

# The Shepherd Psalm #1

**Introduction.** Psalm 23 is without doubt one of the most loved passages in all of the Bible. Its message continues to comfort our souls, especially during times of sorrow, even though it is 3,000 years old. It has 15 lofty themes to ponder and love. And its messages are just as fresh and meaningful to us today as ever. Today we will explore the comforting lessons of Psalm 23.

## ***I. Faith – “The Lord is my shepherd”***

- A. These words declare the simplicity of David’s faith in God as the One who laid the foundations of the earth, yet is ever mindful of His creation (Psalm 138:6)
- B. Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd..." in John 10:11.
  - 1. The church is His flock of sheep (John 10:16; Acts 20:28).
  - 2. His sheep hear His voice and follow Him (John 10:27; cp. Romans 10:17).
  - 3. They do not follow strangers (John 10:5).
    - a) Many of His sheep today are beginning to follow strangers.
    - b) Denominationalism in the world or even the denominationalism which is within the body of Christ make them no longer Christ’s sheep.

## ***II. Assurance – “I shall not want”***

- A. Perhaps David’s experience with the Lord convinced him of this (cp. 1 Samuel 17:32-37). This assurance comes from well founded teaching (Psalm 37:23-25; Matthew 6:33).
- B. God will supply our needs:
  - 1. Blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).
  - 2. Sow bountifully and reap bountifully (2 Corinthians 9:6-11).
  - 3. Knock and ask (Matthew 7:7-8).
  - 4. He will never leave us (Hebrews 13:5-6).
- C. The first two phrases of Psalm 23 taken together express faith and assurance (cp. Hebrews 10:22; 11:1).

## ***III. Contentment – “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures”***

- A. There is no greater way to express this contentment than by peaceful sheep lying in lush pastures (cp. 1 Timothy 6:6-8).
- B. Failing to be satisfied leads to other sins:
  - 1. Covetousness (Luke 12:13-15).
  - 2. Envy, jealousy, and strife (Philippians 1:17; 1 Timothy 6:4)
- C. Surely we could learn from Paul’s experience how to be content (Philippians 4:11-13).

## ***IV. Peace – “He leadeth me beside the still waters”***

- A. Restless and troubled waters are dangerous. The still, quiet waters are peaceful and safe (Mark 4:36-41).
- B. Jesus is our “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).
  - 1. The peace of God will keep or guard us (Philippians 4:7).

2. Those who follow the Lord are peacemakers (Matthew 5:9; Romans 12:18; 14:19; Ephesians 4:3; 1 Peter 3:10-12).
- C. However, there can be no cowardice.
  1. Realize it is a spiritual battle (2 Corinthians 10:3-6).
  2. Put on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:10).
  3. Fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12).
- D. There can be no peace at any price.
  1. Peace should be sought, but not at the cost of purity (James 3:17).
  2. Obeying God may mean war if one is really serious (Matthew 10:34).

#### **V. Life — “He restoreth my soul”**

- A. With our first breath we become a living soul, and when the spirit departs we die (James 2:26).
- B. To restore the soul seems to imply life again.
  1. The answer to Job’s question in Job 14:14 is yes.
  2. This is why David was not afraid to walk through the valley of the shadow of death. He could go to him (2 Samuel 12:22-23). Evidently David knew of the resurrection (Psalm 16:10; cp. Acts 2:31).
  3. The resurrection of Christ foreshadows our resurrection (John 5:28-29; 11:25).

#### **VI. Leadership — “He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake”**

- A. The Lord leads and David followed.
  1. Man cannot direct his own steps (Proverbs 20:24).
  2. David was led by God through the teaching of the Old Testament.
  3. Today God leads us through the New Testament as it was revealed through the Holy Spirit (John 16:13-15; Romans 8:2, 14).
    - a) God’s plan for righteousness is found in the gospel (Romans 1:16-17).
    - b) All of us are to walk by this same rule and look to Jesus (Philippians 3:15-16; Hebrews 12:1-2).
- B. The Lord leads and we are to follow.
  1. It is sad but true that men refuse to deny themselves to follow Christ (Luke 9:23). They would rather follow blind guides (Matthew 15:13-14).
  2. The Lord is no blind guide.
    - a) He is the good shepherd and cares for the sheep (John 10:1-4, 11-14).
    - b) We can follow with confidence.
- C. The Lord has the words of life.
  1. Peter and the disciples could not look elsewhere (John 6:66-68).
  2. Now He has proven that He can and will lead us through the valley of the shadow of death. He has been there (Hebrews 2:14-15).
  3. And He proved that man can and will be raised from the dead (Acts 2:24; Colossians 2:15).
- D. The Lord leads in paths of righteousness.
  1. He is the end of the Law for righteousness (Romans 10:4).
  2. Our present system of righteousness is of God by faith (Philippians 3:8-9).

- E. We are to walk as He walked (1 John 2:5-6; 1 Peter 2:21), and He does not ask us to do what He was not willing to do.
  - 1. He was about His father's business (Luke 2:49).
  - 2. He was baptized (Matthew 3:15,16).
  - 3. He was tempted (Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 4:15).
  - 4. He ministered (Matthew 4:23; Acts 10:38).
  - 5. He suffered (1 Peter 2:23-24).
  - 6. He died a martyr's death (Revelation 2:10).
- F. Follow Him and He will lead you to obedience, peace, and rest (Matthew 11:28; Hebrews 5:8-9).

**VII. Confidence — “*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death*”**

- A. This is confidence that where He leads and I follow, all will come out right.
- B. The valley is figurative of the earth where death reigns.
  - 1. While it is the land of the living, it is also the region of the dying.
  - 2. This was the region of David's walk and ours as well.
  - 3. This is where evil men roam who befall us.
- C. The shadow of death is constantly about us.
  - 1. We read about it every day. We see it, hear it, and we are touched by it.
  - 2. Even those who seem to take life for granted and death as nothing are touched by its shadow.
  - 3. Most humans realize the frailty of life and the ever-lurking presence of fear and death (Ecclesiastes 9:5). The walk is the walk all men must take (Hebrews 9:27). To those whose shepherd is God there is no fear of evil.
- D. Such confidence is born of hope (2 Corinthians 5:6, 8; Philippians 1:23). What gives us this confidence? The promises of God (2 Peter 1:4).
- E. All the fear of death should be removed from us (Hebrews 2:14-15). We should not fear it or man who can harm us (Hebrews 13:5-6).

**Conclusion.** Psalm 23 describes the Christian's constant communion with God that calms his fears and brings peace to his soul. All whose shepherd is the Lord can have the same assurance as David. It teaches us to trust God for guidance, to lean on Him in trouble, and to hope in Him for eternity.