

Ps 23 (ESV) The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ⁽²⁾ He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. ⁽³⁾ He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁽⁴⁾ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ⁽⁵⁾ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ⁽⁶⁾ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

1. **Allan C. Emery (successful industrialist) tells a great story regarding the relationship the shepherd has with the sheep**

- A. He spent time with a shepherd – his 3 dogs and 2000 sheep on the Texas prairie
- B. One night they were sitting around the campfire enjoying the peace and quiet
 - 1). The sheep were lying down contentedly
 - 2). Suddenly the loud howling of coyotes pierced the silence
 - 3). The dogs became alert – scanning the darkness - growling
 - 4). The sheep who had been sleeping jumped to their feet – frightened and bleating pitifully
- C. Here's the interesting thing – when Allan looked out on the flock he saw 1000's of little lights
 - 1). He realized that was the reflection of the fire in the eyes of the sheep

Point: Rather than looking into the darkness where the sound was coming from

As soon as they sensed danger those sheep instinctively looked towards the shepherd

- A. The sheep have this wonderful – intimate – relationship with the Shepherd
 - 1). They have learned to depend upon him – so they immediately look to him
- B. I have made the point repeatedly – it matters where you focus when life goes South
 - 1). If we look to ourselves – our ability – we cannot rest – life is too big for us
 - 2). If like those sheep we learn to look to God – trusting in his care – rest is the fruit

Transition: The reason looking to him is powerful is because of who he is

- A. David starts this Psalm out by telling us who the Shepherd is – so we can rest
 - 1). Let's take a minute to review what we saw two weeks ago

2. **Review: Who our Shepherd is**

Ps 23:1 (ESV) The **LORD** is my shepherd; I shall not want.

- A. Our shepherd is the **LORD** = Almighty God. The great I am. The creator
 - 1). That is the one who has gladly – joyfully - taken on the responsibility to care for us
 - 2). Said it is Jesus Christ who called himself the good shepherd
 - a). But all the godhead is involved – so many promises specifically from the Father Who blesses us through Jesus Christ – the channel it flows into our life through
 - b). So all the promises of God are part of the caring for you – all involved
- B. I really want you to get this - He is the one who rejoices in the fact we are his

Zep 3:17 (NKJV) The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; *He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."*

- 1). Do you see God like that?
 - a). I know sometimes you only see your failures – weaknesses - inconsistencies
But God sees you in Christ – clothed in his perfection
 - b). And he looks upon you with a gladness and joy that is filled with love
- 2). It says his joy over you is so great he rejoices over YOU with singing

CHS: He will rejoice over you with gladness. "He will delight in you with singing." Think of the great Jehovah singing. Can you imagine it? Is it possible to conceive of the deity breaking into a song? Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together singing over the redeemed?

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- a). That is how glad God is that you are his
 - b). I know you mess up – join the club – but that doesn't stop God's song
 - 1a). He sees you in Christ and he sings
 - C. Listen to this one – speaking to the Jew – but it is a principle true for all of God's people

Jer 32:41 (NASB) "And I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul.

 - 1). He finds great joy in doing us good – and he does do that good with all his heart and soul
 - a). He is not a reluctant – stingy shepherd – He loves taking care of his flock - YOU
 - D. Then we saw when he does this: **He IS our shepherd**
 - 1). "Is" speaks of an immediacy – he is shepherding you right now
 - a). If you are his sheep – you went to sleep under his loving care
You woke up under his care – you sit here under his care
You will go home under his care
 - b). When you wander off as some of have
 - 1a). He has gone after you and brought you back
 - 2a). He was still watching over you in the wilderness
 - 2). He will guard you until you are in glory with him and his Father

1 Pet 1:3-5 (NIV) Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, (5) who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

 - a). Our shepherd is guarding our inheritance – it is safe – it is waiting for us
 - b). He is also guarding us – shielding us by his power – so we will get there to enjoy it
 - C. There is no need to great for him to meet

No predator to strong he cannot protect you against
No circumstances that are out of his control

Transition: That is a reminder who are shepherd is – why we should get into the habit of looking to him

 - A. He will take care of us – he will bless us – but to what extent – what can we trust him for?
 - 1). This promise is breathtaking – talk about something that should produce great joy and rest
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I. THE EXTENT OF OUR SHEPHERD'S CARE

Ps 23:1 (ESV) The LORD is my shepherd; *I shall not want.*

1. Important because of who this is speaking too: Sheep

- A. Left to their own sheep will lack everything
 - 1). They are clueless and helpless without the shepherd's help
 - 2). They lack any defense system are easy prey for any predator if they aren't protected
 - 3). They have no sense of direction – if separated from flock they can't find their way back
 - a). They can even get lost in their own pasture
 - 4). They can't track down their own food
 - 5). Their wool if not sheared will become so heavy they lie down and can't get back up
 - a). Or it will get caught in thorns and they are trapped
 - 6). Any injury is life threatening – they don't recover well from injuries without human intervention

Point: Sheep need a shepherd because they can't take care of themselves

A. Therefore they instinctively look towards the shepherd to take care of them

2. Important because this is speaking to human sheep

A. I wonder if God thought – “I need a powerful illustration to show why men need me”

I know – I'll create sheep and then call them sheep

1). That should show them how much they need a divine shepherd

B. I know that is humbling – some don't like it

“I can take care of myself. I don't need a shepherd. I'm fine without divine supervision!” WRONG

C. Apart from our shepherd we have no defense against the predators we face

Eph 6:12 (ESV) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

1 Pe 5:8 (ESV) Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

1). Like those sheep hearing the Coyotes howl – that verse should cause you to look to the shepherd

D. Without our shepherd's guidance we wander aimlessly away from safety into danger

1). At best we just make educated guesses that are wrong quite a bit

2). But our shepherd knows the way to blessing – to those green pastures

a). His plan for our life is loving – perfect – a plan meant to lead to joy - contentment

Je 29:11 (ESV) For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Transition: We are in desperate need of being cared for

A. Left to our own we strive and strain, scam and scheme rather than rest

1). We are anxious about everything – we can find no pasture were we can just lie down

2). Life promises then takes away – a kid gets sick – job security is threatened

“What is that lump I feel?”

B. We need to learn to look at the shepherd and trust him – rest in his love – his promises

1). Why did God have David write this Psalm – to show you what it can be like

a). To convince you that you have a shepherd

b). Whose care is so comprehensive you can say “I don't want”

2). That is the potential of the Christian life

C. Let's look a bit deeper into what this is saying – see the balance and the beauty of this verse

1). We do have to be careful because this verse can be misused

II. I SHALL NOT WANT DEFINED

Ps 23:1 (ESV) The LORD is my shepherd; *I shall not want.*

1. Not used in sense some misinterpret it: Lambo's and Leer Jets

A. “Hey! You're the king's kid. Do you think he wants you to drive some old car?”

B. But “Want” in this context is speaking about needs = *I will not lack any necessities*

C. Interesting – Our English word comes from a medieval term “To be abandoned”

1). So here – I am not abandoned – Why? I have a shepherd – because of that I will not want

Psalm 23:1 (HCSB) The LORD is my shepherd; *there is nothing I lack.*

2. “I shall not want” is theme of this whole Psalm

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- A. In the rest of this Psalm David spells out what “I shall not want” means
- 1). We shall not lack rest – v. 2
 - 2). We shall not lack life – He restores our soul – v. 3
 - 3). We shall not lack guidance – v. 3
 - 4). We shall not lack safety – v. 4
 - 5). We shall not lack provision – v. 5
 - 6). We shall not lack a heavenly home – v. 6
 - a). The promise is in v. 1 – Specifics on how God works that out is in v. 2-6
- B. This kind of thinking is found all over the Bible
- Speaking of the necessities of life: Mt 6:32–33 (ESV)** For the Gentiles (**those who don’t know God**) seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ⁽³³⁾ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
- 1). The gentiles worry about their necessities – having enough
But you have a shepherd – you know God – he will make sure you have all you need
- C. Listen to David’s words for those who fear the Lord = Revere him. Put him first
- Ps 34:9–10 (ESV)** Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, *for those who fear him have no lack!* ⁽¹⁰⁾ The young lions suffer want and hunger; *but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.*
- I love this one: Psa 37:4-5 (NIV)** Delight yourself in the LORD and *he will give you the desires of your heart.* (5) Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this:
- Thought:** Let’s work that one out a bit
- A. You may be thinking “I thought you said he doesn’t give us what we want – but what we need”
- 1). “Isn’t giving us the desires of our heart – giving us what we want?”
 - a). Yes – but it’s very important to understand how this works out
How we end up living a life where we get what we want
- B. We put him first – revere and honor him – listen to his voice and follow him
- 1). He begins to work in us making us more like him = sanctification
His desires are worked into our hearts so deeply they become our desires
 - b). So now we want what he wants for us – and he can and will give us those desires
 - 2). I begin to live this wonderful life of watching God provide – satisfy
A life where my desires are fulfilled – amazing!
- C. Haven’t you discovered that he is a generous God
- Php 4:19 (ESV)** And my God will supply every need of yours *according to his riches* in glory in Christ Jesus.
- 1). “According to” is important - why didn’t Paul say “Out of” his riches? = huge difference
 - 2). Let’s say I go to Bill Gates (Founder of Microsoft) seeking support for a project
 - a). He listens – “I like it” – writes a check for \$10.00 = that’s out of his riches
But if he says “I like it” writes a check for \$10,000.000. That’s according to his riches
 - 1a). That check reflects how rich he is – it’s according to his riches
 - 3). When God says I am going to supply every need you have according to my riches
 - a). That means he is not going to be stingy – a reluctant giver
- Point:** So He is the God who promises we shall not want?
- A. Do you believe that? Can you trust him for this?
- 1). This is one of those passages that is meant to change the way we live
- B. This has really affected the way I pray.

- 1). Easy to get into begging – pleading for things when we pray
We act like God has to be forced to give us what we need
 - a). But you don't see many begging prayers in the Bible
Why? You don't have too if you believe in the promises
He promised he would provide all of our needs
- 2). So the proper balance of prayer in light of this verse
 - a). Jesus said: "You have not because you ask not" – *so I must ask*
But scripture also says I will supply all your needs according to my riches of grace
To such an extent you shall not want any necessity
 - 1a). This is the responsibility that God has taken on = his promise to us
 - b). So I ask because he told me too
Then I thank him that every need will be provided because he promised
 - 1a). Prayer mixed with thanksgiving
"Father I ask for this need and I thank you that you will provide"
 - 2a). Asking because we're commanded too – resting in the promises as we ask
- 3). As you pray like this – peace floods your heart – Why?
 - a). You're reminding yourself of the promises – God's faithfulness
You are turning and looking towards the shepherd

Question: Can we find this pattern in the Bible? Yes

Php 4:6–7 (ESV) do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁽⁷⁾ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- A. The command – do not be anxious about anything
 - 1). Why? Because you have a shepherd who has promised to take care of everything
- B. There are three parts to this prayer that leads to peace – all are necessary
 - 1). **Prayer** – that is not asking for something – that comes next
 - a). Prayer is not just asking for something – then C Ya
 - b). This is worship – devotion – sets the mood of intimacy with God
 - c). This reminds us of who we are praying too – Almighty God
The one who loves us – has promised to take care of us – and can take care of us
 - 2). **Supplication** – now we ask for what we need
 - a). This comes after reminding ourselves of who we are praying too
 - b). See the same thing in the Lord's prayer – the model he gave us
Mt 6:9–11 (ESV) Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ⁽¹⁰⁾
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ⁽¹¹⁾ **(NOW after reminding yourself of who you're going too)** Give us this day our daily bread,
 - 1a). Before asking we remind ourselves that we are going to our Father *in heaven*
 - 2a). The one who loves us and has promised to provide – the one who can provide
 - c). That builds faith – rest – trust – anticipation when we do ask
 - 3). **Thanksgiving** - Notice this last part – so essential for peace
 - a). Why do we do this – it forces us to think scripturally – it brings God onto the scene
 - 1a). It forces us to think about his sovereignty in our time of trial
 - 2a). That he is in control – that nothing is out of control – all according to his plan

- b). “Father thank you for these circumstances. I know you have allowed this because you love me and all this is leading me to those green pastures of blessing. I thank you that you are using this to develop me. And I thank you that you said this won’t last forever as soon as I learn my lesson the smoke will clear and I’ll be stronger and more like you. I thank you this has come through your perfect plan for me. I thank you that I can rest, knowing that you will provide in your way and in your timing. I thank you that I am under your loving care.
 - c). Notice the result of bringing God – our shepherd onto the scene with thanksgiving
Php 4:7 (ESV) ...And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- 4). What have I done? I chose to look at my shepherd rather than the darkness?
- a). I chose to gaze upon him and his promises rather than the circumstances

Thought: Because he promises to take care of you doesn’t mean it will always be easy

- A. Why I must learn to trust him – thank him in the dark
- B. Sometimes the shepherd must send trials to meet our need
 Because there are things in our lives that can only be burned away by fire
 - 1). Perhaps you’ve wandered from him and only trials will drive you back – prodigal son
 - 2). Maybe you’ve started putting your trust in the things of the world rather than him
 - a). He must reduce those things so you’ll see how temporal they are
 - b). He doesn’t want you clinging to that which can’t really satisfy – he loves you too much
- C. This is why we must learn to think before just reacting
 - 1). What does the Bible say – promise – when we go through tough time
 - a). If I can think rather than just let my emotions control me – I can rest
 - 2). I can come to the place Paul did – continuous contentment in his shepherds care
Phil 4:11-13 (NIV) ...I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. (12) I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. (13) I can do everything through him who gives me strength.
 - a). I have learned the secret of contentment – because I was forced to learn
 - 1a). God brought circumstances into my life where I had to learn to trust him
 - b). Through them I have learned to lean on the shepherd – trust him in all things
 - 1a). I have learned to look at him when I hear the howls of the coyotes
 - c). I have discovered that he is enough
Php 4:13 (ESV) I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

CONCLUSION

1. The blessings of being sheep

- A. Almighty God is constantly watching over us and lovingly taking care of us
 - 1). Because of this we can rest
- B. If we will just listen to him and respond he will lead us into those green pastures of blessing