

Considering The Blessings Of Christ Our Great Shepherd

Ps 23

If I were to give you a quiz as to the most popular psalm in the Bible, would you say, "Psalm 23"? By far, this is the most familiar psalm among believers and unbelievers alike. In general, it is a steadfast "go to" for funeral services because of the hope it brings to grieving hearts. However, it is not just a psalm for handling grief. It is a psalm of confidence, a psalm of comfort. It is a psalm upon which we should often and regularly meditate because it speaks of Christ our Great Shepherd and the benefits He provides.

David begins with these words: "*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*"

When I was a boy, I wondered at the second half of that verse with this question, "Why is the Lord my shepherd if I don't want him?" Obviously that question reflects an immature (ignorant) understanding of meaning because, as most of us know, that is not what David is saying. The word "*want*" communicates "need" or "lack;" therefore, properly understood, the verse communicates that since the Lord is my shepherd, *I shall have no need or lack*. In other words, when it comes to my soul, my spiritual Shepherd supplies all my need!

Now think about that in terms of our current crisis. Never in a million years would we have guessed that an invisible microbe would cripple our planet, and yet it has. Never in a million years would I have imaged that we would close out March and April separated and apart from each other; yet here we are. And yet, all of it is part of our Lord's good, gracious, all knowing, all wise care.

So, for the next few paragraphs, I would like to walk through some of the blessings that our Great Shepherd gives to us. What does our shepherd do?

1. In verses 2-3, we see that in Him, we find our satisfaction. "*Lie down*" means to "stretch out." "*Green pastures*" pictures a place where the sheep need not move in order to find abundant food. "*Still waters*" carries the idea of refreshment. In other words, David says that when Christ is our shepherd, we find our satisfaction in Him. Life may not always be easy (David regularly knew trouble), but these verses express an inward peace and tranquility that only a relationship with Christ can bring. When the Lord Jesus is our shepherd, we can cast our care upon Him and find peaceful satisfaction in the One who ever lives to make intercession for us.

2. Verse 4 speaks of our Great Shepherd being with us at the loneliest point in our life. There is some debate as to whether David speaks of depression or actual physical death, but when viewed with verse 5, it seems more consistent to see it as death. Nevertheless, in either case, the point is made that when the Lord is our shepherd, He is with us even in the darkest days. He has promised to do what no other person can do: He has promised to never leave us nor forsake us.

3. In verse 5, the metaphor changes from a shepherd to a provider. The metaphor changes because after we die, our place of residence changes. In heaven, we no longer need a shepherd to watch over and protect us. There, we will find that the One who cared for us in this life will abundantly provide for us for in the life to come.

This whole psalm reveals God's complete care of His people. While on the earth, He is the Great Shepherd of His people. After this life, He is the Great Provider for His people. So, with utmost confidence, we, like David, can say, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

We live in strange times. We don't know what tomorrow brings, but we can trust the One who knows the end from the beginning. He is the Lord Jesus *who is and who was and is to come*. He is the eternal shepherd who watches over, protects, and provides for all who put their faith in Him.