

“The Good Shepherd”

Psalm 23

Pastor Steve Balvanz · April 26, 2020

Psalm 23 is a masterpiece of inspired praise that testifies to the abundant grace and goodness of our Lord for His people, using the analogy of a shepherd and his flock.

The Lord is my shepherd (v.1)

“The position of this psalm is worthy of notice. It follows the 22nd Psalm, which is, peculiarly, the Psalm of the Cross. There are no green pastures, no still waters on the other side of the 22nd Psalm. It is only *after* we have read, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me” that we come to, “The Lord is my shepherd.” We must by experience know the value of blood-shedding, and see the sword awakened against the Shepherd, before we shall be able truly to know the sweetness of the good Shepherd’s care.” (C.H. Spurgeon)

Only people who have been born again through faith in Jesus Christ can rightly be called His sheep. The scriptural description of unsaved people is that of wolves and goats, *not* sheep.

A sheep is an object of personal property, not a wild animal. Men buy sheep and then they take care of them. Sheep do not survive on their own. They require a tremendous amount of personal attention, care, and protection. And that is precisely the picture painted of our Good Shepherd in Psalm 23. Our Savior *bought* us and then forever lovingly *tends* us!

“It is no accident that God has chosen to call us sheep. The behavior of sheep and human beings is similar in many ways. Our mob instincts, our fears and timidity, our stubbornness and stupidity, our perverse habits are all parallels of profound importance. Yet despite these adverse characteristics Christ chooses us, buys us, calls us by name, makes us His own and delights in caring for us.” (Phillip Keller)

Psa. 95:7; 100:3; Isa. 53:6; Jn. 10:11

1. His _____ (v.1b)

“I shall not want”

This speaks of the Lord’s total provision of all that we need in life and our satisfied contentment in all that He provides.

We may not have all that we *wish* for, but we certainly have all that our loving Shepherd knows that we *need*. Beware—even our righteous *desires* so easily morph into *demands*, and when that happens in our hearts, sin is not far off.

Psa. 34:9-10; 84:11; Eph. 1:3; 2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Cor. 12:9

2. His _____ (v.2)

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

This is a peaceful, serene picture of God’s care and provision. A picture of God’s people securely resting, feeding, and drinking.

Sheep are fearful animals, they are easily panicked and, when scared, they will not lie down to rest. Only the calming presence of the shepherd can provide the security and assurance to make them lie down and calm down.

Psa. 4:8; Prov. 3:24-26; Mat. 11:28

3. His _____ (v.3a)

“He restores my soul”

“Restore” means to return, to recover, to bring back. This is what our souls are in constant need of and it is what our loving Shepherd continually does for us.

4. His _____ (v.3b)

“He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake.”

Sheep are not smart, nor do they have a good sense of direction. They easily get lost and go astray. They are prone to wandering. What an apt description of you and me!

Sin makes us stupid and that is why we need the guidance of our Good Shepherd.

The Spirit of God using the word of God directs us in paths of righteousness.

God is the beginning and God is the end of all our righteousness. The path of righteousness has His grace as its starting point (for He leads us into it) and it has His glory as its destination because His leading is for *"His name's sake."* (John Piper)

Psa. 119:9, 105; Rom. 12:2

5. His _____ (v.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."

Our Good Shepherd doesn't keep us from the valley of the shadow of death, but He leads us through it. His presence is our comfort no matter what the circumstances.

David's faith in the continual *presence* and *protection* of the Lord was a source *comfort* and *courage* in the darkest hours of his life.

Heb. 13:5; Isa. 41:10

6. His _____ (v.5)

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

The picture that David paints is that although he was surrounded by enemies who sought to do him harm, he recognized that God was with him for his good, abundantly supplying his needs as a generous host would do for his honored guests. God's children get the royal treatment!

7. His _____ (v.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."

Every day of your life God is chasing after you with His blessings, *not* His curses. Tragically, many Christians think God is following them around because He is mad at them or is just waiting for them to mess up so that He can thump them. That is a sad, inaccurate picture of our Good Shepherd!

Our Good Shepherd spends all day, in all our circumstances, chasing us down with His goodness and lovingkindness!

“and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever”

The day is coming when our enjoyment of God's goodness and lovingkindness will be finally and forever unhindered by sin...that sounds like heaven! 😊

Lam. 3:19-23

Questions for Discussion and/or Self-Examination:

1. What is the difference between simply knowing this psalm and truly knowing the Good Shepherd? Do you personally know the Good Shepherd, Jesus?
2. (v.1) Are you a contented or complaining sheep? How much time do you spend thinking and thanking God for the all that He has given to you compared to petitioning Him for more or better or different things in life?
3. (v.2) What does verse 2 look like in daily life? How do we experience it?
4. (v.3a) Are you a “cast” sheep today? Have sin or circumstances knocked you off your spiritual feet? Your Good Shepherd is eager to lift you up again. Humbly repent and confess your sins to Him who is ready, able and longing to “restore your soul.”
5. (v.3b) Are you following the Good Shepherd in the ways of righteousness today? Is your speech and behavior a glory to the Lord?
6. (v.4) Are you in a spiritual valley? Remember you are not alone! Jesus is walking through the frightening valley with you. And He will never leave you, nor forsake you! Meditate on the comforting truth of Isaiah 41:10.
7. (v.5) Takes a few minutes to list the many ways God has given you the royal treatment in both spiritual and physical ways and thank Him in prayer for your overflowing cup.
8. (v.6) Do you picture God in hot pursuit of you throughout the day to lavish His goodness and lovingkindness upon you, or do you allow some other faulty image of God to rob you of your security and joy in Him?