

Strong Faith for Hard Times – (2)

He Leads Me Beside Still Waters

Psalm 23

Introduction: Today we come to part two of our August series. Every message in this series is built around one simple truth: *hard times are unavoidable, but hopelessness is optional when you know the Shepherd.* None of us gets a pass on trouble. That's why Psalm 23 has never gone out of style. But here's something many people miss. *Psalm 23 was never written primarily for funerals.* Today we come to one of the sweetest pictures in all of Scripture. And we're going to discover that the Shepherd cares for His sheep far more deeply than most of us have ever imagined.

I. The shepherd's provision: (Psalm 23:1-3)

David opens with these familiar words. *Those words are so familiar that we can recite them without feeling them.* But they are not sentimental words. *They are covenant words.*

A. The personal shepherd

1. David does not say, “The Lord is *a* shepherd.” He says, “The Lord is *my* shepherd.” (That little word *my* is where comfort begins).
2. Jesus picked up this exact image in John 10:11, 14-15 and the shepherd of Psalm 23 is ultimately fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ,

B. The promised supply

1. David is not claiming that the believer will never feel pain, never know loss, or never carry unanswered questions.
2. He is saying that when the Lord is your Shepherd, you will never lack what the Shepherd knows you truly need.
 - a. That harmonizes with Jesus’ teaching in Mt 6:25-34 and...
 - b. With Paul’s assurance (Phil. 4:19)

Adrian Rogers: *The secret of satisfaction is not found in having more things, but in belonging to the right Shepherd.*

C. The peaceful rest

1. *The language of (v 2) evokes rest, provision, and even exodus-like guidance into the place God prepares for His people.*
2. **Max Lucado** - *He makes me and He leads me.*

The Shepherd is the active one. The Shepherd provides both our needs and our peace.
1 Peter 5:7

II. The shepherd's paths: (Psalm 23:3)

The Shepherd does not merely give us a place to stop. *He shows us the way to walk.*

A. Renewing restoration

1. This includes refreshment for the weary, recovery for the fainting, and rescue for the straying.
 - a. Wandering sheep are a common sight in the wild and on farms.
 - b. Wandering sheep are a common sight in the church too.
2. The safest place for any believer is not where everyone else is going, but where Jesus is leading. (Gen 48:15; 1 Pe. 2:25; 1 Cor. 11:1)

B. Righteous Routes - *The Shepherd leads us, but He does not lead us randomly.*
(Ps 25:4-5; Prov 3:5-6; Rom 8:14)

The Shepherd restores wandering sheep and faithfully leads them in righteous paths for His glory.

III. The shepherd's presence: (Psalm 23:4)

This may be the most beloved verse in the psalm

A. The dark passage

1. David does not say *if I walk there*. He says *though I walk there*.
2. Valleys are not exceptions in the Christian life; they are part of the journey.
3. The psalm does not promise exemption from darkness. It promises companionship in darkness. (Isa 43:2; Heb 13:5-6)

B. The Divine Protection

1. The rod was a protective instrument; the staff was a guiding and rescuing instrument.
2. **Adrian Rogers:** *The rod protects and corrects, while the staff draws the sheep close.* (Jn 10:27-29; Heb 13:20-21; 1 Pe 5:4)

God's presence is greater than life's darkest valley.

IV. The shepherd's plenty: (Psalm 23:5-6)

A. The prepared table - *God's abundance is not always postponed until the conflict is over.*

B. The Perfumed Head & Overflowing Cup -

Dr David Jeremiah - *God cares for His people in green pastures and by still waters, restoring their souls, anointing their wounds, and filling their cups to overflowing.*

C. The Permanent Home - *The Shepherd who cared for him in life would not fail him in death.* (Jn 14:1-3)

The Shepherd's blessings begin now and continue forever.

The Good Shepherd lovingly provides, guides, protects, and ultimately brings His sheep safely home.