

J.J.

BELOVED PSALMS Series
The Lord Is My Shepherd
Psalm 23 (Part 2)

INTRODUCTION :

We started studying the book of Psalms.

Etymology : psalms : mizmowr ; melody; it's a poem set to notes. So this is meant to be sung.

Every morning, I read the book of Psalms before I go to the book I'm reading in the Bible.

Quote : John Calvin called the Book of Psalms “an anatomy of all parts of the soul.”

Have you seen those posters inside the doctor's office, where it shows a human body without the skin, where it shows your heart, your lungs, your liver, your muscles and etc.? This is what the book of Psalms does, there is no skin of pretension. The writer just expresses what's inside his heart. If he is angry and wants revenge, he writes it. If he is full of joy and wants to sing and dance, he writes it down. If he is being impatient and wants to give up, he writes it.

Aren't these feelings that we also experience from time to time?

When you read the book of Psalms, it immediately seems it understands what you're going through, what you are feeling. Since the ultimate author of Psalms is the Holy Spirit, He wrote this to tell us that he knows and understands what we are going through at this moment.

If you're hurt, God understands you are hurting. If you're afraid, God wants to comfort you. If you are happy, God wants to rejoice with you.

The Psalms gives me the go-signal to go to God and tell him I'm hurt by what other people are doing or you're afraid of what's going to happen or you are happy and you want to tell Him all about it.

Rey Stedman calls this “Folk Songs of Faith”

In the Philippines, the most famous folk song that we have was written and sung by Freddie Aguilar which is called “Anak”

Psalm 23 is the most famous folk song for Christians

Psalm 23 : 1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in 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 paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Prayer

THE BENEFITS OF FOLLOWING THE LORD

REVIEW :

This is a very personal psalm for David. How do we know?

Needless to say, those who will benefit from this psalm **are the ones who personally follow the Lord as "my" shepherd.**

There are four benefits of the sheep whose Shepherd is the Lord.

- I. MY LORD GIVES ME SATISFACTION
- II. MY LORD GIVES ME DIRECTION
- III. MY LORD GIVES ME PROTECTION
- IV. MY LORD GIVES ME RECOGNITION

I. MY LORD GIVES ME SATISFACTION

I shall not be in want - Heb. "chacer" means "lack", so it means when we follow Christ,

a. He satisfies my physical needs

v. 1a "He makes me lie down in green pastures."

Picture it : It's a picture of contentment. Sheep lying down in the grass, when it gets hungry, he just needs to tilt its head and eat.

b. He satisfies my spiritual needs

v. 1b - 2a "He leads me beside quiet waters."

Last week, we studied that sheep are fearful creatures. They don't like sudden changes or noises, that's why the shepherd has to bring them to quiet waters in order for them to drink.

v. 2a He restores my soul.

To continue :

One of the greatest questions asked by any man is this, "What am I going to do?"

Now if the Lord is MY shepherd, here's the second benefit.

II. MY LORD GIVES ME DIRECTION

v. 2b He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Before we share on how God guides us, let's study again some sheep facts that are connected on why God wants to give us direction.

Sheep fact : Vision : They have excellent peripheral vision and can see behind without turning their heads. **BUT they cannot see immediately in front of their noses.**

Just like us humans,

- We are excellent at looking at our peripherals e.g. looking at what other people have or what other people did to you or did not do for you and etc.
- We are also excellent at looking behind us e.g. looking at our past, looking at other people's past.

Illustration : There's a husband who went to the pastor and asked for advise because they are always fighting and the pastor asked, "What's wrong?" The husband replied, "The problem is when my wife becomes angry she doesn't only get hysterical, she also gets historical."

But just like sheep, we are very, very shortsighted. We can't see what's ahead of us. We can anticipate what's going to happen but in reality we don't really know what even tomorrow looks like. That's why we need guidance and direction.

Sheep fact : Hearing : They have excellent hearing and they can move their ears according to the sound. That's why they will follow the voice of their shepherd.

Now why am telling you this?

It's because if the Lord is my shepherd, He wants to "guide" me. *He guides me*

Quote : One of the things I've learned from John Stott when I attended in one of his lectures is he said, "You can only lead the sheep but you can't feed them."

he leads me beside quiet waters, 3 he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

The Lord can show us and tell us the right direction but it's up to us to obey and follow.

The sheep knows how to follow the voice of Jesus Christ.

John 10:27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

How do we know we are following His voice?

paths of righteousness

There are two elements :

- **First element :** Paths “magal” which means “well-defined worn-out trail” This is a path that has always been walked on. It’s what you see when you are in a forest, there’s a foot trail or the fields and you see a trail. You know It’s a sure trail because a lot of people have used it already.

So we will know we are following His voice because we are following a sure trail.

How do we know now it’s a sure trail? We now go to the second element.

- **Second element :** “righteousness” which means the right thing to do. In the Bible, the right thing to do is the thing approved by God.

You know you are listening to God’s voice and following a sure trail because it is approved by God.

So how do we know if something is approved by God? THROUGH HIS WORD!

1. **He directs me to the right road found in the Word of God.**
paths of righteousness

Now if there is a right road, there is wrong road.

Let me tell you another sheep fact.

Sheep Fact : Flocking Instinct : It is instinct that they want to flock with other sheep.

Just like men. Proof? We want to follow the latest trend. Fashion trends? Everyone’s wearing the same style of dress or you want to have the same kind of handbag or the same kind of shoes that others are wearing.

The flocking instinct is strong . Even from birth, lambs are taught to follow the older members of the flock. Ewes encourage their lambs to follow. The dominant members of the flock usually lead, followed by the submissive ones. If there is a ram in the flock, he usually leads. **When one sheep moves, the rest will follow, even if it is not a good idea.**

Illustration : The flocking and following instinct of sheep is so strong that it caused the death of 400 sheep in 2006 in eastern Turkey. The sheep plunged to their death after one of the sheep tried to cross a 15-meter deep ravine, and the rest of the flock followed.

*Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man,
But its end is the way of death.*

This is the reason why it is important for us to follow the voice of God and not the voice of man (our own voice or other men's voice) or else you don't know you might be headed in a ravine.

So how do we know we are on the right road? It is according to the Word of God.

Application : This is the reason why I encourage you to read and study your Bible and as much as possible to go to church. It's because God works according to His Word.

When you are reading God's Word, here are the promises of our Shepherd when it comes to His direction (specially when you have a problem)

a.) The Lord will direct you step by step.

*Proverbs 16:9 A man's heart plans his way,
But the Lord directs his steps.*

Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path. (NLT)

In the Old Testament times, there are no lamp posts like today. It's really pitch dark specially when there's no moon. So when they need to walk outside at night. They tie lamp near their feet so it guides them step by step.

Do you want this in your life?

Isaiah 30:21 Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.

This can only happen if you are immersed in God's Word.

Charles Spurgeon says : Our blood must be "Bibline". It means that we are so immersed in God's Word that it flows in our blood.

b.) The Lord will eventually direct you to victory.

Joshua 1:8 Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

*Psalm 1: 2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
And in His law he meditates day and night.*

*3 He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.*

But again, may I remind you, God will only GUIDE us in paths of righteousness. **It's not enough that we know God's Word but what's more important is to follow it.**

James 1:22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

Here's the ultimate test if you are truly following the Shepherd's voice

2. It produces the *right result* which is the Glory of God.
"for His name's sake".

Question #1 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism

Q: What is the chief end of man?

A: Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

In short, in everything that we do, the reason why we were created, the reason why we are here on earth and the reason why we will go to heaven if you believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

1 Corinthians 10:31. Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Romans 11:36. For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

The Lord wants to give you His direction "for His name's sake". (HIS GLORY)

THIS IS GOOD NEWS FOR US because we know that God will only look after our good.

WHY? BECAUSE HIS NAME IS AT STAKE.

In Filipino, pangalan Niya ang nakataya.

Illustration :

Try singing praise music while doing something bad.

Examples :

Can you thank the Lord if you are in bed with a woman other than your wife?

Can you sing "Lord I offer my life to you" while stealing?

Can you say "Praise the Lord" that you are not forgiving another person?

Can you say "Glory to God" because you are worrying?

**So instead of asking "What am I going to do?", we should be asking
SHOW THIS : "Lord, what do you want me to do?"**

Here's the promise of God when you ask that question.

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

The litmus test

Is it according to God's Word? Does it violate any of God's commands?
Can I give God the glory?

S.G.D.