

The Messenger

"... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans 10:15



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Psalm 23: My Trust Is in the Lord

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Verse 1 begins: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." This passage is the pillar to the whole psalm. It sets the standard for what David is trying to convey. From the first phrase, "The Lord is my shepherd," David evokes rich images of the provision and protection of the covenant – God. It can be necessarily inferred that David had a very personal and special relationship with the Lord, not just from the psalms but also from other scriptures. I Sam. 13:14 tells of God searching for a man after His own heart. So David says, "The Lord is my shepherd." David's image of the relationship between sheep and shepherd shows emotions of care, provision, and protection. A shepherd is a leader to the straying sheep. He is attentive to the sheep and their needs. David makes it clear that he needs the shepherd. David himself is quite familiar with shepherding according to I Samuel 16:11. Here David is described as the youngest of his family and is out tending the sheep. Bethlehem's hills were very suitable for shepherding according to Luke 2:8. A shepherd not only protects and provides for his sheep, he also leads them. This will be addressed in the next few verses of the psalm.

David says in verse 2, "He makes me lie down in green pastures." David's recognition of the shepherd as a leader is addressed in this verse. God's love and care is constant and true and he blesses us with the richest of blessings or greenest of pastures. The shepherd gives the sheep time to rest as he makes them "lie down." This applies directly with Matthew 11:28 where Jesus said, "Come to Me all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus provides rest to all those who desire it, as the Lord in Psalm 23 provides David.

David, still in verse 2 says, "He leads me beside quiet waters." The Lord is truly described and foreshadowed as a leader. It is clear that the Lord knows what is best for His sheep, and to argue this point would be in complete contradiction to this and other scriptures. Jesus says in Matthew 6:8, "Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. The "still waters" are comforting to the sheep. There are streams of peace in a world full of rushing waters with constant currents. With the quiet waters and the green pastures the shepherd provides peace, comfort and safety.

Verse 3 begins with "He restores my soul." David here emphasizes the assurance of forgiveness that the Lord provides. The Lord cares for the sheep to the point of searching for them in an effort to bring them back when straying and lost. A perfect parallel is found in Luke 15 where Jesus tells a parable about one lost sheep among 99 others in the flock. Jesus goes and searches out that lost sheep, leaving the 99 behind, until he finds it (Lk. 15:4).

Still in verse 3 David says, "He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." David presents a path that his shepherd leads him in, and that path is one of righteousness. Such a path could be described as narrow, such as the one described by Jesus in Matthew 7:13, 14, when He says, "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those that find it."

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In verse 4 David says, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for Thou art with me.” It is a true statement that through thick and thin the Lord will be with us; we just have to trust in Him. David says that even though he walks through darkness, he is not afraid.

Why is David so confident in the Lord? In I Samuel 17, David is seen delivering food to his brothers who are at war with the Philistines. When the giant Goliath comes out to curse God, David takes offense to the uncircumcised Philistine and wants to fight him (I Sam. 17:26). When he is given the chance, he shows great confidence in the Lord. David very courageously says to Goliath, “I will kill you and take off your head” (vs. 46, 47). David expresses the same confidence in Psalm 23 as in I Samuel 7.

Verse 5 can be broken down into three parts. The first part says, “Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” David speaks of a feast prepared for him by the Lord. A parallel is found in Luke 14 where Jesus is seen offering a feast for many, especially those in need. Again the shepherd is seen as *the* supporter and *the* provider. The second part of this verse says, “Thou hast anointed my head with oil.” In ancient times oil was used for various purposes. Anointing or perfuming the banquet guests was a gracious gesture by the host. Over in I Samuel 16:13 Samuel anoints David as King of Israel. The third part of the verse says, “My cup overflows.” This concludes the verse with a sense of completeness. David says that his cup overflows. What David is referring to is the blessings that have been granted bountifully.

Finally, verse 6 says, “Surely goodness and loving-kindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Here again we see great trust in the Lord by David. David begins and finishes the psalm with confidence in the Lord as his shepherd.

Psalm 23 is a psalm that shows true confidence in the Master Shepherd. Do we have confidence in the Lord as David did? We can. I am reminded of passages such as Joshua 1:9, Deuteronomy 31:6, and Jeremiah 1:8, where the people of God long ago were told not to be afraid, and were promised by God that He would be with them all the way. In Hebrews 13:5 God promised, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you, so that we confidently say, the Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me?” In Matthew 28:20 Jesus promised, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Psalm 23 also speaks of assurance through both prosperity and adversity, David says that even though he walks through darkness, he will fear no evil. It is amazing to see how David, in Psalm 23, says he *walks through the valley of the shadow of death*, yet makes it clear that his *cup overflows*. If we will let the Lord lead as a shepherd as He did David, our cup will overflow.

Finally, Psalm 23 deals with a hope of dwelling in the house of the Lord. Gaebelien writes, “The psalmist draws comfort that God’s love and presence are constant. His ‘goodness and love’ reflect the attributes of Yahweh, the covenant faithful God.” He also gives an excellent interpretation of what *dwelling in the house of the Lord* actually means when he says, “The psalmist’s experience of God’s ‘goodness and love’ is equivalent to *dwelling in the house of the Lord*” (Gaebelien 218).

To be continued.