

## **The Shepherd Psalm**

### **Psalm 23**

**Introduction** - Kyle Yates said of the twenty-third Psalm, *“It is the pearl of the Psalms, a nightingale singing in the world’s night of loneliness and need.”*

Psalm 23 is perhaps the best known and most loved passage in the Bible.

Why is the twenty-third Psalm so popular, even though it was written 3000 years ago?

**1. It presents the most perfect picture of happiness and contentment that has ever been drawn.**

- Every human being has a deep craving for peace, contentment and lasting satisfaction.
- Psalm 23 shows us God alone can provide these things.

**2. The Psalm is also popular because it is so personal and so practical, covering every area of life.**

- It describes all that the Shepherd does for His sheep.
- David wrote Psalm 23! He was the great Shepherd, King of Israel! We don’t know at what time in his life. Young or old?

When Lloyd Douglas, author of the *The Robe* and other novels, attended college, he lived in a boardinghouse. A retired, wheelchair-bound music professor resided on the first floor. Each morning Douglas would stick his head in the door of the teacher’s apartment and ask the same question, “Well, what’s the good news?” The old man would pick up his tuning fork, tap it on the side of the wheelchair, and say, “That’s middle C! It was middle C yesterday; it will be middle C tomorrow; it will be middle C a thousand years from now. The tenor upstairs sings flat. The piano across the hall is out of tune, but, my friend, that is middle C.” Since no act brought him forth, no act can take him out. Does he fear an earthquake? Does he tremble at a tornado, Hardly, Yahweh sleeps through storms and calms the winds with a word. Cancer does not trouble him and cemeteries do not disturb him. He was here before they came. He’ll be here after they are gone.....

Counselors can comfort you in the storm, but you need God who can still the storm. Friends can hold your hand at your deathbed, but you need a Yahweh who has defeated the grave. Philosophers can debate the meaning of life, but you need a Lord who can declare the meaning of life. You need a Yahweh.

Now, the theme of the Psalm is found in the first verse.

- David was a shepherd, and he knew that all he was to his sheep, the Lord was to him and so much more.

- But who was the LORD? “*Jehovah Ra-ah*”. O.T. Moses, “*I AM.*” N.T. , Jesus- “*I AM,*” John 10.

James Boice, “*I am who I am,*” It is an inexhaustible name, like its bearer. Chiefly, it refers to God’s timelessness, on the one hand, and to his self-sufficiency, on the other. Self-sufficiency means that God needs nothing. He needs no wisdom from anyone else; he has all wisdom in himself. He needs no power; he is all-powerful. He does not need to be worshiped or helped or served. Nor is he accountable to anyone. He answers only to himself. Timeless means that God is always the same in these eternal traits or attributes. He was like this yesterday; he will be like this tomorrow. He will be unchanged and unchangeable forever. He is the great “*I am.*”

He doesn’t change! Now the amazing thing that this great Jehovah is My Shepherd. Wow! “*My,*” so personal, not “*a,*” but “*My.*”

“*Shepherd*” - In Israel shepherding was the lowest of all works; given to the youngest in the family. Illus. - David!

Yet Jehovah stoops to take care of me as a shepherd does his sheep.

So David says, “*I shall not want.*” or the Living Bible translation, “*I have everything I need.*” Because the Lord is my shepherd. Not my wants, but my needs.

We see three areas of need in our lives that the Good Shepherd can take care of. He takes care of our “*frailties*” and our “*fears*” and our “*future.*” (We are needy people.)

## **I. Our Frailties**, vs. 2-3

If the LORD is our Shepherd, then we are his sheep.

Sheep are dumb, dependent, and defenseless. So we need three things.

### **1. Rest**, vs. 2, literally “*waters of rest.*”

- In the Middle East, very little grass, so must keep moving.
- Sheep won’t lie down unless they are free from: Fear; Friction with other sheep; Famine, need to be full.
- Without a shepherd, sheep can’t rest.
- So the same with people, NO REST! Unsaved.

Jesus said, “*Come unto me all ye...*” Matt. 11:28-30.

Illus. - St. Augustine said, “*We were made for God...*”

So when the Lord’s your shepherd, you shall not want for rest.”

**2. Restoration**, vs. 3, “*He restoreth my soul,*” or literally, “*Brings back my health.*” The Living translation, “*He renews my strength.*”

It’s a Hebrew idiom the words mean “*brings me to repentance*” or “*conversion.*”

It means that when I fall He restores me to spiritual health. Illus. - Philip Keller, “*cast sheep.*”

So us to like “*cast sheep.*”

Illus. - David’s own life, Ps. 32 & 51. “*Restoring unto me the joy of my salvation.*” You too?

Illus. - The Prodigal Son.

**3. Righteous Paths**, vs. 3, “He leadeth me in....”

Sheep are foolish creatures and have no sense of direction, they get lost. Us too! We stray off God’s path. Isa. 53:6, “*All we like sheep have gone astray.*”

So the Good Shepherd restores us so he can lead us on right paths or “*paths of righteousness.*”

Holiness leads to happiness. For His names sake, His glory. So rest, restoration, righteous paths.

## **II. Our Fears**, vv. 4-5

Illus. - Sheep are timid, afraid to pass through dark valleys. Us too, many fears.

**1. Fear of death**, vs. 4. Jesus gave his life for the sheep. He rose. Death for the Christian and friend, not a foe. I Thess. 4:13-18 and 2 Cor. 5.

**2. Fear of danger**, vs. 4. Literally, “*valley of deepest darkness.*”

a. The Shepherd’s presence., vs. 4, “*for thou art with me.*”

b. The Shepherd’s protection, vs. 4, “*thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.*”

c. The Shepherd’s provision, vs. 5. The Lord now is our “*host*” also now David is talking to the Lord, “*thou.*”

He’s Jehovah Jireh, “the Lord will provide. Ps. 37:25, “I have been young...”

So if the Lord is your Shepherd, you don’t need to fear! Neither death or danger!

Because of His:

- Presence
- Protection
- Provision

### **III. Our Future, vs. 6**

David now abandons the figures of speech in a parenthetical summary. David's confidence, "*surely.*" Faith's confidence. Two things will follow me all my life:

1. Goodness
2. Mercy
3. Heaven

When the Lord is your shepherd, you shall not lack a heavenly home! Jesus our Good Shepherd said in John 14, "*I go.....*" The Christian life is a pilgrimage and our final destination is Heaven, our eternal home!

Some say you can't know you're going to heaven. But note, vs. 6, David said, "*I will.*" Ask how could he speak with such assurance? Answer, "*The Lord is my Shepherd.*"

Ask, "*Is the Lord your Shepherd?*" If not, "*How?*"

1. Realize your sin.
2. Repent and turn away.
3. Receive Jesus.

If He is your Shepherd, you can say, "*I shall not want.*"

He takes care of my:

1. Frailties
2. Fears
3. Future