

Psalm 23 – Study 3

What a great psalm Psalm 23 is. Now, all the psalms are great and all the Word of God is great, but we've been looking at Psalm 23 and we've discovered some things. We've discovered that David compares himself to a sheep. He says, *The Lord is my shepherd*. Sheep have a shepherd, and so David compares himself to a sheep here, and we're seeing in this psalm how that David exalts the Shepherd, and the Shepherd is none other than God. And as we look at God, we see the Lord Jesus Christ.

We've also seen what the sheep experiences, in other words, what David experienced, and that was a personal relationship with the Shepherd. He also experienced a precious relationship with the Shepherd, and he also experienced a profound relationship.

And now, what the sheep expresses, what David expresses here. In the first three verses David talks to us about his Shepherd. Now, beginning in verse 4, David begins to talk to His Shepherd about Him, the Shepherd. When David considers what he had and who he is talking about, David cannot help himself from praising the Lord.

First, I see there is praise for the Shepherd's power. We see that in His power the Shepherd provides peace. David says this in verse 4: *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

Even though the sheep must at times pass through the most frightening and dangerous of places, they travel in peace knowing that their shepherd has everything under his control, that we would have the same

confidence that David had and this should dwell in our hearts in each of God's sheep today.

Yes, the path leads through difficult and dangerous places at times, but yet there are occurrences and events in life that are frightening to our hearts but if we know that Jesus, the Great Shepherd, is leading us, if we know that He is in absolute control of all the paths of our life, then we can pass through the shadows in peace and security.

Psalm 37:23 says, *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and he delighteth in his way.* By the way, a shadow cannot harm you. What can the shadow of an angry dog do? It can't bite. What can the shadow of a poisonous snake do? It can't strike. Shadows cannot harm you, and if you walk with Jesus, you are walking in the light, and in the light there are no shadows. You have His promise of peace as you travel.

According to Philippians 4:7, it says, *And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.* Also, we read in John 14:27 where Jesus says this: *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*

In His power, the Shepherd provides peace, and in His power, the Shepherd provides His presence. The presence of the Good Shepherd with His sheep is the theme which is spread throughout the very substance of this psalm, Psalm 23. From the idea of His leadership in verses 2-3, to His presence in the darkest of times in verse 4, to His intimate activity in verse 5, the Lord is seen in a close relationship

to His sheep. He is always there to lead them, feed them, protect them, and to watch over them at all times.

This is the blessed truth that God's children should rejoice in today. Hebrews 13:5 says, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.* And again, Christ gives assurance when He says in Matthew 28:20, *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

We see in His power the Shepherd provides peace; in His power the Shepherd provides His presence; and in His power, the Shepherd provides His protection. David mentions the implements of the shepherd's protection, the rod and the staff. These tools have a very specific purpose in the life of a sheep.

The staff was a long pole with a crook near the end. With this implement, the shepherd would correct the sheep, draw them close when they began to wander and lift them out of the crevices into which they might fall. The rod was much shorter than the staff and was used by the shepherd to protect the sheep from anything that might try to attack the flock. So, too, are the born-again sheep of the Lord protected by Him both night and day. We enjoy a peace with absolute protection with Him, with the Lord.

Colossians 3:3 says, *For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.* We are hidden. What great protection that is, knowing that we are in Christ. We are in God. Oh, yes, our enemy may walk about as a roaring lion looking for whom he may devour, looking for victims to devour, according to I Peter 5:8, but he has a leash on him. He is controlled. Our Father holds the leash. The devil can only go so far. He can't touch our souls. He can't do us eternal harm.

First, there is praise for the Shepherd's power, and then we see that there is praise for the Shepherd's provision. Psalm 23:5 says, *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.*

First, I see that He provides rest. Usually a soldier in enemy territory would be forced to gulp down a hasty meal as best he could while he cowered in fear of being discovered, captured, or killed. However, the Lord spreads the table for His children right in the middle of the enemy's territory and all the enemy can do is watch us as we feast on the blessings of the Lord.

Now, I do not think we will ever fully grasp this, but there are times in life that seem almost unbearable to us as humans. It's those times when the enemy comes to us and mocks us and comes to question our determination to follow the Lord, but through the grace of the Lord, He is able to turn the worst of times into the greatest of blessings. He leaves us feasting on His grace while the enemy is angrily silent, unable to hinder us, harm us, or even touch us. That's how the Lord arranges life for His glory and for our good.

Romans 8:28 says, *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* Second Corinthians 4:17 goes further and says, *For our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* And I say glory to God.

Then we see the Shepherd provides remedies. In Jesus' day when He walked on the earth, when guests visited in a home, they were often anointed with oil to show them how much they meant to their host. It was considered an insult not to wash the feet and anoint the head

of your guest. As we move through this life, the Lord takes many opportunities to anoint us with the oil of His grace. His goodness and His blessings are reminders that we are precious in His sight. I don't care what the devil may have told you, you are precious to the Lord, so precious, in fact, that He sent His Son to die for you on the cross. John 3:16 says, *For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

Romans 5:8 says, *But God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* Christ died. He shed His blood on the cross of Calvary and that blood cleanses us from all sin. It does not cover it. It takes it away. You are completely sinless when you receive Jesus Christ as Savior. Oh, this body may sin, but the real you, the real you that's going to Heaven can never sin because Jesus Christ took your sin on the cross of Calvary. You could never enter into Heaven with sin. That's the reason this old body has to die. I'm not giving you a reason to sin, I'm simply saying that you're in the flesh and this flesh is dirty and we need a daily cleansing from God. *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,* I John 1:9.

The idea of anointing oil also brings to mind the image of a wounded sheep being tenderly mended by a caring shepherd. How many times have you been bruised and battered by the knocks, falls, and scrapes of life? Hasn't the Good Shepherd come by with His healing touch and met your need every time? You may be in need right now. Take heart. Jesus is near to help you.

Well, He also provides rejoicing. David tells us that the Lord's blessings in his life are so

great that he has more than he can handle. He says his cup has passed full and has run over into the saucer. And that's exactly how the Lord treats His precious children. If you are in a place where He can bless you, then look out, because He certainly will. If we could hear some of you, your testimony right now would tell us that there have been times when the Lord filled my cup to overflowing. There have been times when His presence and the reality of His glory was almost more than you could bear. Those are the real blessings of the Lord. Thank God for the times when He fills our cup.

David gives praise for the Shepherd's promises, as well. In Psalm 23:6, he says, *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.* The pilgrim is assured that goodness and mercy will be his constant companions along the way home. And these are the components of grace and remind us that, as we travel, we will always be blessed with grace sufficient to the need in our lives.

Second Corinthians 12:9 says, *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* We need to know that there is nothing in life that we can face that will be greater than His ability to see us through. You see, we are following One who plans and knows the way we take. Psalm 37:23 says, *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and he delighteth in his way.*

He also goes with us along the way to assure us of safe passage through this violent and harsh land, this world. With Him near, there is nothing to fear.

And finally, we see the Shepherd promises hope for tomorrow. David concludes this psalm with a precious reminder that this life down here will end someday, but that those who know the Lord will move to a new realm to live for eternity, and some people believe that David was referring to the tabernacle in this verse. I like to think that he is looking a little further away than that. I think he is looking forward to a time when he will be in the presence of the Lord in Heaven, and that is the destiny of every child of God today.

John 14:2-3 says, ^{2a}*I go to prepare a place for you.* ³*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

Do you know Him today as your Savior? Of course, if you do not know Him, then much of what I have said has been foreign to you. However, if you don't know Him today and would like to meet Him, you can. If you are tired of wandering lost and alone on the wild hills of sin, then come to Him if He is calling you and if He is speaking to your heart right now.

I am sure glad that I know the Shepherd. How about you? Do you know Him? If not, He can be your Shepherd right now.

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