

Our Faithful Shepherd

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[0 : 00] The 23rd Psalm is one of my favorite psalms.

And so I said, I'll do a lesson on this. And as I was preparing it and reading, there's only six verses in it.

And I'm looking at it and I'm, where did all this information come from? It is packed with information and everything. But this is probably the best known passage in the Bible next to the Lord's Prayer. In fact, I remember in the seventh grade, this is back when you can do this in class. One of our assignments was to learn and recite the 23rd Psalms.

That tells you how old I am. Because you can't even come close to that now. It has really been one of my favorites. The 24th Psalms develops an unfamiliar metaphor.

[1 : 07] What I'm talking about, I'm going to use these, but I've got to use it, is the shepherd-sheep relationship. Few people in America have ever seen a flock of sheep under a shepherd's care.

Much less experience the everyday occurrence coming to the way of life. David drew from this experience as he penned the 23rd Psalms.

And there's a guy named John Davis, but in his book, *The Perfect Shepherd*, this is the one I found in the library. He talked about an experience he had with a Muhammad Yassid, who was a shepherd over around Israel.

And he was able to go with him, spend a week with him working as a shepherd. And he shared the experience. And there's a lot of information in there about that, but I only drew up on part of it.

But he talked about their relationship. And the first thing Muhammad had him do was to change his entire attire. In other words, he had to walk the streets with them with the sheep, wearing sandals and such that.

[2 : 16] And he said, actually, the first day, he was ready to get out of those sandals. So it's quite an experience. As they were making their way from Tekoa to Getty, they were working with the sheep.

And there were several days. They sat on the hillside one night watching the sheep. And as they were sitting there, Dr. Davis and Muhammad started talking.

And he asked him about the attitude of a shepherd. This is a response that he gave him.

Muhammad constantly mentioned the fact that the best shepherds are those who genuinely love their sheep.

They not only should love them, but should feel a deep obligation for their care and growth. This is a great picture to me of our Lord and Savior.

He loves us so much that he just, like you said, he gave his life for us. And so this just paints a beautiful picture of that. In Isaiah 40, verse 11, we'll read here, He will feed his flock like a shepherd.

[3 : 25] He will gather the lamb with his arms and carry them in his bosom and gently lead those who are with young. And in John 10, verse 11 through 15, Jesus says, I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep. But a hireling, he who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and flees the sheep.

And the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling, the hireling, flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.

As the father knows me, and Jesus is saying here, even so, I know the father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. With this background in mind, in the first verse, there's four words in the Hebrew.

And it reads, the Lord Yahweh is my shepherd. I will not have need. Yahweh is based on the Hebrew verb, Yahweh, meaning to be.

[4 : 35] The name is the assertion of the Lord's self-existence. This was the name revealed to Moses in Exodus 3.14. Jesus also identified himself with this name.

And the first verse emphasizes the provisions for the sheep. What everything the sheep enjoy comes as a result of a divine blessing.

And that is taking us as a sheep. Everything comes as a divine blessing from the Lord. When David speaks of this Lord as his shepherd, he is emphasizing the inexhaustible resource available to the sheep.

The second word of the Hebrew text is roi, and it's translated my shepherd. So you put them together, Yahweh, my shepherd.

That's the first four words in that first verse. He said the word is related to the Hebrew verb rea, which simply means to feed, graze, or pasture.

[5 : 42] In light of the shepherd's responsibilities and capabilities, one can see the vast potential and prospect of the Lord as being our shepherd. The intimacy of the psalm is not reflective of an impersonal theological assertion.

The true impact of the psalms is the addition of the personal pronoun, my. This association is not established by a superficial acclamation, but by a forthright encounter with his suffering suffered in Psalms 22.

And if you have your Bible, we're going to look at parts of Psalm 22 as it describes our suffering shepherd, our Savior. In Psalms 22, we'll not read every bit of it, but we'll go read excerpts of it. It says, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me? These are some of the same words you've looked in the New Testament when Jesus was on the cross, when he gave his life for us.

He says, Oh my God, I cry in the daytime, but you do not hear. And in the night season, am not silent.

[7 : 02] Then you go on down and it says, They cried to you and were delivered. They treasured in you and were not ashamed. And going over, he says, All those who see me ridicule me.

They shout out the lip. They shake their head, saying, He trusted in his Lord, yet let him rescue him. Let him deliver him since he delights in him.

Again, here we're seeing Jesus reaching out to the Lord as he is stretched out on the cross. He says, He says, And then going down to verse 15 here.

He says, My strength is dried up like a pot's shared, and my tongue clenches so to my jaws. Then on 16, he says, They pierce my hands and my feet.

I can count my bones. They look and stare at me. They divide my garments and among them. And for my clothing they cast lots.

[8 : 17] Again, this is a description of the suffering shepherd, which we read again in the New Testament.

It is true that the psalm, even when claimed by unbelievers, produces a measure of sentimental comfort.

This is to unbelievers. This is to unbelievers. However, in the darkest hour, genuine comfort comes only to those who can confidently claim the shepherd as their own.

David found this out himself.

So have we. See the happiness of the saints as the sheep of God's pastures. They are well placed, well laid.

[9 : 16] He making me lie down in green pastures. We have a comfort of this life from God's good hand as well as his support.

Our daily bread from him as our father. The greatest abundance is but a dry pasture to those wicked men who relish only in it which pleases the senses, but to a godly man who tastes the goodness of God in all his enjoyment, and by faith relish that thought he has but little of the world. It is a green pasture. In other words, we have those out there. It is a pasture for them, but they do not really get out of what we do.

But as us as Christians, when we put our total trust in the Lord, he gives us a green pasture. It may not be very much, but we are blessed with it.

That is where they have it, but they are not blessed with it. As I was reading, I read that sheep are stupid animals and frequently are alarmed and actually run over each other, facing away from something that stalls them.

[10 : 39] In fact, they'll run over each other trying to get away. The shepherd corrects this problem by catching one sheep and gently forcing that sheep to lay down and feed from the pasture.

And when he does, the sheep will follow him. David remembers such an occasion as for himself. He makes me lie down. This is where David is saying, Well, the Lord has made me lie down. As he does with us sometimes. He said, Many times in our hectic, hurried age, we must occasionally be made to lie down by our shepherd Savior.

When he steps into our healthy skelter world, he often forces us to rest. Have you ever experienced that where God has come in and just stopped you in your track and said, Just wait on me?

This is what he's saying here. He will come in and make us lay down in green pastures and allow him to work with us to restore our souls.

[11 : 45] In verse 2, it concludes with another pleasant picture. He leaves me beside quiet waters. As I read this, I remember the one book that I read from.

This one, the sheep, when they take them to the water, even though they've been out all day, they're weary and worn and everything. If the water is rapid water, they will not drink from it. So the shepherd steps into the water with his rod and staff and moves stones around and basically kind of builds a dam where the water is calm.

And when he does, those sheep will go right to that calm area and drink. One of the things they say, when sheep see the water like that, in their minds, now I'm not in their minds, so I can't say this, but they say that, well, maybe they think that if they get their wool wet, it's going to cause them to get waterlogged and sink into the stream.

And so they're afraid of that. But I'm not a psychologist, so I'm not trying to try to figure out what these sheep are thinking about, you know. He restores my soul.

[12 : 59] The shepherd has provided refreshment for the flock with waters he has stilled. Then he's talking about he has restores my soul. Restoration is what a full, meaningful term.

There is that familiar scene, again, along the hillside. Sheep have a bad habit of wandering. And he's talking about here, the wandering sheep.

As I was preparing this lesson, I read the story of a sheep. The sheep spotted a hole in a fence around the pasture where they were grazing. The wandering sheep wandered through the area, the hole, and several other sheep followed him.

And this was by a roadside. And it caused a disruption for the people passing by. They were honking their horns and doing everything to get the sheep to encourage them to get out of the way until the shepherd or the owner of the sheep came and led one back and all the sheep got back and allowed them to be able to pass on.

Also, as night falls, wolves will lurk in an area where darkness may be to find a mutton they can have for their supper. The shepherd will sit there and count his sheep and call them by name.

[14 : 19] Realizing the shepherd had a wandering member of his flock, he strikes out and restores the lost one to his flock. Occasionally, however, he has one young sheep that's probably, his name probably was Ted, that was always wandering and getting into trouble and such like that.

That's why I say that. That's me. And he has a habit of wandering again and again. The shepherd would leave the flock and go find the wandering sheep or lamb.

When such things occur, often the shepherd will lift the lamb up from the thistle and cactus, holding it close to his side, abruptly breaking out.

You ready for this? Abruptly breaking its leg. The shepherd will then make a splint for the shattered leg and then carefully care for that one wayward lamb and near his heart.

And the sheep will learn a bitter lesson while depending completely upon the shepherds during that period of restoration. This same process is something that we as Christians, when we become like a wayward sheep, God has to, in a metaphorical way, break our limbs to where he can take care of us until he gets us back to where we're restored to where he wants us.

[15 : 45] Do these words fall upon one of God's children who has gotten into a habit of drifting from the flock? Let me remind you of one important word.

He, He, the shepherd's Savior who will restore you. He is looking for you if you have strayed away. In Isaiah 53, 6, we read, All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of all.

All is a reference not only to the entire nation of Israel which wandered in the wilderness and sin, but also the whole race of mankind who wandered from God's perfect love.

God the Father laid the burden of his redemption upon the Son who willingly and voluntarily accepted the burden.

[16 : 48] His redemption was as universal as man's sin. God, our shepherd's Savior, will lead us in the path of righteousness for his name's sake.

in Psalms 23, 3. It's basically broken down in three sections. This one's the shepherd's section. The other one is preparing the table.

And then the third part is us receiving our glory in heaven.