

THE 23rd PSALM

Int.

1. Aim: To explain the 23rd Psalm and the applications to our life.
2. The most popular chapter in Bible. Only 118 words. Most memorized. It has 17 Personal pronouns.
3. Shepherd scene:
 - a. Shepherd stays with sheep day and night
 - (1) Leads to pasture and water
 - (2) Cares for their every need
 - (3) Protects from danger - willing to give life for sheep
 - (4) Keeps them from being scattered
 - (5) Seeks any who become lost
 - b. Christ is the true shepherd - [John 10:1-18] Jn.10:11 *"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."*
 - (1) He provides for our needs - v.11 v.14
 - (2) He cares for our hurts and needs
 - (3) He protects us - V.11 - gave his life
 - (4) He keeps us united and together
 - (5) He seeks those who go astray.
4. Shepherd scene was common
 - a. There are nearly 500 references to sheep and shepherds in the Bible.
 - b. The people in those days were very familiar with a good shepherd's attitudes and work, as well as the nature and needs of sheep.

c. Tending flocks was a common and honorable way of making a living in Bible times

(1) Abel was a keeper of sheep

(2) Abraham and Lot both had great herds

(3) Jacob and Job attended to keeping sheep

(4) Amos was a herdsman and David was in the field with the sheep when Samuel

came to find Israel's new King.

5. This 23rd Psalm can help us understand more fully the great shepherd of the sheep.

Discussion

I. **Ps. 23:1 "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."**

A. Opens with an assertion

1. He did not plead: "O Lord, Be my shepherd, for I am in need of a great deal."
2. It was a confident positive statement - "The Lord is..."
3. A shepherd knows his flock. He provides for their every need and watches for their safety.
4. If necessary, he would even lay down his life for the sheep.
5. My Shepherd - personal = Faith

B. He had a calm assurance that nothing he actually needed would be lacking.

1. John 10:10b "... I am come that they might have life, and that they might have [it] more abundantly."
2. Assurance - we shall have all spiritual needs supplied
3. Mt. 7:11 - we need to ask in prayer "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

4. If God loved us enough when we were sinners to give his Son to die for us, surely he will now give us all we need for spiritual growth since we are his children. Rom. 5:7-11 "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 10. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. 11. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."
5. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep - John 10:15

II. **Ps. 23:2 "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters."**

A. Picture of contentment and peace

1. The flocks are fed and watered - all wants satisfied
2. He leads them to a place of Still water
 - a. Sheep are fearful of swift running water
 - b. Their wool gets wet and they can be drowned
 - c. Must lead to a quiet pool of water
 - d. If the stream is swift then he can build a little dam and they will drink out of that still water.

B. Christ our shepherd leads us to have all we need

1. Matt. 11:28-30 "Come unto me, all [ye] that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." 29 "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." 30 "For my yoke [is] easy, and my burden is light."
2. Jesus promises us safety if we remain in his fold. - Matt. 6:33
3. 1 Tim. 6:8 "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."
4. Phil. 4:11 "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."
5. 2 Pet. 1:3 "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:"
6. All the wants of our soul are satisfied

C. Contentment -- Peace - His promise is that he will never leave us nor forsake us - Hebrews 13:5

III. PS 23:3 "He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

A. Sheep will sometimes go astray and get lost from the flock

1. They are helpless - They get hurt, wounded
2. Shepherd searched and restored it to the flock
3. When the lost sheep see the shepherd coming to their rescue they are delighted
4. He guided them in the right paths or ways

B. Christ restores our soul

1. Man is troubled with sin - our thoughts lead us astray
2. We become weary, troubled and worn down by sin.
3. Prov. 23:7a "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he:"
4. Jesus is the way - Jn. 14:6 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
5. 1 PET 2:25 "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."
6. He revives and reinvigorates our soul when it is exhausted and weary.

C. Leads in paths of righteousness

1. Leads in path that leads to him
2. He does not drive us but he lead the way and gives us an example to follow
3. 1 Pet 2:21-23 = follow his steps "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23. Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:"
4. Right living
5. No one ever regrets following the Lord. No one on his death bed ever advised young people to refuse to follow the Lord.

D. For his name's sake

1. For the sake of his great name
2. His name may be honored and glorified.

IV. **PS 23:4 "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."**

A. Valley of the shadow of death

1. Journey was sometimes dangerous
2. One wrong step and they could fall to their death
3. The rod and staff were used to protect from dangers. The shepherd would guard the flock and drive away the enemies.

B. Application

1. We have danger all around us
 - a. Sins of all sorts - temptations
 - b. Death, sickness, heartaches - troubles and trials
2. Christ will go with us through all the trials
 - a. Heb. 13:5b "... for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."
 - b. 1 Cor. 10:13 "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."
 - c. Eph 6:10 "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

C. He gives us confidence, courage, companionship & courage

1. The rod and staff of the shepherd provided protection for the sheep.
 - a. The rod was a weapon like club which often had nails driven through the big end of it.

- b. The staff had a crook on one end which was used for protection as well as to bring the sheep back to safety
2. There is security in the Savior's word.
 - a. We take heart in His promises and Joy in his sacrifices
 - b. We can walk through this world and fear no evil

V. **PS 23:5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.**

A. The Shepherd:

1. Would remove all poisonous plants - Watch for dangerous animals
2. If any sheep was injured he would pour oil on the wound to heal

B. Imagery of a host and his guest

1. Some feel that this is a change from the shepherd image to the idea of a host taking care of his guest
2. The host has prepared a table - a feast for him
3. The feast was served in spite of enemy activity

C. Application

1. Christ our shepherd or host supplies all our needs.
2. Phil. 4:19 "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
3. Rom. 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."
4. Our enemy is the devil but as a child of God we can enjoy the spiritual feast that is prepared for us.

- D. Joy - my cup runneth over - 1 Pet. 1:8. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:"
- E. This is Providence - favor and joy

VI. **PS. 23:6 "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."**

- A. The shepherd
1. Provided for needs and protection all through the day
 2. At the end of the day the sheep were gathered to a sheepfold - a place of safety
 3. The sheep and the shepherd could relax and rest
- B. Host Guest idea
1. The preparation and serving of the feast was but a foretaste of what was to come.
 2. God would not allow him to starve spiritually.
- C. Application
1. The Christian life is the best possible life on earth, if that was all - but we have heaven TOO!
 2. Someday our life will be over - Heb. 9:27
 3. At the end of life we can rest assured of our eternal dwelling with God!

4. John 14:1-4 "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2. In my Father's house are many mansions: if [it were] not [so], I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, [there] ye may be also. 4. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."
5. Rev. 21:1-4 "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. 2. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. 4. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."
6. 1 Thes. 4:18 "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."
- D. David looked to the end of life and to the home ultimately awaiting all the faithful where association with God is unending, in the city whose builder and maker is God.

Conclusion

1. The church is the flock - Acts 20:28
2. Jesus is the shepherd - 1 Pet. 2:25 "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."
 - a. For the sheep he bled - He gave his life so we could live
 - b. Heaven is the eternal home for those who love the Lord !

3. This 23rd psalm has been memorized by millions.
4. As A.G. Freed was going to surgery he quoted this chapter. It brought tears to the eyes of the surgeons. He never recovered from this surgery.
5. This 23rd psalm is the recipe for living a victorious life.

Sources

Psalm 23: The Shepherd Psalm by David Pharr - Carolina Christian Feb. 1981 P. 8

The Story behind The Indian Version of the 23rd Psalm

Many years ago the Indians of the Plains heard the 23rd psalm and were much intrigued by it. They wanted to share its beauty with the neighboring tribes but were unable because of the difference of language. A bright Indian suggested that they put it into the universal Indian sign language, which was done. Many tribes shared its inspiration and loveliness. A woman named Isabel Crawford understood the Indian sign language very well. She thought it would be interesting to translate the sign language version back into literal English. And the result is:

THE INDIAN VERSION OF THE 23rd PSALM

The Great Father above is a Shepherd chief. I am His and with Him I want not. He throws out a rope to me, and the name of the rope is love, and he draws me to where the grass is green and the water not dangerous, and I eat and lie down satisfied. Sometimes my heart is very weak and falls down, but He lifts it up again and draws me into a good road. His name is Wonderful. Sometime, it may be very soon, it may be a long, long time, He will draw me into a valley. It is dark there, but I'll be not afraid, for it is in between those mountains that the shepherd Chief will meet me and the hunger that I have in my heart all through this life will be satisfied. Sometimes He makes the love rope into a whip, but afterward He gives me a staff to lean upon. He spreads a table before me with all kinds of goods. He puts His hand upon my head and all the "tired" is gone. My cup he fills till it runs over. What I tell is true. I lie not. These roads that are "away ahead" will stay with me through this life and afterwards I will go to live in the Big Tepee and sit down with the SHEPHERD CHIEF forever.

23rd Psalm Explanation

Ever wondered why the 23rd Psalm is so popular? It could be because of the wonderful messages contained in every line.

Consider...

The Lord is my shepherd...

That's a RELATIONSHIP

I shall not want...

That's SUPPLY

He makes me lie down in green pastures...

That's REST

He leads me beside the still waters...

That's REFRESHMENT

He restores my soul...

That's HEALING

He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake...

That's PURPOSE

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...

That's CHALLENGE

I will fear no evil...

That's ASSURANCE

For you are with me...

That's FAITHFULNESS

Your rod and staff, they comfort me...

That's SHELTER

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies...

That's HOPE

You anoint my head with oil...

That's CONSECRATION

My cup runs over...

That's ABUNDANCE

Surely goodness & mercy will follow me all the days of my life...

That's BLESSING

And I will dwell in the House of the Lord...

That's SECURITY

Forever...

That's ETERNITY!