

Jesus My Shepherd
Psalm 23
The Laurel Center
May 8, 2015

Main Idea: Jesus provides all of my needs both now and forever.

Introduction

The Psalms tend to be one of our most favorite books and were the most quoted books in many situations. They seem to be the nitty-gritty, the rubber meets the road songs of our heart and soul. They help us to grapple with hard times and enjoy the great times. They remind us that God's presence is always with us. Because they give us a way to thank God in all circumstances and to deal with the hard times of life, the Psalms are a favorite.

This series is meant to help us know how to use the Psalms that we already know in our daily lives. No matter what we come up against there is a Psalm for that. Out of the 150 Psalms, our emotions and the ways that we interact with God are on display. Let us take a look at the first song, Psalm 23. The Psalm teaches us to trust in God no matter what our situation may be. Teaches us that because God is with us, we can have peace in his presence.

Text – Psalm 23:1–6

A PSALM OF DAVID. **1** The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. **2** He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. **3** He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. **4** Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will 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 anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. **6** Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

I. The Lord provides all my needs (vv. 1 – 3).

A He lavishly meets physical needs.

- 1 The song begins by using the metaphor of a shepherd to show how God, more specifically Jesus as we will see, provides for all of our needs and leads us to the places where we are taking care of.
- 2 Throughout the old and new Testaments the imagery of a shepherd is also tied to leadership. Through leadership, provision and protection are provided for nations.
- 3 Many of the leaders throughout Israel's history were trained to lead God's people by first leading sheep. Sheep tend to be helpless and also get into trouble as well as needing to be led.

- 4 Moses, David and a host of prophets all began their leadership with shepherding first. It seems to be that the greatest leaders have started in the small place of being shepherds first.
- 5 Shepherding was one of the lowest classes of people in Israel. It was usually given to the youngest son or outsourced because it was considered such a lowly profession.
- 6 Right after the fact of his shepherding is given a one-word verb with a negation. "I shall not want." This word *wanting* contains the ideas of lacking something, being in need, being deficient or missing something, or to be deprived.
- 7 Because of Jesus' leadership, we are never in need and never lacking what we need. We are never deficient or missing something. We are never deprived. The negative suggests what we don't have rather than listing what we do have.
- 8 The Psalm will further contain what we do have in the next few lines specifically with the vivid imagery of the kinds of things that are provided by the shepherd for the sheep.
- 9 These concrete images give our imaginations room to see how God takes care of us. There are a series of verbs that talk about leading. These speak to the leading of the shepherd into good conditions.
- 10 The verbal to live down or to make lie down has behind it the idea of rest from physical labor or activity. This is not the same as the word for sadness but specifically speaks to physical rest.
- 11 Matching with the form of the verb that could mean to lie down to rest, the waters that are still also carries the impression of restfulness or peacefulness. The word "still" has the idea of rest or columnists.

B Be generously meets spiritual needs.

- 1 Beyond peaceful care of the body and leading in the places that cause rest and relaxation, the Lord as a good Shepherd also takes care of the human soul.
- 2 The word for soul connotes the idea of one's being, life or soul. This is the spiritual aspect of the human being. The soul or spirit is closely linked within the bounds of the Old Testament.
- 3 The psalmist says the shepherd "restores my soul." The words soul here is the word for life or soul. But the interesting word here is the word for. Restore.
- 4 The word for restore is the common word of to turn or return. This is the same word used when God begs the Israelites to return to him away from idolatry and back into his arms.

- 5 To restore the soul is to return it to what God originally created it to be. This is in the sense to enter his rest as the writer of Hebrews would put it. It is a spiritual returning to the original place of the soul.
- 6 **Illustration:** It is like when we would wipe a disk drive on a computer and put a clean image on the desk. This would restore the desk to its original settings and programming. It would take care of anything that has corrupted it or extra things you didn't need. It would restore from viruses and give the computer a fresh start.
- 7 Restoring the soul gives it a fresh start and resets it to the place that God wants to take it. It frees the soul from sin and corruption, the damaging things that can destroy the soul and drive the person away from God and away from his intentions and design for it.
- 8 God then reprograms the soul to its original purpose, to follow his paths of righteousness and right doing for all people and things involved. God wants to restore us to a place of holiness as he originally designed as to follow.
- 9 His restoration has to do with taking us to the place that he originally created us to be in. This is the place of doing right before God and humans. This is the place of following God's desires rather than those of sin and our own.
- 10 God's purpose for this is for his name's sake. God wants to restore us to represent him in his character and attributes. The name of a person in the Old Testament speaks to their character.
- 11 God wants to restore us into the original creatures he made us to be, representing him and doing the things that he would desire for us to do. He wants to restore us into the creatures he made us to be.

II. The Lord protects from all danger (vs. 4).

A He protects from all fears.

- 1 We are surrounded by many types of fears. One of the biggest fears is that of death. For the most part, it might be our biggest fear. We are afraid of what would happen when we die.
- 2 But God protects us from those fears because he walks through the worst of our fears with us. No matter how dangerous or scary the fear seems God is with us.
- 3 His presence protects against fear because of his great love for us. As John would say later, "perfect love casts out all fear." We need not fear anything, even death, because God is with us.

- 4 God's presence does not just restore our souls and give us physical rest but it also protects us from our fears. No matter what we are experiencing are dealing with as long as God is with us we can survive it.
- 5 Valleys tend to represent low points in our spiritual and physical life. Valleys represent the trials that we face and the evil that we face. Valleys are the low points in our lives of struggle.
- 6 Even through these times of struggle and trial God's presence is our victory. Because God is with us we had his strength to face every trial in battle and come out victorious.
- 7 The shadow of death has recently become understood to be the shadow of deep darkness. This is a place that no human wants to be. Whether this deep darkness or death neither appealed to us and we are afraid of the possibilities in such a place.
- 8 We must remember that death only became a factor after we sinned against God. Death is the result of sin. Death has two phases. The first is spiritual, separation from God. If one indoors life in this phase, the second phase, physical termination," turn separation from God into its finality in eternal separation.

B He defends against insecurity

- 1 our best defense against the dangers and fears of this world is in calling on God for his protection. In God protects us in three different ways. The second part of verse four tells us God's defenses for us.
- 2 The first defense from fear and evil is the presence of God. The psalmist says that he fears no evil first because God is with him. God's presence casts out all fear.
- 3 The fact that we are not alone in any endeavor that we take whether it be a trial or a blessing gives us great strength encourage. We do not have to worry about relying on our own resources only but have God's resources at our disposal.
- 4 More important than his resources at our disposal is simply being connected to him in his presence. Because God is always with us, we know that we do not fight alone. We have the greatest ally in the Lord of the universe, the one who is most powerful, sees all things and knows all things.
- 5 Second, God has two other tools at his disposal. As our good Shepherd Jesus carries a rod and his staff. These two tools come in handy in different ways.

- 6 The shepherds rod or club was a tool of protection in that it was an offensive weapon. The rod could be used against animals and other things that would prey on the sheep.
- 7 The rod might've had a metal ending on it that can be used to poke with the spike. It could also be used to whack anything coming at the sheep. It could be used like a club as well.
- 8 The third weapon of the Shepherd is the staff itself. The staff would have had a crypt and demonic mostly to manage the sheep and direct them. While this is not a weapon in and of itself, the Lord's leadership in our lives is a true weapon.
- 9 Imagine what it would be like without the Lord's leading in your life. You would not know where to go and what to do. But the fact that God is leading you in the proper direction in that he is leading you away from damaging choices and pitfalls.
- 10 We do not get into all of the circumstances we may have used the Lord did not lead us. His leading is a great weapon because it keeps us from harm simply by telling us which ways to go and what to do.

III. The Lord prospers me forever (vv. 5 – 6).

A He gives sanctuary and favor.

- 1 The third part of this Psalm focuses on God's goodness to us in prosperity. Some scholars try to keep this connected with the shepherd imagery of the first four vs.. But it is most likely that this imagery comes from that of a host rather than a shepherd.
- 2 Hospitality is a key factor and important cultural concepts in the Bible. It seems almost all of the cultures represented in the Bible find hospitality a key to their survival and culture.
- 3 Hospitality rules require that a host takes great care to make his visitors comfortable and to care for all their needs. While the shepherd is mentioned specifically in verse one, the host is alluded to in verses five and six.
- 4 The imagery of verse five is especially astounding because the Lord becomes our host in the midst of the worst situations in life. In the presence of one's enemies, hospitality is not considered an issue.
- 5 But the Lord gives us a feeling of peace and comfort as he acts as a host before us even whenever we are in grave danger all around. Even though there is danger all around us, the Lord treats us as if we are in a total state of peace.

- 6 Though our enemies do not treat us with kindness, the Lord lavishes upon us. The table is a key to fellowship and kindness. It shows the provision of God in the midst of dire circumstances.
- 7 The second act of the Lord as our host is to anoint our head with oil. This was a regular part of entering into a host's house. The host would take care to anoint the face and head of a person with oil.
- 8 Oil would help to keep the skin from becoming cracked in the dry air of the Middle East. It was also a fragrance that would keep any sweat and body odor from becoming too obvious.
- 9 We must not forget that oil is also a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Jesus gives us the oil of his spirit. The Holy Spirit is with us in the midst of our enemies. He teaches us exactly what to do.
- 10 Next, the hostess careful to let her cup overflow were run over. We are more than provided for in lavishly provided for. We need not fear our enemies or the shadow of death because God is more than providing but prospering us..

B He invites into eternal bliss.

- 1 Finally, despite the dangers we find in life the trials and the suffering, the Lord prospers us with goodness and mercy all the days of our life. No matter what's happening around us we have an inner joy peace that cannot be shaken.
- 2 Goodness and mercy are things that we do not deserve but God gives us anyway. The psalmist is careful to say that God will surely do these things. There's no question in the mind of the psalmist that God is blessing him in these ways.
- 3 Sometimes it does not feel like God is on our side were that he is prospering us in every situation. Trials and suffering make it hard to understand that God is always looking out for our very best.
- 4 But these things that the psalmist mentions in these last couple of verses are the natural reality of the believer in Jesus. Whether we feel it or not God is always prospering us and there is nothing that can take us out of his hand.
- 5 In this sense we feel an eternal security in God. Jesus is taking care of our every need and even more than that lavishing his goodness and mercy upon us. Whether we feel are not God is out for our best.
- 6 No matter what comes our way God is prospering us. This does not always look the way we would like it looked. We have one idea of prosperity but there is another that God is actually producing in us.

- 7 Prosperity does not have to do with money or wealth. It can deal with our spiritual blessings in Christ or relationships. There are many ways that God can prosper us in the here and now and in the future.
- 8 The greatest mark of the prosperity of the believer is a place with God in heaven for all eternity. The greatest earthly prosperity is the fact that the world cannot take away our truly or our salvation.
- 9 The last line of the Psalm speaks of dwelling in God's house, the temple in the eyes of the psalmist. How we long to be in God's presence forever and ever.
- 10 While the psalmist refers to the Temple here, God has a temple in heaven for us and we will live in the new Jerusalem in his presence forever in eternity.
- 11 Even though this specifically and historically refers to the Temple in Jerusalem, we can understand this to mean that we will live with God forever in paradise. Heaven will be a wonderful place because God is with us there and we are living in his palpable physical presence.
- 12 No amount of suffering or trial here or danger here can scarce away from the fact that when we die we will be with Christ forever. No matter what comes against us on earth our ultimate prosperity is in the treasures we have in heaven.

Conclusion

The greatest part of looking more closely at Psalm 23 is in knowing that the good Shepherd that is here although he is called Lord, meaning Yahweh our God, is more specifically understood because of John 10 to be the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us that he is the good Shepherd who protects and cares for his sheep. He is the one who is our God and guide and protect her. It is Jesus who provides, protects and prospers us.

He is the greatest leader in shepherd that we will ever know. He is the one looking out for us and interceding for us at the right hand of the father. He is the one building us a permanent and eternal dwelling place with him in heaven. He is the one who is our defense our shield and are rock. He is our refuge and protects us from all things. No matter what we are going through Jesus is the one who walks beside us and gives us his presence and his Holy Spirit. Our comfort comes in the fact that Jesus holds us in the palm of his hand and knows all things that will happen to us. We can trust in the Lord and have confidence in him and have comfort in his taking care of us.