

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

Psalm 23

Written late in the life of David, the psalm starts out talking *about* God...but ends up talking *with* God. Using the image of a shepherd, David reflects on the *grace* and *many benefits* the Lord had given him through throughout his life...especially when he *faced many dangers*. He concludes with the fact that God's *persistent, loving protection* would ultimately *restore* him to full *intimacy* and *communion* with Him.

Jesus is called:

- The Good Shepherd...(John 10:14)
- The Great Shepherd...(Hebrews 13:20)
- The Chief Shepherd...(I Peter 5:4)

I. THE SHEPHERD LEADS: (vs. 1-3)

The Lord is my shepherd (vs. 1a)...literally means “*with the Lord as my shepherd*”.

What a beautiful picture is painted here...*weak* and *defenseless sheep* under the *direction* and *care* of the great Shepherd. The Lord is often described as a *shepherd*.

“Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.”

~Isaiah 40:11

- The basic habit of sheep is to *wander*. They are prone to *straying*...to *wandering off*.

How reassuring to know that the Shepherd will *search for* His sheep, *will find* them, and *carry them* safely back to the fold. Left to themselves they would never find the way. The *lost sheep* have been *found* and are now *secure* with the Shepherd (Parable of the lost sheep...Luke 15:3-7).

“All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.”

~Isaiah 53:6

- Sheep are *dumb/stupid*. They are *not smart animals*. They will *wander* into *areas of danger* regardless of signs of *caution* and *warning*. They will get into a situation and suddenly not know how to get out of the situation.

I.e. They will wander down a steep cliff “*thinking*” that they saw green grass, only to find themselves trapped.

I.e. You can train a dog, lion, elephant, etc. Other animals can be trained to do tricks...I.e. The circus.

But sheep are *dumb/stupid*. Sheep only have *one natural predisposition*...they *recognize the voice* of it's shepherd.

Do you hear His voice? Do you hear the voice which draws you to Him. Do you follow Him?

“...The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.”

~John 10:3b-4

It is one thing to believe the Lord is *the* Shepherd, but to say **the Lord is my Shepherd** brings great *joy* and *peace*.

“I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me...”

~John 10:14

I shall not want (vs. 1b)...

Sheep left to themselves have want for everything.

- Sheep are *led by their sight* and *not by a sense of smell*. They choose the *desires of their eyes*. They always think that the *grass is greener on the other side* of the fence.

Sheep can't distinguish between what is *nutritious food* and *clean water* and what is *poisonous* and *contaminated*. But the shepherd is their *great provider*. He will *provide* their temporal needs.

In the **Sermon on the Mount**, Jesus tells us *not to worry*.

“For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”

~Matthew 6:25

The battle against the *world*, the *flesh*, and the *devil* is intense but *strength to overcome* is provided. Sheep are *weak* and they sometimes *wander*, but the Shepherd *watches over* them...*protects* them...and *provides* for them.

He makes me lie down in green pastures (vs. 2a)...

The Shepherd provides *rest*. He makes them *lie down in the green pastures*.

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

~Matthew 11:28-30

- Sheep are *followers*. They *follow one another*. When one does something, they all *follow* and do the same thing. If sheep begin to *run* and *stampede*, they will run *until they drop*. They *don't know* when to *stop*. (Who do you follow?). I.e. A club or fraternity mentality.

The Lord *leads* His sheep into the *green pastures* of His *Word* where they find *rest* in His *truths* and *promises*. How often *trouble* and *fear* make *rest* impossible! The *pressures of life* take their toll. *Anxiety* about the future *robs* the worrier of his *rest*.

He leads me beside quiet waters (vs. 2b)...

Just knowing that He *leads* is a *great comfort*. How *difficult* it would be to travel through the paths of life *without His guidance*.

- Sheep are very *unstable* animals. They are *“top heavy.”* They are prone to *“casting.”*

We often feel like we are in a *stormy place*. The waters are *troubled*, the *challenges* are *great*. But our Shepherd then *leads* us beside the *still waters*. He brings us to a *quiet* and *peaceful* place and, as we *give thanks* for the *peace enjoyed*, we *acknowledge* we were *led there* by our Shepherd and it is *for His name's sake* that these *blessings* are ours.

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”

~John 14:27

He restores my soul (vs. 3a)...

Ultimately, He *restores our souls*. There are *seasons* when we feel *unproductive...unfruitful*. Our *zeal* has *declined*, and *joy* has *faded*. A sense of sin has *broken our heart*, and the *influences of the world* have had their impact.

David frequently *prayed* for the Lord to *quicken him* and here he *acknowledges* the *answer to that prayer*. The Lord Himself *restores the soul*. He *revives* us and *renews* us. He *restores the joy of our salvation*, He *renews the heart* with a *holy zeal*, He *renews a right spirit* within us.

What a loving Shepherd we have. When we read His *promises* and review His *provisions*, we can indeed say, “*I shall not want.*”

Restores...means *to bring something back to it's original design.*

Satan loves to *steal*, *kill*, and *destroy* the believer. With the *fall*, man *died spiritually*. When man *died spiritually*, man's *soul* (*mind*, *will*, and *emotion*) was *destroyed*.

- Sheep are *creatures of habit*. They have a *natural desire to return...to return to a previous place...to return to the place of their birth*. We are born with a *sin nature* in the likeness of Adam. We continue to battle that *sin nature* (Psalm 51:5). That is why we *do things* that we really *don't want to do*. We have *inherited a sin nature*.

“For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate...For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.”

~Romans 7:15, 18

I.e. That is why we have a need to be *born again*.

Through Jesus, man is *born again*, with our *soul restored* to it's *original design*...what it was like *before the fall*.

He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake (vs. 3b)...

- Sheep are *stubborn*. They *want their own way* (Isaiah 53:6).

“The way of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death.”

~Proverbs 12:28

“Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.”

~I John 3:7

II. THE SHEPHERD PROTECTS: (vs. 4)

- Sheep have *no natural defenses*. They are very *vulnerable to prey*.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me (vs. 4)...

Shadow of death...*death is only a shadow* for the Christian. In order to have a *shadow*, there must be *light*... and Jesus is the *light of the world* (John 8:12). When a *loved one dies*...it may seem like a *dark time*. But remember, “*Then came the morning...*”

Rod...used to *fight off prey*.

Staff...used to *recover a sheep* that has fallen over a cliff or in a hole (*well*).

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep...I lay down My life for the sheep.”

~John 10:10-11, 15b

III. THE SHEPHERD PROVIDES: (vs. 5-6)

Believers are never in a situation that the Lord is not aware of...and He is *always present* and will *never leave* us or *forsake us*.

“I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.”

~Hebrews 13:5b

Now:

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows (**vs. 5**)...

Anointed...a *courtesy shown honored guest at a banquet*.

Forever:

Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever (**vs. 6**)...

House of the Lord...refers to the *Tabernacle*...where the *presence* of God *dwelled*.

- Sheep *must have a shepherd to survive*. Without a shepherd, a sheep is a very *nervous animal*. They yearn for someone to *lead* them...to *care* for them...to *guide* them.

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”

~John 10:27-30

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- With the Lord as our Shepherd, we have a Shepherd who **SPEAKS** to us personally in a way that we can **KNOW** His voice.
- With the Lord as our Shepherd, we have a Shepherd that **LEADS** us...**PROTECTS** us...and **PROVIDES** for us.
- With the Lord as our Shepherd, we have a Shepherd who laid down His life for us to **REDEEM** us and provide for us **ETERNAL LIFE**.

PSALM 23

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.

3 He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.

4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.

6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.