

## The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm

### Introduction:

1. The Bible consists of two major parts, the Old and the New Testaments.
2. Jews, in the first century, regarded the Old Testament as consisting of three major parts, "the law of Moses,..the prophets, and...the psalms," Luke 24:44.
3. The longest book in the Old Testament is the book of Psalms; there are 150 psalms listed in the book of Psalms.
4. These psalms were written by different inspired men. By chapter designation at the head of the chapters, David is credited with having written 73 of the Psalms. Perhaps that is why he was called "*the sweet psalmist of Israel*," 2 Samuel 23:1.
5. Without doubt, the most familiar of the Psalms is the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm, sometimes called "the Shepherd Psalm."
  - a. This lesson will involve a study of the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm. It is entitled "The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm." Read the psalm.

### Discussion:

#### I. Opening Remarks:

- A. As stated, this psalm is probably the most loved, and most quoted of all the psalms.
- B. It is often quoted in life.
- C. And it is especially quoted, or read, at funerals.
  1. Yet, truth be known, this psalm deals more about living (or how we should live) than about dying.
  2. It seems that, in times of trouble, multitudes turn to this psalm in order to find comfort. However, the blessings of this psalm are not for everyone; the blessings of this psalm are reserved only for those who have the Lord as their Shepherd.
- D. In reading this psalm we should try, as much as possible, to mentally put ourselves in the situation of the Jews of that time.
  1. The nation of Israel abounded with shepherds and flocks.
    - a. David himself, as a youth, was a shepherd, I Samuel 16:11.
    - b. When Jesus was born shepherds were in the field, keeping watch over their flock, Luke 2:8.
    - c. Jesus spoke a parable regarding a man with 100 sheep, of one straying, and of the shepherd searching for that sheep, Luke 15:3-7.
    - d. Jesus called Himself "*the good Shepherd*," John 10:11.
    - e. The church is called "*the flock*," Acts 20:28.
  2. As politics is a part of the culture in Washington D.C., Shepherds shepherding their flocks were a part of the culture as it related to the Jews in the land of Canaan.
    - a. Thus God was called the "*Shepherd of Israel*," Psalm 80:1.
    - b. Jesus is called "*that great Shepherd of the sheep*," Hebrews 13:20.

#### II. "The Lord is My Shepherd," Psalm 23:1-4.

- A. Analyze Verse one.
  1. "*The Lord is my Shepherd.*"
    - a. To the psalmist, the Lord Himself was his shepherd.
  2. "*The Lord is my Shepherd.*"
    - a. Denotes a personal relationship between himself and the Lord.
  3. "*The Lord is my Shepherd.*"
    - a. The Shepherd is in charge. David is speaking of himself, not as a shepherd, but as a sheep.
  4. "*I shall not want.*"
    - a. He will provide for my needs; why should I worry? Matthew 6:33; James 1:17.
- B. Analyze Verse two.
  1. "*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.*"
    - a. The true Shepherd continually sought the best pastures for the flock; God wants us to feed upon His word continually, Psalm 1:1-3.
  2. "*He leadeth me beside the still waters.*"
    - a. Water for the sheep came from three main sources – dew on the grass, deep wells, springs and streams.
    - b. Sheep get thirsty. Whether they recognize it or not, all people are "thirsty" for God! John 4:14, but too many try to satisfy that thirst by turning to human substitutes, Jeremiah 2:13.
- C. Analyze Verse three.



1. *"He restoreth my soul."*

a. Sheep, because of too much wool, mud, burrs, and other debris can be turned on their backs and be unable to get up without help.

b. We, a spiritual sheep, often need lifting up. Galatians 6:1

2. *"He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.."*

a. Shepherds must keep sheep on the move; a pattern of grazing must be worked out.

b. Like sheep, Isaiah 53:6; we tend to cling to habits that are destructive, Proverbs 14:12.

D. Analyze Verse four.

1. *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.."*

a. Sheep are continually subject to danger – from the passage ways to the high plateaus, from dogs, coyotes, cougars, bears, etc.

b. We, too, are subject to danger! I Peter 5:8; I Corinthians 10:12; 2 Timothy 3:13.

2. *"I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.."*

a. The sight of the shepherd can do much to calm the sheep.

b. With God, we have no reason to fear! Joshua 1:5,6; Hebrews 13:5.

3. *"Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."*

a. The rod provided protection against external foes; the staff was used to lean upon and to move the sheep in the right direction.

b. We must trust in and lean upon God, Proverbs 3:5, and follow His directions, Isaiah 55:7-9.

III. **The Lord is My Host, Psalm 23:5,6.**

A. Analyze Verse five.

1. *"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."*

a. The sheep are now approaching the high mountain country of the summer ranges; known as alplands or tablelands, so much sought by sheepmen.

(1) God has prepared a banquet for us; we are to feed upon His word, Matthew 4:4; John 6:48,51.

2. *"Thou anointest my head with oil."*

a. Summer time was fly time; the shepherd would apply an antidote – often of olive oil, mixed with sulfur and spices. Such provided comfort, joy, and peace to the sheep.

b. God provides all this for His faithful children! Philippians 4:4-7.

3. *"My cup runneth over."*

a. Sheep led by a good shepherd have an overabundance of blessings.

b. Faithful Christians, who follow the *"good Shepherd,"* John 10:11, are blessed beyond measure! Ephesians 1:3; Romans 8:31,32.

B. Analyze Verse six.

1. *"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."*

2. *"And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."*

a. The shepherd has taken the sheep from the green pastures and still waters of the low lands, up through the mountain passes to the high tableland of the summer range. Fall comes, the weather changes, and it is time to bring the sheep home.

b. Christians constitute the flock of God, Acts 20:28; Jesus is that *"great shepherd of the sheep,"* Hebrews 13:20. When we obey His gospel we are added to His church, Acts 2:47, which is His *"flock,"* Acts 20:28. We follow Jesus, through *"thick and thin,"* and eventually it is time to go home, and what a homecoming that will be!

IV. **Practical Application for us.**

A. Jesus is *"the good shepherd,"* John 10:11, not a *"hireling,"* John 10:12.

1. We must follow Jesus, not man, John 14:6.

B. Jesus *"is all the world to me!"* He is:

1. My Creator, John 1:1-3.

2. My Savior, Matthew 1:21.

3. My sacrificial lamb, Isaiah 53:7,8.

4. My Shepherd, John 10:11.

**Conclusion:**

--Bobby Witherington,