



"Though I Walk Through the Valley"

Psalm 23 (NKJV)

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. 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."

There is no other Scripture that has been used more at funerals and grave sides than this one single verse. It arouses deep emotion within us, and it is a source of deep and abiding comfort.

May that be true today.

I. The Place of the Valley

He has talked about the green pastures, still waters, treacherous mountains, now...."The Valley of the Shadow of Death"

The "paths of right" do not protect us from the valley,

The Shepherd would lead the sheep through this valley in order to reach the summit. Sometimes it would be a gradual climb, and the shepherd had to beware of avalanches, rock slides, poisonous plants, predators that raid the flock, and the storms of sleet, hail and other adverse conditions.

But notice this was not the valley of death....but a shadow.

Shadows have always covered the narrow gorges through which the Shepherd and sheep must past. Mountains and rocks are on each side, and the light is blocked by their substance.

When you have a shadow, you must have two things...a substance and a light.

It is the light shining on the substance that casts a shadow.

A shadow of a dog cannot bite, the shadow of a sword cannot kill, and the shadow of death cannot harm the child of God.

The word in Hebrew is difficult, because it appears to be two words joined together - **"shadow"** (to be dark, to grow dark) and **"death."** It could be rendered "deathly darkness," or "darkness to death," or even "deep darkness." Times of darkness.

II. His Person in the Valley

There is someone in the valley who causes the sheep “not to fear.” It is the same Lord who leads us through the depression of dark gloom.

Notice the change of pronouns here. Up to this point in the Psalm the sheep have been the subject of attention, now, it turns to address the shepherd directly. The personal pronouns “I” and “you” enter the conversation. It becomes a most intimate discourse of deep affection.

He never took his flock where he had not already been before.

So, he’s been there.

Remember the name of God – **Jehovah-Shammah**.

We see it in **Ezekiel 48: 35...**

“All the way around shall be eighteen thousand cubits;
and the name of the city from that day shall be: **THE LORD IS THERE.**”

That is the last verse of Ezekiel speaking of that electrical city of God.

“The Lord is there.”

The Lord has been here, He is here, and He is there. All three tenses describe the Omnipresent God.

Whether it is in the midnight hour of hearing a bunny in the bush or the touch of the Shepherd’s hand raising us from the depression in which we have fallen, the presence of the Shepherd chases away all fears.

“You are with me.”

The Shepherd is present. He is no longer ahead leading, but beside us to cheer us and escort us.

Matthew 1:23 - “Immanuel” - God with us.

Hebrews 13:5-6 “For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we may boldly say: “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”

But, it is the Lord who leads us through that depression of dark gloom (dark as death.)

A. He is with us in the Trials

Kyle Yates said in a book 1953 that the Psalmist is not referring primarily to the moment of death in this verse, for there are far more heart-rendering moments in life than the moment when Jesus comes to take us home.”

Phillip Keller points out that this is the seasonal passage from the lowlands, where sheep spend the winter, through the valleys to the high pastures, where they go for the summer.

The valley is a place of transition – not a place of settling. You pass “through” the valley.

There are things worse than death for a child of God.

But the same Shepherd who has led me to the still waters and green pastures will safely lead me through the rough terrain and treacherous mountains.

Isaiah 43:1-3

**“But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel:
“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers,
they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned,
Nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the Lord your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior...”**

This passage is as necessary as the green pastures and still waters.

God gives us “valleys” for it is there we learn His presence and power.

II Corinthians 12:9 “My grace is sufficient for thee.”

B. He is with us in the Tomb

While most believe the Psalmist is not referring to an actual death here, there is nothing wrong with connecting the “valley” as that of death.

For the great news of the Gospel is that Jesus is not only the one who is with us in our trails, He has gone with us through them, He is also the one who has already tasted death for us and has promised “not to leave us or forsake us.”

He’s already been there.

Charles Spurgeon said:

**“The shadow of death is a blessed privilege to every true believer.
For death shall be to him no death at all, but a very deliverance from death,
from all pains, cares, and sorrows, miseries and wretchedness of this world,
and the very entry into rest, a beginning of everlasting joy;
a tasting of heavenly pleasures, so great, that neither tongue is able to express,
neither eye to see, nor ears to hear them, nor any earthly man’s heart to conceive them.”**

Spurgeon went on to say...

"Someone has said that when there is a shadow there must be light somewhere, and so there is. Death stands by the side of the highway in which we have to travel, and the light of heaven shining upon him throws a shadow across the path; let us then rejoice that there is a light beyond. Nobody is afraid of a shadow, for a shadow cannot stop a man's pathway even for a moment."

A medical missionary came to the end of life's journey.
He had served the Lord for many years and was dying of leukemia.
Being a doctor he knew just how far the disease had progressed,
knew just how long he had life to live.
He wrote a letter to the circle of churches with which he had fellowshiped for many years.
'Brethren, David speaks of the valley of the shadow of death.
I have now come to that valley, but I find no shadows there. On the contrary,
I have found that the path of the just is as a shining light that shineth more
and more unto the perfect day.'"

He is there to "walk us through the valley."

Tough times, and even death, are not "dead ends," but we can "walk through the valley."

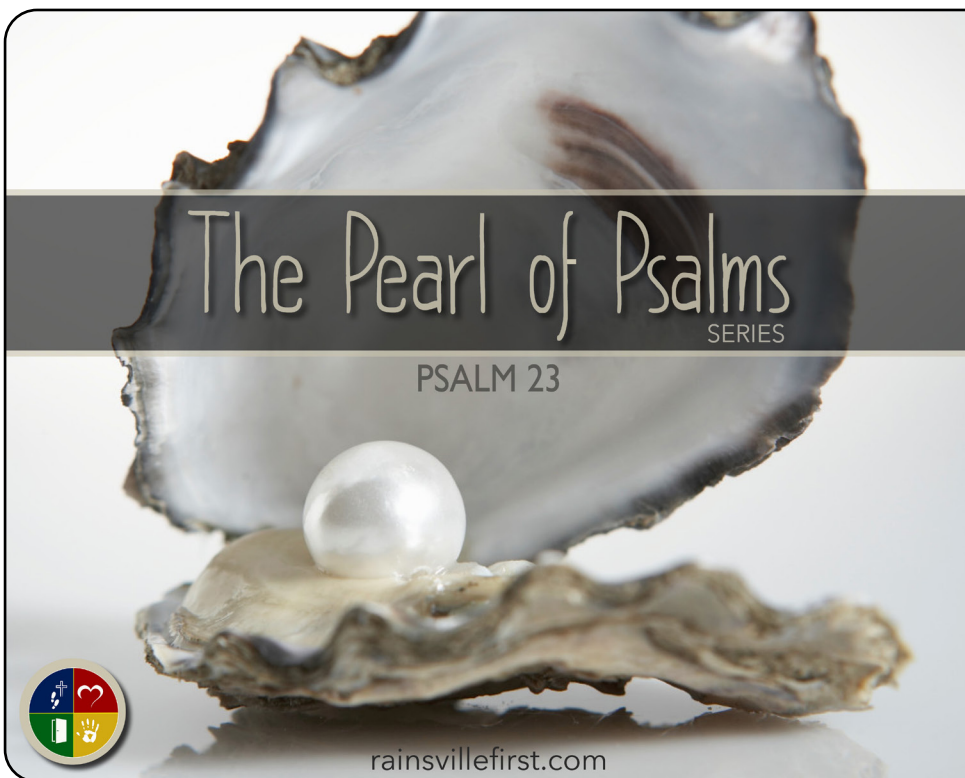
We will make it to the other side.

Jesus told His disciples to get in the boat and "Go to the other side." A storm came up and they thought they were going to perish, but if they had just remembered....You are going to the other side, they would have realized there was no way that storm was going to take them out.

Oh, the personal joy of knowing this comforting presence. To have walked with Him through some very difficult and dark days and to find His presence is there to cheer us.

After the funeral service of his first wife, the late Donald Grey Barnhouse, distinguished pastor of the Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, was thinking about how he could convey to his young children the loss of their mother. As he tried to conjure up words of comfort, the shadow of a large van passed over their car as they were driving down the highway. Instantly, Barnhouse thought of the words needed for the moment. "Children," he asked, "would you rather be run over by a truck, or by its shadow?" The children quickly answered, "Well, of course, Dad, we'd much rather be run over by its shadow! The shadow cannot hurt us."

Then Barnhouse, the master illustrator, replied, "The truck of death ran over the Lord Jesus two thousand years ago so that only its shadow now passes over us. This is all that has happened to your mother. Only the shadow of death has passed over her. She is unharmed in heaven."



SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 2019

September 15th

"THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD"

September 22nd

"I SHALL NOT WANT"

September 29th

"HE MAKES ME LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES"

October 6th

"HE LEADS ME BESIDE STILL WATERS"

October 13th

"HE RESTORES MY SOUL"

October 20th

"HE LEADS ME IN THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS"

November 10th

"THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY"

November 17th

"YOUR ROD AND YOUR STAFF THEY COMFORT ME"

November 24th

"YOU PREPARE A TABLE BEFORE ME
IN THE PRESENCE OF MY ENEMIES"

December 1st

"YOU ANOINT MY HEAD WITH OIL; MY CUP RUNS OVER"

December 15th

"SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME"

December 22nd

"AND I WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER"

December 29th

"THE LORD'S SUPPER"