

**THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD
FINDING COMFORT IN THE SHEPHERD
PSALM 23:4b**

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Introduction

There can be no doubt that we are living in the midst of some very **PERILOUS TIMES** in this world. We have even seen in recent times how **CIRCUMSTANCES** of this life can change suddenly! (*e.g. COVID*)

We may be **BLESSED** to have experienced life on the **MOUNTAIN TOP** at times! (It is easy to thank the **LORD** for those times!) However, we may suddenly find ourselves having to negotiate through a **DARK VALLEY** of **TRIALS** or **TRIBULATION** where the **SHADOW OF DEATH** may even seem to hover over us!

Living in **PERILOUS TIMES** makes it difficult for many to find **COMFORT!** But that **should not be the case** for those of us who are the **LORD'S SHEEP!**

We have been seeing through **PSALM 23** that because **THE LORD IS OUR SHEPHERD**, we can find **COMFORT** in **HIS PRESENCE!**

As we move deeper into **PSALM 23**, we should sense our **NEED** to **MOVE CLOSER** to **OUR SHEPHERD** and **STAY CLOSE** to **HIM!**

I. THANK GOD WE HAVE A SHEPHERD WHO IS PERSONAL!

We saw in *verse 1* how the **PSALMIST** began speaking **ABOUT** his **SHEPHERD**, "*The LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, I shall not want!*"

We have seen the **PSALMIST** has said some important things **ABOUT** his **SHEPHERD** in *verses 1-3*:

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. . .

He leadeth me beside the still waters. . .

He restoreth my soul. . .

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

But we pointed out a change when we got to *verse 4* as the **PSALMIST** diverts from speaking **ABOUT** his **SHEPHERD** to speaking **TO** or **COMMUNING WITH** his **SHEPHERD!**

He says, "*I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.*"

This comes not only from the **SHEEP'S KNOWLEDGE** of the **SHEPHERD**, but more importantly it comes from the **SHEEP'S EXPERIENCE** with the **SHEPHERD!**

We can learn **ABOUT** our **SHEPHERD** as we increase in what we **KNOW ABOUT HIM** from **READING** the **WORD** and from being **TAUGHT** in the **WORD!** As we move through the **WORD OF GOD** and **STUDY** others interaction with **HIM**, we learn **ABOUT HIM!** (We could call that **BOOK KNOWLEDGE!**)

As we learn **ABOUT HIM** we may **TALK ABOUT HIM** and **EXALT HIM** before others for all of what we learn **ABOUT HIM!** **And we should!** I'm not minimizing that at all!

And we may even **TALK ABOUT HIM** and **EXALT HIM** in our **WORSHIP** of **HIM!** **And we should do that as well!**

Psalm 34:3– "O magnify the LORD with me, And let us exalt his name together."

That's great! But what our **SHEPHERD** really wants is for that which we **KNOW ABOUT HIM** (i.e. **BOOK KNOWLEDGE**) in our **WORSHIP** of **HIM** to move to our own **PERSONAL EXPERIENCE** with **HIM** in our **WORSHIP** of **HIM!**

Psalm 28:7– "The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusted in him, and I am helped: Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; And with my song will I praise him."

When the **LORD** does something for us personally as we go through a **DARK VALLEY**, it causes us to **DRAW NEAR** to **HIM** with a heart full of **GRATITUDE** as we **PRAISE HIM** and **EXALT HIM** because of that which **HE DID** for us! That's when we come to know the **LORD** by **PERSONAL EXPERIENCE** in a **GREATER WAY!**

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So, there is a world of difference between **TALKING TO OTHERS ABOUT HIM** from what we **LEARN ABOUT HIM** from the **BIBLE** and what we **LEARN ABOUT HIM** from our **EXPERIENCE** with **HIM AS OUR GOOD SHEPHERD!**

And, there is a world of difference between **TALKING TO HIM** from what we **LEARN ABOUT HIM** from the **BIBLE** and **TALKING TO HIM** or **COMMUNING WITH HIM** from our **EXPERIENCE WITH HIM** as we go through life's **VALLEYS!**

When **DAVID** went through the **VALLEYS** in his life, he came to know the **LORD** in a deeper, more meaningful way!

Let's just think about **DAVID** as he was in a **VALLEY OF DANGER** as a **SHEPHERD!** He gave the **LORD** the glory for having delivered him out of the paw of both a lion and a bear in *1 Samuel 17:37*.

And that **EXPERIENCE** caused him to be able to trust the **LORD** to deliver him from **GOLIATH!** It strengthened his trust in the **LORD!**

I'm sure that was also instrumental in his trusting the **LORD** through the many attempts on his life at the hand of **KING SAUL** without taking matters into his own hand and killing **KING SAUL** himself!

What **VALLEY** or **VALLEYS** will it take to move us beyond our mere **BOOK KNOWLEDGE** of the **LORD** and **DRAW US NEARER** to **OUR SHEPHERD** with a desire to **CLEAVE TO HIM, LEAN UPON HIM, WALK WITH HIM, COMMUNE WITH HIM, TO KNOW HIM,** and to **FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM** in a **GREATER WAY** than we ever have before?

The safest place for us as we walk through the **VALLEYS OF THIS LIFE** is for us to be **AS CLOSE TO THE SHEPHERD** as we possibly can be! Because it is in **OUR SHEPHERD** that we find **SAFETY** and **DELIVERANCE** through our **VALLEYS!**

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THANK GOD WE HAVE A SHEPHERD WHO IS PERSONAL...
II. THANK GOD WE HAVE A SHEPHERD WHO IS POWERFUL!
Psalm 23:4 says, *"Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."*

The **SHEPHERD** of **DAVID'S** time used simple things in the **SHEPHERDING** his flock. He used a **ROD** and a **STAFF**.

The **ROD** was a weapon. It was not a gun, or a bow and arrow, or a spear. It was a **STICK**, that was more like what we think of as a **CLUB!**

The **ROD** was used by the **SHEPHERD** to **GUARD** the **SHEEP**. Young people, like **DAVID**, who were growing up and working as **SHEPHERDS** learned how to use that **ROD** effectively!

They would learn to throw the **ROD** with great accuracy at long distances. They could hit their target well with the **ROD**. It became an extension of their bodies!

The **SHEPHERDS** also carried a **STAFF**. The **STAFF** was a long **STICK**, longer than the **ROD** and most often with a **CURVED END**.

The **STAFF** was used to lean on. But also, the **STAFF** was used to **GUIDE** the **SHEEP** or help to **RETRIEVE** the **SHEEP!** If a **LAMB** happened to be wandering away, the **SHEPHERD** could reach out with the **STAFF** and with the **CROOKED END** bring the **SHEEP** back.

If a little **LAMB** fell into the water and was in danger, the **SHEPHERD** could reach with his **STAFF** and hook it around the body of the little **LAMB** and bring him up out of the water.

If a **LAMB** became entangled in briars or was caught in a thicket and could not get out, the **STAFF** could be used to tear loose the things that had gotten tangled in his wool and free him.

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With the **ROD to GUARD** and the **STAFF to GUIDE**, the **SHEPHERD** had all that was **NEEDED to COMFORT** any of **HIS SHEEP** through whatever they faced in the **VALLEY!**

Let's look at a few things from another passage in the Bible about this **ROD**. **I want us to see MOSES' ROD**. **MOSES was a shepherd on the backside of the desert for his father-in-law, JETHRO.**

We see **MOSES** is at the Burning Bush as the **LORD** called him into **HIS** service to lead Israel out of Egypt! *Exodus 4:2-4; 17; 20*

Here we see that the ROD was a symbol of the LORD'S POWER and AUTHORITY! (It was used in 6 out of the 10 plagues in Egypt)

Exodus 7:8-12 (serpent);

Exodus 7:15-21 (water turned to blood);

Exodus 8:5-6 (frogs);

Exodus 8:16-17 (lice-the finger of GOD);

Exodus 9:23 (hail);

Exodus 10:13 (locusts);

In Exodus 14:10-18 (the parting of the Red Sea)

It was used when ISRAEL had their backs against the RED SEA!

Moses said, *Vs 13 "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day."* He went on to say, *Vs 14*

"The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

In verse 15 we see "the rod"! God said, "But lift up thou thy rod, and stretch out thy hand over the sea, and divide it..."

Exodus 17:5-6 (striking the Rock at Rephidim to get water)

Exodus 17:8-9 (in the battle versus Amalek)

Numbers 20:7-13 (Moses struck the Rock twice to get water)

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The **LORD** was the **SHEPHERD WHO** was **POWERFUL** for **HIS SHEEP, THE FLOCK OF ISRAEL!**

What about the STAFF?

The **SHEPHERD** used the **STAFF to GUIDE** the **SHEEP**. I read one time that a **SHEPHERD** could walk by a **SHEEP** that had become jittery and nervous and simply by laying that **STAFF** against the body of the **SHEEP**, the **SHEEP** would walk along side the **SHEPHERD** and calm down.

The **SHEEP** would be **COMFORTED** and **CALMED** by the **STAFF** of the **SHEPHERD** simply lying against its body as he walked.

I believe that the ROD represents to us the POWERFUL WORD OF GOD, and I believe that the STAFF represents the SPIRIT of GOD that HE has given to GUIDE us.

THANK GOD THAT WE HAVE A SHEPHERD WHO IS PERSONAL AND POWERFUL!