

The LORD is My Shepherd Psalm 23

A Psalm of David.

Ps 23:1 ¶ The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. 3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

Shepherd is a Hebrew word which means *to tend a flock; to pasture or graze a flock; to rule; to associate with as a friend, a companion, keep company with, make friendship with, to keep sheep, to pastor.*

"The LORD is my shepherd," What does a good shepherd do? The shepherd is the one who takes complete care of the sheep. He sees to their protection, to their feeding, that they are watered, that they have proper place to lie down and chew the cud, so that they may grow and maintain good health. The shepherd leads them down safe paths, so they are not in danger of hurt, or harm, wherever he leads them.

In this Psalm, David makes five declarations which we wish to examine.

"I shall not want" Want means *to lack; to fail, be abated, bereave, decrease, have lack, make lower.*

We believe that this Psalm was written, at the point in David's life, when God has given him rest from all his enemies. David is telling us: God chose me to be king over Israel, when I was just a lad, a young shepherd keeping my father's sheep. God took me under the wings of his protection and has been the Shepherd of my life. Wherefore, I have no reason to believe that God will not continue to supply my every need.

Let us look at the first, of the five Jehovah, plus something, names, of God seen in: **Ge 22:14 and** see if it tells us what David is saying. **Ge 22:14; 13 "And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. 14 And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen."** JEHOVAH-JIREH means *God will see to it, or God will provide.* It is the name given by Abraham to the place, the altar, where he sacrificed a ram, provided by God, instead of his son Isaac. This is the prophetic picture of what Jesus Christ would do for us, by offering himself on the cross as our sacrifice for sins.

If God has chosen you; If God has opened your spiritual eyes, so that you can see Jesus Christ as the ram caught up in the thicket by the horns, who has been offered on the altar of the cross, that you might live; If you believe that God has provided everything needed, for the eternal redemption of your sins; If you believe in the finished work of Jesus Christ, you can also say with David **"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."**

However, if you believe that you have got to do something, besides what Christ has already done to remove your sin debt, you cannot say **"I shall not want,"** because you are still wanting something besides Christ and him crucified, risen and exalted.

"The LORD is my shepherd;" "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures" The first definition of pastures is *a home, a habitation, a pleasant place*, which for sheep would be like a sheep fold. The second definition is a *pasture*, which is like a good field where the shepherd would build a sheep cote or carry the sheep to feed. The good shepherd will provide a place of safety and quiet where the sheep may lie down and ruminate. The sheep cote would be a place from which the good shepherd has already driven out the foes and is keeping watch that they do not return to devour the sheep. The sheep fold will not be among the thorns and thistles, for there would be no rest there. The sheep will not grow, and they will die of eating unhealthy things.

Now, let us look at the second of the Jehovah- names that refer us to God, seen in: **Ex 17:15 "And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi: 16 For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."** JEHOVAH-NISSI means *God is my banner.* It is the name Moses gave the altar he built after God defeated the Amalekites. David is saying, because God is my shepherd, God has given me a home in Jerusalem, and God has provided me rest from my enemies, wherefore, I can rest easy under the banner of his name. I can lie down and rest in the abundance of God's marvelous grace, because I am safe and secure in his care.

Can you say with David? **"The LORD is my shepherd;" "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures,"** Have you entered the sheep fold, the church, where there is food and protection? Are you trusting in the defeat that the Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ, has had over Satan and sin? Do you believe that he has paid the eternal sin debt that you could not pay? Do you believe in the eternal security of the child of God? If you believe these things, then you have been brought to green pastures, and you are being fed by the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, the word of God. If you are walking in church fellowship, with regular church attendance, so that you are on a steady diet of good wholesome food; then you can say with David **"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures."**

"The LORD is my shepherd;" "He leadeth me beside the still waters" Why would the shepherd lead the sheep beside still waters? Sheep are not good swimmers. If they get into turbulent water, they are very apt to drown, and thus be lost to the shepherd. The good shepherd knows this, and he will not lead them to turbulent waters to drink. He will take them where the water is still, or moving softly, so they can drink in safety. The third Jehovah- name of God is found in scripture in: **Jg 6:24; 22 "And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face. 23 And the LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die. 24 Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovahshalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites."** JEHOVAH-SHALOM means *God is peace*. It comes from **Jg 6:23 "Peace be unto thee."** It is the name, that Gideon gave the altar he built, after the angel of the Lord (the pre-incarnate Christ) has convinced him that he is called of God to lead Israel to battle, and that God will defeat the invading forces. Thus, we understand that David is saying; God has fought, and is still fighting, my battles. David understands; God will not lead him into temptation, where the waters of life are very turbulent, and he is apt to be drowned.

Can you witness with David and say? **"The LORD is my shepherd;" "He leadeth me beside the still waters"** Do you understand that Christ Jesus, in your new birth, has delivered you from the turbulent waters of life? What do you mean? Because the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, knows that you cannot swim good enough to eternally save yourself in the turbulent waters of sinfulness; He has endured the turbulent waters for you, and brought you out of them into the sweet peaceful waters, which flow from the fountain of living waters, found in Christ. The church of salvation by grace is our refuge of still waters. Do you notice; when times are tough, and it seems that the whole world is against you; yet, by the grace of God, you can look within and see, and feel, the calm assurance of Christ? Do you remember, and practice, the scripture teaching in: **Ps 46:10 "Be still, and know that I am God:"** If you do, then you can say with David **"The LORD is my shepherd;" "He leadeth me beside the still waters."**

"The LORD is my shepherd;" "He restoreth my soul" Sheep are ruminating animals, which means they chew the cud. The shepherd, knowing the needs of the sheep and he feeds them in the green pastures. When they are full he allows them to lie down and chew their cud. While the sheep chewing their cud; they are resting their bodies and their bodies are being restored. They are being refreshed, and they are gaining strength, to be able have productive lives. While they feed, and chew the cud, the shepherd is in a place where he can oversee all that is happening and insure their safety. Scripture prophesies of this place in: **Eze 48:35 "and the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there."**

"The LORD is there" is the Hebrew word JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH, even though the Hebrew word is not written here. This is a prophesy of the restoration of fallen Jerusalem, which is to happen in the future. David was driven from the throne of Israel, in Jerusalem, because he sinned against God, and he had to suffer judicial judgment for his sin. However, God did bring David back to sit upon the throne in Jerusalem again. Wherefore, David could say **"He restoreth my soul."**

Can you say with David? **"The LORD is my shepherd;" "He restoreth my soul"** The daily struggles of life oftentimes take us far from the things of God. Each day, we should take time to chew the cud meaning: we are to remember, the work, of procuring eternal life and eternal forgiveness of sins, has been completed by our Saviour, and give him thanks. We should remember and ruminate on the preached, and taught, gospel of Christ. We should remember the word of God that we have read and studied. We should remember the divine fellowship that God has given us in church fellowship. We should remember the love of the Great Shepherd and

trust in Him fully. If we do these things daily, then we can lie down to rest each night with peace in our heart, and mind, and we can say with David **"The LORD is my shepherd;" "He restoreth my soul"**

"The LORD is my shepherd;" "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" We find in: **Ps 4:1 "Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer."** David understood that God was his righteousness, and that David was the sinner who needed deliverance. He prays that God will hear his prayer. David well understood; the path that God had laid out for him was the righteous path. It was the path of being a faithful servant to God, living and working to fulfill all that God designed for him to do, and thereby he would bring glory and honor to God.

Now, let us look at the text in: **Jer 23:6; 5 "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. 6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."** This text is a prophecy of the coming Messiah, Christ Jesus, who is **"THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."** The name for **"THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS"** is the Hebrew word JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU, which is the last of the Jehovah- names we find expressed in scripture, even though the actual word is not here.

Can you say with David **"He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."** Have you been born-again and made your public profession of faith in Jesus? Have you joined the church of salvation by grace provided for us by Jesus? Have you been baptized by immersion, following the example of Jesus? If you have done these things; If you are walking in fellowship in the church; If you are attending church regularly; if you are worshipping God daily; if you are praying to God in the name of Jesus; If you are serving God in faithfulness; with the attitude of thy will, not mine, be done, then you are **"walking in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."** Because, our faithful walking, in faith in Christ, brings glory, and honor, to the name of the Lord. Therefore, you can freely own with David in saying **"The LORD is my shepherd;" "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake"**

As we consider these thoughts and bible truths, it puts our minds and heart in a right perspective of what we should mean when we say, **"The LORD is my shepherd."** Let us ask ourselves daily; did my walks and talks today, exemplify that we believe **"The LORD is my shepherd."** Can others, both the saved and the unsaved, look at our lives and see that we are wholly committed to God as King David was? We see in Acts 13:22 God said of David he is **"a man after mine own heart."** David was king over Israel, a shepherd of the flock, yet King David understood that he was under **"The Shepherd."** This is a wonderful reminder that we are the sheep, and Jesus Christ is the Shepherd.

Remember, King David was a man of flesh and he made his mistakes, some of which are recorded in scripture, but, David always repented of his sins and returned to God with his whole heart. This should be a comfort to us, that as David was a man after God's own heart, so are we. We know our lives will not be perfect in our walks here in time, but, if our focus and attention is upon our Saviour and Lord, we can always say with King David; **"The LORD is my shepherd."**

In closing; we are reminded of scripture in: **Joh 10:27-28; 27 "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."** We give thanks, and praises, to our Saviour, and God, that He is the great Shepherd of our souls, and our bodies. Hallelujah! Amen!

The bible declares in **Joh 10:1 ¶ "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. 2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. 4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. 5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."** I once saw a video of this actually happening. There were five people who were looking at a herd of sheep in a pasture from a good distance off. Each person in turn used the same words that the owner used to call the sheep. When the strangers called the sheep, the sheep did not even look up but continued feeding. However, when their shepherd called them, they immediately looked up, and when he called them again, they all began to hasten to him. A person, who has been gifted the new birth,

can hear and understand the voice of Jesus calling to them. They look up to him, and as Jesus calls them, they will hasten to come to him.

The second is historical in reference to sheep that continually stray away from the flock and do not respond to the voice of the shepherd. Usually these are lambs, which are just feeding haphazardly and are soon gone from the sight of the flock. They are not responding to the voice of the good shepherd. When the shepherd sees the continual disregard of his voice in a lamb, he will go get lamb and he will break one leg of the lamb. The shepherd will fix the leg so it will heal properly and not be a problem for the lamb as it grows up. However, with the broken leg, the lamb is now completely dependent upon the shepherd and must remain in close contact with the shepherd. Once the leg is healed, the lamb will no longer stray away from the flock, because now it has become attached to the voice, and the daily care, of the shepherd.

This gives us the picture of our great Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and how he tends to the sheep, the children of God. If we are continually straying away from God, he will bring great affliction upon us, which will cause us to draw near to him, and make us desire to remain close to our Shepherd and to love and heed the voice of our Saviour. Thus, we see the picture of **Joh 10:4 "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice."**

4 "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

King David recognized that he was living in the land of the grave, which is what **"the shadow of death"** means. David also understood that there would be a resurrection of the dead. We understand that here in time, we are living in the land of the grave. Except Christ return before our natural death, we all expect to go to the grave. If have eternal life in Christ Jesus you go to heaven, in the resurrection of the dead in Christ.

"I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;" Evil means **bad adversity, affliction, calamity, or distress**. King David knew there was evil on this earth, for he lived a life that was filled with adversity and affliction and witnessed much evil. We remind you; King David is now an old man, looking to go the grave shortly, with experiential knowledge from his long life, and he understands completely, I have no reason to fear evil for God is on my side.

True Christians do not fear evil, though they may dread to have to endure the consequences of evil, because they know that Christ is in them. They know that they have something that the world and Satan do not have, which is the power of Christ in us. We know that the power of Christ is greater than the power of Satan and all the evil that is in this world, as seen in: **Ro 8:31 "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."** If you have **"Christ in you,"** as you go through life you will grow in faith, as you experience God's continual deliverance from evil. Like King David, as you grow in experiential knowledge, your faith and trust in God will grow stronger.

"thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Rod has the meaning **to branch off; a scion, (scion means lineage, a clan or tribe) a stick for punishing, writing, fighting, ruling, walking, etc., sceptre, staff**. My first thought of a rod is Aaron's rod that budded and bore fruit, which identified Aaron as the Lord's chosen high priest. The high priest office always followed the lineage of Aaron, and the priesthood the tribe of Levi. We are identified by God, in the new birth, as priests to God, and our claim to lineage of priesthood is through Jesus Christ the true High Priest. It is not only a prophesy of the New Testament Church, but of every child of God for whom Christ died. The rod, representative of the New Testament Church, which like Aaron's rod, which was a dry branch until the sacrificial law was completely fulfilled in Jesus Christ, is still bearing fruit, and will continue to do so, until the last child of Grace is born again.

The rod, as a stick for punishing, is the picture of God's judicial judgment upon us when we turn away from Him. Remember the scripture in **Heb 12:8 "But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."** If there is no chastening from God in our lives, it is evidence that we are not a child of God.

What about a staff? The word used here means **support, sustenance, or a walking stick**. Since the object of this chapter is "The Shepherd," we also recognize that most shepherds have a staff. In application to the life of a child of God, The Shepherd is our support, sustenance, and our walking stick. It is the power of Christ in us, the

Holy Spirit, which gives us support. Without the support of Jesus in our lives, we could not live the life of a child of God. Jesus is our bread of life, and therefore, He is our sustenance. Jesus, and His Word of Truth, are what we lean upon, and use to assist us in our pilgrimage here on earth.

Do you remember that one of the definitions of rod was a staff? Therefore, we can see a shepherd using his staff as a walking stick, as a tool of defense for the flock of sheep, and also as a tool of admonition to unruly sheep. Historically, a shepherd's staff had a crook on the end that he could use to pull a sheep back from danger. This also demonstrates a tool of admonition. It is easy for a child of God to get caught up in the things of this world and lose sight of their shepherd, but The Shepherd will draw them back unto himself, with lovingkindness. With these thoughts in mind, it is easy to see how King David could say "***The Lord is my Shepherd,***" "***thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.***" King David had experienced both and was of a glad heart that God loved him enough to use both upon him. Every child of God can say the same.

5 "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." Table means ***a table that is spread with a meal.*** King David knew that every meal he ate was by the blessing of God. King David also knew that he always had enemies in this life. Even in this time of peace that he was experiencing, he knew there were enemies lurking about and working to try to take him from the throne that God had set him upon. The same is true in the life of a child of God. When we read the written word of God and see our Saviour in the words, there is a table spread with food for us. When we hear the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, there is a table spread with food for us. When we fellowship with God's people, there is a table spread with food for us.

There is also another table, to which we sit down and partake of the bread and wine, which are representative of the body and blood of our blessed Saviour, known to us as the Lord's Supper.

Prophetically, we see that our Saviour, who gave his life for our eternal salvation, did so in the presence of his, and our, enemies. Our Saviour overcame all these enemies and brought peace into the hearts of God's people, even though we too are surrounded by enemies, the most dangerous being our own sin nature.

"thou anointest my head with oil;" King David was anointed to be king over Israel from a horn of oil. God sent the prophet Samuel to do this anointing, which must have often given King David hope when he was experiencing great tribulations. How, you ask? There was a long time between, when David was anointed, until he became king on the throne over all of Israel. When he was experiencing great trials and tribulations, David had the promise of God that he would be king over Israel, therefore, David could understand that God would protect him to fulfill his promise to David.

Every child of grace has been anointed with oil, the Holy Spirit presence of Jesus in them. We have the promise of Jesus that he will return and take us to the place he has prepared for us, thus we are anointed with joy and peace in our hearts, for God cannot lie. We are told in Revelation that we are made kings and priests to God, therefore, figuratively, we have had our heads anointed with oil, as King David.

"my cup runneth over." What cup is King David talking about? He is speaking to us of the cup of the blessings of God, which were so abundant in his life, that his life was overflowing with these blessings. The same is true in the lives of the children of God. Though in the struggles of life it may not seem so, but the knowledge that you have been saved eternally, and your sins are eternally forgiven, is to each child of God a cup overflowing with the blessings of God.

6 "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

6 "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:" King David knew that God would be with him all the days of his life, from the time he was anointed until his death. We know this is true because we are told in ***1Sa 16:13 "Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward."*** This gives us a picture of what happens in the new birth. The Spirit of the Lord comes upon us from that day forward, until death. With the Spirit of the Lord, we have goodness and mercy all the days of our lives.

"and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever." Even though King David did not have the New Testament scriptures, he knew that there would be a resurrection of the dead, and then he would ***"dwell in the***

house of the LORD forever." The same is true for every child of God. We are told of this in ***1Th 4:13-18; 13 ¶***
"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

We can comfort ourselves, and one another, with this Psalm of David. ***"The LORD is my shepherd;" "and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."*** Hallelujah! Amen!