

Our Shepherd, the Good Shepherd

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Part One: The LORD is Our Shepherd

Psalm 23

- 1 A Psalm of David. 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. Verse 1

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

A. Shepherd: Guiding imagery

B. Or '*I shall not be in want*'

1. God's Provision
2. This is at the very least spiritual blessing as in verse 6, though verse 6 seems to be a furtherance of the earthly provisions that God provides for us.
3. Matthew 6 – Jesus promises that the Father clothes the lilies and knows the rise and fall of sparrows, and if we seek first His Kingdom, then we should not worry since He will take care of us.

Matthew 6:31-34

- 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'
- 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.
- 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
- 34 "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

II. Verse 2

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

A. Green pastures: Good grazing areas.

B. Still waters: Not rushing – not dangerous.

Illustration: Sheep were not good swimmers, and it would be easy for sheep to be carried away with the current in a tumultuous river. The LORD brings us to drink from rivers that will satisfy our thirst and that will not carry us off into danger.

Application: The LORD brings us to places of provision that are far from danger. He even brings us to places in which we can rest and lie down, though there is always the danger of a potential attack. Our Shepherd protects us from danger, and He is the author of refreshment and rest.

III. Verse 3

He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

A. Or ‘He brings my soul back’

1. As we will see in verse 4, the Shepherd does not hold his staff and rod in vain. He keeps us on the right path by using His shepherd’s crook to restore us to the fold when we begin to wander.
2. There is a clear rejuvenation theme in this statement, as in verse 2, He brings us to grazing grounds and drinking areas, which also rejuvenates us.

B. God gets the glory out of us living more righteously. He does not keep us on the way of righteousness so that we can boast in our own self-righteousness. God both deserves and gets the glory as we walk in righteousness.

C. The path of righteousness can be paralleled to the narrow path that Jesus talks about in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 7:13-14

13 "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.

14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

Application: Stay on the narrow path of righteousness. Our Shepherd will guide us through it and keep us on the path, but we have to be a part of the flock walking in the right direction in order for that to effectively happen!

IV. Verse 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.

A. Literally, ‘*Valley of deep shadows*’ – the worst of times and events.

Application: Even in the worst of times, we are under the care of the Shepherd of our souls, and thus, as David states, “I will fear no evil.”

B. Rod: Correction

C. Staff: Guidance

Application: The LORD brings us through the messiest of situations in life. He often will carry us through a miserable event. He corrects us through chastisement (cf. Hebrews 12). He guides us through the witness of the Holy Spirit, through Scripture, through the affirmation of others, etc. In all of this, He brings us *comfort*.

V. Verse 5

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

A. You anoint my head with oil – still the Shepherd & sheep imagery. When a shepherd wanted to really make the sheep’s coat shine, he would rub some oil into it.

Parallel: Pantene Pro-V: Makes your hair shine. (No, this is not a paid ad) God takes care of us, *even in the midst of our enemies*. He provides for us liberally and is out for our well-being. This doesn’t mean that we will always be in plenty, but in many scenarios, we have much more provided by God than we realize.

B. My cup overflows: God provides for us more than we can handle. Even in giving, He promises in Malachi 3 to pour out blessings until we have no more need. God never promises to make us rich, but He does desire greatly to make us spiritually rich and ready to affect others who need Jesus.

Illustration: When we go Christmas shopping, we want to get good gifts for our loved ones. This often costs us a lot, even when we do not have a lot. As one cashier told me, ‘Tis the season to be broke!’ We are spiritually blessed in God to overflowing. Even when we are financially strapped, we can pray for His provision, but we can especially know that He has blessed us spiritually to overflowing.

VI. Verse 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.

A. Or, ‘*Goodness and mercy will pursue you.*’ The favor of the LORD is persistent and continuous. As Jesus stands at the door of your heart and knocks for you to let Him in, He desires to give His flock the blessings of His goodness and mercy. We have no greater example of God’s goodness and mercy than His provision of Jesus on the Cross.

1. Goodness

- a. God seeing it fit to provide a sacrifice for us to bring us back to Him.
- b. God providing His own Son as a sacrifice for us.

c. Jesus living a sinless life in order to be a spotless Lamb Sacrifice for us (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:7).

2. Mercy

- God providing a way out of the penalty of sin: death and eternal punishment in hell (cf. Romans 6:23, Mark 9).

B. Eternal dwelling with the LORD

1. Better is one day in His courts than a thousand (many) elsewhere (Psalm 84:10).

2. He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3).

3. He has prepared a place for us (John 14).

4. A New Heaven and a New Earth will be provided for those who trust in Him (Revelation 21).

5. Dwelling with the LORD for eternity will be wonderful and amazing.

Part Two: The Lord is Our Good Shepherd

John 10:11-18

11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

12 He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

13 He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.

15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

Theological Observations: Jesus is our Good Shepherd.

- He provides for us abundantly
- He leads us to spiritual fulfillment
- He brings us comfort
- He is good
- He is merciful
- He guides us
- He cares for us
- He keeps us on the right path
- He lays down His life for us
- He seeks those who are His to come into His flock

Challenges: Which camp are you in?

- Do you need to trust the LORD for provision in various areas of life? Also, have you sought God's wisdom in these areas? If so, now is the time. Know that the Lord knows your needs fully, and that whether He is giving you a financial struggle and wants to increase your faith, or if He has given you plenty in various areas and wants you to help others, listen to His voice as He guides you.
- Are you one of the sheep who have not yet entered into the fold of God? Do you need to commit your life to the Lord and enter into relationship with Him? If so, now is the time. Commit your life to the Lord, repent of your sins (anything you've done that has gone against God's commands), and ask Jesus to enter into your life as your Savior and King.