

Bible and the Headlines: Getting Sheepish

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Little Bo Peep was given bad advice. Her counselor told her if she would leave her sheep alone, they would come home. Recent headlines show that sometimes sheep need a little help to get home.

The news syndication webpage Need to Know on August 5th carried the story, “Brave Cavers Save Sheep After It Falls Down 90ft Drop.” The article recounted how three spelunkers were making a descent into a cave in northern England when they encountered a sheep: “The members of Kendal Caving Club’s main struggle was not startling the sheep and causing it to drop down even further into the abyss.” The cavers adapted a harness and spent the next 90 minutes hoisting the ruminant skyward. “Beryl” [the name the team gave to the sheep] was completely calm during her rescue.

On August 13th, Cornish news site CornwallLive featured, “Three Women on Training Run Dive into Bodmin Lake to Save Drowning Sheep.” The trio of marathoners were on a practice run when they saw a dog attack a sheep. The sheep dove into the lake to escape but the dog was still waiting on the shore. One of the runners stated, “The lake is quite deep and the poor sheep was just swimming around in circles . . . it was getting further and further out all the time.” When the sheep was back on terra firma, it collapsed from exhaustion.

The August 20th newsletter for the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) contained, “Rapid Animal Rescue Response as Wildfires Spread in Greece.” The recent blazes across the Peloponnese have endangered the livestock in the region. An AP photographer captured on film how one creature escaped the inferno. The caption to the photo was “A man carries a sheep on the motorcycle during a wildfire in Patras city, western Greece.” Sadly, many other critters perished in the flames.

The singular rescue of a sheep was featured in Jesus’ Parable of the Lost Sheep. Jesus asked his disciples, “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?” (Luk 15:4). Jesus also described the animals rescue, “When the man finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep’” (Luk 15:5-6).

Jesus used the example of a sheep’s deliverance to illustrate God’s joy when a lost person recognizes their need of a Savior, “I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent” (Luk 15:7). Like Little Bo Peep’s flock, people need Someone to bring them home.