

Faith Comment published in the Petersfield Post

8 May 2013: Patsy Robinson, Petersfield Methodist Church

Clean Sheep

One misty winter morning, I stood watching a field of shaggy sheep nibbling the frosty grass. Their wool was covered with twigs and brambles, which stuck out at odd angles, often impeding the sheep's progress as they were dragged along. The flock had obviously been sheltering under a hedge for the night and now they were unable to free themselves from the undergrowth that had stuck to them. Even worse, some of the larger branches were picking up further twigs from the ground as the sheep grazed. As often happens, I wondered if this was a picture of something in our own lives.



We know that when we become Christians we are completely washed in the sheep-dip, made clean by what Jesus has done for us. However, the cares of life can then begin to stick to us like branches and twigs.

When I worked in the prison service, we often found that young people who had been locked up for very serious crimes had begun their offending with such things as shoplifting or setting fire to rubbish bins. One thing led to another and eventually they found themselves in jail.

We are all susceptible; like those dragging branches, 'small' sins, if left unconfessed and unchallenged, attract larger ones, till we can become quite weighed down, unable to free ourselves without help.

The only remedy is to stay in constant, daily contact with the Shepherd; we need to let him get close enough to remove the briars before they get too heavy and impede our walk.