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Lessons from Psalm 23: The Lord is My Shepherd

By David DeWitt

Theme: The Lord is my shepherd, therefore I shall not want.

Author: David.

Historical Setting: unknown.

Key Passage: **Verse 1 is the theme.**

Structure: If there is a division it is between verses 3 and 4, but the poem flows as a unit from beginning to end. Notice the content of the psalm. **David says 10 things God does for him.**

PSALM 23 A PSALM OF DAVID

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Verse 1—i.e. **(1) God supplies David's needs** (like Matthew 6:25-34; 6:31-33 reads: *Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

Verse 2—*He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.* **(2) God gave David rest** (like Hebrews 3 & 4).

Verse 3—*He restores my soul;* **(3) God renewed David's spirit.** *He guides me in the paths of righteousness* **(4) God guided David into righteousness** (like Romans 8:14-16, and John 16). *For His name's sake.* **(5) God did all He did for David, not for David, but for His own names' sake.**

Verse 4—*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.* **(6) God comforted David in the midst of trouble, even trouble which threatened his life, without necessarily removing David's trouble.**

Verse 5—*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;* **(7) God supplied David's needs without necessarily removing his enemies.** *You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.* **(8) God supplied David, not just with his needs but with comfort and abundance.**

Verse 6—*Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life,* **(9) God's goodness and loyal love will follow David all his life.** *And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.* **(10) God will bring David into God's presence forever. So David does seem to have had an eternal perspective.**

Thoughts and Applications

THIS IS PROBABLY THE MOST BEAUTIFUL POEM EVER WRITTEN BY ANYBODY IN ALL OF HISTORY.

Since this is read at most Christian funerals (and has been all through the centuries), this psalm is probably read or quoted from memory every few minutes every day of the year. David used metaphors from his whole life. First of his youth as a shepherd (*green pastures...quiet waters*). Then his life fleeing from Saul (*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies*), and his blessings as king (*You have anointed my head with oil, My cup overflows*).

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