Supernatural Protection and Correction
Welcome to Harvest Community Church
Series: Psalm 23
Text: Psalm 23:4

The rod and staff in the hand of our Shepherd is for our protection and correction. When we get out of line, He uses His staff to prod us back into the right place. And when enemy forces come against us, the rod is used to beat them away.

The rod and staff are vital tools for any shepherd as they aid him in protecting and correcting his sheep. Very often this is one combined instrument with two different ends. One end of this long staff is often shaped like a hook, and it is used for grabbing sheep and pulling them back into place when they are out of line. The other end is basically straight and used to beat off or kill any predators that are trying to attack the sheep.

A true shepherd protects from both wolves and thieves. Those that are stealthy and those that are obvious. A true shepherd is not timid or apologetic towards those whose desire is to hurt the sheep. When David said that God's rod and staff comforted him, he was letting us know that our Shepherd has what He needs to not only direct and correct us when we're out of line, but also to effectively beat off any enemy that attempts to attack us.

Jesus speaks of the tenacity of the shepherd when a wolf comes to attack the flock.
John 10:11-13

There are seven very important words to understand in this passage:

1) Hireling It appears three times in two verses. It means one who only works to get a salary. This person is not called to be a shepherd; they are merely filling a position to collect a paycheck.

2) Shepherd It describes the feeder, protector, and ruler of the flock. This person is so committed to those under his care that he is willing to invest his entire life and even lay it down for their betterment and safety. **Jeremiah 23:1-4, Jeremiah 3:15**

3) Wolf The Greek term is 'lukos', when applied figuratively, it depicts cruel, greedy, rapacious, destructive men. What's fascinating about the word lukos is that it was used by Romans and Greeks to describe a particular group of prostitutes who sold themselves and howled during the night to attract the attention of men and lure them into their lairs.

   The use of this word 'lukos' — translated here as "wolf" — lets us know these are not God-called leaders, but those who will sell themselves for gain and only stick around as long as there is something to be gained. These are men in ministry who have ulterior motives and are willing to prostitute or sell themselves to get something out of the people.
   Acts 20:29-30 (NLT), Matthew 7:15-20 (NLT)

4) Flees A hireling runs away when trouble comes. To flee means to take flight, to run away, to run as fast as possible, or to escape. It pictures one's feet flying as he runs from a situation. When a wolf shows up and comes against the sheep, the hireling takes off running. A hireling is a coward. All they care about is the money. They do not really care about people or a job well down. Their purpose is transactional not relational. He easily abandons them because they do not belong to them. They have no vested interest.

5) Catches With the sheep left unprotected, the wolf catches the sheep. **John 10:12** This word 'catches' is a translation of the Greek word 'harpadzo', which means to seize; attack: to snatch; to steal or rob. **John 10:10-11** The contrast between Jesus and Satan is unmistakable. The purpose is not to simply harass but to destroy. As our Shepherd Jesus protects us from satanic attack in all its forms.

6) Scatters In the Greek 'skorpidzo', which means to scatter, and is closely related to the Greek word for a scorpion. The use of this word indicates that sheep scatter when they feel stung by a person or situation. Satan not only comes to steal but to poison. Satan is venomous. While a lion and bear will strangle and rip apart, scorpions kill from the inside out. Satan is called a serpent because he is cunning and poisonous. Scorpions are tiny in comparison but are potent.
Not all predators have the same approach - Lions pounce and put prey in a strangle-hold; bears maul with crushing force. Wolves chase to exhaustion and then consume. Snakes hide in waiting and inject with poison that kills from the inside out or they constrict by taking the very breath from you. Thieves steal what belongs to another and keep what is stolen in bondage and slavery.

7) Lastly Jesus said that the hireling does not care for or about the sheep. The word 'cares' here is the Greek word 'melei', and it depicts a deep concern. When used positively, the word melei means to pay serious attention to something. But the hireling doesn't care for the sheep. All he cares about is himself and getting his paycheck. In contrast, Jesus — the Good Shepherd — cares about us! When the wolf comes, Jesus doesn't run away. He stays right by us and defends us with His very life. He has a rod and a staff to take care of us and to rescue us from the mouths of predators.

David was very familiar with the power of the rod and staff because he had been a shepherd to his father's sheep. Just before his face-off with Goliath. David spoke to King Saul and described his experiences as a shepherd. **1 Samuel 17:34-37**
Notice David was not shy about what he did to the lion and the bear. He was willing to deal with things and get his hands dirty. He was not afraid of the battle.

David knew that the sheep were safe when he had his rod in his hand. When any predators came against his sheep, he would use his rod like a club and beat the intruders — to death if necessary. Likewise, David was also comforted when he thought about the rod that his Shepherd carried. He knew that the Lord would use His rod to beat down any enemy that came against him. A true shepherd is gentle and safe with the sheep but dangerous to any enemy.

David also knew the second purpose for the rod and staff, and that was to bring correction to the sheep. One end of the staff was shaped like a hook, and it was used to reach down and rescue a sheep that had fallen or to help it get out of a ditch and back on its feet again. It was also used if a sheep needed a gentle tap to keep from putting itself in danger or from heading in a wrong direction. The rod became an extension of the shepherd's caring hands. God's loving hands are intimately involved in caring for us. **Isaiah 59:1**

David was personally acquainted with the Lord's correction. When David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and then had her husband, Uriah, murdered, the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to call David to account for his actions. David wrote about God's correction.
Psalm 51:1-4, 7-12

Although God's correction in David's life was so strong it made him feel as if his bones had been broken, he knew that God loved him and he needed to be disciplined in order to be placed back on track with God's will for his life.

Let's allow the Lord to use His rod and staff in our life. It will provide protection against the enemy's attacks, and also bring correction when and where we need it most.