

The Lord is My Shepherd

By Gaye Moss

Is there a place where you go to feel safe and comforted? The awesome promises found in Psalm 23 provide a wonderful refuge for our souls. The verses recorded in this Psalm are some of the most treasured in the Bible because they bring sweet hope and comfort. When fear comes or difficulties arise, the scriptural truths found in this beautiful Psalm enable us to enter into God's peace and rest.

In the New Testament, Jesus invites all who are weary and burdened to come to Him (Matthew 11:28). He told us in John 10:11, "*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.*" When we accept Jesus' invitation to be our Savior and our Shepherd, we have the wonderful privilege of entering into His peace and rest. The truths recorded in Psalm 23 give us an amazing picture of all that Jesus has provided for us.

When the Lord is our Shepherd, we find rest in the midst of life's storms. In His loving care, we find safety and comfort. At His table, we are nourished and refreshed. When we make the Lord our Shepherd, His goodness and mercy accompany us everywhere we go, and we have the wonderful assurance that we will dwell in His presence all the days of our lives.

Powerful Promises From Psalm 23

1. When The Lord is Our Shepherd, We Shall not Want.

Psalm 23 begins with the amazing proclamation, "*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want*" (v.1). The word *want* in verse one can be translated *lack* or *to fail* (Strong's, 2637). In the Lord, we never need to fear lack or failure. When the Lord is our Shepherd, we can trust Him as our provider and our source of victory.

2. When The Lord is Our Shepherd, He Nourishes and Refreshes Us.

Verse two declares, "*He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still water.*" Sheep cannot find safe pasture without a shepherd. The shepherd is the one who clears the rocks and cultivates the green pastures. The shepherd is there to provide nourishing green pastures that are free of poisonous plants and weeds. He leads the sheep to still waters because He knows that running water will cause their wool to grow heavy and they will drown. We can trust our faithful Shepherd to provide us with wonderful nourishment and refreshing waters through His powerful Word and His Spirit.

3. When The Lord is Our Shepherd, He Restores Our Souls and He leads Us in Righteousness.

We can always trust our Shepherd to lead us in the right direction. We are promised in verse three, "*He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.*" When we make Jesus our Shepherd, He begins a wonderful work of

restoring our souls (our minds, our wills, and our emotions). Our part is to follow Him and to stay sensitive to His voice. Jesus told us in John 10:27, “*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*” We can be encouraged and comforted in the fact that if we have trouble hearing Him, or we take a wrong turn, as we sometimes do, He will find us and He will redirect us. He will even carry us at times when we are hurt or wounded.

Questions: How comforted does it make you feel to know that you do not need to fear lack or failure because the Lord is your Shepherd? Have you ever had the Spirit of God stop you from going in a wrong direction? How have you sensed Him guiding and directing your life?

4. When the Lord is Our Shepherd, We Never Need to Fear.

“*Yea, 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*”(v.4). The rod is a symbol of authority, and the staff is an instrument of support. When we make the Lord our shepherd, He gives us His authority and He supports us. When we are under His authority, there is no reason to fear.

In John 14:12-14, Jesus gave us authority to accomplish amazing things in His name. He told us in Luke 10:19, “*Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.*” He also promised us that He would not leave us without support, but He would send us help through the Holy Spirit (John 14:18, 26; 16:7, 13).

The name **Jesus** (Strong’s, 2424, Greek) comes from the Hebrew name **Jehoshua**–Joshua (Strong’s, 3091). *Jehoshua* is a compound name, and it means **Jehovah-saved**. **Jehovah** (Strong’s, 3068) is the *self-Existent* or eternal God. **Yasha**, the Hebrew word for *saved* (Strong’s, 3467), means “to be *free*, to be *safe*...defend, deliver, help, preserve, rescue...bring salvation...and get victory.”

When Jesus is our Shepherd, we can walk through the valley of the shadow of death because He is always with us to defend, deliver, help, preserve, rescue, and save. Our faithful Shepherd will lead us safely through the difficult valleys of our lives to a place of freedom and victory by the power of His Word, His Name, and His Spirit.

5. When the Lord is Our Shepherd, We Walk in His Anointing.

Verse five promises us, “*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.*” It is at His table that we feed on the truths of His Word that bring wonderful nourishment to our souls. At His table, we receive His anointing grace. Our enemies cannot defeat us when we are walking in the Truth of His Word and the power of His Spirit.

During David’s time, it was customary for honored guests to have their heads anointed with oil, and when a host really enjoyed the company of a guest, the host would fill their cup to overflowing. In ancient Israel, shepherds used oil to heal wounds and to protect the sheep. The oil worked as a repellent to keep insects from tormenting the sheep. It

was also placed on the sheep's nose to keep serpents away. During mating season oil was placed on the rams' heads to help protect the males when they would tend to butt heads.

The oil and the wine of the Spirit are so important at those times when we need healing, or when the enemy comes to steal, kill, and destroy, or when we are in a situation where we might tend to butt heads with someone. Our heavenly Shepherd came to fill our lives to overflowing (John 10:10). He longs for us to set with Him and dine with Him (Rev. 3:20). He is the one who anoints our lives with the power and healing grace of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8, James 5:14-15).

6. When The Lord is Our Shepherd, His Goodness and Mercy Follow Us, and We Dwell in His Presence Forever.

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Verse six is one of the most amazing verses in the Bible. The Hebrew word translated **goodness** (Strong's, 2896) in this verse also means “beautiful, favor, prosperity, sweet, wealth, and welfare.” The Hebrew word translated **mercy** (Strong's, 2617) also means “beauty, favor, and loving kindness.” God's goodness and mercy are covenant benefits (Dt. 7:12-15).

When we are in covenant with God, through the cross of Jesus Christ, we have the ability to walk in His goodness, mercy, beauty, prosperity, favor, and love. When we make Jesus our Shepherd, we can look forward to dwelling in the sweetness of His presence forever—enjoying all of His wonderful covenant blessings.

Questions: How have you experienced the Lord's protection and comfort as you have walked through difficult valleys? How have you been blessed by His goodness, mercy and love?

Lesson Application: Take some time to make a fresh commitment to the Lord as your Shepherd, your Savior, and your King. Make a fresh commitment to spend time in His Word and His presence. Ask Him to fill your life to overflowing with His goodness, mercy, and love. Ask Him to help you walk in the wonderful promises of Psalm 23.

Conclusion: I know of a precious lady who invited Jesus to be her Savior and the Shepherd of her life. She was very excited about walking with the Lord, but she was struggling with a drinking problem. In the midst of her struggle she accepted her Shepherd's gracious invitation to come to His table. Day-after-day she sat reading her Bible with her can of beer sitting on the table next to her. After a period of time, she discovered that she did not need the beer any longer. Her life became so filled with God's goodness, mercy, and love that she was set free from her need for alcohol.

When we faithfully dine at our Shepherd's table, He will give us wonderful instruction and guidance. As we partake of His Word and listen to His voice, we will find all the help we need to live victorious lives.

[Insight regarding a shepherd and the sheep was taken from Max Lucado's book *Safe in the Shepherd's Arms*, published by J. Countryman, a division of Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee 37214.]

(Scripture quotes are taken from the NKJV.)