

Summer in the Psalms

God Cares: Part I

Psalms 23:1-6

The Sheep Need a Shepherd

- In Psalms 23, David does not compare us to strong lions, swift gazelles, or clever snakes
- David likens us to sheep
- Sheep are not the smartest animals God created
- Sheep:
 - Can't find their own food
 - Easily get lost
 - Can't defend themselves
- What David is saying Psalm 23 we like sheep
- We have a lot of the same attributes as sheep (*Isaiah 53:6*) ***"All we like sheep have gone astray..."***
- God did not leave us helpless, He provided us a shepherd, the Lord Himself

God Provides for Us

Psalm 23:1-6 (KJV) 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.

- David opens the psalm with the Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want, or I shall not lack
- It is the nature of God to provide (*Psalms 84:11*) ***For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.***
- God's care for us is constant
- The LORD as our Shepherd is always guiding us to the place where our needs will be met
- God is not limited to providing material things for us
- God will give us wisdom, answers, help through others, peace
- The Shepherd knows what His sheep needs and works to ensure their basic needs are met
- The Shepherd's objective in his care for the sheep is that they have everything they need
- It is *not* the shepherd's objective that the sheep have "everything they want"
- God is concerned about our daily wellbeing, the essentials of life, but He is not in the business of giving us everything we want
- And having everything you need does not mean that you will never experience a difficult time, hardship or even lack
- The Shepherd also knows sheep need rest
- The Shepherd "makes" the sheep lie down
- The Shepherd knows:
 - Rest is necessary
 - When rest is necessary
- The shepherd makes the sheep rest out of concern for their well-being now *and* in the future
- The Shepherd knows we need rest, and He creates opportunities for us to rest
- The Shepherd knows when we need to be refreshed
- The Shepherd is the only one who can deliver us from our anxieties
- Without the shepherd's help, the sheep can't rest
- The shepherd guides the sheep to green pastures
- The Shepherd's job is to lead the sheep to fresh, clean, and calm waters

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- Sheep will not drink from rushing river because they are frightened by the noise and swiftness of the current
- If they are not led to calm and clean waters, the sheep will drink from polluted waters where they can pickup internal parasites and other diseases
- The Shepherd knows where the best water is
- Every day the Shepherd wants to lead us to the still waters so that we can be refreshed and satisfied daily ***John 4:13-14 (KJV) Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: [14] But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.***
- Jesus is all you need ***Isaiah 55:1 (KJV) Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.***
- This passage paints a clear picture of God providing comfort care and rest for us
- We are to trust in God's provision

God Guides Us

Psalms 23:3a "He restoreth my soul....."

- When sheep rest, they sometimes choose a soft, comfortable and low spot in the ground
- They may end up in a position where their feet are off the ground, and they can't get back up
- They are what shepherds call a "cast" or "downcast position"
- If the shepherd does not come along to put them back on their feet:
 - They will lose circulation in their legs, and they may die
- The sheep *need* a restorer
- We need a Shepherd that restores
 - He knows how
 - He cares about my life and doesn't want me to stay in that condition
 - The need for restoration often comes after a time of rest, refreshment, feeding
- The shepherd counts the flock several times a day to determine if any are missing
- He goes through the flock to make certain all of them are on their feet
- We are like sheep as we can fall into conditions and situations that leave us helpless, hopeless, vulnerable, and distant from Jesus
- We can go from contentment to hopelessness in a moment
- How can believers become downcast? ***Psalms 42:11 (KJV) Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.***
 - *We get comfortable*
 - Sometimes comfort makes us careless
 - *Going astray*
 - We have the same wandering spirit as sheep
 - We have a tendency to venture away from God a little at a time until we lose sight of the Savior
 - *Becoming weighed down*
 - Sheep can become cast down by the sheer weight of their own wool

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- Wool is symbolic of our own self importance
- When we are downcast, we are just like sheep, helpless, hopeless, vulnerable and distant from Jesus our Shepherd
- But Jesus our Shepherd came to seek and to save those who are lost
 - He left the comfort of heaven to come to earth to seek and save lost people like us
 - To Jesus all of His sheep are important and valuable to Him
 - He cares about us collectively and individually
 - He will search for each of us until He finds us

God Guides Us

Psalm 23:3b “... *he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*”

- Sheep are creatures of habit
- They will stay in area even until all the grass and water are gone
- Without the guidance of the Shepherd, the sheep will go their own way and not develop into healthy, safe, and secure sheep
- The Shepherd makes certain that the sheep are regularly moved from green pasture to green pasture, from fresh stream to fresh stream because He is constantly concerned about the welfare of the sheep
- The Shepherd knows every field, every stream
- He knows where to go and how long to stay in any given area
- The Shepherd moves the sheep around because His own reputation is at stake
- The Shepherd promises to lead you in the right paths
- He does it for His name's sake
 - Jesus' name, His character, His reputation is at stake
- That's encouraging to know that Jesus makes certain that He leads you in the right paths
 - If Jesus were to fail in leading you, you would be discouraged and instead of witnessing to others how great a Shepherd Jesus is, you would “witness” to others how Jesus led you down the wrong path or how He let you down

God Protects Us

[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.*

- Even though the sheep are following the shepherd, they may still encounter valleys
- A valley is often dark, lonely, and dangerous
- The sheep are walking through the valley of the *shadow* of death
- But we are not afraid of shadows, because shadows are *not* the real thing
- We are not to fear our time in the valley because we are walking through it, the valley is not a destination for us
- We also are not to fear the valleys of life because we don't go through them alone, God is *with us*
- But not only is the Lord with us in the valley, God's *rod and staff* comfort us
- The Shepherd's rod is club that is designed to count, protect, and correct the sheep
- It was used by the shepherd to ward off predators

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- The shepherd could use it as a hand weapon or throw it ward off predators
- The Shepherd's rod is symbolic or emblematic of God's Word
 1. The Word of God numbers and/or examines us
 - Daily we are to pass under the rod of God through daily reading of the Word **Ezekiel 20:37 (KJV) And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant:**
 - The Word of God is designed to examine us in detail, beneath the surface to identify and expose any sinful, habits, attitudes, thoughts, that could potentially get you off track **Psalms 139:23-24 (KJV) Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: [24] And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.**
- The Word of God protects us
 - As believers we are to use the Word of God like the Shepherd's rod to protect us from the attacks of the devil
 - Jesus Himself used the Word of God to beat back the attacks of satan (Matthew 4:1-11)
- The Word of God corrects us
 - The Word of God will show you when you are getting too close to spiritual danger
 - The Word of God will issue warnings for you to heed
 - The Word of God through the power of the Holy Spirit will convict of sin and errors in our lives to get us back in the fold
- The Shepherd's staff was a slender pole 40-50 inches long with a crook on the end
- The crook would be used to rescue sheep when they were caught in bushes, they fell off cliffs, down ravines, etc.
- The Shepherd's staff was used by the shepherd for:
 1. Getting the sheep close together
 2. Guiding and directing the sheep
 3. Recovering wayward or sheep in trouble
- The Shepherd's staff is symbolic or emblematic of the Holy Spirit
- The Holy Spirit draws us close to God
 - Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are always drawn close to God
- The Holy Spirit directs us John 16:13 (KJV) Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.
 - The Holy Spirit will guide us to the truth of God's word
- The Holy Spirit delivers us from danger and rescues us when we wander Ezekiel 34:11-12 (KJV) For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. [12] As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.
 - Just like sheep we sometimes get caught in situations of our own making where we need to be rescued
- Trust in God's protection

God Blesses

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[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 for ever.

- The image of the psalm shifts slightly from the strict comparison of a sheep's life over to a human's experience of encountering and dealing with enemies.
- Not long after Samuel identified young David and anointed him king, David began to face opposition.
- David testified that his Shepherd was with him in every battle, strengthening and refreshing him throughout his life
 1. The LORD fed and nourished David. He spread a table for him in the very presence of his enemies.
 2. The LORD anointed his head with oil.
- 3. Oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.
- 4. The LORD had empowered David with His Spirit in every battle.
 - Shepherds also applied oil to their sheep.
 - When a sheep was injured, the shepherd would use oil to soothe and heal its wounds. They poured oil on their sheep's heads and backs to repel insects.
 - As they grazed, the fragrance of the oil would also repel snakes that hid in thick grass.
- 5. The LORD showered David with blessings in the midst of the battle.
- 6. His cup overflowed not only with the provisions he needed throughout battle, but also with confidence and with the joy and love of the LORD in his life.
- The New Testament warns us as believers that we will face many enemies in our pilgrimage through this world.
- Our three greatest foes are identified as ...
 1. *The world*—that system which is contrary to God's Word and His will and is led by Satan, the prince of this world (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)
 2. *The flesh*—our sinful human nature that tempts us to sin and to disobey God (Mt. 26:41; Ro. 7:18; 8:4, 8, 12)
 3. *The devil*—Satan, the enemy of God and man who prowls the earth like a menacing lion (1 Pe. 5:8)
- Our Great Shepherd has provided everything we need to be victorious in battle.
 - He will strengthen and nourish us with His Word.
 - He will fill our cups to overflowing with His love and presence
 - Through all of life's storms and struggles we can be triumphant in Christ, the Captain of our salvation.
- As David looked back on all the events of his life, he could see the faithfulness of his Shepherd.
 - The LORD's constant care filled him with great assurance and hope for the future.
- The word *surely* does not express "probability" here but a *certainty*
 - In other words, David could face the rest of life boldly, with great confidence about his future.
- In every circumstance God's goodness had flowed out to him

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- In times of distress, David had repeatedly called out for God's *mercy* to preserve him and God had shown him steadfast, covenant love
 - David expected God's goodness to continue throughout the rest of his life
- And because of his Shepherd's great love, David knew he would dwell there with the LORD forever.
- Think about it:
 - The Son of God, the Creator and Great Shepherd, became the Lamb of God so He could suffer the judgment we were due (Is. 53:6–7).
 - The Lamb of God was slain at Calvary to take away our sin, the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29).
 - He became the door or gate by which we can enter into the sheepfold (Jn. 10:1, 7, 9), a way into the Father's house (Jn. 14:1–6).
 - The Chief Shepherd is coming back for us, His sheep (1 Pe. 5:4), and He will transport us into the LORD's house, where we will be with Him forever (1 Th. 4:16–17).
 - The Lamb will shepherd us—feed and lead us (Re. 7:17)—throughout eternity, and we will dwell with Him forever in the LORD's presence.
- How wonderful to be one of His sheep!