

NEW RESOURCES AND AN EXPANDING REACH

This spring marks a season of growth for Reflections Ministries. The following new and expanding resources reflect our ongoing commitment to help believers grow in wisdom, intimacy with God, and an eternal perspective.



ReflectionsU—our new online learning platform—launched in February. It supports guided Bible studies and individual reflection in a more accessible format. reflectionsu.com



The **Ken Boa Reflections Bible** launches this month! This new online Bible integrates Scripture with devotional, theological, and formational resources, including videos developed over Ken's decades of teaching. Learn more at kenboa.org.



Reflections will enjoy a wider audience with new ministry pages on **OnePlace** and **LightSource**. These extensive online platforms feature video and audio teachings by the best-known Christian leaders.



We continue to add Bible studies/reading plans to **YouVersion**. Look for the latest in the app or use the QR code at right.




Don't forget our own **Reflections app**, which supports daily rhythms of reflection and prayer. Download in the **Apple App** or **Google Play** stores.



Our **Substack**, in combo with our blog, features in-depth articles—the latest on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Subscribe for the free or paid version. substack.com/@kenboa

CHECKING THE LIST

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9–10

Some people have a fleshly tendency to use the Bible's lists to measure their acceptance with God. Take the list, for example, that Paul wrote concerning those who will not get into heaven (1 Cor. 6:9–10). This is one "list" that most people would prefer to avoid. So our fleshly tendency is to frantically scan that list like a college student checking a pass/fail list after a physics exam. All we want to know is, "Did we pass?"

It would be wrong to read Paul's list as pass/fail criteria for heaven. That would imply that everyone is going to heaven except those who have "failed"—those whose actions appear on the list. In fact, just the opposite is true. Scripture teaches that we will all find our names on the list of the wicked. None of us are destined to inherit the kingdom of God, except those who have been removed from the list by virtue of having been redeemed by Jesus Christ.

Lists in the Bible always have a bigger purpose than simple enumeration. The characteristics of love (1 Cor. 13), the fruit of the Spirit and deeds of the flesh (Gal. 5), and the gifts of the Spirit (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4) are not definitive. Rather, they are examples to guide our understanding and practice. This is certainly so with Paul's list of those who will not inherit the kingdom of God. The point is not to name every kind of wicked person that exists, but rather to emphasize that the kingdom of God is a realm of

righteousness, and that no person may enter without the righteousness of Christ.

Don't scan Paul's list for your particular besetting sin. And don't look at others' lives and make definitive judgments about their eternal destiny based on this list. Rather, focus on your own relationship with Christ. There is only one name on the list of those righteous enough to inherit heaven, and that is Jesus Christ. And if you are in Him, then you will inherit heaven as well.

God's Promise:

No one will inherit heaven except those who know His Son.

Reflections Ministries
One Piedmont Center, Suite 130 • Atlanta, GA 30305
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



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REFLECTIONS

A teaching letter encouraging believers to develop a clear mind and a warm heart



NOTHING CATCHES GOD BY SURPRISE

God of our fathers, I give thanks that You have revealed Your great and surprising story of redemption to us in Your extraordinary Word. Through the Scriptures, I see that there is always a purpose in what You do, and that nothing catches You by surprise. You are fully sovereign over human history, and I am grateful that You have embedded Your people in a larger Story. It is this Story that gives me perspective and hope amidst the uncertainties and obstacles of this earthly sojourn. Your creative plans behind the scenes turn the apparently hopeless situations we face into manifestly hopeful outcomes. Your deliverance and Your timing are surprising, but I want to learn to trust in Your wisdom and not in my own. May I hope in Your providential care and not in my own limited plans and efforts.

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Psalm 23:5-6—A Shepherd Who Provides and Abides

In this final installment of a three-part series on Psalm 23, we focus on verses 5–6.

“YOU PREPARE A TABLE BEFORE ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MY ENEMIES” (v. 5a)

Before a shepherd leads his flock into the high summer ranges, he prepares the way for them by making a preliminary journey. He brings the necessary materials, examines the grass and vegetation, and plans to avoid or eliminate areas of poisonous weeds.

So, too, our Master has gone ahead of us and prepared the way for us to follow so that we can enjoy the abundance of His provision. He understands our nature and needs, having been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15; 2:17–18). Because He is faithful, He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear, but will give us the power to endure (1 Cor. 10:13).

Knowing that predators frequently look for a chance to make a sudden attack, the shepherd must stay alert. Our heavenly Shepherd knows every wile and deceit of our adversary (cf. 1 Peter 5:8) and warns us to stay close to Him, our sure place of safety. The farther a sheep

wanders from the shepherd, the more vulnerable it is to being picked off by predators. We would be wise to stay close to our Lord by investing time on a daily basis in His Word and in prayer.

“YOU HAVE ANOINTED MY HEAD WITH OIL; MY CUP OVERFLOWS” (v. 5b)

The summer months can be a time of torment rather than pleasure if the sheep are not treated against pests like warble flies, botflies, and nasal flies. Nasal flies attempt to deposit their eggs in the mucous membranes of the nose, and the larvae that later hatch burrow into the flesh of the sheep’s head and cause severe irritation. This produces a restlessness that can exhaust the sheep as it stamps erratically, races from place to place, or butts its head against objects to seek relief. Shepherds in ancient Israel solved this problem by anointing the animals’ heads with a mixture of olive oil, sulfur, and spices. This remedy would produce a remarkable transformation.

In our lives, there are hundreds of potential irritations, annoyances, and personality conflicts that can deprive us of

peace and drive us to distraction. We can let them torment us, or we can ask the Holy Spirit to give us the mind of Christ so we can face these peevish problems with quietness and peace. The anointing and fruit of the Holy Spirit can give us a joy and a contentment that transcend our circumstances.

“SURELY GOODNESS AND LOVINGKINDNESS WILL FOLLOW ME ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE” (v. 6a)

With these words, David affirms that because he belongs to God’s flock, the goodness and loyal love of the Lord will always be his portion. There will be times when our circumstances will threaten our willingness to make this affirmation with the psalmist. Even under the best care, the sheep can think they are being led down blind alleys or through places that seem as dark as night. But when we look at the outcome of the Lord’s leading in the lives of people like Abraham, Joseph, and Job, we discover that in His sovereign love, God brings eventual good out of the apparent chaos for those who have chosen to be in His care.

We must never let our circumstances determine our view of God’s character or care. The good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep (John 10:11; 1 John 3:16) will not abandon us, but will perfect the good work He has begun in us (Phil. 1:6). He tells us to keep our eyes on Him, not

our problems, and to show His goodness and mercy to others.

“AND I WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER” (v. 6b)

In W. Phillip Keller’s analysis of this psalm,* the sheep went from the green pastures of the home ranch in the spring, through mountain passes, and onto the high tablelands of the summer range. Then, the storms of fall drove them down the foothills and back to the home ranch for the long, quiet winter. The annual cycle is complete, and as the psalmist reflects on the manifold provision of the shepherd who has diligently protected and cared for his flock, he is content to dwell with the good Shepherd forever.

The annual cycles of earthly life quickly run their course, but the Lord has given us a hope that transcends the temporal and spatial limitations of this planet. Those who have become members of God’s flock through faith in Christ Jesus have already entered into eternal life, because eternal life is knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3; cf. 5:24). His presence will be our joy forever, and we should become accustomed to it by practicing His presence during the years of our earthly sojourn.

*. Author of *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*.

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