

Psalm 23 A Psalm of David. 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.

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

David grew up on a farm taking care of sheep. David took this responsibility with the utmost of seriousness, even putting his life on the line to care for his sheep. He knew that these sheep were dependent on him, on his care for them. Each sheep had their own name. When David called their names, the sheep obeyed for each one knew well the voice of the shepherd, David. The sheep knew David's voice and responded to his touch, to his direction, to his voice. David knew the sheep by name and just by calling their name, the sheep would follow.

Shepherding was considered the lowest of all professions. If you were a shepherd you were the lowest man on the totem pole and usually the youngest son. You had to be sure your sheep were safe 24 hours a day seven days a week. You would often sleep near the sheep, which meant David spent hours under the stars and it was here that David as a young person drew very near to God. Often those in this life who have hearts for God spend an incredible amount of time alone with God. David took care of his sheep tenderly and with great attention. The Lord was his shepherd and David knew God's tender constant care always. Out there, alone with God and open to God's truth, David experienced God's abiding care and protection. David, the shepherd of sheep learned to trust explicitly in God as his Shepherd.

The Lord is the great I AM. God is always present, never changes, and always has his attention on his people, the sheep of His pasture. You may take your attention off of God, but God never takes His attention off of you.

Sheep are not the smartest of animals. They tend to follow the sheep in front and if the front sheep walks off a hill to its death, the other sheep will follow, not knowing that it is not good

to follow the crowd. A good shepherd, and David was a good shepherd, made sure the sheep did not get harmed by going off in the wrong direction or being killed by other wild animals. A good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. David said of himself, 1 Samuel 17:34-36 But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, {35} I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. {36} Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear.

Jesus Christ is our Shepherd. He laid down his life for us on the cross and now he asks of us to follow him. Friends, we all need the Good Shepherd. He has for us a constant, abiding care that actually meets the needs of our very existence. Sheep cannot exist too long without a shepherd. Without a shepherd, their existence is perilous at best.

In my lifetime, I have known Christians for whom I have the utmost of respect. Some have served as mentors, others I know only through their books, solid Christian leaders and teachers. They have learned that it is more important to go to the Lord to have your deepest needs met than to people. They have learned to submit their entire lives to the Lord. They do not look to people for what only God can provide. Go to the Lord for your help. Paul writes, "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Please go every day to the shepherd and He will take care of you. If you always want people to be there for you and if you are looking to people to meet to every need, you are looking in the wrong place and you are asking for constant heartache. One of the reasons so many Christians live in such misery is they have not learned how to be fed by their shepherd. One of the reasons so many Christians are miserable in the inside is they have not learned how to respond to the direction of the Shepherd. One of the reasons why we have so many Christians living unfulfilled is that they do not go to the Shepherd to be filled.

In chapter 30 of first Samuel all of David's army turns against him and want to kill him. David and his army had returned home only to find all of the women and children taken by enemies. The men blamed David for the loss of their families. **1 Samuel 30:6(ESV)** ⁶And David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for their sons and daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.

When I was in junior high and high school, I longed to feel accepted by my classmates. I struggled with that for years. But I saw an inner strength in so many of my teachers and it is what I wanted in my own life. As I got to know them, each had their own story of how deeply they had suffered and struggled until they learned that the Shepherd has everything that they need. They stopped going to man first and went straight to the Shepherd who could supply all that they had in need. The shepherd has what we need but we have to listen, obey, and respond to His voice and leadership. Instead of following him, we follow some other sheep who walk off in another direction away from the shepherd. It is the blind leading the blind and when that happens, we both or all fall into the pit. Peer pressure, following the lead of one's wayward acquaintances and friends can be devastating to one's soul, let alone life.

One person has written, "our sin is what we turn to when where we are least satisfied with God." Putting it another way, when our deepest satisfactions come from God, sin loses its appeal. Knowing the Shepherd is all we want. "Lord Jesus all we want is to know you."

Before I close I wish to read these words of Jesus.

The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.... I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it.... I am the

good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd (John 10:2-4,11-12,14-16).

I close with an excerpt from one of Corrie Ten Boom's books. In the Forward of the Book Pamela Rosewell writes, On August 23, 1978 Tante Corrie suffered a severe stroke which rendered her mute. Successive strokes caused paralysis and for the last part of her life she was unable to leave her bed. Though she became extremely weak physically, spiritually it seemed she was even stronger. She could not speak, read, or write. Despite the fact it was sometimes very difficult for her, she accepted her physical limitations and drew her strength from the Word of God, and from the Lord Himself, with whom she still constantly communed.

The Lord has all that you need and His care for you will never end. God's love for you is perfect. God's Word to you never fails. God's promises are never broken. God knows everything about you and knows exactly what you need. Who better to turn to than the Shepherd. The shepherd will see your unhappiness, your misery, your sadness, and bring much needed relief by His perfect love, compassion, patience, faithfulness, and forgiveness. He is in covenant with you.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want." Amen and Amen.