

Psalm 23

In describing the Creator God as a shepherd, David wrote out of his own personal experience because he had spent his early years caring for sheep, [1 Samuel 16:10-11].

Sheep are completely dependent on the shepherds for provision of grazing, guidance and protection.

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is called the Good Shepherd, [John 10:11], Great Shepherd, [Hebrews 13:20], the Chief Shepherd, [1 Peter 5:4].

As the Creator God is the Good Shepherd, so all true Christians are His sheep.

This Psalm focuses on the qualities of the Good Shepherd and the qualities of sheep who follow Him.

Psalms 23:1 [New King James] *“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.”*

Jesus Christ as the owner of the sheep, [John 15:14-16; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18-19] delights in His flock, for Him there is no greater reward and satisfaction than seeing His sheep contented, well fed, physically and spiritually and growing under His care.

Psalms 23:2 [New King James] *“He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.”*

A sheep will only lay down when they are free from fear and it is the promises that our Good Shepherd has made that can allow us as His sheep to be free from fear, [John 14:15-18; Hebrews 13:5-6].

Psalms 23:3 [NIV] *“he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.”*

David, the writer of this Psalm, was acquainted with the feeling of hopelessness, cast down and feeling without strength in himself.

Psalms 42:11 [New King James] *“Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.”*

“Cast down” is the shepherd’s term for a sheep that has turned over on its back in a depression in the ground and cannot get up again by itself.

Unless the shepherd finds it quickly it is close to death and vulnerable to attack. As the sheep lies there, gases build up in the rumen and tend to cut off the blood circulation to extremities of the body, especially the legs.

This is the physical example of a sheep, that is like every Christian at times, that needs restoration.

1 Corinthians 10:12 [New King James] *“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”*

Do **not** think we are immune to such a condition. Certain human conditions that are similar to those of a sheep who finds itself “cast down” and needing restoration.

A sheep who has too much wool can easily become “cast down,” for humans too many possessions and worldly attitudes of mind can weigh us down.

An over fat sheep is among those who are “*cast down*,” a flabby lifestyle can make us weak, spiritually.

Material success is no measure of spiritual wealth.

We all need discipline in our lives and this may be forced on us by the Creator God who loves us, the Good Shepherd, [**Hebrews 12:5-8**].

“*He leads me in the paths of righteousness*,” if left to themselves sheep become self-destructive, turning good pasture into desert wasteland due to overgrazing, polluting their own ground until it is corrupt with disease and parasites, [**Isaiah 53:6**].

The greatest single safeguard that the shepherd has in handling his sheep is to keep them on the move, **not** left in the same place for too long.

2 Peter 3:17-18 [New King James] “*You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.*”

“*Grace*” is the Greek word “*charis*” referring to a heart and mind that is influenced by the Creator God, “*knowledge*” is referring to our understanding of God’s will as expressed in His Word, the Christian Bible.

This cannot happen in our lives without the active presence of the Holy Spirit who is only available to those who obey the Creator God, [**Acts 5:32**].

We then have to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit to receive the very attributes of the Triune God in our lives, [**Galatians 5:22-25**] which are the “*fruits*” of our intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit.

It is the same Holy Spirit who will guide us into the truth of God’s will and give us a motivating vision of the new world that God is preparing for all humans who love and obey Him, [**John 16:13**].

Psalms 23:4 [New King James] “*Yea, 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.*”

Most of us do **not** want “*valleys*” in our life, such as the loss of a loved one in death, yet the Creator God can turn such times into a great benefit for ourselves and others, our being able to comfort others in the same situation, knowing how they feel.

Every “valley” situation encourages us to turn to our Creator God for help which will strengthen our relationship with Him.

“*Rod and staff comfort me*” these are the instruments that a shepherd uses to guide and bring his sheep out of dangerous situations, mostly the rod and staff are now one combined instrument.

The rod is used by carefully being placed on the side of the sheep’s head to change the direction it is moving in; the staff is a rod with a curved end that will fit around the leg of a sheep to pull it out of a dangerous situation it may have fallen into.

Every true Christian will be comforted by such care by the Good Shepherd.

Course direction in life and recovery from situations that our sins have caused us to fall into.

Psalms 23:5 [New King James] “*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.*”

A good shepherd will go ahead of the sheep and ensure that the new pasture he is going to lead them to is free from poisonous weeds or anything else that would harm his sheep.

“*Table*” refers to the high, flat-topped plateaux of any continent where the best grazing for the sheep during the summer months.

We as Christians can be comforted by the fact that the Good Shepherd has been ahead of us to prepare us for every situation, any danger that would cause us to fail.

Hebrews 4:14-16 [New King James] *“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*

Jesus Christ knows exactly what it is like to be a human being with all the physical weaknesses.

1 Corinthians 10:13 [New King James] *“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”*

A promise that with the strength available from the active indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we will **not** be tempted beyond our ability to bear. In the extreme situation the “*way of escape*” may be physical death.

The anointing for the sheep was to receive the sheep from the agonising annoyance of flies that in summer attack a sheep’s eyes and nose, this anointing had to be done repeatedly.

For the Christian it is the anointing of the Holy Spirit at the time of their baptism, [**Acts 10:44-48**] but we need a daily anointing, [**2 Corinthians 4:16**].

This continual anointing of the Holy Spirit will allow us to be freed from the effect of ever-present aggravations of personal conflicts and other niggling distractions in life becoming issues that cause us to sin.

Psalms 23:6 [New King James] *“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”*

The “goodness and mercy” refers to our attitude towards other people on a day-to-day basis, just as the Creator God has extended His goodness and mercy to us.

This is how we can fulfil the command given to us by Jesus Christ.

Matthew 5:14-16 [New King James] *“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

To be a light to all those who do not know Jesus Christ who is The Light, [John 8:12].

“*I will dwell in the house of the Lord,*” refers to the presence of the Triune God, through the active presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

[Please download and study the articles on this website under the main heading ‘*Holy Spirit.*’ You will be eternally grateful that you did.]