, it is not just

following rules. I will tell you, I love following rules. I am a rule follower. Certainly, I get that in my job day in and day out, to make sure everyone follows the rules. When you do not follow the rules, you go to jail, and that is what happens in my job. But the reality is that our life in Christ is so much more than following rules. I think if you are a young person in this room, and you are thinking about that, certainly God has given us boundaries of the way He wants us to live. Peter calls us out to holy living in here, as well as living righteously. But it is more than just following rules for the sake of following rules. We follow rules because He first loved us; we respond out of love for Him. We do things that are holy. We do things that are righteous because of who our Shepherd and Overseer is.

At the end of I Peter 1:9, it says, "Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls." So, the Shepherd and Overseer is making a way for us to be conformed to His image, and we are doing that as we submit to Him and live in this way that He has called us to. Now, if you try to live righteously, what will your success rate be? Zero! You have no shot; it is not going to happen. You know, I have been there; I have tried it, because I love to follow rules. My wife gives me a task list, and I love it. I will follow every rule. I will check off every box there. I love rules; I love lists.

But when the Lord shows you that you cannot live righteously except through the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls, who has made the way for us to live righteously, but then you live under the burden and the weight of the law for the rest of your life. He is the Righteous One. Remember when we read through Psalm 23, He said, "He leads us in paths of righteousness for His name's sake." He is the Righteous One, and He is the One that leads us down those paths of righteousness. He is the only One who is righteous.

When we say He is righteous, what do we mean by that? It means as Shepherd and Overseer, He is right, He does right, He is always right, and He makes right. He is the Righteous One. That is the fullness of His righteousness, and it is so great. Now we come, and we are in Him; He is our righteousness. So, we need to live that out by submitting to Him. We are able to live out this righteous life through the Righteous One.

The Call to Return

I will just end with this thought where it says in verse 25, as just a final thought here, "For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." I want to take that point where it says, "have now returned."

On one hand, as it says here, if I could put it this way, a past tense way, we would have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. In the next chapter in I Peter 3:18, it says, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

So, He has already made a way for us to be brought back to God. When we put our faith in Him, we have returned to Him that which was lost and was separated through sin, He has made a way for us to be restored into that fellowship with God. So, He has

brought us to God, and we have returned in a past tense way to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. But I think there is a little bit more to it than that. We have returned, but we also need to return.

There is something of a call of returning in this verse here to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. So, when we think about us at the beginning there, it says, "You were like sheep going astray." Now, even though we were like sheep going astray, does that mean that sheep never again go astray? Of course not. You can imagine, like maybe you are a shepherd, and you have a sheep that goes astray, it is not like that sheep has learned the lesson and will never go astray again. That sheep is just as prone to wander as any other sheep for the rest of that sheep's life, just like we are. We are saved, but yet we still have that proclivity, that inclination yet again to stray away. So, when we stray, when we rebel like sheep again, there is a call here to return to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. Now, this idea of returning is one that is a very wide call throughout Scripture. In the Old Testament, there are so many examples where it talks about returning, but we cannot even go through them. There are so many examples where God is calling His people so many times through prophets: "Return, Israel has turned away; return unto Me." The call comes over and over and over again.

There are so many examples such as in Jeremiah, there are examples in Hosea, and there are many examples in Isaiah. One of the passages in Isaiah 30:15 says, "In returning and rest, you shall be saved."

There is a neat thing about this word returning that is found here in this Isaiah passage because it is connected very much to a New Testament understanding of returning, which is repentance. So, there is a kind of twofold layer to this word return here, where it is returning, and repentance. You see in the New Testament many times this call for repentance.

So, I do believe there is a call for us to return to Him. Now, maybe for some of us, straying away is very short; it is not very far. We are still within arm's length in the straying. And for some of us, maybe we strayed a little bit farther and need to be brought back. But He is a Good Shepherd, a Good Overseer that brings us back with loving arms, with everlasting love. And what happens when we return back unto Him? I will just close with this verse from Acts 3:19 where this word is used again. Peter is giving another message, basically another preaching, and he says, "Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."

Every time we return to the Lord, what follows is a refreshing; the Lord refreshes us again. That is, I think, just such an encouragement that we can come to Him yet again, no matter where we are or where we have been. We return to the Shepherd and Overseer, and He refreshes us with His presence yet again. What a good God!

Let us close with a word of prayer.

Lord, thank You so much that You love us in this way, to be our Good Shepherd, this example as Great Shepherd, to be this Overseer as Chief Shepherd. Lord, we are amazed at Your goodness and love and care for us as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death that we can hold onto this promise that You are with us. Thank You so much that we can hold onto this. And Lord, even as we consider these words, there is even a call for us to return to You again. We are thankful, Lord, that what flows from that returning is refreshment. Thank You so much for that refreshment that can only come in the presence of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Lord, we are so thankful that You are our Shepherd, that You are our Overseer. There is no place that we would rather be than in Your presence. Lord, we cling to You now. Thank You, Lord, so much for this word. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

<i>The Shepherd and Overseer of Our Souls</i>	1
Introduction	1
The Transformation of Peter	1
The Responsibility of a Shepherd	2
The Shepherd of Our Souls	2
The Good Shepherd	3
The Great Shepherd	3
The Chief Shepherd	3
Psalm 23: The Good Shepherd	4
The Promise of His Presence	5
The Comfort of His Presence	5
The Valley of the Shadow of Death	6
The Overseer of Our Souls	7
The Role of the Overseer	7
The Keeping Power of God	8
The Covering of the Overseer	9
The Lordship of the Overseer	9
The Call to Righteous Living	9
The Call to Return	10

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