

The Lord Is My Shepherd

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David contemplates in the first Psalm 23 and during his 5

[15:59] And sometimes we can fall into thinking that David had some kind of special faith that allowed him to trust more deeply and fully in God's strength. But David didn't always rely on God's strength, and I want to highlight just one example that shows that, too.

Think back to the episode in 1 Samuel 21. That's where David had fled to Gath to get away from Saul. And then when he realized that going to Gath might not be the smartest thing to do, listen to what David did.

Here are verses 1 Samuel 21, 12, and 13. So 1 Samuel 21, 12, and 13 say, Now David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish, the king of Gath.

So he changed his behavior before them, pretending madness in their hands, scratched on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva fall down on his beard. So does that sound like somebody who wrote Psalm 23?

It doesn't sound very much like the person we see in Psalm 23. So between the episode in Gath and the writing of Psalm 23, David's faith obviously grew somehow. And obviously he learned to trust more deeply and fully in God because God kept proving the truth of Romans 8.31, which of course is, if God is for us, who can be against us?

[17:15] And we can learn that truth as well as we go through our lives. And we can do that by studying God's word and reflecting on what God has done for us. That's why the key is not whether we know Psalm 23.

We're coming back to the theme of whether we really believe Psalm 23. So let's talk a little bit now about how God showed David his strength and how David could rely on God's strength during times of difficulty.

We've already said a little bit there about that. And once we saw that David learned to rely on God's strength, we can talk about how he learned to rely on God's presence.

So let's go ahead and look at another piece of verse 4. Why does David say he's going to have no fear? That's right, it says, for you are with me.

So of course, not only does he rely on God's strength, but he gets God's strength from God's presence. And notice that that is in the present tense.

[18:15] It's not qualified at all. It doesn't say you are sometimes with me or you might be with me. It says you are with me. And that's what we need to remember as well. God is with us even in the most difficult and troubling times.

And we've said it already, but it's worth considering again because every believer can say that the self-existent, unchanging, eternal creator of the universe is his or her own personal shepherd.

So let's talk a little bit now about how David relies on God's comfort during the times of trouble. The last line of verse 4 simply says, Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

So ancient shepherds used the rod and the staff to rescue, protect, and guide the sheep. So they became symbols of the shepherd's loving care over his flock. And the sheep are not alone. Their shepherd is standing over them and guiding them. And that shepherd guides them into safety just as the Lord stands over us and protects us. So that's why you see that the shepherd analogy is such a fitting analogy for this psalm.

[19 : 23] So think about the three things that we've seen in verse 4. David's reminded us of the three things upon which we can rely. We've seen God's strength, we've seen God's presence, and we've seen God's comfort.

And before we leave verse 4, let's look at another cross-reference to see what the Lord Himself says. This passage actually echoes many of the same themes that we've already seen in Psalm 23. And it's from Isaiah as well. It's Isaiah 43, verses 1 to 3a. And those verses say, So check out how many things that are mentioned in Psalm 23 are also mentioned in Isaiah.

Because those verses say, To fear not, for I have redeemed you. So we see the idea of no fear and restoration as well. We also see God clearly say that He'll be with us and that we won't be overwhelmed as we go through trials.

And He doesn't say, If we go through trials there, He says, When you walk through the fire and when you go through the rivers, you'll be fine. So we can see that it's one thing, to see what David tells us about it.

[20 : 56] But we also get the same thing from the Lord Himself as we look at other passages in the Bible. So, so far in the Psalm, we've seen David's confidence in a powerful God and a personal guide.

And we've seen David contemplate what that means. We've also seen David think about God's complete provision and God's comforting protection. And in verse 5, we're going to see David contemplate one more thing and that's God's caring preparation.

So we see that caring preparation as we read verse 5. And before we actually look at the verse again, notice one more thing because the first four verses use the imagery of the shepherd.

And in verse 5, the imagery switches to using the Lord as the host. So here's verse 5 again. It says, You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil. My cup runs over. So let's walk through each line of the verse. Even though the image is changed, David's thought in this verse is likely connected to the troubles that he referenced in verse 4.

[22 : 06] The enemies that he referred to earlier are powerless to prevent enjoyment of God's generous hospitality. So think about that a second. The enemies that he referred to earlier are powerless to prevent the enjoyment of God's generous hospitality.

And one commentary said that perhaps those enemies were actually there as captives at a victory celebration. That might have been the image that he was trying to invoke when he said that. And then David says in the second line of verse 5 that God anoints his head with oil.

And in the ancient Middle Eastern culture, anointing the guest was associated with an honored guest. That's what a host would do to an honored guest. And it was also associated with blessing. So we get the sense from the first two lines of verse 5 that God provides in abundance. But the last line confirms that. Because that's where David said that his cup runs over.

And listen to this Matthew Henry quote about verse 5. I also printed it on your handout. It says, That last line will get you thinking a little bit, won't it, there?

[23 : 34] Because essentially he says it's our own fault if we don't have abundant spiritual blessings. So why do you think that is? Well, remember Ephesians 1.3 That's the verse that says Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

So that clearly says that God has already blessed us with every spiritual blessing. So as believers, we can take comfort and our cup is already running over with those spiritual blessings.

We just need to take advantage of them. And then before we leave the fifth verse of Psalm 23, let's think about the verse as a whole. Because the verse shows us that God wants to have fellowship with us.

So how amazing is that really that the creator of the universe is willing to have an intimate relationship with each one of us. And that's why I said the real key is whether or not you believe Psalm 23.

So not only does God want us to have a relationship with Him, He, the one who created us, actually treats each one of us as if we are an honored guest. So we've seen David's confidence.

[24:50] We've just finished looking at all his contemplations. And the confidence and the contemplations lead us to the third major section of the Psalm. And that's where we see David's conclusion. So what is David's conclusion?

That's verse 6 where he says, Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. And David's conclusion has at least two parts. First we see David conclude that he's been pursued by goodness. So pursued by goodness is the first section. And you may be thinking how we get that when it says, Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me.

Well, that's because the Hebrew word translated as follow actually describes an animal in pursuit. So when the Lord, our shepherd, is following us, that actually means that He's pursuing us. So we're being pursued by the loving care of God instead of being stalked by wild beasts and all the other bad things that could come after us. And notice too, what we're being pursued by, we're being pursued by goodness and mercy.

[26:01] So they're not just passively following us, they're actively coming after us. And then does David say that the goodness and mercy pursue Him part of the time? Nope, he very clearly says that they pursue Him all the days of His life.

So let's think about what he means by the goodness and mercy there. Is mercy a type of goodness? Yep, it definitely is a type of goodness.

So when do you think he wanted to use both mercy and goodness in that verse? Well, one reason for doing that is by putting both of them together to describe God's loyal love that really intensifies the meaning of both words.

So what he's really trying to describe to us there is overabundant mercy and love that's really in no way deserved. So when you see those two together, just remember that the two of them together intensify each other.

So it's not just enough that we have one, but we have both, and both of them together really have a greater effect than each of them separately. So being pursued by the goodness is great, but David's conclusion also has a second part, and that's where he also concludes that he is perpetually in grace.

[27:21] So let's talk about how he's perpetually in grace. What does David say is going to happen to him after all the days of his life? Yep, it says, I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

And Matthew Henry summed up verse 6 like this, he said, with what I have, I am pleased much, and with what I hope for, I am pleased more. All this in heaven too, then we serve a good master.

So listen to that quote one more time, it says, with what I have, I am pleased much, with what I hope for, I am pleased more. All this in heaven too, then we serve a good master.

So we've looked at the verses individually, let's think about the progression in the psalm as a whole, because look at verse 1, going all the way back to it, that's where David said, I shall not want.

But then by the time he got to verse 6, he was even more positive. Verse 1 was pretty good, because we know he's not lacking for anything, but by the time he got to verse 6, he was saying that surely goodness and mercy were going to pursue him all the days of his life.

[28:32] So that's a little more positive in verse 6 than he was in verse 1. And have you ever thought about what caused David to become more positive? one thing is that his hope rised and his faith was strengthened by being exercised.

So that's what goes into your blank there, that his hope rises and his faith is strengthened by being exercised. Think about the difference between the David that we see in Psalm 23 and the David that we saw when we read the passage from 1 Samuel.

obviously something significant happened between then and now and probably several significant things happened between then and now.

So we said it in the introduction but the next sentence is worth repeating again at the end of the lesson. The promises that David came to depend upon are the same promises that we can depend upon. So just keep letting that sink in that the promises that David came to depend upon are the same promises that we can depend upon.

I wanted to leave you with two questions tonight. And you don't need to answer these out loud but you can probably guess the first question and that is do I fully believe Psalm 23?

[29 : 49] We're going to wind up about the same way that we started out. So as you think about Psalm 23 and whether you fully believe it ask yourself this other question and it's this how will believing Psalm 23 affect how I live?

Psalm 23 and I love you a little! I love you a little that a little Thank you.