

## **THE LORD OUR SHEPHERD IS: --**

**Psa.23**

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. Do you suppose we fully appreciate what a great blessing it is to be able to truthfully and scripturally say “the Lord is my shepherd?” An exegesis of Psa.23 will help.
2. Before studying Psa.23 think about what the Lord says in the N.T. He says:
  - a. His “sheep hear his voice,” give audience to, understand, receive, obey, Jno.10:3.
  - b. His “sheep follow him: for they know his voice,” Jno.10:4.
  - c. His sheep “a stranger they will not follow,” Jno.10:5. (they will not listen to false teachers)
  - d. His sheep know him, and he knows them, Jno.10:14.
  - e. His sheep make up “one fold” or one flock, Jno.10:16.
3. But do you realize that his flock is the church , the body of the saved, the redeemed, Ac.20:28,29; 1Pet.5:1-3; Cf. 1Tim.3:14, 15; Eph.4:4-6; 1:22,23; Ac.2:47.
4. Therefore, if the Lord is your shepherd, you are of necessity one who has by faith obeyed the gospel and become one of his sheep, a member of his one flock, the church.
5. If that be true, it is the only way you can scripturally claim the Lord as your shepherd.
6. According to Psa.23, if we are the Lord’s sheep, then he is our Shepherd. That being true, then according to Psa.23, the Lord as our Shepherd is: ---

### **II. DISCUSSION**

#### **A. THE ONE WHO SUPPLIES ALL OF OUR SPIRITUAL NEEDS, V.1.**

1. As our Shepherd he makes all needful provision for us.
2. He is the one who feeds, protects, guides.
3. In him and through him we can lack no spiritual good.
4. No loving care shall be lacking; our soul is sufficiently supplied, blessed with all its needs.

5. The words “shall not want,” as applied by the psalmist, would embrace everything that could be a proper object of desire in harmony with God’s grace in the interest of our soul and its spiritual welfare.
  - a. Cf. Psa.34:9: “O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.
  - b. Shall not “suffer need.” It does not mean that God’s people will always obtain their desires or wishes, but will be supplied with their actual needs as sheep of the Lord’s pasture.
6. In him there is no spiritual famine. Cf. Phil.4:19.

**B. THE ONE WHO MAKES US TO LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES, V.2a.**

1. “Green pastures” are pastures that are always fresh; always rich, never exhausted.
2. There is no fear of biting the bare ground where the grass is long enough for the flock to bed down in; in such a pasture there is enough provision for the flock and some to spare.
3. Sweet and full is the doctrine of Christ, the word of the Lord (Psa.19:10; 119:103; 141:6); for food for souls, as green tender grass is natural nutriment for sheep.
4. When by faith we are enabled to find rest in his promises, we are like the sheep that lie down in the green pastures; we find at the same moment both provender and peace, rest and refreshment, serenity and satisfaction for the soul.
5. But observe: It is “**HE**” that “maketh me to lie down in green pastures.” It is the Lord himself who graciously enables us to perceive the preciousness of his truth, and to feed our soul upon it.
6. How grateful ought we to be for the power, the ability, and the opportunity to appropriate his promises!
7. “Lie down” here does not mean to be prone, with the body extended as if from exhaustion. It describes one in a position of comfort and contentment – needs being completely supplied. Cf. Mt.11:28-30.

**C. THE ONE WHO LEADS US BESIDE STILL WATERS, V.2b.**

1. The Christian’s life consists in gracious activity. We not only think, but we act. We are not always lying down to feed, but are

journeying onward toward perfection; hence, we read, “he leadeth me beside the still waters.”

2. What are these “still waters” but the influence and blessedness of his grace through his Spirit-revealed word attending and leading us in various operations of his will like waters – in the plural – bringing peace and hope to our soul. He is our peace. Eph.2:14.
3. It is commonly said that, “Still waters run deep and that nothing is more noisy than an empty drum.”
4. The Lord leads us beside these “still waters;” We could not go there of ourselves, we need his guidance; therefore, it is said, “he leadeth me.” Cf. Jer.10:23.
5. The Lord does not drive us; he leads; he says, come; he says, follow me.

#### **D. THE ONE WHO RESTORES OUR SOUL, V.3a.**

1. A shepherd was supposed to provide food to restore or nourish the bodies of his sheep, his flock, which he did by leading them in the pastures described in the preceding verse – “green pastures.”
2. The Lord as the spiritual Shepherd provides spiritual food for the souls of his spiritual sheep, which consists of the instruction found in his written word originating with the Father and given to his sheep by means of the Spirit- inspired Apostles, which revives and reinvigorates the soul. Cf. Psa.19:7.
3. It refers to the spirit when exhausted, weary, troubled, anxious, worn down with care and toil – not to the soul as wondering or backsliding from the Lord.
4. The heart, thus wearied, he re-animates. He brings back its vigor; he encourages it; excites it to new effort; fills it with new joy.

#### **E. THE ONE WHO LEADS US IN THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR HIS NAME’S SAKE, V.3b.**

1. The Christian as the Lord’s sheep delights to be obedient, but it is the obedience of faith working by love, to which he is constrained by his Master, his Shepherd – “He leadeth me”
2. The Christian is not obedient to some commandments and neglectful of others; he does not pick and choose; he yields to all. Cf. Jas.2:10.

3. He does not suffer his sheep to wander in ways that would lead to ruin. Notice that the plural is used – “the paths of righteousness,” right paths, or right ways; straight paths; righteous ways; ways of truth and holiness.
4. Whatever is required of us in being led in the paths of righteousness, we by faith do it, led by his love and his example as revealed in his word.
5. We are led by our Shepherd in “the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake” – on account of his name’s sake; for his own sake. It is to the honor and for his glory we submit to be led; thus being holy for he is holy.
6. There can be no true and lasting happiness or blessedness apart from true holiness (Cf. Psa.1:1-6). And there can be no walking in the paths of righteousness in and of our own selves. Cf. Jer.10:23; Psa.197-12; 119:11,105.
7. Naturally it would be in the paths of righteousness that he leads his sheep; for he can lead in no other paths than such as he himself walks. Cf. 1Jno.1:5-7.

**F. THE ONE WHO IS WITH US AND REMOVES OUR FEAR OF EVIL THOUGH WE WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH, V.4. Cf. Heb.2:11-15.**

1. Read the verse slowly emphasizing every word, every thought; for each one has a wealth of meaning stirring up great feeling in the heart of the believer as the Lord’s sheep.
2. “Yea, though I walk, I will fear no evil,” – as if the believer did not or could not quicken his pace when and if he came to die, but still he calmly walks by faith with the Shepherd of his soul.
  - a. To thus walk indicates the steady advance of the soul which knows its road, knows its end, resolves to follow the path, feels quite safe, and is therefore calm and composed. Cf. Paul in Phil.1:21-24; 2Tim.4:6-8.
  - b. The dying saint is not in a flurry; he does not run as though he were alarmed, nor stand still as though he would go no further; he is not confounded nor ashamed, and therefore keeps to his own pace. Cf. 1Jno.2:28; 4:17.
  - c. Observe that it is not walking “IN” the valley, but “THROUGH” the valley of the shadow of death.”
    - (1) The believer, faithful to the end, walks through the dark tunnel of death to emerge into the light of immortality. Cf. 1Cor.15:51-57.

- (2) We do not die, we do be sleep to wake in glory.
  - (3) Death is not the house, but the porch; not the goal, but the passage to it.
  - (4) The darkness of death is but a shadow after all. The shadow of the dog cannot bite; of the sword cannot harm; nor is death the fatal end.
- 4. "I will fear no evil"
    - a. He does not say there shall not be any evil, but "I will fear no evil," not even the Evil One himself.
    - b. Why do I fear not evil?
  - 5. "For thou art with me"
    - a. This is the joy of the Christian, the Lord's sheep; thus he not fear.
    - b. Remember: He leads; he makes me to lie down; he restores my soul.
    - c. To do this, he would have to be with me. We have this assurance.
  - 6. "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" – We have not only his presence, but his comfort and his protection!

**G. THE ONE WHO PREPARES A TABLE BEFORE US IN THE PRESENCE OF OUR ENEMIES, V.5a.**

- 1. "Thou preparest a table before me"
  - a. Cf. V.1, which says, "I shall not want"
  - b. The word "table" here is synonymous with *feast*; and the meaning is, "thou providest for my wants" or my needs.
  - c. "Before me" or for me. It is spread for me in the very presence of mine enemies; that is, in spite of them, or so that they could not and cannot prevent it.
  - d. They are compelled to look on in spite of themselves and see how he provides for us; they see it as proof of his divine favor.

**H. THE ONE WHO ANOINTS OUR HEAD WITH OIL AND OVERFLOWS OUR CUP, V.5b.**

- 1. "Thou anointest my head with oil"
  - a. Strong (1878) "a prim. Root; to be fat; spec. to anoint; fig. to satisfy; from (1880) make (wax) fat...fatness, i.e., (fig) abundance."
  - b. In harmony with this idea, Barnes' notes: "Marg., as in Heb., makest fat. That is, thou doest pour oil on my head so abundantly that it seems to be made fat with it. The

expression indicates abundance. The allusion is to the custom of anointing the head on festival occasions, as an indication of prosperity and rejoicing...And the whole is indicative of the Divine favor, or prosperity, and of joy.” Cf. Mt.6:17; Lk.6:45,46.

2. “My cup runneth over”
  - a. Our cup is not simply full; it overflows; we have an abundance. Cf. Eph.3:20.
  - b. It’s an expressive metaphor, indicative of a state of bliss experienced by the believer.
3. The expression in V.5 means our lot is wholly satisfactory.

**I. THE ONE WHO OF A SURETY MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR GOODNESS AND MERCY TO FOLLOW US ALL THE DAYS OF OUR LIFE, V.6a.**

1. This is a fact made possible by the Lord as our Shepherd that is as indisputable as it is encouraging, and therefore a heavenly *verily*, or “*surely*” is set as a seal upon it.
2. These twin blessings – goodness and mercy – follow the sheep all the days of their earthly life –the good days as well as the bad days; through all its changes; in every variety of situation; until we reach its close.

**J. THE ONE WHO OF A SURETY MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO FINALLY DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER, V.6b.**

1. This should be at once the crown of all our hopes for the future.
2. There it is – a happy eternity. Cf.Jno.3:16-18; 1Jno.2:24,25; Rom.8:24,25,35-39.

**III. CONCLUSION**

1. Can you truthfully, scripturally, confidently, and most assuredly in full faith say, “The Lord is **MY** shepherd”?
2. If so, what goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life as a believer, and what hope you have of dwelling in the house of the Lord forever – if you maintain that faith and retain that relationship with the Lord as your Shepherd!
3. If not, you need to become one of the Lord’s sheep by believing and obeying the gospel this very hour!