

The 23rd Psalm

Introduction:

- A. This Psalm's place in the scriptures.
 - 1. It is without doubt one of the most loved passages in all of the Bible.
 - 2. It is most frequently used at funerals.
 - 3. Its message continues to comfort our souls, especially during times of sorrow.
- B. Today we shall explore the ever abiding comforting lessons of Psalms 23.

I. Faith – ***“The Lord is my Shepherd”***

- A. Just think about ... is He YOUR shepherd?
- B. Jesus said, *“I am the good shepherd...”* – Jn.10:11.
 - 1. The church is His flock of sheep– Jn.10:16; Acts 20:28.
 - 2. Jesus said His sheep hear His voice and follow Him – Jn.10:27; cf.Rom.10:17.
 - 3. They do not follow strangers – Jn.10:5.
- C. Is Christ your shepherd and are you following Him?

II. Assurance – ***“I shall not want”***

- A. Perhaps David's experience with the Lord convinced him of this – cf.1 Sam.17:32-37.
- B. This kind of assurance comes from well founded teaching – Ps.37:23-25; Matt.6:33.
- C. God will supply our needs:
 - 1. Knock and ask – Matt.7:7,8.
 - 2. He will not leave or forsake us – Heb.13:5,6.
 - 3. Sow bountifully and reap – 2 Cor.9:6-11.
 - 4. Those who serve the Lord acceptably in Christ are abundantly blessed – Eph.1:3.
- D. Summary:
 - 1. *“The Lord is my shepherd”* – Here is my faith.
 - 2. *“I shall not want”* – Here is my assurance.
 - 3. *“Now faith is the substance (assurance – ASV) of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”* – Heb.11:1.
 - a. Heb.10:22 – *“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...”*

III. Contentment – ***“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures”***

- A. There is no greater way to express this contentment than by peaceful sheep lying in lush pastures.
- B. 1 Tim.6:6-8– *“But godliness with contentment is great gain.”*
- C. Failing to be satisfied leads to other sins:
 - 1. Covetousness – Lk.12:13-15.
 - 2. Envy, jealousy and strife also are natural results of not being content.
- D. Surely we could learn from Paul's experience how to be content – Phil.4:11-13.

IV. Peace – ***“He leadeth me beside the still waters”***

- A. Restless and troubled waters are dangerous – cf.Mk.4:36-41.
- B. The still quiet waters are peaceful and safe – Jesus said, *“Peace, be still”* – Mk.4:38.
- C. Jesus is our *“Prince of Peace”* – cf.Isa.9:6.
 - 1. Phil.4:7– *“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding...”*
 - 2. Those who follow the Lord are peace makers – Matt.5:9; Rom.12:18; 14:19; 1 Pet.3:10-12.
 - 3. Eph.4:1-4– *“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*
- D. There can be no cowardice however. We must:
 - 1. Put on the whole armour of God – Eph.6:10.
 - 2. *“Fight the good fight of faith”* – 1 Tim.6:12.

3. Realize it is a spritual battle – 2 Cor.10:3-6.
4. Contend earnestly for the faith – Jude 3.
- E. There can be no peace at any price.
 1. Jas.3:17 – Peace should be sought, but not at the cost of purity.
 2. Obeying God may mean war if one is really serious – cf.Matt.10:34.
- F. Only the true followers can have peace.

V. Life – ***“He restoreth my soul”***

- A. With our first breath we become a living soul, and when the spirit departs we die – cf.Jas.2:26.
- B. To restore the soul seems to imply life again.
- C. Job asked, *“If a man die, shall he live again”* – Job 14:14.
 1. The answer is yes.
 2. This is why David was not afraid to walk through the valley of the shadow of death.
 3. This is why he ate instead of fasting when his son died – 2 Sam.12:22,23.
 4. Evidently David forsook the Resurrection – cf.Ps.16:10; Acts 2:31.
 5. The resurrection of Christ foreshadows our resurrection – Jn.5:28,29; 11:25.
- D. What a promise of Life that David could say, *“He restoreth my soul.”*

VI. Leadership – ***“He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake”***

- A. Note: The Lord leads – David followed.
 1. Man cannot direct his own steps – cf.Jer.10:23.
 2. David was led by God through the teaching of the O.T.
 3. Today God leads us through the N.T.
 - a. God’s righteousness is found in the gospel – Rom.1:16,17.
 - b. All of us are to walk by this same rule – Phil.3:15,16.
 - c. Looking unto Jesus – Heb.12:1,2.
- B. The Lord leads and we are to follow – Lk.9:23.
 1. It is sad but true that men refuse to deny themselves to follow Christ.
 2. They rather elect to follow blind guides – cf.Matt.15:13,14.
 3. The Lord is the Good Shepherd and cares for the sheep – Jn.10:1-4,11-14.
- C. The Lord has the words of life.
 1. Peter and the disciples could not look elsewhere – cf.Jn.6:66-68.
 2. Now he has proven that He can and will lead us through the valley of the shadow of death.
 - a. He has been there – Heb.2:14,15.
 3. And He proved that man can and will be raised from the dead – cf.Acts 2:24; Col.2:15.
- D. The Lord leads in paths of righteousness.
 1. He is the end of the Law for righteousness – Rom.10:4.
 2. Our present system of righteousness is of God by faith – Phil.3:8,9.
 3. The Lord leads us through the Spirit – Jn.16:13-15; Rom.8:14.
- E. We are to walk as He walked – 1 Jn.2:5,6; 1 Pet.2:21.
 1. He does not ask us to do what He was not willing to do.
- F. Follow Him, He will lead you to obedience, peace and rest – Matt.11:28; Heb.5:8,9.

VII. Confidence – ***“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death”***

- A. Confidence that where He leads and I follow all will come out right.
- B. The walk is the walk all men must take – Heb.9:27.

- C. The Valley is simply figurative of the earth where death reigns.
 - 1. While it is the land of the living, it is also the region of the dying.
- D. The shadow of death is constantly about us.
 - 1. We read about it every day.
 - 2. Most humans realize the frailty of life and the ever lurking presence of death and fear – Eccl.9:5.
- E. Such confidence is born of hope.
 - 1. Paul desired to depart and be with Christ – Phil.1:23; cf.2 Cor.5:6,8.
- F. What gives us this confidence?
 - 1. Our confidence should rest upon the promises – Heb.11:1; 2 Pet.1:4; Heb.10:22,23.
- G. All the fear of death should be removed from us – Heb.2:14,15.
 - 1. We should not fear it or man who can harm us – Heb.13:5,6.

VIII. Courage – *“I will fear no evil”*

- A. David had shown courage all of his life.
 - 1. He gave God the credit for slaying the lion and bear and Gaint – cf.1 Sam.17:37.
- B. The man who fears God has no need to fear any other thing.
 - 1. If we fear men we may be rejected of God – Matt.10:28.
 - 2. God accepts us if we fear Him and do His righteousness – Acts 10:34,35.
 - 3. John teaches us how to completely eliminate fear – 1 Jn.4:18.
- C. When we are totally satisfied that we are at peace with God we need not fear any evil.

IX. Companionship – *“For thou art with me”*

- A. What a wonderful and comforting thought.
- B. How can we have Him as our companion?
 - 1. First, we must come to where God is.
 - a. He dwells in light – 1 Tim.6:16.
 - 2. We must come to walk where He dwells – 1 Jn.1:5-7.
 - 3. That means we must keep His commandments – 1 Jn.2:3-5; 3:24.
 - 4. We must draw nigh to Him – Jas.4:8.
 - 5. The Lord is with us as our companion as long as we are with Him – cf.2 Chron.15:2.
- C. Too many today are supposing God is with them.
 - 1. Even Mary and Joseph supposed that once – cf.Lk.2:42-52.
 - 2. Just like a lot of people today who are looking for Him among their kin folks.
 - 3. Others are looking for Him in denominations and in other schemes.
- D. You must look for Him where He is.
 - 1. You can't come to God except by Jesus – Jn.14:6.
 - 2. To come to Jesus you must hear and learn of the father (Jn.6:44-45) and obey Him (Matt.7:21).
 - 3. And you must be careful not to go beyond God's word or encourage them who do – 2 Jn.9,10.
- E. If we listen to Him, and obey Him, He will be with us as our companion.

X. Comfort – *“Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me”*

- A. One's rod and staff was the same thing.
 - 1. As a rod it was used as a stick by which to discipline and as a staff it was a walking stick.
 - 2. David could take comfort in the rod because it would be used to punish his enemies – Ps.9:16.
 - 3. He could take comfort in His staff since it was the path God would travel.
 - a. God is faithful – 1 Cor.10:13.
- B. God's rod and staff comforts those who walk with Him – not a comfort to the sinner.
- C. Think of the glorious promises we have in death – 1 Thess.4:13-18; Rev.14:13.
- D. What greater promises or comfort could we desire?

XI. Providence – “*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies*”

- A. What a beautiful thought:
 - 1. Abundance is provided, so much so that his enemies could see it.
 - 2. Those who criticized his chosen course were able to see that it was the right course.
- B. We have the same promises – Prov.28:25; Matt.6:32,33.
- C. While the enemy of the sheep seeks a victory, a table is prepared for the sheep.
- D. One of the lessons learned from the book of Revelation is that though the enemy seems to have a victory, the saints always win – Rev.13:10; 14:12,13; 19:11-21; 20:4-6.

XII. Favor – “*Thou anointest my head with oil*”

- A. To be anointed of the Lord is to:
 - 1. Be chosen of the Lord.
 - 2. Be in His favor – cf.1 Sam.16:13.
 - 3. Be a king.
- B. God has chosen and anointed certain ones today – 2 Cor.1:21,22; Eph.1:4.
 - 1. We are a chosen generation – 1 Pet.2:9.
 - 2. And in His favor – 2 Cor.4:6; Eph.1:16-19; 3:16-19.
 - 3. And made us kings – cf.1 Pet.2:9; Rev.1:6.
- C. What a marvelous thought.

XIII. Joy – “*My cup runneth over*”

- A. The cup is full.
 - 1. There is no more room for blessings.
- B. Think of the rejoicing that the Christian can have in Christ.
 - 1. The eunuch went on his way rejoiced – Acts 8:39.
 - 2. The jailer’s household rejoiced – Acts 16:34.
 - 3. All Christians should rejoice – 1 Pet.4:12-14; Matt.5:11,12; Phil.3:1; 4:4.
- C. No one on earth has more right to rejoice than the people of God.

XIV. Mercy – “*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life*”

- A. There were reasons for David’s conclusion.
 - 1. He had followed the Lord and leaned upon Him.
 - 2. He had been richly blessed with all kinds of blessings even before his enemies.
- B. God’s goodness is reserved for those who continue in His goodness – Rom.11:22.
 - 1. The prodigal understood his father’s goodness was reserved for those living there – cf.Lk.15:17.
 - 2. The blessings of salvation are for those who walk therein – 1 Cor.15:1-3; Col.1:21-23.
- C. If you continue in God’s will, you too should enjoy goodness and mercy all the days of your life.
 - 1. This does not mean you are not going to be tried from time to time.
 - 2. God permits us to be tried to prove our faith – cf.1 Pet.1:6,7; Jas.1:1-3, 12-14.

Conclusion:

- A. **Immortality – “*And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever*”**
 - 1. David understood following the Lord provided blessings here and in eternity.
 - a. Abraham had this kind of faith – cf.Heb.11:10-16.

- b. Job reflected it too – Job.14:14.
- 2. Godliness has promise of the life that now is and that to come – 1 Tim.4:8; Mk.10:28-30.
 - a. We will have a new body – 2 Cor.5:1; Phil.3:20,21; 1 Cor.15:52-57.
 - b. It is reserved in heaven for us – 1 Pet.4:5.
- B. Can you speak with the faith, conviction, confidence and assurance of David?
 - 1. Only if you have let the Lord be your shepherd.
- C. If you've not had Him as your Shepherd, why not start now?