

Jehovah My Shepherd Psalm 23

by John Nelson Darby

John Nelson Darby's sermon on Psalm 23 emphasizes God's role as our Shepherd, providing spiritual guidance, forgiveness, and eternal hope.

Scripture: Psalm 23:1, Hebrews 10:19

Topics: "Assurance of Salvation", "God as Shepherd"

Description

John Nelson Darby expounds on Psalm 23, emphasizing that the blessings from the Lord as our Shepherd are both spiritual and temporal. He highlights the significance of the veil being torn, allowing believers to approach God with confidence, knowing their sins are forgiven through Christ's sacrifice. Darby reassures that God's care leads us to spiritual restoration and peace, enabling us to face life's challenges without fear. He stresses that true happiness comes from understanding God's love and provision, which allows us to dwell in His presence forever. Ultimately, the sermon conveys that God's goodness and mercy accompany us throughout our lives, culminating in eternal fellowship with Him.

Transcript

The blessings into which, as the Shepherd, the Lord leads the flock are not merely temporal but spiritual. The veil is now rent from top to bottom, and we are brought to God. God is not only caring for us all the way, but the exercise of our souls should be to walk in the light with Him, and, if by any means, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. The care He takes is to bring us up to walk in the power of that heavenly glory with Himself. "Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." God is not only known to us as Jehovah, giving us mercies all the way along the road; but it is the Father blessing us with spiritual things. True, the hairs of our head are all numbered; but there is discipline for our souls as well, which leads into blessing.

Any pious Jew, having a renewed nature, in old time might know and use this psalm, saying, "Jehovah, my Shepherd." The holiness of God was not fully revealed; and therefore the conscience not disquieted, and the distance not felt. They knew the favour of God and counted on His goodness then; but now we are brought into the light and see what judgment is. The veil is rent, and God's holiness is manifested; for we are in the light, as He is in the light, through Jesus. "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth."

Now that sin has been fully shewn out - the death of Christ proving what the enmity of the heart was - this matter must be settled. I cannot say, "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever," if I have not the knowledge of sin forgiven. I cannot talk of confidence, if I have a fear of judgment and I see the desert of

sin in the light of His holiness. I cannot consistently speak of One who may be my Judge, that He is my Shepherd, and I shall dwell with Him. To know Him as our Shepherd, we must not have it an unsettled matter about sins being forgiven. God cannot let sin into His presence.

There must be a conscience purged. Christ has been accepted, and He puts us into His place, having made peace through the blood of His cross. "He has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." He has "entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." God does not see sin in Jesus; indeed in Him was no sin: and we who believe are in Him; therefore He sees no sin in us. The comfort and peace Christ had, as a man walking on the earth, He gives us. "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." Now I have come to put you in the place of unhindered confidence with the Father; and that is, what you could never have, if the least sense of sin were upon you. The peace is made: therefore He can not only say, "Peace I leave with you," but "My peace I give unto you." These were not idle words, and we can see how He could give it to us, having brought us to God and put away everything against us.

35 Now the question is one of happiness with God. Conflict by the way there is also of course; but God is my Shepherd. Not only has He done something for me, but He is something to me: therefore it is said "that your faith and hope might be IN GOD." I believe in God as seen in Christ, as one who has loved me perfectly and manifested His love by putting away my sins. "The kindness and love of God our Saviour towards men hath appeared." The thought I may now have of God is that He has done all this for me, and that He is all this to me. I may fail and so get into evil, and this will make me ashamed; but it should not destroy my confidence, because my faith and hope are in God Himself. Now God is my Shepherd, and we may have confidence in Himself, for it is not merely said, He has done this, and He will do that, but "I shall not want." There never can be a want to the soul that has the supply. It is the application of this power and goodness of God to my every-day need that I shall feel, and all this must go on the ground of sin forgiven. Now I have found out, not only my need of being justified, but that He has justified me. Whom He called, them He also justified; Rom. 8.

The starting-point of Christian experience is "God for us"; and "if God be for us, who can be against us?" I am the object of His favour, which is better than life. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters." I shall find good everywhere. I shall lie down, no one making me afraid. Though the wolf may prowl in the way, I lie down in green pastures. It is "He leadeth me," and that must be in perfect peace and enjoyment "beside the still waters." This is the natural Christian state. We realise all things ours, for God is for us; therefore we may lie down. We shall have conflict, etc., but amidst it all enjoyment. If the sorrow gets between our souls and God so as to produce distrust, it is sin. Even if sin comes in, sad as it is, He can restore the soul. Whether from trouble, or from offending, He can restore. See what thoughts are here given about God! The Psalmist does not say, I must get my soul restored, and then go to God, but "He restoreth my soul." So "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." Who can restore but He? There may be something to correct in us, if not actually a fall. There may be hardness in my heart, which trouble shews me, and the like. For our good in this way He sends trouble, as well as that which is our proper portion following Him who was the "Man of sorrows." But if He restores, it is "for His name's sake." Here am I, a poor, fainting, wretched creature, and the Lord comes in and lifts me up - why? "For his name's sake." Whatever I am, God is for me; and not only in this way, but also against enemies. "For, though I walk through the valley," etc. (v. 4). Man had reason to quail at death before Christ came; but now in the fullest sense, we need "fear no evil." Death is "ours" now. "We have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead." If they took my

life, they could not hurt me, for I am trusting to One who could raise me. Paul as good as says, If they take this life, I have lost nothing; nay, it is positive gain, for it hastens me on the road. Death is not terrible now. Why? "Thou art with me." It is terrible without this. "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." It is not a rod, but Thine, so I shall fear no evil. No one can compete with God. Death is the very thing by which Christ has saved me, and it is that by which He will take me into His presence - " Absent from the body, present with the Lord." It may come as a trial to exercise my soul. Well, I have to remember, "Thou art with me."

There is not only failure in life and failure in death to meet, but there are mighty enemies (v. 5). Nevertheless I can sit down amongst them, and find everything given me for food. I feed on this dying Christ, and it was in His death Satan's power was most put forth. In another light Satan comes and tempts me with the flesh, but I can say to him, I am dead; I have a right to say it - I may fail in saying it, but that is another thing. Satan cannot touch anything but my flesh; and if I am mortifying my members, he has no power. If my members are alive, Satan cannot count me dead. In the presence of all then I can sit down and say, I have done with them all - "for Thou art with me." I have found that power by which they are made nothing to me. Then we arrive at further security, joy, and blessedness still: "Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." Now that Christ has ascended and the Holy Ghost has been given, there is triumphant peace and abounding in joy through the power of the Holy Ghost.

37 I now find God Himself the source of all, and not only this as a present thing, but seeing what God is, I can say, "goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever." We shall never want goodness and not find it. "Goodness shall follow me." Assuredly the goodness of God is better than man's, even if we could get this. There is a place to dwell in: that is my hope. For us it is the Father's house. There are not only blessings conferred, but a place to dwell in with the Father for ever. As He brought Christ through, of course He will bring me through too, and I am there now by faith. I am at home with my Father. He would have us feel that all the correctings and chastenings by the way are founded upon the fact that He is for us. When peace is really settled through the work of Christ, I have all these exercises; and what is known only to faith at the beginning becomes afterwards experience, though always faith too; but, every step having had this experience, we can say that we know it. Whatever it be we meet with by the way, we know it is all for good, and we shall dwell for ever with Him. Wonderful grace!

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