

PSALM 23

PSALM 23:1-6 • TV-046B

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By

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Psalm 23:1-6

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. 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. Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou anointest my head with oil. My cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Now some people have tried to determine when David wrote **Psalm 23**. Some believe that he wrote this Psalm when he was in the caves and in the forest fleeing from King Saul, when he feared for his life.

And he was comforted that he would not be in want, that he need not fear, that his life would not be destroyed since the Lord is his Shepherd. Maybe that’s true, maybe that’s when he wrote this Psalm. I do not know and I do not believe anyone else knows for sure.

But some say that he wrote this Psalm after he became king of Israel, after he was peacefully settled on Israel’s throne. “The trumpet of war had given way to the quiet waters of peace and the beautiful fields of green pasture.” Well, that may be so. It sounds good but I’m not sure that we know that either.

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And then some say that this **Psalm 23** was written toward the end of David's life when he was an old, old, man, about the time when he said; "*God had made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. And although my house be not so with God;*" this covenant was his salvation and his desire.

Well, it may be so. Maybe David was contemplating the Valley of Death, the day when his life would be taken and he would graduate to the house of God forever. That may be when he wrote this Psalm; I do not know.

But I'm sure of this, I'm confident of this; I really know this, one thing is worthy of notice concerning when David wrote the **Psalm 23**, this blessed Psalm follows the **Psalm 22**.

You say; "Well anybody knows that." I know, but do you know what the **Psalm 22** is about? **Psalm 22** is the Psalm of the cross. Now you read it. It begins: "*My God, my God; why hast thou forsaken me? I cry in the daytime and I cry in the night season. I can tell all my bones. The people walk around the cross and shoot out their lips and say: let's see if God will have Him? They cast lots for my raiment, for my vesture.*"

This **Psalm 22** is almost a full description, it is a beautiful description of what took place at Calvary. And David wrote the **Psalm 23** after he wrote the Psalm of the cross. And it's only after we come to a knowledge of "*my God, my God, why has thou forsaken me,*" that we can really enter into "*the Lord is my shepherd.*"

You don't know the Shepherd until you know how He bought you and how you became His sheep. The Lord Jesus Christ must purchase the sheep before He can say, "I am their Shepherd."

They've got to be bought. They were given to Him by the Father but He had to purchase them. He said; "*I lay down my life for my sheep. Other sheep I have.*" Where did He get them? He bought them too. "*And them I must bring. And they shall be one fold and one shepherd.*"

So, the **Psalm 23**, that beautiful, beautiful, God honoring, heartwarming Psalm, was written after **Psalm 22**, the Psalm of the cross. We must come to the cross before we can call Him our Shepherd, before we can be His sheep, that's for sure.

Some well-meaning believers also are troubled because they cannot at all times feel the joys and the comforts of **Psalm 23**. But you know, it's interesting to know and we ought to remember, that David lived a long time and David wrote much.

David only wrote one **Psalm 23**. He wrote many Psalms of praise and one **Psalm 23**. He wrote many Psalms of conviction. He wrote many Psalms of grief over his sin; "*How long O Lord wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long wilt thou not hear me when I call?*"

I wet my pillow with tears at night weeping for my God. I seek the Lord grieving, mourning, seeking, praying, but only one **Psalm 23**, one powerful: "*the Lord is my shepherd,*" Psalm of assurance, Psalm of confidence, and Psalm of comfort.

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Let's look at it together, will you? Take your Bible there and let's look and ask the Holy Spirit to be our guide and our teacher in this hour and let's look at the **Psalm 23**. Maybe by God's grace it'll come to mean more to you. Maybe the Holy Spirit will make some of you say, "I wish I could say the Lord is my Shepherd. I wish the Lord would be my Shepherd."

"The LORD is my shepherd." Now you could dwell on these five words for the entire program. Let's look at these five words. You never exhaust this one phrase *"The LORD is my shepherd,"* The Lord (God) is my Shephard, not a God, not some God, not any God, but the living God.

Christ said, *"This is eternal life that they might know the only true and living God."*

Paul said, *"There's but one God and one mediator between God and men."*

David said, *"As the heart panteth for the water brooks so my soul panteth for the living God."*

And this living God is my shepherd (there is no "if" here in our text). There's no maybe, there's no perhaps, *"the LORD is my shepherd."* And do you know who my Shepherd is? It's Jehovah.

You know, somebody said one time; "I want nothing to do with an absolute God. I want nothing to do with God in His justice and God in His holiness and God in His righteousness. I want to deal with God in mercy and in grace and in love."

And that's what this word LORD is here, Jehovah, Saviour, God my Saviour, not Elohim, God my Saviour, the Saviour God is my Shepherd. Now I don't know about others but He's my Shepherd.

You know, Joshua said, *"I can't speak for other houses but I can sure speak for my house. As for me and my house we'll serve the Lord."* He's my Shepherd!

"And then the LORD is my shepherd." He is the chief shepherd ordained of God, anointed of the Father. He is the chief Shepherd. And He is the good Shepherd. He is the great Shepherd.

And He's the good Shepherd; both the office of shepherd and the sheep were given Him of the Father. He is ordained of the living God to be my Shepherd, my Redeemer, my Saviour. *"The LORD is my shepherd."*

Now watch this next phrase: *"I shall not want."* I shall not want for any good thing. Now if Jesus Christ was not my Shepherd; why I'd be in poverty; I'd be in the poverty of sin. I'd be in the poverty of fear. I'd be in the poverty of darkness.

But He is my Shepherd and He's able and He's willing to meet all my needs. Belshazzar trembled as the handwriting on the wall said, *"You are weighed in the balance; and found wanting."*

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You're weighed in God's scales of holiness. You're weighed in God's scales of righteousness. You're weighed in God's scales of immaculate purity and you're found wanting, you're found wanting.

No wonder that man's knees (Belshazzar's knees) smote against one another. No wonder his loins were loose. No wonder he couldn't catch his breath. No wonder he didn't die of a heart attack.

God said, "*You're weighed,*" not in the scales of human opinion, not in the scales of your own opinion, not in the scales of reputation; "you're weighed in my scales, my scales of holiness and righteousness and you're found wanting."

Brother; I'll tell you this; you are too; "*All have sinned and come short of God's glory.*" You might compare yourself to folks around you and come up looking pretty good. And you might compare yourself as some of the worst characters in history and you might come up looking pretty good.

But God said, "You're weighed in my scales." God weighs men with the scales of perfect holiness and we come up short. But, the LORD is my Shepherd and I shall not come up wanting, "*I shall not want.*"

And then Paul prayed; how he prayed about that thorn in the flesh, how it grieved him and how it troubled him and how he prayed about it. And the Lord came to him and said, "Paul; now you're not going to want for anything. My grace is sufficient for you."

"*Jesus Christ is made to me, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*" He's all I need. I don't want for any good thing. I may want for some things that I don't think I have or maybe I think I'd like to have.

But by God's loving providence I don't need them. If I needed them He'd give them to me. That's right; if I needed them He would give them to me because, "*the LORD is my shepherd and I shall not want.*"

The Lord is a good Shepherd; He's a good shepherd and He'll take care of His sheep. He's not going to lead them to close to the cliff. He's not going to lead them in pastures of poison. He's going to lead them in green pastures.

"*I shall not want.*" He's able; He's able to save me to the uttermost, able to keep me from falling, able to change my vile body that it might be like His glorious body.

Look at the next line. Because the Lord is my Shepherd "*I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters.*" Now you need this right here; will you listen a moment?

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Our lives are made up of two parts, what we think and what we do, thoughts and deeds, meditation and activity, two parts. Blessed is that person; oh how blessed is that man or woman who can say in both these parts, in thought, in deed, meditation, and activity; “The Lord is my Shepherd, the Lord is my guide, the Lord is my leader.”

And he being my Shepherd, “*Maketh me to lie down.*” I can lie down in peace. I have no reason to fear. I don’t have to always stand and be ready to defend myself; He’s my defender. I don’t have to always be ready to stand and flee from my enemy; He’ll protect me. I can lie down and I can rest.

Our Lord said, “*Come to me and I’ll give you rest.*” You don’t need to be uneasy and anxious; “*I’ll give you rest. Be still. My peace I give unto you.*”

“*And He makes me to lie down in green pastures.*” What are these green pastures in which we find our comfort and our assurance and quietness of spirit? The green pastures are His Word. That’s right, His Word. I can feed in peace on His Word, on His covenant, on His promises. They are called, “*Precious promises.*” That’s what we feed upon.

Now the sheep are led out there in the green pastures and they lie down with plenty to eat, plenty to nourish them and satisfy them and all that they need. And our Shepherd leads us to the green pastures of His Word and we can lie down in peace, rest, blessed quietness, and tranquility because we have all we need. Christ said, “*I have meat to eat of, you know nothing about.*”

“*And then He leadeth me by the still waters.*” Now, we not only think but we act. We’re not always lying down; we’re walking through a wilderness, what we’re walking through. He leads us.

And the trials of life are pictured as deep water; that’s right. They do business in deep water. The trials of life are pictured as troubled waters, waves of the sea. Do you remember that time when the disciples with the Lord were out on the sea and the wind was blowing and there was a storm about and the waves were dashing that little vessel all about, just tearing it apart and the Lord was lying back there in the back asleep?

The disciples came back and woke Him up and said, “*Lord, don’t you care if we perish?*” And our Lord arose and stood on the bow of that little boat and raised His hand and He said: “*Peace; be still.*” He calmed the waters, the troubled waters, the deep waves, troubled waters, the waves of the sea.

And that’s what our Lord does for us during time of trial and troubled waters and when we walk through the deep waters of affliction and sorrow. He makes us lie down beside the, “*still waters.*”

Now, here are two reasons why we can find peace in time of trial:

First of all: Because He leads us there, He leads us there.

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It's in His providence that you're passing through that trial you're going through right now. It's in His providence. It'll be for your good. Now He brings us into trials for our good and for His glory. He leads us there.

Secondly: And then He leads us by the still waters.

He calms them. Do you know how He calms them? We remember His promise: *"All things work together for good, (the eternal good, not the temporal good, but the eternal good) of those who love God, who are the called according to His purpose."*

"He restoreth my soul;" see that? He restoreth my soul to life for in Adam I died. He restores my soul to purity, for in sin I was born. He restores my soul to God for I was a lost soul. *"This my son was lost but now he's found."* I was a lost sheep but now I'm found.

He restores my soul daily, for I am weak and I am sinful. Adam lost the way to God. Adam lost the truth of God. Adam lost the life of God. And all of this was restored in Christ.

I'll never lose the way again because Christ is the way. I'll never lose the truth again because He said, *"I am the truth."* And I'll never lose the life of God because Christ is that life. *"I'm the way, the truth, and the life. He restoreth my soul. No man cometh to the Father but by me."*

Look at the next line; *"He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake."*

Do you know what Solomon said? Solomon said in **Proverbs 8:20**: *"I walk in the way of righteousness,"* not my righteousness; that's filthy rags, you know it and I know it. That's the fig-leaf apron of filthy rags. It won't do.

I walk in the righteousness of God's dear Son, the perfect obedience of Christ the Lord. Paul said, *"Having not my righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God in Jesus Christ our Lord."* It's His righteousness in which I stand.

The hymn writer put it this way:

**"With His spotless garments on
I am as holy as God's own Son."**

He leads me to walk in paths of righteousness, not only imputed, but imparted. And I do walk with Him in paths of righteousness.

Now watch this; this will be a blessing to you, listen to me for a few moments: *"Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I'll fear no evil for thou art with me."*

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Now I may say some things right now that are different from what you have always heard. I know that nearly everyone who reads this portion of Scripture applies it to the day of death. "Though I someday will walk through a valley of the shadow of death; at that moment I won't be afraid because God is with me."

And that's true. Our Lord has already died on the cross. He tasted death for me. He took the sting out of death. But listen to this; David is not just referring to the day of his death; "*Though I walk,*" this is my life; it's a walk. "*I'm walking through a valley of the shadow of death.*"

He's talking about the whole journey of life. He's talking about the entire sojourn here on this earth. We are walking through a valley of death all the time. There's death all about us. It is a valley of death. This whole world is a valley of death. Our whole life experience is through a valley of death. Everything about us is death.

We're right in the summertime now but in a few months those trees are going to be dead. The grass is going to be dead. The flowers are going to be dead. The vegetables in the garden; when you and I out there picking corn and tomatoes and beans; they are going to be dead, all withered and dried up and brown, dead.

And someday you're going to be dead. And those children about you are going to be dead, everything in this world. The fall of Adam put the stamp of death on everything and everybody. "*In Adam all die.*" Everything dies. There isn't anything your eyes behold that is not marked for death and death.

I'm walking through a valley of death. I'm walking, walking, walking, through a valley of death. But thank God I'm walking through it. It's not my home. I'm a pilgrim, I'm a sojourn, and I'm a stranger. This is not my home. I'm walking through, I'm walking through.

Here's a word maybe you've never really looked at real good. Let's look at it a moment. He said, "*Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.*" Why'd he say that? I'll tell you why he said it. He said it because death in its substance and death in its sting has been removed for the believer. Christ has taken the sting out of death. Christ said, "*He that believeth on me shall never die.*"

Death is but a shadow for the believer. That's right! Christ has taken the sting out of it. The power is no longer there. The substance is no longer there. The sting is no longer there. I need not fear; it's just a shadow.

The shadow of a dog won't bite you. The shadow of a gun can't kill you. The shadow of death cannot destroy you. Oh these shadows are all about us. These shadows we've seen them; they're real. The shadows are there. They're obvious.

But Christ is our life and they are but shadows. I don't need to be afraid. It's like a man walking his little boy down the street and its night time and the moon is shining an awful, grotesque tree, is casting an ugly shadow across the path.

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And the little boy jumps back in fear and the daddy says; “Son; you don’t need to be afraid, that’s just a shadow, it can’t hurt you.”

And the same thing is true of everything I encounter through this valley of death; it’s a valley of the shadow of death and I don’t need to be afraid. It can’t hurt me because *“He is my shepherd,”* because He is with me. *“I will fear no evil though I walk through a valley of the shadow of death.”*

Death; *“A thousand fall at thy right hand and ten thousand at thy left hand but it shall not come nigh unto thee.”* I don’t need to be afraid. *“I’ll fear no evil.”* Now notice this; the Psalmist does not say, “though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, there will be no evil; there is plenty of evil. And there’s also the evil one. There’s evil all about us. And to our regret there’s still evil in us.

But He says we don’t need to fear evil and we don’t need to fear the evil one, why? It’s because; *“I am with you, I’m with you.”*

Now I want to be honest with you, with my hearers, when I’m preaching the Word of God, the Gospel of Christ. Let’s be totally honest; the man who promises you if you trust Christ and if you come to the Lord, if you become a believer; the man who promises you an easy road, who promises you health and wealth and prosperity, is a deceiver. Now I’m saying that in all candid honesty because our Lord doesn’t promise His people an easy road. The disciples didn’t have an easy road.

Christ said; *“My brethren; marvel not if the world hate you. It hated me before they hated you.”* *“They’ll cast you out of the synagogue. They’ll cast your name out as evil. The day will come when men who kill you will think they are doing God a favor.”* That’s right! *“And a man’s enemies will be his people of his own household.”*

That’s right! You’ll go through heavy trial. The apostle wrote and said; “Don’t be amazed if you go through heavy trial. God is trying your faith.” You’re going to have infirmities and afflictions. You’re going to have trouble. You’re going to have sorrow.

But you learn from these things. *“Tribulation worketh patience, patience, hope, and patience, experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed.”*

A man who promises you if you come to Christ, that from then on your problems will be solved; oh no, oh no; that’s not so. *“They who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. And it is given unto us not only to believe on Him but to suffer for His sake.”*

And I’m saying that if you come to Christ, if Christ is pleased to reveal himself to you; God may let you be one of those who shall go through great sorrow and great agony and great suffering for His glory; that’s right, for His glory that you might be a blessing to someone else.

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God may put you in a sickbed in order to make you a blessing to somebody down the street. God may put you like He did John Bunyan in prison for 12 years that you might write *Pilgrim's Progress*.

God almighty might send you to India to bury your family like Judson that you might preach His glorious Gospel. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be counted worthy to suffer for His sake? Wouldn't that be wonderful? Wouldn't that be something?

But these fellows out here preaching; "Now trust the Saviour and you will prosper, give your tithes and you'll get rich; God wants you to have everything here on this earth;" that's a lie. There's not a word of truth in it. That man's deceiving your soul. That's right!

The Word of God says; you're going to suffer; but oh what a blessing to be counted worthy to suffer for His sake. There's plenty of evil about us. And we regret to say in us, when we don't fear evil, because He's with us, He's with us.

"And thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." What's the rod used for? It's to number the sheep. The shepherd holds his rod out like this and his sheep; you couldn't get a stray in there to save your life. His sheep pass under the rod.

Have you ever passed under the rod and been numbered? You know, the prophet said *"I'm numbered with the redeemed. The hairs of my head are numbered, thy rod and thy staff."*

And then the rod and staff are used for correction. That's right, a little sheep for guidance and leadership. The little sheep begins to run out there and the shepherd takes that crook and hauls him back here.

"Come here fellow; you're going the wrong way. Reach out and get that sheep that strays. But keep him in line, keep him in line. Chasten him, correct him, guide him."

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." Now the believer's not without his enemies, both without and within. But he wouldn't be like his Lord if he didn't have some enemies. He loves His enemies. He doesn't hate them and He doesn't seek vengeance upon them but He has them. And God prepares a table of good things. And even in the face of our enemies we sit down with peace and joy and assurance.

"And thou anointest mine head with oil. My cup runneth over." It overflows with the blessings of God. My sins are forgiven. Christ is my Redeemer. He's my Intercessor. I have fellowship with God. My hope is secure. My inheritance is eternal; my cup runneth over with God's mercies. *"Surely goodness and mercy; (they will and they have) will follow me all the days of my life, by His grace, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."*

And David said; can you say it, **Psalm 27:4?** *"One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple."* And to meditate upon His grace!

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