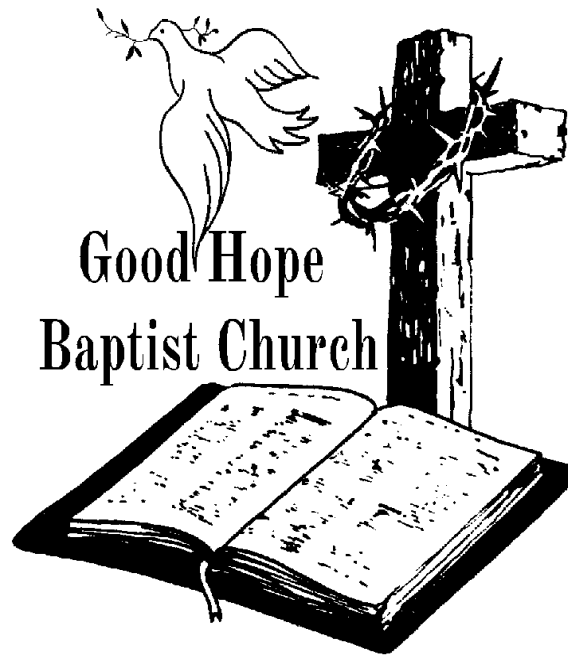


The Lord Is My Shepherd

Psalm 23



Living Together In The Love Of God

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FOCAL Read Responsively Psalms 23:1-6 A Psalm of David. 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 forever.**

ILLUSTRATE A man by the name of **Adolf Hitler** wrote a book titled "**Mein Kampf**" (meaning "My Struggle"). His Book mobilized many supporters, and brought on the terrible death and destruction of World War II. Hitler wrote his book after reading the writings of Philosopher **Friedrich Nietzsche**, who told of the supposed "Death of God" and the ability of humans to be super men. The Russian **Karl Marx** wrote a book called "**Das Kapital**" that declared capitalism and religion to be evil, and communism to be the best good for a nation. His writings led to the establishment of the Soviet Union, and the death of hundreds of thousands of innocent people. **Charles Darwin**, a failed minister of the Gospel, wrote his book, **Origin of the Species**, proposing that man actually evolved from lower life forms, and accounting God to be no more than a figment of the imagination. Darwinism has changed the face of American education by exiling God and Biblical Creationism while teaching that we are - in effect -

nothing more than higher forms of animals.

These men: **Hitler, Nietzsche, Marx, and Darwin**, all had faith, and their followers had faith. Their faith was in themselves, and in their ability to change the world.

These men did change the world, but not for the better, because their faith was misplaced, and their books were God-forsaken.

A leader that forsakes God is as bad as a skilled surgeon that will not wash his hands. **Hitler, Nietzsche, Marx, and Darwin** were all leaders, and their leadership tainted and poisoned all they touched. This was not the case with King David. David put his faith in the Lord. Even when he sinned the great and terrible sins of *murder* and *adultery* as he did with Bathsheba and Uriah her husband, David declared to God "**against Thee and Thee only have I sinned**" (Psalm 51:4).

David was a God driven leader, and the writings he left behind do not poison our minds, but build us up and draw us to Christ. 1000 years before the Lord Jesus Christ came to this earth King David wrote Psalm 23, as well as *fifty four* other Psalms. Each one of these Psalms are great, God inspired, and God driven. But there is just something about Psalm 23 that is so special.

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want".

These are timeless words, words packed with meaning - not just because they are Scripture, but because David was a *normal man with a normal man's failings*. He

wasn't perfect, but he knew this. David put little faith in himself. **The Lord is my Shepherd**. That implies that David knew he *was the sheep*. No better, and no worse than anyone else. David did what the Scripture says:

1 Peter 5:6-7 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: (7) Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

and by doing so showed us how each and every one of us should strive to live. **The Lord is my Shepherd**.

1. The Lord Is My Shepherd, I Am His Sheep

FOCAL Psalms 23:1 The **LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.**

David wrote "**The Lord IS my Shepherd**", not "**He WAS my Shepherd**" or "**God is my Shepherd when I'm in trouble**". David submitted himself to the Lord Who saved him. He knew that:

CONTEXT Psalms 24:1-2 A Psalm of David. **The earth is the LORD's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. (2) For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.**

God said:

Psalms 50:10-12 For **every beast of the forest is mine,**

and the cattle upon a thousand hills. (11) I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. (12) If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof.

It all belongs to God! David made up his mind from the beginning of his walk with God that **the Lord IS my Shepherd, I shall not want**. He put himself in the position of sheep, and let God be Shepherd.

The Shepherd *must* provide for the sheep, or He is no Shepherd. If God is the Shepherd, and I am the sheep - then He *must* provide my needs!

David was not born King David. He was born into relative obscurity. Nobody knew his name, or even cared when he was a boy. He was the *eighth son of Jesse*, the runt of the litter. When he was old enough his father put him out in the field to *watch the sheep*, a terrible job. Sheep have no natural defenses, so they are totally reliant on the Shepherd. Sheep also are easily distracted, so the Shepherd has to be on watch lest his sheep get themselves in trouble.

As David sat in the dark of the night watching over the sheep, he had time to think about his own life. David saw the billion billion stars in the sky and realized that **The Lord is my Shepherd**. He gave his life to the Lord.

God doesn't use the *best*, He uses the *broken* and the *surrendered*. God is glorified in the underdog, in the weak, in the helpless. He is glorified in the

surrendered life! **God needs *nothing*, so He never operates from a position of need. He wants US to admit that we need HIM.**

One day while David sat watching the sheep, the Prophet Samuel came calling. **King Saul, the present King of Israel** had become lifted up with pride. He no longer wanted to follow the Lord. **The Lord was *no longer his Shepherd***. It was God Who put Saul on the throne, and God Who now was getting ready to remove him. The Lord will not tolerate arrogance from His people. God's people are commanded to:

Psalms 100:3 Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

It's very dangerous for a sheep to try and be a Shepherd. We're not made to be God - we're made to follow God. Saul was arrogant, prideful - and God set in motion the events to remove him from the Throne. God told Samuel:

1 Samuel 16:1 And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

Did you notice what God said? **"I have provided Me a king among Jesse's sons"**. When trials come our way we often ask the question, "Why is this happening to

me?" We mourn, we rail, we fight against the trial. Yet if you are in Christ **the Lord is your Shepherd**. Nothing comes to you that does not come under the gaze of the Shepherd. If a trial or a trouble, like a wolf or a wild dog, comes near God's flock, He knows all about it. Nothing happens without His control.

Everything that happened to David happened because - as God said - "**I have provided Me a king from among Jesse's sons**". God is at work, even when the sheep do not know it.

God does not save His children to leave them to the whims of this world and Satan. No, He's watching. **The Lord is my Shepherd**. He is in control.

When Samuel got to Jesse's place, we read that "**Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel**" (1 Samuel 16:10). Jesse brought the best and the strongest out to Samuel. Look at this child - look at his strength. And this one, how beautiful. Yet one by one the Lord said "**No, that's not the one. I have provided Me a king, but these are not him**". Samuel asked Jesse "**don't you have any more children?**", to which Jesse replied "**there remains but the youngest, and behold, he keeps the sheep**" (1 Samuel 16:11). David was the least of the children, but he was the one that the Lord had prepared. Samuel anointed him King over Israel that day.

Though David was anointed King over Israel by Samuel, Saul still sat on the throne. Many men might have risen up and tried to take over the Throne. After all, God

anointed David. He was God's chosen. Yet David did nothing. **The Lord is my Shepherd**. Sheep are to be patient, to **wait on the Lord**. David wrote in another place:

Psalms 27:13-14 I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. (14) Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

There are times when life just doesn't make sense. **Wait on the Lord**. The Shepherd stands above the flock, watching and knowing. What do you do while you're waiting? PRAISE HIM! SERVE HIM!

The Lord knows those Who are His, and care for us. **Wait, and trust the Shepherd**. David waited. He became a Harpist for King Saul, a King playing servant to a now deposed King. Yet David didn't worry, nor push to gain the Throne. The Lord had anointed him, and in due season the Lord would put him on that Throne.

2. The Lord Is My TRUSTED Shepherd

FOCAL Psalms 23:1-2 **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.**

As a Sheep David learned to **obey the Shepherd**. He let God lead him. He let God be in control.

In ancient times two opposing armies would often

choose a champion, and when the two champions fought this would determine who was the victor. Such fighting prevented needless bloodshed, while still declaring a victor. The army of Israel came up against the army of Philistia, and the Philistines quickly suggested a battle between two champions. Saul agreed to the battle, but was having a problem. The Philistine who stood before Israel was *nine feet tall*, and carried a spear as long as a *weaver's beam*. The head of the spear was *eighteen pounds*. This man was a monster. The Bible also says that this man was arrogant, mocking Israel and Israel's God.

1 Samuel 17:16 And the Philistine drew near morning and evening, and presented himself forty days.

ILLUSTRATE 40 Days Forty days is an interesting study in the Bible. **Forty days** was the amount of time God allowed rain to fall on the earth, destroying all creation in the time of Noah (**Genesis 7:4**). **Moses** was in **Mount Sinai** for forty days and forty nights, receiving the Law from God (**Exodus 24:18**). The **spies of Israel** searched out the Land of Canaan for forty days (**Numbers 13:25**), and because they rejected the command of God the Lord caused Israel to wander in the wilderness for forty days (**Numbers 14:34**). When God sent **Jonah** to Nineveh he preached "**yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown**" (**Jonah 3:4**). Our Lord Jesus fasted for forty days in the wilderness before He was tempted of Satan (**Matthew 4:2**). Jesus taught for **forty days** before ascending unto Heaven following His resurrection.

On the fortieth day a young boy by the name of David rode up, bringing lunch to his brothers. He heard the giant Goliath challenging Israel and said:

1 Samuel 17:26 ... **who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?**

David volunteered to go out and battle Goliath. No one believed in him His brothers accused him of being arrogant and prideful. King Saul said:

1 Samuel 17:33 ... **Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.**

Yet what did David reply? He told Saul of a time when a lion and a bear attacked his flock, and he, trusting in the Lord, killed these beasts. He said:

1 Samuel 17:37 ... **The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.**

The Lord does not want His people to be frightened. He doesn't want us to live in insecurity and in fear. He wants us to look to Him as the Shepherd, knowing that He and He alone knows what is best. He wants us to *wait upon Him*, to follow where He leads.

The power of the sheep lies in following the Shepherd. As long as the sheep follows the Shepherd, it is protected, prospered, and in the Shepherd's plan.

Where was David's power? It was in the Lord. He wrote in another place:

Psalms 18:32-36 It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect. (33) He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places. (34) He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. (35) Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great. (36) Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip.

His power was in God! You all know the end of the story. David went out against a fully armed and protected Goliath. Goliath carried more firepower - but David walked with the Lord! David told Goliath:

1 Samuel 17:45-47 ... Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. (46) This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. (47) And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with

sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hands.

It's not how much firepower you have, but whether you are walking in the Lord or not that will win the battle! **The five smooth stones and the sling that David carried to Goliath had the power of a 357 Magnum, because David walked with God!**

David said "**The Lord will give you into our hands**". God blesses those who follow Him!

Did David's life suddenly turn around that day? Anointed as King of Israel, did he immediately assume the Throne upon defeating Goliath?

No, he didn't. In fact the Bible tells us:

1 Samuel 18:6-7 ... when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine {Goliath}, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. (7) And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

The person who follows God will be honored, but the one who does not follow God will not be honored. Saul had not followed God, but David had. The Bible says that "**Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him**" (1 Samuel 18:8).

God used David to humble Saul, and Saul to hone David. David would not ascend to the Throne until God had finished with both David *and* Saul. God is in control!

Saul did not have the Lord as his Shepherd, but David did. The Bible tells us that **Saul tried to kill David with a javelin (1 Samuel 18:10)**, but David dodged the javelin and continued to wait upon the Lord. When Saul couldn't kill David with a spear, he made him captain of a thousand men and sent him off the battle. The Bible says:

1 Samuel 18:14-16 And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him. (15) Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him.

Saul - following not the Lord but his own desires - was filled with fear. He feared losing the Throne. He feared David's popularity. This fear motivated Saul to plot and plan against David, seeking to take his life. The Bible says:

1 Samuel 18:17 ... Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him.

Saul plotted again and again to take David's life. He gave David his daughter **Michal**, then demanded that David slay a hundred Philistines as a dowry for the wedding. David ended up killing *two hundred* Philistines instead. The Bible says:

1 Samuel 18:29 And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually.

Eventually Saul took his own life, and David ascended to the Throne of Israel.

3. If The Lord Is *Not* My Shepherd, Why Should I Want To Come To Him?

FOCAL Psalms 23:1, 3 **The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. (3) He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.**

Perhaps there are some of you who, in listening to this message, have thought "How do I know that the Lord *wants* to be my Shepherd? Why would He care for me?"

God loves you. The Bible repeatedly teaches us that God loves all, and wants all to come to Him. Listen Beloved, **before David ever wrote "The Lord is My Shepherd", the Lord gave him a vision into the future.** In Psalm 22 - the Psalm just before Psalm 23 - David was given a glimpse into what Jesus Christ - the Great Shepherd - would actually do for His people. God let David see the Shepherd of the sheep on the Cross. David wrote:

CONTEXT Psalms 22:16-17 **For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. (17) I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.**

The Jews never executed anyone by crucifixion. They used *stoning with stones* outside of the gates of the city to punish a Capital Offense. **"They pierced My hands and My feet"**. Jesus was crucified - not because He was evil, but because we are sinners. No charges nor fault could be found in Him. Pilate said that Jesus was an innocent man. And yet:

Matthew 27:35 And they crucified {Jesus}, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, **They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.**

David saw the Great Shepherd hanging on that Cross. He saw Jesus hanging there naked, shamed, for:

CONTEXT Psalms 22:18 **They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.**

When Jesus cried out from the Cross, He wasn't looking back to David in order to quote him. David was looking *forward* to the Messiah, *forward* to the **Great Shepherd Who lay down His life for the Sheep**. When Jesus cried out **"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"** (Matthew 27:46), David had already seen this 1000 years before:

CONTEXT Psalms 22:1 ... **My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?**

and when David wrote:

CONTEXT Psalms 22:2 **O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.**

that Jesus cried out in both the day as well as the night, this was literally fulfilled in **Matthew 27:45**, where we are told **"from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour"**.

Why did Jesus Christ go through this? Why did He hang on the Cross of Calvary? Because God is holy, and we are all sinners. We're not just sinners because Adam sinned, but we're sinners because *we sin*. Look at the best and the brightest of mankind, and you will find self serving sinners. Look at the philanthropist, and you will see that he requires his generosity be rewarded by having a wing of a hospital or a library named after him. We are all sinners - but God is holy.

CONTEXT Psalms 22:3 **But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.**

God is without sin, and cannot allow sin into His presence. This is why Jesus hung on the Cross, to make payment for our sins. This is why He hung there, bleeding and dying, as the people mocked Him. **"If you are the Son of God, come down from that Cross. You saved others, but You can't even save Yourself!"** (Matthew 27:39-44). David saw this mocking, and wrote of it in Psalm 22. David saw Jesus

CONTEXT Psalms 22:14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

Poured out like water. His bones out of joint from the stress of the crucifixion. Your sins and mine poured out on Him, and judged.

The Lord is my Shepherd.

The HATEFUL hands of man mocked Jesus. The HELLISH hands of Satan and his minions scorned Jesus. The HOLY hands of God poured our sins out on Jesus.

The Lord is my Shepherd. And through all of this, the Bible says that Jesus went willingly. Jesus willingly gave Himself for you, and now calls on you to give yourselves to Him.

John 10:14-18 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. (15) As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. (16) And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. (17) Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. (18) No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

The Lord is my Shepherd. Your souls will never be restored until you come to Him Who gave Himself for your souls. You will never walk not fearing death until you come to Him Who conquered death. You will never enjoy life regardless of your enemies until you come to Him Who **prepares a table for you in the presence of your enemies.**

Jesus Christ lay down His life so He could take it up again - *for you*. If you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not have an ongoing personal relationship with Him - He is calling you to His side today. Come. Lay your soul down at His feet. Surrender to Him. **The Lord is my Shepherd.**

This is the way of life, a life given to Jesus - for He gave His life for you.

May God touch your hearts, and draw you to Him through His Word!

FOCAL Read Responsively Psalms 23:1-6 A Psalm of David. 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 forever.

1 Peter 5:6-7

**1. The Lord Is My Shepherd,
I Am His Sheep**

Psalms 23:1; Psalms 24:1-2; Psalms 50:10-12; Psalms 100:3; 1 Samuel 16:1; 1 Samuel 16:10; 1 Samuel 16:11; Psalms 27:13-14

- God doesn't use the *best*, He uses the _____ and the _____.

- What do I do while waiting on the Lord? _____

2. The Lord Is My TRUSTED Shepherd

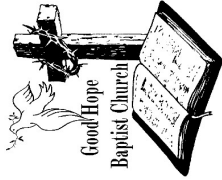
Psalms 23:1-2; 1 Samuel 17:16; 1 Samuel 17:26; 1 Samuel 17:33; 1 Samuel 17:37; Psalms 18:32-36; 1 Samuel 17:45-47; 1 Samuel 18:6-7; 1 Samuel 18:8; 1 Samuel 18:10; 1 Samuel 18:14-16; 1 Samuel 18:17; 1 Samuel 18:29

- The power of the sheep lies in _____

- God used David to humble Saul, and Saul to hone David, just as He used the lion and the bear in David's youth. **An untested faith is a useless faith!**

**3. If The Lord Is *Not* My Shepherd,
Why Should I Want To Come To Him?**

Psalms 23:1, 3; Psalms 22:16-17; Matthew 27:35; Psalms 22:18; Matthew 27:46; Psalms 22:1; Psalms 22:2; Matthew 27:45; Psalms 22:3; Matthew 27:39-44; Psalms 22:14; John 10:14-18



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