

# The Good Shepherd | Psalm 23 | 5/15/16

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- Read full text
  - **Read Psalms 23**
- God is a shepherd | Psalm 23:1
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  - Throughout Scripture God is known as a shepherd.
  - It doesn't matter if we are looking at God in the Old Testament or Jesus in the new there are numerous references to God using this "shepherd" designation.
    - The first time in Scripture where God is referred to as a shepherd is by Jacob.
      - Genesis 48:15
        - "Then he blessed Joseph and said: The God before whom my father's Abraham and Isaac walked, **the God who has been my shepherd** all my life to this day,"
    - In the New Testament Jesus refers to Himself quite clearly as the good shepherd.
      - John 10:14
        - "I am the good shepherd. I know My own sheep, and they know Me,"
  - So with God referring to Himself as a shepherd we have to then wonder what does that mean?
    - When we first think of this we immediately get a mental image of man dressed in shepherds clothing with the hook staff that is looking over a flock of sheep.
      - We may think well that doesn't sound very "Godly" we think of shepherds as the lowest of the professions.
      - But God He is the king on the throne! How does a shepherd quite fit the picture for God?
    - **The answer we seek is not in the appearance of the shepherd, but instead in his heart, behavior and actions.**
      - What qualities do you think that a shepherd possess?
        - Protector, leader, comforter.
      - In scripture when God refers to Himself as a shepherd or when man gives Him that designation there are specific traits that are implied.
        - Protector, leader(guide) and comforter (shows love).
        - Isaiah 40:11
          - "He protects His flock like a shepherd; He fathers the lambs in His arms and carries them in the fold of His garment. He gently leads those that are nursing"
      - Jacob's reference to God being a shepherd is quite significant.
        - So when Jacob said that God was his shepherd then this is how Jacob described what God was doing for him.
        - Because God wasn't just some far removed God who dictated the directions and actions of men, or a God who just enacted punishment and didn't care or love His creation.
        - Instead Jacob felt like a sheep that was under the watchful eye of the loving shepherd.
    - The sheep of the Good Shepherd are the Christians.
      - So if God is the shepherd then the Christians are the sheep.
        - 1 Peter 1:25
          - "For you were like sheep going astray, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls."

- The sheep are those who have accepted Christ and who have heard the voice of the good shepherd and believed.
  - Matthew 25:33-34
    - “He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”
- The lost those who have rejected the calling of God and do not believe are the lost goats.
  - Matthew 25:41
    - “Then He will also say to those on the left, depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels!”
  - As Christians who have been saved by grace through faith in Christ Jesus are now under the watchful and loving eye of the good shepherd.
    - Hebrews 13:20
      - “Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus—the great Shepherd of the sheep—with the blood of the everlasting covenant,”
- **Knowing that God is our shepherd, what does this immediately tell you about what He thinks of us?**
- God leads and feeds His flock | Psalms 23:2-4
  - ***Read Psalms 23:2-4***
  - The good shepherd (God) leads and feeds His flock (Christians)
  - Just as a worldly shepherd leads and guides the sheep who don’t know their way, this is what God does for us.
    - Without God we would be completely lost in life, there would be no purpose or direction except for our own.
    - In fact, we are just like sheep who have no shepherd, wondering around aimlessly, not able to find food or shelter.
  - But God is our shepherd and He has promised to always lead us on the right path.
    - This Psalm says that God will have us lie down in green pastures and lead us by still waters.
      - It does not say that God will lead us to a rocky and barren dessert without a drop of moisture. Or that God will lead us to our demise.
      - **No it says that God will lead us to food and water, He will lead us to exactly where we need to go because He knows what we need.**
      - **God will take care of us.**
      - God CANNOT lead us to a path of destruction.
        - This is not His nature. He is the good shepherd.
        - Now this road may contain a path of correction, but it is for a good purpose not to hurt us.
    - God establishes the steps of man and He will not allow us to fall.
      - Psalms 37:23-24
        - **“The steps of a man are established by the LORD, when he delights in his way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the LORD upholds his hand.**

- This is a powerful passage that speaks to how God thinks and cares about what we as Christians do in our lives.
  - Our steps are established by God.
    - God has put us on a path and even though at times it may seem in our eyes hard or difficult, we can take comfort knowing that it is exactly what God intended for us.
    - He knows what we need, and if a time of trial to learn is necessary, then that is the path He has chosen for us.
    - **Even our paths that seem to be hard and difficult may be exactly what we need.**
  - Even if we fall we will not be thrown down or be completely overwhelmed.
    - That is something that only the Christian can experience.
    - **This does not mean that we will never experience pain or suffering, but that we can never fall all the way without any hope, nor will be overwhelmed to a point that we cannot overcome the situation.**
    - Not matter how hard the path maybe or our hard a difficulty of life is He will not let us go.
      - **How have you seen God lead you on the path that HE chose for you?**
  - God and the Christians feed the flock
    - As God leads the Christians to the green pastures and still waters He feeds is, but not just in the physical since.
      - God feeds the Christians spiritually through the paths that He leads us on.
      - God feeds us His truth through the Holy Spirit that lives within us.
      - With the Spirit we will NEVER be in want of spiritual nourishment.
    - Christians also have a responsibility to be under-shepherds of God to care for His flock.
      - While God is the good or great shepherd, He has called His Christians to also care and look over other Christians.
        - Acts 20:28
          - “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”
        - 1 Peter 5:2
          - “shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly”
        - John 21:17
          - “He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John do you love me? Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, do you love me? And he said to him, Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you. **Jesus said to him, Feed my sheep.**”
      - He has called us to feed them with His Word the Scriptures so they will not be overcome by false teachings.
        - Acts 20:29-30
          - “I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.”
- God protects us | Psalm 23:4

- Perhaps one of the most memorable and often quoted passage of Scripture from Bible is Psalms 23:4.
- This is the passage that Christians lean on and use for comfort and the removal of fear when we are in a difficult time because we know that God will protect us.
- **This passage reminds us that no matter how bad a situation maybe, or what Satan throws at us that if we lean on Christ we can overcome any fear that we may have.**
- The staff to lead and the rod to protect
  - We may also notice that in this passage that the shepherd has not only a staff but also a rod.
    - The staff is the symbol of the shepherd who guides his flock.
    - The rod is the symbol of the weapon that the shepherd uses to defend his flock.
  - So not only will God lead us on our path but He is right there ready to defend us from evil.
- The valley of the shadow of death
  - This could be any dark time in our life either one that we caused ourselves because of our choices, one that Satan and the evil in the world caused or even a path that seems dark because it is a path of discipline.
  - **But while we may have extreme fear while walking this path we can take GREAT comfort in knowing that our good shepherd is LEADING us and also PROTECTING us.**
- This brings great comfort to the Christian knowing that God is and will always be there.
  - Knowing that we have the good shepherd right by our side at all times.
  - To be alone is quite scary especially if one feels all alone and helpless.
  - But with Christ we never have to feel this way because He will be there with us every step of the way.
    - Deuteronomy 31:6
      - “Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.”
- **How does this truth affect you in your time of hardship? Does this truth give you the ability to get through your valley?**
- God will provide | Psalm 23:5
  - **Read Psalm 23:5**
  - In this Psalm we have shifted from shepherd and sheep to a host and their guest.
  - However, the meaning and the relationship has not changed.
  - This is not a description of a hasty meal given to soldiers on a battle field, but to how a host treats their honored guests.
  - God is our host. He has welcomed us with open arms into His home.
    - In ancient culture when one was invited to the home the host would provide a meal and also protection.
    - It was known that if you were invited in that there was now a responsibility of protection that was provided from the host to the guests.
    - In this way God is also bestowing that same protection.
  - God also provides
    - God our host not only provides us with nourishment and protection but He provides us more than what we need.

- God anoints our heads with oil which symbolized the great honor that He has for us.
  - **The overflowing cup represents abundance**
    - **This abundance isn't material wealth and possessions but they are spiritual.**
    - God will provide us with an overwhelming sense of His grace and mercy that even in the face of our enemies, God will provide.
- We remain in the house of God forever | Psalm 23:6
  - **Read Psalm 23:6**
  - This Psalm closes on a note of praise and absolute truth, that God will never leave us and that we will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.
  - He has given the Christians an unfading crown.
    - 1 Peter 5:4
      - “And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”
  - He will love us forever
    - Psalms 136:1
      - “Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.”
  - No matter what we go through we are God's sheep and He will never lose one of us EVER. Our salvation is permanently secured.
    - John 18:9
      - “This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: of those whom you gave me I have lost not one.”