

A pass through The Psalms: Week 12: Psalm 23

David grew up & worked as a shepherd; so he is a professional when it comes to sheep & shepherding. He loved the metaphor of seeing God as a shepherd. *I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. John 10:11* The shepherd's job is to care for his flock, making sure they are safe, nourished and happy. Sheep are vulnerable to danger from wolves and other predators; they cannot run very fast, and they are not always smart enough to avoid danger. The sheep need a shepherd to take them to fertile areas to graze, to protect them from predators & other hazards, and keep them together so they don't stray from the group.

The Lord is my shepherd.

The metaphor of the psalm is that God is like a shepherd (*believers like sheep*). He helps us to find food, water, work, love, friends and all that we _____. He also protects us from evil. He also gently (*or firmly*) prods us when we step out of line and _____ from the way set in the Bible.

I shall not want.

This is a very powerful statement. David means that those who trust in God will have _____ they need if they allow God to be their daily shepherd. We may not have everything we want, but we will be cared for, loved, and provided for very well...

Most importantly, our Shepherd himself will make it so there is nothing else to be _____, because we have _____.

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

Sheep require a lot of green pasture to graze, eat, rest upon and plenty of water to drink. At a basic level, this means that God will _____ all of our food and other needs.

He restores my soul.

On a deeper level, it means that God provides _____ for the body, the mind and the soul that is wholesome, healthy, and necessary for our growth and _____.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

You are not your own, you belong to the shepherd. Your life exist for him and his purposes.

His primary job is to lead you down a path of refinement, a path of obtaining physically/daily what he has already given you spiritually/eternally...his righteousness.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me...

You may walk in _____ territory in your life. In fact, I promise you that you will walk through much difficulty during your life! However, you need not fear, for the Lord is with you. He has _____ never to leave or forsake us. He has promised that he is with us, even until the end of the age.

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Shepherds carried a rod and a staff to guide the sheep and to ward off wolves or other predators that would harm the sheep. You may get prodded or pushed, at times, and it is for your good. It may be for your _____ and to keep you on the _____. The rod and the staff are in fact there to us by knowing that we are cared for and loved.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies...

You and I will encounter “enemies”, or forces that do not want us to continue on our journey. They will do anything they can to separate us from the path and the shepherd. God will guide us to victory, even though he tells us that there will be many enemies ever present.

...you anoint my head with oil...

Anointing the head with oil was a practice in biblical days that was used to honor a person and to dignify a person. It means that not only will you be fed or cared for in the presence of your enemies or accusers, but you will be honored and dignified or deeply respected, as well.

Kings and rulers were anointed as well. David is telling us that our shepherd has the authority to anoint us as Kings and Queens and give us authority to rule...which in fact God will do with believers in the kingdom to come.

...my cup overflows.

This phrase means that I am given even more than I could ever need or could ever use. The words form a very powerful image of a cup of wine that overflows continually because there is so much of it. It means I am truly, _____ loved and cared for beyond even my needs or wants....hence why “I shall not want”

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life...

This is a statement of future, eternal, never ending protection, forgiveness, favor and satisfaction. The word surely, means _____ or “positively” without a doubt. Without a doubt the sheep, the believer, will experience goodness and mercy for always and ever.

...and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

The reason that David is confident that goodness & mercy, or happiness & grace will follow him all the days of his life is because he will dwell in the house of the Lord forever...and David has realized that is the _____ place where _____ goodness & mercy are.

(1) Believers will gladly live forever in the physical house of the Lord that Christ is preparing for us...

(2) But also it means to keep one's attention focused on the Lord, living in moment by moment faith in the word of God, submitting to the will of God's. The words “to dwell” means “to abide”, which means to remain, to reside, to be one with. Just as Jesus said “abide in me.” And this abiding will ensure that goodness & mercy will follow...

Abiding with the Shepherd leads to → goodness and mercy.

Following the shepherd, listening to his leading voice etc. is the very way that the sheep are lead into goodness and mercy.

Abiding with the Shepherd is → the goodness & mercy.

The goodness and mercy we receive as believers is actually the ability, permission, access to abide with God, the shepherd. That is the good thing.