



1 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 for ever. (Psalm 23:1-6)

Introduction

Having completed a detailed study of the 22nd Psalm, a Messianic Psalm, depicting the ordeal of Jesus on the cross, and the final ecstasy of His resurrection, we now undertake a solemn view of that Shepherd Psalm which is the 23rd. Having paid the price of our sins and redemption, the Lord has emerged from the Garden Tomb victorious. He is now our Shepherd King and Savior.

Though the sheep know not where the shepherd may lead, they follow on in faith and trust. The trail is winding and they know not the Way except to understand that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

I wrote the following devotion on the 23rd Psalm which was posted on our blog in March 2011. It is appropriate to share this devotion again following those of the 22nd Psalm.

The Twenty-Third Psalm – being a Messianic Psalm:

I feel a great reluctance in preparing this devotion on the 23rd Psalm. Its beauty, majesty, and high spiritual character render it above any human capacity to expand upon. So please regard my commentary thereon as a simple statement of what the Psalm means to me.

The LORD is my shepherd - This is the beginning point of every Christian walk – to know and acknowledge Christ as our Shepherd. He made us, sustains us, and calls us to Him. No other cares for us as He does. All others simply desire to use us and to ruin us in the process; but Christ loves His sheep. He eats, sleeps, and keeps watch with them day and night. He has given His very Life-Blood for them. This, a stranger will not do. He is always conscious of our needs and feeds us. *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.* (John 10:10-14)

I shall not want - All of our needs will be provided by the Shepherd. Those desires we have that will not benefit, but harm us, He will withhold. But our wants (those needs we have to sustain us in our journey and being) He will see to. We are mere sheep and cannot know where the pastures of feeding will be found for the morrow, but He knows and makes provision for our being led to them.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures - Sheep are fickle creatures. They are reluctant to lie down just any place. They will shy away from lying down where they do not feel secure (it is difficult for them to arise due to the structure of their legs). They will not lie down unless they are first fed. They will not lie down where pests will annoy them. They only lie down where they are secure, well-fed, and serene.

He leadeth me beside the still waters. - To those who love the Shepherd, all waters are still waters to them. They have peace in spite of the external havoc that may exist around them. The waters of the Lord are still and deep! His provision of the waters of life is boundless and pure. Though we wander in the wilderness of the world, to our eyes and thirst will always be visible the Still Waters of the Lord.

He restoreth my soul - Because we are as sheep compared to the Providence of God, we often fail and falter. We lose confidence in our walk. But He lifts us up and gives us new hope. Are we weary? He encourages us by His Voice – “*just a bit further in the journey and we will have found the new pastures to which I am leading you.*” When we are too tired to proceed, He lifts us to His breast and carries us near His Heart just as the shepherds do until this day. His Voice is uniquely different from every other voice and we respond to it as sheep do to their shepherd.

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. - He only leads continually in the right way to sanctify us and improve our lives. As the Psalmist says: “*All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.*” (Psalm 25:10). Through our obedience and righteous living, we glorify our Shepherd. All the other shepherds stand in awe at the orderly and loving company of His flock.

thou art with me; For me, this is the most powerful line in the Psalm. I call to the bar the following two witnesses:

- *The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the*

region and shadow of death light is sprung up. (Matt 4:16)

- *Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.* (John 8:51)

The last witness, the Lord Himself, assures us that we may only view the 'shadow of death' but a shadow is not the real thing, but only a spectre. The Ark offered complete security for Noah and his family because they stood WITH God. The Ark of Christ is always and forever the safe place. He is with us even in the valley of the 'shadow of death'. We need not fear for the Shepherd is with us, and where He leads is always to a place of greater and more abundant blessing.

Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me - The Shepherd's Staff is both a Rod and a Staff. The top end has a hook in it to rescue those little lambs who fall in the rocks and crevices. The Shepherd pulls them from places of danger with His staff. But the bottom end of the Staff is a sharpened Rod. It is used to prod the sheep who attempt to wonder into danger. The Lord uses both in leading us in life's journey. If we remain alert and obedient, the Shepherd will not need the use of either end of His Staff.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies - No matter the presence of strong enemies in the field arrayed against us, the Shepherd will take measures to defend and feed His sheep. He feeds us with the food that is comfortable for us. The greenest grass on the slopes and valleys of pasture is our food. The enemy (wolves, lions, dogs) lurking around the perimeter of the flock cannot eat our food. It is not suitable to them for they must have blood only. So He feeds us before them.

Thou anointest my head with oil - He takes time and care to anoint us with the oil of the Holy Spirit. So anointed, we appear refreshed and present a pleasant fragrance by our love and obedience to our Shepherd.

My cup runneth over - Certainly, there are moments in which a child of God can barely handle the enormity of love and spiritual blessing flowing from God's Hand to us. The world often wonders how a Christian can seemingly be overcome with troubles and yet give every evidence of joy and happiness in his state. I have discovered that the best method to dispel sorrow or depression is to sing the Godly and classic old hymns of the church – the same I have heard from my mother's lips as a child. God does not only fill our Cups ...He fills them to overflowing. As we drink from our cups, they remain still full and still overflowing. His Grace is a well-spring of Living Waters.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life - **SURELY!** Beyond any doubt or question! Even the judgments of God are mercy for His people. His Hand of blessing will follow us everywhere and all the time, even to the end of our earthly journey and, yes, beyond into eternity!

I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever The most palatial mansion awaits those who wait upon the Lord. The Home of God is our Home! We will abide there, not as servants, but as sons and daughters forever and forever. All that He owns He has given to His beloved children, but the greatest gift of all will be the fellowship with Christ, with the Holy Spirit, and with God the Father. We shall then eat freely of the fruit of that Tree which was taken from the Garden because of the sin of Adam. We shall dwell together in heavenly places, and love each other and our God.

The depth and beauty of this great Psalm is beyond our complete understanding¹. Our

¹ Each time you read this lovely psalm, each time you let it into your heart and dwell on it, your understanding will become more complete. It is thus so with all Scripture. Thus, it is incumbent on each of us to read Scripture every opportunity and let it into our hearts that we might dwell on it and our

attempts to render all of its majestic beauty from the few short lines of it will always be a humiliating failure for God's every Word is so pregnant with meaning that the depths of the Sea are insufficient to fathom the fullness thereof. This Psalm is like a precious gem, or diamond. When held up to the light, one sees striking rays of gleaming blue. Another will see bold shafts of golden beauty. Another observer, looking at the same stone, will see effulgent white, green or red. Is there a disparity of meaning? Do we see the same stone wrongly? Not at all for God is Light. His Light is White and pure. White Light is composed of every color in the rainbow! It takes all colors combined together to produce white. God is all of those Colors. He provides different glimpses of Himself to each of us according to our present need and ability to see.

May the Lenten Season always be one which climaxes in a multitude of gems of new truth and knowledge for all who seek the face of the Lord.

understanding become more complete. This is not to say we should examine it with a microscope, but more aptly put with a macroscope, as Scripture is meant to be digested not dissected.