

The Promises of My Shepherd, Psalm 23
GCC, 3/3/19, Morning Worship, Communion Sunday

Introduction

Psalm 23 gives great comfort to the Christian but “Can we, with David, really say “I shall not want?” (v. 1) and “I will fear no evil” (v. 4)?

- I. The Five Words that Give *Meaning* to the Psalm (v. 1–2)
 - A. My Shepherd *causes* me to lie down in green pastures by giving me a desire for the Shepherd
 - B. Two Principles
 1. The Shepherd determines our desires and
 2. Then leads us to the places where our desires are fulfilled
 - C. The Contrast with Competing Shepherds
 1. The Shepherds of money, greed, family, reputation, health, and societal status leave us lacking and fearful

- II. Your Shepherd Leads you unto the Good Times (23:2–3)
 - A. Sometimes providence smiles upon us and we revel in the green pastures and still waters

- III. Your Shepherd Leads you *through* the Bad Times (23:4)
 - A. Sometimes providence frowns upon us
 - B. How do the words, “The Lord is my Shepherd” keep me from fear?
 1. Because the Shepherd is with me (23:4; cf. Isa 43:2)
 - a. The promise behind the providence bids me fear no evil
 - b. Do not look for the goodness of God in providence but in His promises
 2. Because the Shepherd comforts me by His rod and his staff
 - a. Rod=Protection from predators
 - b. Shepherding crook=protection from ourselves
 - c. Afflictions as “feters of grace”
 - d. Learn to bend a discerning ear to draw out the promises of God within the cacophony of His providence
 - e. Take the sovereignty out of the Shepherd and you become a “victim” of dark providences
 - f. Through faith, ascertain the smile of God behind dark providences and you are a victor in the midst of them

- IV. Your Shepherd Makes you to Feast in the Presence of your Enemies (23:5)
 - A. A Table of Peace in the Midst of Enemies
 - B. A Table of Peace in the Passover
 - C. A Table of Peace for Believers

- V. Psalm 23 Is Impossible without Psalm 22
 - A. The Cry of Dereliction and the Good Shepherd
 - B. The Two Cups of the Good Shepherd

Questions for Application:

1. Why are the words, “The Lord is my Shepherd,” the key to understanding Psalm 23?
2. How does God “cause” his sheep to rest in green pastures and lead them beside still waters? In other words, does he “force” them to do it, or does he somehow work through their will?
3. Consider the two principles that arise from the words, “The Lord is my Shepherd.”
 - a. The Lord determines our desires
 - b. Then He leads us to places where those desires find fulfillmentWhat desire does the Lord put into our heart that “causes us” to walk through good, bad, and ugly times with contentment and without fear?
4. What are the two reasons why David said, “I will fear no evil” in the Valley of the Shadow of Death?
5. From what do the rod and the staff protect us?
6. What are “fetters of grace?”
7. Can you identify “fetters of grace” in your life that have preserved your desire to stay close to the Shepherd?
8. What is providence?
9. What is a smiling providence and a dark providence?
10. What does this phrase mean? “Take the sovereignty out of the Shepherd, and you become a “victim” of dark providences.”
11. How does viewing the Lord as our Shepherd makes us victors rather than victims in the midst of dark providences?
12. What does it mean that our Shepherd “prepares for us a table in the midst of our enemies?”
13. What did the Shepherd have to do with the cup before he was able to make it overflow unto us?