

My Shepherd

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[0:00] The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want. He makes me down to lie in past.

! Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in grace. He maketh me to lie down in grace. He maketh me to lie down in grace.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. It's a comforting psalm, isn't it?

The Lord is my shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd. Now for you to say that, you've got to be a sheep. You've got to be a sheep.

It's interesting what the Bible says about sheep. Apparently sheep are mentioned many times, more than 500 times in the Bible. More than any other animal, sheep are very evident through God's Word.

[1:37] And we know in a practical way, sheep can be quite silly animals. They can be quite stupid animals. They've been described as dumb, dirty, directionless, dependent and defenseless.

Sheep are timid and helpless. They usually get lost and hurt and bitten by snakes. They're very vulnerable animals.

They're gentle, quiet, innocent animals. But they're very vulnerable to danger. So they need a shepherd. They need a shepherd. And it's interesting that God says of His people that we are sheep.

We are spoken of as sheep. As those dependent beings, those wandering beings, those vulnerable beings that sheep are. And the Word says to you, to me, Jehovah Rofi, the Lord is my shepherd. One of His names is that He is a shepherd. When you think of sheep on the hillside, they need a shepherd to care, to guide, to nurture. The Lord is my shepherd.

[2:47] I shall not want. Now really and truly, the Lord is my pastor. The Lord is my pastor. The Lord is my shepherd. He is the pastor. He is the shepherd.

He is the one that we come to for our nourishment and care and supply. He is the shepherd. The absolute, the ultimate shepherd. The chief shepherd. The shepherd of His sheep.

The Lord our God. And it's to Him that we come for our supply. We are complete in Him. He is sufficient. He is the one we can come to.

And when sheep are going about their lives, they've essentially got just a couple of basic needs. Essentially is food and drink.

Food and drink. The sheep on the hill, they just basically need some grass and water. A couple of basic things. And the Lord is my shepherd.

[3:45] I shall not want. He provides that which we need. The essentials of our lives. He cares for us. He watches over us. And the psalm is about ownership.

If the Lord is my shepherd, then I ought to recognize His rights over me. He owns me. He's my shepherd. He is the one that I'm under His care, under His control.

I'm not my own. I've been bought with a price. He is the Lord, the Master, the one who owns me. He has ownership of my life, my shepherd. Verse 2, it says, The Lord is my peace.

Jehovah Shalom, another of the names of God. The Lord, my peace. In verse 2, He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters.

You know, when we're looking for peace, He is the one to come to. The Prince of Peace. The absolute source of peace, of refreshment. The freshness is there in the shepherd's care.

[4:49] The freshness, the stillness is there. The calm, quietness is there. And we can rest in the Lord. You know, sometimes we can, all of us

become busy, rushing here and there, going about our lives in the hustle and bustle, the rat race, the treadmill, and not taking time to come and rest, to come to Him and speak to Him and hear from Him and fellowship with His people.

And it's important for us to do that. It's a good and godly thing to find that rest, to find those green pastures, to find those still waters.

In all the hustle and bustle, we can miss that. And the shepherd is there to lead the sheep to those places where He knows that they will be fed. He makes them to lie down in the green pastures.

He makes them to lie down because I'm told for sheep that they cannot properly digest their food unless they lie down. It's important for a sheep to lie down so that they can digest their food.

He knows that the sheep will not lie down unless they feel a security of where they are, unless they feel perfectly safe from the enemy attack. And He knows that they need to lie down because their wool grows thick and rich in direct proportion to the time they spend resting and munching on the grass.

[6:18] They need to have that resting time. And it's interesting, where does He take them? To the still waters, to those quiet waters. The sheep can be fearful animals.

They can be easily startled and scared. They can be fearful. They will not drink, I'm told, from a running stream. The sheep need to go to those quiet waters, to those still waters.

And it says of the shepherd in verse 2 that, He leadeth me. He leadeth me. He goes before His sheep. He does not drive us as the Aussie stockmen would drive the sheep or try to rustle them with the sheep, dogs and so on.

He leads the sheep. He goes ahead. And as He says in John 10, that my sheep hear my voice and they follow me. They follow the shepherd. Sheep have poor vision.

Sheep do not see very well. They can't see very far. You could put it, He's as blind as a sheep, rather than as blind as a bat. Because sheep can be really, they've got that dim sight.

[7:28] They can't see very far ahead. So when sheep are walking down the pathway, they can't see very far down the pathway. They wouldn't know if there was a cliff ahead of them or some dangerous situation that is going to face them.

They need the shepherd to guide, to lean, to go ahead, to be their guide. And friends, how do we need as Christians to consider, am I following His leading?

Is it the shepherd who's leading me? Is He guiding me to those places of rest, of refreshing, to the lush grass, to the place where my soul can be fed?

Is He my guide? Is He my shepherd? Verse 3, another name of our Lord, Jehovah Rafika, the Lord my healer, the Lord my healer.

Verse 3, He restoreth my soul. It's got a sense of healing to it here, of restoring, of reviving, of reinvigorating. Now we all need that from time to time.

[8:33] We need a reinvigoration. We need a refreshing, a restoring. And He brings that deep peace into the soul of man, of woman. A restoring of our soul.

Sheep, again, apparently can, when they lie down, if they get too comfortable, they can roll over on their backs. Especially if they have good feet.

They roll over on their backs, a lamb or a sheep. And when it gets on its back, it cannot get on its feet again, unless the shepherd comes and lifts it up.

And, of course, a sheep, in such a case, would be very vulnerable to attack from wolves or wild dogs or vultures, or even suffering from the heat.

For a sheep to be on its back, just can't roll over. Its legs go numb and ends up falling victim. But He restoreth my soul.

[9:34] He comes and He restores us. The shepherd leans down and turns us over. It gets us back on our feet again. He restores us. Now, we can have times, all of us can, when we get discouraged.

When we get cast down. When we need a reviving. We need His restoring touch. In the Word of God, it tells us of the prophet Elijah.

There was a time when he was discouraged. So discouraged that he wanted to die. But God strengthened him. And God encouraged him. And restored him again. When Peter and the disciples, after the crucifixion, they went back to fishing. In discouragement. Jesus met them.

And encouraged them. To continue serving Him. He restored them. It goes on there. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness. For His name's sake.

[10:34] Another name of the Lord, our God, is Jehovah, Sipkenu. The Lord, my righteousness. Another name of God. And it's used in Jeremiah 23, verse 6, to describe the Saviour.

The context there is speaking of the Lord Jesus. It says in prophetic foresight, this is His name, whereby He shall be called, the Lord, our righteousness.

Jeremiah 23, verse 6. This is a Bible verse you can use with those who deny the deity of Christ, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses. They falsely claim to be Jehovah's Witnesses when they're really not, because they don't believe in the Lord, our righteousness.

The Lord Jesus is our righteousness. As the Bible says, that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Even the very best good works that any of us can do are counted as filthy rags.

But He exchanges our sinfulness with His righteousness. It talks about the robe of righteousness that He gives to us. He robes us with Himself, so that instead of seeing our sin, He actually sees Himself.

[11:45] He actually sees Christ in you, and you in Christ, as your righteousness. And so, the Lord, our righteousness, His name has honour.

It has reputation. And we ought to consider that as we live. And follow His leading. And friends, are we following His leading? He leadeth me in the path of righteousness.

It says that He leadeth me beside the still waters. How do we know His leading? We've got to listen. Listen for His voice.

Listen for the voice of the Saviour. In John's hand it says, as I referred earlier, My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me. Do we hear His voice?

How do we hear the voice of God today? The voice of God is in His Word. It's in that precious Word of God. And so we ought to take a hold of it, and apply it, read it, take it, and let it speak to you.

[12:51] The sheep have such a keen ear, that they can detect the tones of their own shepherd's voice, and can distinguish it from all others. If you're His sheep, if He's your shepherd, then it's His voice that you'll listen for.

It's His voice that you'll take heed to, and you'll be aware. When others claim to have the voice of God, when some claim to speak for God, when they do not, you'll be discerning of that.

You'll recognise that that is not His voice. It doesn't measure up with His Word. Verse 4, we read, Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me. Jehovah Shammah, the Lord my companion, or the Lord is present. The Lord is present. Isn't it good to know that God is in the present tense?

God is now. God is here. God is with you. With you. Every step that you take. As a Christian man, as a Christian woman, Thou art with me.

[14:07] He's with you. You don't come and visit Him on a Sunday and then leave Him behind for the rest of the week. As a Christian, He is with you. With you.

Through the valley of the shadow of death. Some of you have walked there. You've been down that valley. You've been through that shadow. He's got the sense of darkness, of the sense of gloom, of the sense of loss.

He's still there with you. He's still there every step of the way. Through the valley, through the dark and gloomy place, through the times of difficulties, through the times of defeats, through the times of tests, of family concerns, of temptations, of trouble, of sickness, of heartache, of disappointment, Thou art with me.

That can be your promise. That can be your profession. That can be your claim. He sustains us there through the valley of the shadow of death.

He is with you. With you. Our God is not remote and disconnected and far, far away. He is with you.

[15:19] Through your situation, through your testing, through your life's journey, He is with you. That's faithfulness.

It goes on, Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. His rod and his staff, as the shepherd, he has the rod, he has the staff.

The rod was like a club, a hard, heavy club. The staff was like to, as you see it, pictured like a crook with a curled stick, with a curled end.

And the rod speaks of the protection of God. As a club, he walks before you, the shepherd. As you tread in his steps, he uses that club to strike away that which would harm you, that which would endanger you, protecting the sheep, protecting his sheep from marauding predators.

[16:26] And the staff was the slender pole with the crook on the end. This was used to aid the sheep. So when the sheep got into difficulty, when they got caught in a thicket, or they went astray from the path, the shepherd would drag them gently with the crook, would take the crook around their leg and hook them and pull them from harm and draw them back to the right track.

Friends, we can rely upon the shepherd to be that protection, to be that care, to direct us, occasionally to discipline us as he would tap them with the staff, but not strike them with the rod. He would tap them with the staff and hook them, train them, and discipline them to be back on the track again and using that club as the heavy instrument to protect from the danger of predators. And in the Christian life too, we can know his protection and his care. We're not alone. We're not alone through life. Thou art with me can be our prayer, our claim.

In verse 5 we read, Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies. Thou anointest my head with oil. My cup runneth over.

[18:01] He sets us even before our enemies. In the word it speaks of Jehovah Nissi. The Lord is my victory. The Lord is my victory.

You know, there's enemies through life. You might have some human enemies. As a Christian, you've got spiritual enemies. You know, rulers of darkness, of wickedness in high places, of the enemy of our soul.

He fought Adam from day one pretty much in the beginning that Satan showed his ugly face and we've been in a state ever since, haven't we?

The devil's got a lot to answer for. But then we, as human beings, we can't say it's all the devil's fault because we shouldn't have listened to the devil in the beginning as Eve did, as Adam did. We could have said no but we chose disobedience. And friends, today, he's still our enemy. He's still public enemy number one. It's not Osama bin Laden.

[19:06] He's not public enemy number one. It's Satan, the devil, the enemy of our soul. He's the one who's bent on your destruction of dragging you down as a Christian or as an unbeliever.

He doesn't want you to hear the gospel. He wants to block your ears to it and trick you and divert you from hearing it. Friends, he's the enemy of our soul. But thank God, Jehovah Nissi, the Lord, is my victory.

One of the names of God is that he is the victor as we think as we've sung tonight that we have victory because of the resurrection. We've got the victory.

He's rose triumphant, victorious and his glory is now we sing. He died and rose on high. He lives eternal life supreme.

He's our saviour and we are walking in his victory. And even when we're in the presence of our enemies, he is with us. He is with us. He'll see us through. And he anoints our head with oil.

[20:09] Our cup runs over. This is a picture of, you know, imagine a cup filled to the brim and overflowing. That's the picture of the Christian life.

He says, I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly. That's the Christian life. It's a life with a whole new dimension. A life that makes sense because I'm here for a reason.

You're here for a reason. And it's not just to make money and the one with the most toys wins, you know. It's vanity, isn't it? Be a billionaire and your life's lived in vain.

You know, some, it's been said that they've gathered all the masses of wealth they can accumulate and they've eaten, drank and been merry all of their lives and yet, you know, people like Elvis

Presley, what a waste.

You know, you see, in the end of his life, what a tragic, tragic loss of a life. Just a merry-go-round that leads to nowhere. And yet, as a Christian, my cup runneth over.

[21:16] You know, we've got joy in this life, we've got meaning and forgiveness and assurance of a heaven to come of Christian brothers and sisters who we can come to know and of eternal life as a prospect, as an assured promise from God Almighty.

And so we've got much in the present and in the life to come. Our cup runs over. And that's not to say, you know, if you become a Christian, I can't guarantee you're going to have a bed of roses and everything's going to be hunky-dory and you're never going to have a problem again, as some preachers would falsely kind of promise.

Because really and truly, the rain falls, it says in the Bible, on the just and on the unjust, we still have everyday lives and pains and pleasures like anyone else does.

But there's something more. There's something more. Something much, much more. Because we have a Saviour. We have a Shepherd who leads us. And He is with us. And He anoints our head with oil.

And He fills our cup. And it runs over. It says in 2 Corinthians 3, verse 5, Our sufficiency is of God. You know, He's enough. It's like, I think, a young boy in Sunday school was reciting, The Lord is my shepherd.

[22:42] And He said, The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. And someone questioned Him. He says, That He is enough. The Lord is my shepherd. That's enough for me.

Just to have Him as our shepherd. That's enough. You know, the passing pleasures of life are really of no real substance. But, The Lord is my shepherd.

That's enough. He supplies my need. My sufficiency is of God. His nourishment, His satisfaction, His blessings. And we see that He anoints our head with oil.

And this has got a picture of the shepherd as he comes and he cares for the sheep. The shepherd comes and he examines the sheep. He sees what the condition of the sheep is.

And we know those of us who have had farming, exposure to farming, will know how sheep need to be carefully tendered, carefully catered for, sheep can get in all kinds of trouble and all kinds of afflictions for set sheep.

[23:44] And so He examines the sheep. He looks for those thorns, those prickles. He looks for those bruises, of those scabs, of those sore places, those raw places.

And He applies His soothing oil. He anoints my head with oil. He comes and He pours His oil upon us. And in the Bible it speaks of the Holy Spirit as being represented in terms of being oil, the Holy Spirit.

So as a Christian, He anoints our head with oil. He fills us with His Holy Spirit. He caters and tans our wounds, our hurts. He comes as the great physician to heal those hurts, to care and to soothe, to tan.

verse 6. It goes on, Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

The Lord my provider. Jehovah Jireh. The Lord my provider. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. we have His constant fellowship.

[25:00] He's constantly with us. As I say, you don't just go and visit Him at a church meeting or when you're feeling particularly religious. He's with you all the time.

You've got His constant fellowship. When you're going about your everyday down at the workplace, down in your home life, He is with you every day, day after day of your life.

And the promise is, I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. That's eternity. Eternity of forever with Him. Of being forever in the Saviour's presence.

And we know it now. We know it in the present time. Friends, do you know the shepherd? Do you know the shepherd?

Can you say, the Lord is my shepherd? my shepherd? John 10, 11, it says, I am the good shepherd.

[26:02] The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. Psalm 23 speaks to us of Christ. He is the good shepherd.

In the context, He talks about others who are not really shepherds. They're just hirelings. They're just there as a job kind of thing. But He is the shepherd to whom we belong.

If we are His sheep, we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. And friends, today, I just want to encourage each one.

Perhaps you're like the sheep spoken of in Isaiah 53, that all we, like sheep, have gone astray. The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity, the sin of us all.

Sheep stray, sheep wander, even Christians. We don't always live up to His name. We're meant to be Christ ones.

[27:10] Christians, we don't always live up to it, do we? And friends, we need to think. Take stock tonight. Let's pray.