

**GREAT CHAPTERS OF THE BIBLE-04**  
**PSALMS, CHAPTER 23**  
**A SHEPHERD LOOKS AT THE 23RD PSALM**

**I. INTRODUCTION.**

A. Scripture text: **Psalm 23:1-6.**

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. [2] He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. [3] He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. [4] Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me. [5] Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; Thou hast anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. [6] Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

B. This is a favorite passage of scripture for many occasions; funerals, weddings, award plaques, in cemeteries, books, etc.

C. Jesus is our spiritual shepherd; but the "physical" shepherd understands this timely writing like no other.

D. I will be doing some reading this evening, but I think you will find it interesting.

**II. "THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD; I SHALL NOT WANT" (Psa. 23:1).**

A. Read **paragraph 1.**

B. We need not be anxious about tomorrow (Mt. 6:25-34).

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. [34] Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

C. Some people's only exercise is jumping to conclusions.

D. Proverbs 10:3 says the Lord will not allow the righteous to go hungry.

The LORD will not allow the righteous to hunger, But He will thrust aside the craving of the wicked.

E. Planning for the future is different from worrying about the future.

**III. "HE MAKES ME LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES" (Psa. 23:2a).**

A. Read **paragraph 2.**

B. Discipline is for every child of God (Heb. 12:9-11; 12:5,6).

(Heb 12:5-6) and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; [6] FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."

(Heb 12:9-11) Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? [10] For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. [11] All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

C. The emphasis here is on the word "makes." God knows our needs better than we do.

**IV. "HE LEADS ME BESIDE STILL WATERS" (Psa. 23:2b).**

A. Read **paragraph 3.**

B. There was the possibility and fear of a sheep drowning in moving water, due to the wool getting wet and heavy.

C. Jesus gives us living waters when we are faithful to Him (Jn. 7:37,38).

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. [38] He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'"

- V. **“HE RESTORES MY SOUL; HE LEADS ME IN THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR HIS NAME’S SAKE” (Psa. 23:3).**
- A. Read **paragraph 4**.
  - B. Jesus will dine with us, if we let Him into our lives (Rev. 3:20).  
‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me.
  - C. We find rest for our souls in Jesus (Mt. 11:28-30).  
“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. [29] Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and YOU SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. [30] For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.”
- VI. **“YEA, THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH I WILL FEAR NO EVIL. THY ROD AND THY STAFF THEY COMFORT ME” (Psa. 23:4).**
- A. Read **paragraph 5**.
  - B. The victory over all things (enemies) is in Jesus. Eternal comfort is found in Him (2Th. 2:15-17).  
So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us. [16] Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, [17] comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.
  - C. With Jesus for us, what do we have to fear (Rom. 8:31)?  
What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?
- VII. **“THOU PREPARE A TABLE BEFORE ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MY ENEMIES” (Psa. 23:5a).**
- A. Read **paragraph 6**.
  - B. God has always shown His power to be superior of that of Satan’s (1Cor. 10:13; Rev. 20:10).  
**(1Cor 10:13)** No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.  
**(Rev 20:10)** And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.
- VIII. **“THOU ANOINT MY HEAD WITH OIL; MY CUPS RUNS OVER” (Psa. 23:5b).**
- A. Read **paragraph 7**.
  - B. Oil has been used in times past as a drug of healing:
    1. In the parable of the good Samaritan (Lk. 10:34).
    2. The elders used it (Jas. 5:14).
  - C. Our cup runs over today, with the spiritual blessings from God (Lk. 6:38).  
“Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”
- IX. **CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.**
- A. Read the 23rd Psalm again, putting emphasis on the last verse as a fitting conclusion.
  - B. Truly, one of the great texts of the OT. Is the Lord (JC) your spiritual shepherd?
  - C. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring-Xians.

***The Basque Shepherd and the Shepherd Psalm*** (*Reader's Digest*, 1950, p. 44-47).

### **Paragraph 1.**

"Sheep instinctively know," said D'Alfonso, "That ere they have been folded for the night the shepherd has planned out their grazing for the morrow. It may be that he will take them back over the same range; it may be that he will go to a new grazing ground. They do not worry. His guidance has been good in the past and they have faith in the future because they know he has their well-being in view."

### **Paragraph 2.**

"Sheep graze from around 3:30 o'clock in the morning until about ten. They lie down for three or four hours to rest," said D'Alfonso. "When they are contentedly chewing their cud, the shepherd knows they are putting on fat. Consequently the good shepherd starts his flocks out in the early hours on the rougher herbage, moving on through the morning to the richer, sweeter grasses, and finally coming to a shady place for their forenoon rest in fine green pastures, best grazing of the day. Sheep, resting in such happy surroundings, feel contentment."

### **Paragraph 3.**

"Every shepherd knows," said the Basque, "that sheep will not drink gurgling water. There are many small springs high in the hills of the Holy Land, whose water run down the valleys only to evaporate in the desert sun. Although the sheep need the water, they will not drink from these fast-flowing streams. The shepherd must find a place where rocks or erosion have made a little pool, or fashion with his hands a pocket sufficient to hold a bucketful."

### **Paragraph 4.**

"Each takes his place in the grazing line in the morning and keeps the same position throughout the day. Once, however, during the day each sheep leaves its place and goes to the shepherd. Whereupon the shepherd stretches out his hand, as the sheep approaches with expectant eyes and mild little baas. The shepherd rubs its nose and ears, scratches its chin, and whispers affectionately into its ears. The sheep, meanwhile, rubs against his leg or, if the shepherd is sitting down, nibbles at his ear, and rubs its cheek against his face. After a few minutes of this communion with the master, the sheep returns to its place in the feeding line."

### **Paragraph 5.**

"There is an actual Valley of the Shadow of Death in Palestine, and every shepherd from Spain to Dalmatia knows of it. It is south of the Jericho Road leading from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea and is a narrow defile through a mountain range. Climatic and grazing conditions make it necessary for the sheep to be moved through this valley for seasonal feeding each year.

"The valley is four and a half miles long. Its side walls are over 1500 feet high in places and it is only ten or 12 feet wide at the bottom. Travel through the valley is dangerous, because its floor, badly eroded by cloudbursts, has gullies seven or eight feet deep. Actual footing on solid rock is so narrow in many places that a sheep cannot turn around, and it is an unwritten law of shepherds that flocks must go up the valley in the morning hours and down toward the eventide, lest flocks meet in the defile. Mules have not been able to make the trip for centuries, but sheep and goat herders from earliest Old Testament days have maintained a passage for their stock.

"About halfway through the valley the walk crosses from one side to the other at a place where the path is cut in two by an eight-foot gully. One section of the path is about 18 inches higher than the other; the sheep must jump across it. The shepherd stands at this break and coaxes or forces the sheep to make the leap. If a

sheep slips and lands in the gully, the shepherd's rod is brought into play. The old-styled crook is encircled around a large sheep's neck or a small sheep's chest, and it is lifted to safety. If a more modern narrow crook is used, the sheep is caught about the hoofs and lifted up to the walk.

"Many wild dogs lurk in the shadows of the valley looking for prey. After a band of sheep has entered the defile, the leader may come upon such a dog. Unable to retreat, the leader baas a warning. The shepherd, skilled in throwing his staff, hurls it at the dog and knocks the animal into the washed-out gully where it is easily killed. Thus, the sheep have learned to fear no evil, even in the Valley of the Shadow of death, for their master is there to protect them from harm."

#### Paragraph 6.

"...Poisonous plants abound which are fatal to grazing animals. Each spring the shepherd must be constantly alert. When he finds the plants he takes his mattock and goes on ahead of the flock, grubbing out every stock and root he can see. As he digs out the stocks, he lays them upon little stone pyres, some of which were built by shepherds in Old Testament days, and by the morrow they are dry enough to burn. In the meantime, the sheep are led into the newly prepared pasture, which is now free from poisonous plants, and, in the presence of their deadly plant enemies, they eat in peace."

#### Paragraph 7.

"At every sheepfold there is a big earthen bowl of olive oil and a large stone jar of water. As the sheep come in for the night they are led to a gate. The shepherd lays his rod across the top of the gateway just higher than the backs of his sheep. As each sheep passes in single file, he quickly examines it for briers in the ears, snags in the cheek, or weeping of the eyes from dust or scratches. When such conditions are found, he drops the rod across the sheep's back and it steps out of line.

"Each sheep's wounds are carefully cleaned. Then the shepherd dips his hand into the olive oil and anoints the injury. A large cup is dipped into the jar of water, kept cool by evaporation in the unglazed pottery, and is brought out--never half full but always overflowing. The sheep will sink its nose into the water clear to the eyes, if fevered, and drink until fully refreshed."