

# Thoughts on Psalm 23

by Shane Idleman

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*Having a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ is the key to experiencing emotional wholeness, spiritual wholeness, and a lack of nothing.*

**Duration:** 26:39

**Scripture:** Psalm 23, Acts 3:19, Romans 3:23, Romans 5:8, Romans 6:23, Hebrews 3:15

**Topics:** "Personal Salvation", "Righteous Living"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the importance of having a personal relationship with God rather than just religious practices. It emphasizes the need to truly know God as the good shepherd, experience His restoration, and walk in His righteousness. The message challenges listeners to examine their hearts, repent of sin, and turn to Jesus for salvation, highlighting the consequences of rejecting God and the eternal significance of accepting Christ as the only way to God.

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## Transcript

You know, if you have your Bibles or if you have it on your phone, or even if you don't just read along with me, Psalms 23. Psalms 23. You know, and I kind of want to preface this this whole reading with just sharing my heart briefly is for many years, I had what would be considered religion and not a relationship.

And many times I would hear scriptures like this and think, oh, yeah, that that sounds great. That's wonderful. But I realized that I didn't truly know the good shepherd.

So a lot of times when we read the scriptures and we say, the Lord is my shepherd, it begs the question, is he? You know, we can't apply things to our lives just because the pastor reads them or we've heard them before. But we have to have a relationship with the risen savior and with the one true and living God. And it's with that understanding, then we can look at Psalms 23, where it says the Lord is my shepherd.

I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his namesake. 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. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil.

My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

And what I want to do is just briefly go through this just as a word of encouragement to some and as maybe as a word of conviction to others. And what I often say to my fellowship here is if you don't like what I'm saying, it might be because you need to hear what I'm saying. And a lot of times God will use that conviction to draw us back to him.

And the whole point of reading, convicting scripture is not to upset people, but it's to convict them, to draw them back to the one true and living God. So a lot of times it's something our culture does not want to hear. Get God out of everything.

We don't want God in anything. Don't mention the name of Jesus Christ. You can mention any other name, but when you mention the name of Jesus Christ, people get upset.

And why is that? Because there's power in the name. The Bible says that God has highly exalted him and given him a name above every name, that the name of Jesus Christ, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord. And one of the great things about pastoring is I don't have to argue.

I don't have to debate. I don't have to come up with truth. All I have to do is proclaim it.

And then the power of the word of God pierces the heart, and that's where change takes place. So as we look at this, the first thing, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. We find that there is emotional wholeness, there's spiritual wholeness, there is not a lack of anything.

And many of you might say, but Shane, I'm lacking, I'm empty. This doesn't make sense. And that could be because possibly the Lord is not your shepherd.

And I know that's difficult to hear, but it needs to be said, especially in the churches of America, because we've been conditioned with religion at the cost of relationship. See, I do all the right things and I say all the right things and I go to church, I live in a Christian home, I have a Bible, I'm a good person. But that's religion, that's not relationship.

So we have to ask, do I truly know the good shepherd? Is he truly my good shepherd? Does he, has he changed, has he radically changed my life? Do I have a passion for God, a passion for his word? Is he the center of my life? And these are hard questions that need to be asked of ourselves. Paul told the church in Corinth, I believe it was, to examine yourselves, examine yourselves. Do you not know that Jesus Christ is in you? It's a very healthy thing to do.

Number two, he makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. God knows what's best.

He knows where the fruitful life is. He takes chaos and he takes the rapids and he leads us beside still waters. He calms the storm.

And a lot of people don't know anything about that because they're living without that relationship. And that's why it's hard for me, because on one hand, I know people can't apply the psalm to their life. But on the other hand, I need to encourage those who can.

And people are saying, well, Shane, I don't know what you're talking about. My life is chaotic. My life is out of control.

I don't have that peace. I don't have that that fulfillment. I don't.

My life is not still waters. It's chaotic. I don't know if I should.

I don't want to live anymore. Christ came to set all that free. He is the good shepherd.

And you only experience these things when you have a right relationship with him. So he goes on to say he restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

A right relationship with God equals restoration. Let me read that again. He restores my soul.

He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. How does he restore a person's soul? He gives them new life in Christ. And once you have that come hell or high water, come chaotic chaos, whatever it is, your life is built on that solid foundation.

And of course, the one that we've heard more often than not, 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 comfort me. And this is interesting because most commentators agree on this. This isn't necessarily talking about death, although it can be, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

If you look at Old Testament imagery, the walk through the valley of the shadow of death, the darkness and, you know, the darkness, the fear that's gripping our nation like never before. I've never seen so many people struggling with fear and depression and prescription medication is skyrocketing. Everybody's afraid.

We're in this fear frenzy. But he says, listen, though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, fear no evil, because I am with you and my rod and my staff will comfort you. And obviously, metaphorically speaking, and what the writer saying here is his rod and his staff, which is his discipline and his correction are not meant to harm.

As you get the picture there, right, of a shepherd with the rod keeping the sheep away from dangerous things and that discipline or that that rod or that. No, don't do that. And that that directing God will do that in our own life.

Some of the some of you, I'm quite to be quite honest with you. I think this is service is going to be a wake up call to look at it. Am I right with God? Is that is that shepherd? Is that rod convicting me? Is that is it challenging me? I don't like this.

Come back, come back. He's pulling that sheep back into the flock that we see it all the time. And I'm often reminded as well that sometimes when a lamb would wander from the care and the protection of the shepherd, that shepherd would sometimes if it was a wandering lamb, he would break the leg of that lamb.

So, Shane, that makes no sense. Well, let me finish. He would splint the leg.

Fix it, and then he would carry the sheep around or the little lamb for for weeks and weeks and weeks, and through that broken and dependent relationship, the lamb knew to stay close to the shepherd. He wouldn't run off anymore and be devoured by possibly devoured by wolves and predators, coyotes, bears,

whatever it was, because he knew. But what did it take? That brokenness that you got broke that leg and to carry that sheep on the shepherd.

That's how you truly know him as a good shepherd through that brokenness and through that pain. But should draw you to Christ and draw you to God. What usually happens is people become bitter, not better.

Maybe they get upset at God and how could God allow we live in a fallen, sinful world? How can God allow? How can God not allow he embraces us? He corrects us. He directs us. But we have to respond to that.

We have to respond to that correction and that gentle nudging back in the right direction. The good shepherd doesn't just love and hold. He also disciplines those I love.

I rebuke and I discipline. What's the point? Same reason. Why do we discipline our kids? No, don't touch that, don't touch that fire.

Why, daddy, why? Because it will devour and destroy you. The pain hurt. But what was the end result? A loving father caring more for his kids and having them experience that pain.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup runs over.

Now, this is interesting because a meal demonstrates intimate fellowship. God is preparing a table and people say, what does this mean? Well. Especially in biblical times, we don't do it as much now, the word fellowship coming together, having a meal together.

God is saying in the midst of adversity, in the midst of difficulties, in the midst of problems, very Bible says something very interesting. When God, when people's lives please the Lord, even their enemies are at peace with them in Proverbs 16, 7. So God's going to make a table. He actually and I see this a lot because in case you haven't figured it out, I'm not kind of an easygoing preacher.

It kind of talked about the difficult truths. And with that, I draw a lot of criticism, a lot of upset kind of people that hear the messages outside of California mainly. And and but God has brought grace in there.

And he makes he makes a table in the presence of my enemies and there's peace and there's rest there that I have intimate fellowship with Christ. It's not arrogance, it's brokenness, it's humility, seeking the heart of a father. And God saying, I will prepare a table before me in even in the presence of your enemies, oil and a full cup represent the blessings of God.

You anoint my head with oil and my cup runs over. And again, Old Testament, Old Testament imagery, the blessings of God would be represented as a cup flowing over oil, running over the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the power of God. These things are representing that here.

So he's saying the Lord is my shepherd. I'm not fearing I'm not going to have this fear. And that's one of my concerns.

I forgot to read. This is who's leading us today. Who's leading you today? Today's culture or God's principles.

Hollywood or the Holy Spirit, Facebook or his book. Let's just I'll be honest with you, one or the other is directing you. You're either being led by the culture or you're being led by God's standard, by his principles.

You're either being led by the media and all the social influence or you're being led by the word of God. The Bible makes it clear that we cannot serve two masters. We cannot love the world and love God.

We cannot serve the world and serve God. We cannot love two masters who either hate the one and despise the other or be loyal to one and reject the other. And many people I see so many problems because they're trying to love two masters, they love the concept of God, but they love the things of the world more.

And God says, listen, once I become your shepherd, once you truly follow me with all of your heart, these things will happen. Though you walk through the valley of shadow of death means that there will be fear, there will be anxiety. He will lead us.

There's blessings there. There's there's making a table in the presence of his enemy, of our enemy. Surely verse six, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Let me read that again. If the Lord is truly a person's good shepherd, goodness and mercy shall follow him all the days of his life.

He will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. So it begs the question, will you dwell in the house of the Lord forever? Do you truly know him as your shepherd? If I've had time, I would go into, you know, a little bit of my testimony, I've said before to the congregation here that I should be buried in a cemetery in Lancaster. I should be on my fourth marriage or I should be hung over today or I should be OD'd on something.

So when I come up here, it's not some metaphysical concept of maybe there's a God out there, the risen savior, Jesus Christ has radically changed my life. And the Bible talks about this relationship. That's why people are so passionate about it.

They're not weird, fanatical crazies. They've been changed by the power of God. So now they want to express this to others.

Well, Shane, that's your truth. That's not my truth. You realize that truth can't be relative.

Truth cannot be relative. Either all religions are wrong, but they cannot all be right. Think about that.

Every single religion on the planet can all be wrong, but they cannot be right because they all, in some form or another, demand exclusivity. And the Bible, that's where Christianity in the dividing place is that Christ said, and Shane, do you believe the word of God? Of course, I can show it historically, prophetically, archaeologically, scientifically written over 1500 years by 40 different authors on three different continents saying the same thing. That God is redeeming, sinful, fallen man.

And the only redemption is through Christ and Christ alone. That's radically changed my life. Everything's changed.

So in scripture, I read it's not boring. It jumps out, it leaps off the pages. And so begs the question this afternoon, I've got to give another sermon in a few hours and it's going to raise that question again.

Do you truly know him? Is he truly your shepherd? Let me read a few scriptures that you probably aren't going to hear on Christian TV. OK, but I need to read them to you because of the totality of the Bible. Romans 323, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

The pride of your heart has deceived you. The Bible goes always back to the pride of your heart has deceived you. And I remember in Paradise Lost, many of you remember that story, they quote Lucifer as saying, I would rather reign in hell than be a servant in heaven.

Why is that? Because of the pride of our heart has deceived us. See, we can't just take all the scriptures on God's love and his forgiveness and his grace. And as if that's the whole scripture, what is God's love? It has to be balanced with the judgment of God.

God's grace has to be balanced with the holiness of God. God's forgiveness has to be balanced with the judgment of God. It's a totality of scriptures.

Romans 623 says, for the wages of sin is death. For the wages of sin is death. This verse is not popular in many churches, nor is it preached for many pulpits telling others that the punishment for sin is eternal death.

Separation from God is not pleasant. It's not marketable and it's not palatable. But it's powerful.

Because it goes on to say it's the power of God for salvation of everyone who believes. So let's be encouraged very quickly here. Romans 623, it adds, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Romans 5 8 declares, but God demonstrated his own love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Now, I want to just remove the pastor hat off for a minute here. Take off the suit and just talk to you as a real person here.

Do you know how many people hear that verse? You've been hearing that verse for the majority of your life. It's in one ear and it's out the next. It's in one ear and it's out the next.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, blah, blah, blah. Whatever God is saying. Listen, if this is convicting you, if he's drawing you closer to him, if he's drawing you into that intimate relationship with him, today is the day of salvation.

I'm pretty sure I'm not going to talk to about 95 percent of you ever again. So what would you say if you said you've got 20 minutes? And you're not going to see 90 percent of this audience again, what would you say? I'm saying it tonight. I'm saying it.

I'm saying it right now. There is no other name under heaven that saves. There is no other name that God has given that saved.

Jesus says, I am the only way, the only truth, the only life. No man come to the father except through me. Roman says the wages of sin is death.

There's always some distraction when I get on this point. That's OK. Don't worry about it.

The the wages of sin is death. See, and I'm not coming at you as some mean, angry, point finger, hellfire and brimstone preacher. To be honest with you, I wish I could just avoid all of this.

And just pull a Joel Steen sermon out and make everybody feel good. But what happened? The word of God is in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones. You can talk about the love of God all day long, but that will not save a man unless he repents of his sin.

Acts 3:19. What must we do to be saved? Peter said, repent, repent. See, that's another where nobody wants to.

The Hollywood doesn't want to hear that word. The culture doesn't want to hear that word. Shane, don't you dare mention the word repent.

It's right up there with Jesus and hell. All these things we can't talk about anymore. But he says, repent.

All that is, is I'm turning. I was going that direction. Now I know going this direction.

I'm repenting. I'm giving my life, everything to you, everything you died for, everything you gave me. Lord, I'm embracing it.

I'm repenting from my sin. I'm calling on the only name that saves. Lord, I give you everything.

This is my life. That's repenting. You're turning from your sin and you're turning to God.

It's not a bad thing. That's why I don't know why people get so wound up and so upset. It's a good thing.

It would be a very bad thing if I said the wages of sin is death. See y'all in hell. That's bad news.

See you, Kelly. Can you get the door for me real quick, Kelly? I'll get on that one. I'm saying the wages of sin is death.

And you say, Shane, what's the big deal about hell? All hell is, is saying I reject God. I want to live with my other, my father, the enemy. We think of God as this me.

God doesn't put anybody in hell. We put ourselves in there. Do you realize that? A holy, righteous God cannot dwell with sinful, fallen man.

So what did he have to, he sent his son, born of a virgin, died a sinless death, lived a perfect life on the cross, bore the sin of the world on him. That's why he said, Eli, Eli, Lama Zabatchini. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? That point in history, the wrath of God fell upon Jesus Christ.

So it doesn't have to fall upon me. So all I do is repent of my sin, turn over everything over to God and embrace what Christ has already done on the cross. Well, Shane, that sounds pretty silly.

Will you come up with a better plan? Because they've interviewed the top minds in the world who are atheists. And we say, how did life get here? Well, I think we came over on the backs of aliens on crystals. Really, that's all you got.

I was talking with Kelly's sons earlier in the week. And it amazes me that the sun is just the right distance from the earth. If it was, do you realize if it was a little closer, we would be a volcano? A little further, we'd be an iceberg.

Let's not even talk about the nitrogen or oxygen balance there or that sustains life. All the different things that need to happen in order for life to exist. All that just happened.

The sun comes up, right? The moon comes right down. The gravitational pull, the ocean. Let's not even talk about the DNA, the molecular structure of the human body.

I have a background in health and fitness. It blew my mind. I said, there's got to be a God.

There's got to be creator. Things we can't even see are so designed. That's why they call it there's a designer.

There's creation. So if there's a creation, it begs the question, who's the creator? And then who's the creator says, here's how I want you to live your life. Here's how you're bridging that gap.

And you want to know one of the reasons why I know that this is true, because you can take any other religion in the world just about and they'll say, here's how you become good and here's how you do this. Nobody gets upset. But when I come up here and I say, Jesus Christ is the only way, the only truth, the only life.

We need to repent of our sin and turn from him. That upsets a lot of people. Why? Because it's a spiritual battle.

We wrestle not against flesh and blood. Our battle is spiritual. And man without God is in a state of death and decay and he's dying.

And without Christ, there's no hope. So I don't get really upset or worked up at this. I think there's so much I could almost leap for joy and say, listen, embrace Christ, turn to him to what I'm saying.

How do I know? Ask God, Lord, I want you. Are you out there? You please show me. I don't know.

This guy's a little high strung for me. But when you leave here, just ask, Lord, if you're out there, I want to know you. I want to know you in the power of your resurrection.

I want to know you in the fellowship of a suffering. The Bible says if you seek me with all of your heart, you will find me. The problem is people don't want to seek God with all their heart.

Why? Because I have to give up the so-called good life. Oh, I've interviewed hundreds and hundreds of people. A lot of it boils down to that.

I have to give up this and we love our sin too much. We love our sin more than Christ. And that's the final appeal for today.

You do not want to live with your life with a question mark here. Do you realize that? I'll never see many of you in about 30 minutes ever again. This is it.

And this has radically changed my life, it's changed millions of people's lives, once pride of your heart is released and humility takes place and we repent of our sin. I believe that we would see a great awakening in this nation if these difficult truths were again brought to the surface. There's a judgment coming, but there's a redeemer.

Do you have a relationship with him? You cannot live your life with a question mark here. So, as I said at the beginning, I'll say again, if this message upsets you. You need to hear this.

You need to hear this. This isn't some mean, arrogant pastor. This is a broken, humble guy that needs Christ every day of my life trying to work.

I'm a prideful man actually working on humility by the grace of God. And you must turn to him if you really want to know him. None of the superficial stuff.

I'm a good person. When we stand before God, he's not going to say, were you a good person? It won't even come up. It won't even come up.

We either hear well done now, good and faithful servant or depart from me, I never knew you. Those are options. There's no well, I'm a good salesman.

Let me just talk, you know, you'll probably fall in your face before a holy, righteous God and won't even be able to speak. Let's say not were you a good person, but what did you do with my son? I provided the way of escape. Not only does the word of God testify it.

Not only am I testifying with my testimony, not only does creation scream creator. But the conviction of your own heart, that's why people get upset. Conviction, the Holy Spirit, God is convicting and drawing that heartfelt, hard heart.

And I'm just concerned that many people go through life with relationship. I've been a good person. I go to this type of church.

I've been baptized in the church. They said, I'm good. I'm good to go.

Well, how are you with God? Don't call the man upstairs because the Bible calls him a holy, righteous God. We have to make sure, are we good? Are we truly do we truly know the good shepherd? And that's really the whole point of this message. There's a couple of scriptures that talk about when you hear God's voice, heart and not your heart.

Three times in the book of Hebrews say when you hear God's voice, heart and not your heart, when you hear God's voice, heart, not your heart, because you know what happens? You can become spiritually deaf and push that away. And that calling, that conviction of God can be quenched and can be green. So I just encourage you.

A lot of you have long rides home. Some of you are local, but just pray, Lord, is that are you speaking to me through that message? Is he drawing you back? Is God drawing you back? Should be very encouraging. It's God drawing you back to him, the prodigal son, the wayward daughter.

No matter what you've been, no matter what you've done, no matter what you've been through. Trust me, my list of sins is just as long as yours. I'm pretty sure of that.

He just says, come, come all of her weak and heavy laden and I will give you rest. We've got to take that step. It doesn't happen on its own.

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