

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow sheep and lambs in the flock of him who truly is our Good Shepherd

The Good Shepherd – our Spiritual Onstar

- I. Provides for us in normal days (vv. 2&3)**
- II. Protects us in difficult days (vv.4 & 5)**
- III. Delivers us at the end of our days (v. 6)**

INTRODUCTION

Beginning around 2006 GM started to offer a service on its vehicles which is now standard equipment on just about every 2008 model. I'm sure you've heard of and probably seen the commercials for Onstar. You know, all you have to do is press the little blue button and help will be on the way if you have a medical emergency or you've crashed your car or had mechanical difficulties.

The Word of God which we turn our attention to on this Good Shepherd Sunday is one of the most well-known and well-loved portions of Scripture. But while we know the picture of the Good Shepherd from Scripture, to really understand the fickle nature of sheep or to understand how a shepherd works, we have no real knowledge of. It is for that reason I thought I might use that modern picture of Onstar to help us more fully understand the care of our Good Shepherd. Today we consider **The Good Shepherd – our Spiritual Onstar**. We will see how he 1) Provides for us in normal days, 2) Protects us in difficult days and 3) Delivers us at the end of our days.

I. Provides for us in normal days (vv. 2&3)

What is our human tendency when things are going well? To take things for granted? To put life on a sort of autopilot? Isn't there, even for Christians, that very real temptation that when we have no medical challenges, the balance in the checkbook is good and the family is getting along fine to just sort of assume that things will continue as they are. We might even be tempted to think that we probably helped things out a little bit – after all, we worked hard at our job, we took good care of our bodies and we took a vested interest in our family. Listen again to what the Psalmist says in vv. 2 & 3 – he, he, he. There is no mention of what we have done, it is a striking reminder that we owe all our thanks to our Good Shepherd for our normal days and thank him for the blessings of them.

II. Protects us in difficult days (vv.4 & 5)

When does Onstar usually come in most handy? Don't the commercials lead us to believe that that little blue button is almost indispensable when your car has hit a tree or you've had a medical emergency in our car in the middle of no where. But let's be honest about it – isn't there another button which we usually hit more often? How often when we encounter a difficult day aren't we prone to hit the panic button? What did I do to deserve this? Why is this happening to me now? How can I resolve this unfair situation?

Notice what we are reminded to do in difficult days. *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.”* Putting matters in the hands of our Good Shepherd when we have to walk through the valley of the shadow of death is one the things which believers are usually pretty good at doing. But how about when our coworkers seem to be ganging up on us, the family is letting us down or the whole world seems to be closing in around us? Do we trust that the Good Shepherd will *“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies”*? Instead of pressing the panic button, the Good Shepherd invites us to press the button of his Word and call on him in the day of trouble, knowing that he will deliver us – even in the face of our worst enemies.

But to put all this in its proper context, we need to realize that the Psalmist is not just speaking of physical blessings. When he says that the Good Shepherd leads his flock to not have to want and be peaceful, he also is reminding us of the spiritual care of the Good Shepherd. The very fact that we can gather for worship around the Word of our God is a clear reminder of the ongoing spiritual care of the Good Shepherd.

III. Delivers us at the end of our days (v. 6)

Another thing which Onstar is useful for is helping you find your way home or wherever you are going when you don't have a clue where you are. Even more beautiful is when a Christian knows or even if they don't know that they are reaching the end of their earthly life and they are able to say like our Savior did in his dying breath or the martyr Stephen did in our first reading for today (Acts 6:1-9; 7:2a, 51-60) – "*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*" Better than having Onstar or a GPS or something similar is having the promise of the one who knows and controls all of life saying "I'm going to get you safely home, no matter what."

CONCLUSION

A Sunday school teacher asked her group of children (1st and 2nd graders) if any of them could quote the entire twenty-third psalm. Over half the class raised their hands. A bit skeptical, the teacher asked one little girl who seemed extremely confident if she could really quote the entire psalm. The little girl confidently, faced the class, made a little bow, and said: "The Lord is my shepherd, that's all I want." Not entirely accurate, but a good summary. As we today are reminded again what a great blessing we have in our Good Shepherd, may we live each day with that confidence "The Lord is my shepherd, that's all I want." Amen.