

XXIII. THE BLESSINGS AND BENEFITS OF HAVING CHRIST AS YOUR SHEPHERD: Psalm 23

INTRODUCTION/CON(TEXT). Psalm 23 is all about the blessings and benefits of having Jesus Christ as your Shepherd. Look at the beginning of this song. *A Psalm of David* **Psalm 23:1a** "The Lord is my shepherd..."

DOCTRINE. Christ's sheep are benefitted and blessed beyond measure both now and forever.

This is a recurring theme in the Bible. The Scriptures speak of sheep 176 times, of lambs 164 times, and of shepherds 80 times.

CLARIFICATION. Christ's sheep are immensely blessed by His grace in this life and the life to come, but not everyone is one of Christ's sheep. Jesus looked at the apostate Jews who refused to believe in Him and said, "you are not among my sheep" (**John 10:26**). In **Matthew 25:31-33** Christ says, "31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left." So, you see, not everyone is one of Christ's sheep. Christ is not everyone's shepherd.

QUESTION. Is the Lord Jesus Christ your Shepherd? Are you one of Christ's sheep?

Q. How do I know that Jesus is my Shepherd?

ANSWER 1. You trust Christ Himself and what He has done on the cross to cleanse you from your sins.

- **John 10:11** "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."
 - Your faith is in Christ alone for salvation. He lived without sin to count you righteous; He died for sin to forgive you; He arose from death to eternal life to be your Savior and King.

If Christ died for you, so that you would be forgiven, then He is your Shepherd—you can only know you are forgiven if you are trusting NOT

in your prayer, not in your works, not in your baptism, not in your obedience, but IN HIS BLOOD alone!

ANSWER 2. You listen to His voice in the scriptures and you follow Him.

- **John 10:27** "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

BOYS AND GIRLS, *listen...*

If your faith is in Jesus to cleanse you from sin, your devotion will be to Him to walk away from sin! His sheep listen to His voice and they follow Him. If you do not follow Him, He is not your shepherd!

CONCLUSION OF INTRODUCTION.

Is your faith in Jesus to save you? Is your obedience to Jesus to lead you? Then He is surely your Shepherd!

TRANSITION/OUTLINE. Now look with me at the rest of this Psalm and see all the blessings Christ's sheep have according to His tender love and mercy! There are at least EIGHT blessings and benefits of being one of Christ's sheep.

If Christ is your Shepherd...

I. CHRIST WILL PROVIDE EVERYTHING YOU NEED (Psalm 23:1b).

Psalm 23:1b "I shall not want."

- **Isaiah 40:11** "He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young."
- **Romans 8:32** "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"

See how truly poor is the one who does not have Christ as their Shepherd!

Money will fly away,

beauty is vain and fleeting,

worldly comforts can be ripped from your hands at a moments notice, the opinions of man may turn against you and destroy your reputation tomorrow;

but the one whom Christ buys and provides for never lacks anything they need for life and godliness!

- **WILLIAM PLUMER:** "How can the saints want? The Lord will give them

every good thing, "every good cross, every good comfort," every needed chastisement, every needed supply, all timely lessons, all good deliverances."

If Christ is your Shepherd...

II. HE WILL GIVE YOU REST AND NOURISHMENT (Psalm 23:2).

Psalm 23:2 "He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters."

- **Ezekiel 34:15** "I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God."

Q. How does the LORD ordinarily give rest and comfort?

- A1.** Through worship! Private, family, and public.
- A2.** Through Scripture hearing and reading.
- A3.** Through prayer and meditation.
- A4.** Through encouragement from others (Christian fellowship).

If Christ is your Shepherd...

III. HE WILL NEVER ABANDON YOU WHEN YOU WANDER; HE WILL BRING YOU BACK WHEN YOU GO ASTRAY (Psalm 23:3a).

Psalm 23:3a "He restores (*returns; brings back*) my soul."

- **CALVIN:** "As it is the duty of a good shepherd to cherish his sheep, and when they are diseased or weak to nurse and support them, David declares that this was the manner in which he was treated by God."
 - **Matthew 18:12** "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray?"
 - **Jeremiah 50:19** "I will restore Israel to his pasture, and he shall feed...and his desire shall be satisfied..."

Q. How many times have you gone through periods of backsliding in your life, and yet the Lord has graciously revived, restored, brought you back, again?

If Christ is your Shepherd...

IV. HE WILL DIRECT YOUR PATHS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR HIS GLORY (Psalm 23:3b).

Psalm 23:3b "He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

- **John 10:27** "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

- **1 Peter 2:25** "For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."

BOYS AND GIRLS: Jesus is not only a Savior to forgive us, He is also a Shepherd to guide us—He speaks to you in the Bible! Listen!

If Christ is your Shepherd...

V. HE WILL BE WITH YOU WHEN YOU SUFFER, COMFORTING YOU SO THAT YOU MAY FEAR NO EVIL (Psalm 23:4).

Psalm 23:4 "Even 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."

- **STAFF. WATSON.** "By staff is meant, metaphorically, the staff of God's support, 'Your staff comforts me.' God's providence is a wing to cover the saints. It is a breast to feed them, and a staff to uphold them. ... The saints always have the staff of divine protection. God secretly preserves them and sets an invisible guard about them. ... Your staff of support and glorious providence is always with me. It comforts me."
 - **ROD. WATSON.** "God's rod, His afflicting rod upon His people, yields matter of comfort to us. "Your rod comforts me." This, I confess, seems strange to flesh and blood; it is a paradox. ... How can there be comfort, from the rod? I shall show you that there is much consolation gathered out of correction."
 - **John 10:12-13** "12 He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep."
 - **John 10:27** "I give [my sheep] eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."
 - **RQ1. When was the last time you were in the valley of the shadow of death?** Jesus was there with you. Christ was providentially preserving you, even if it was the Rod that was laid to your back.
 - **RQ2. When will you walk through the valley of the shadow of death next?** I do not know when, but I know Christ will be there to comfort you!

It may be the rod of affliction or it may be the staff of protection, but both are a comfort to Christ's sheep.

If Christ is your Shepherd...

VI. HE WILL PROTECT YOU FROM ALL YOUR ENEMIES AND BLESS YOU AT HIS TABLE (Psalm 23:5).

Psalm 23:5 "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you

anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows."

- **2 Cor. 6:8-10** "8b We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; 9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything."
- **Luke 21:17-18** "17 You will be hated by all for my name's sake. 18 But not a hair of your head will perish."

USE FOR ENCOURAGEMENT

Who cares that the world hates you if Christ loves you?

What does it matter if you have great enemies if your Redeemer prepares a banquet table before their scoffing eyes?

So what if the wicked fill up a cup of condemnation? Christ has filled up the cup of salvation!

Who cares if the unrighteous try to hard you with slander and false accusations when Christ aims to bless you with favor and benedictions?

So what if the world throws garbage at you? Christ anoints your head with oil!

USE FOR EXAMINATION

Q. Do you care more about Christ's enemies anger at you than your Redeemer's delight in you? May it not be so!

USE FOR EXHORTATION

Say this to yourself frequently:

If Christ smiles at me, it does not matter who frowns!

If Christ is your Shepherd...

VII. HE WILL CHASE YOU DOWN WITH LOVING KINDNESS UNTIL YOU DIE (Psalm 23:6a).

Psalm 23:6a "Surely goodness and mercy (*lovingkindness*) shall follow me all the days of my life,"

BOYS AND GIRLS: Jesus is faster than you, He is in better shape, and He is more skilled at hide and seek. ***If you trust in Jesus***, He will chase you down with His goodness and lovingkindness the days of all your life!

If Christ is your Shepherd...

VIII. HE WILL HAVE YOU REIGN WITH HIM FOREVER (Psalm 23:6b).

Psalm 23:6b "and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

- **Revelation 5:10** "You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,

and they shall reign on the earth."

- **Revelation 22:5** "They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever."
- **1 Peter 5:4** "When the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."

We Christians have the right to the Lord's House now but we do not dwell there. One day we will take hold of our right that Christ bought for us, and we will reign with Him forever and ever.

CONCLUSION.

(i) UNBELIEVERS.

Do you not want Christ as your Shepherd? Turn from your sin and embrace Christ in faith. He will receive you and become your Shepherd.

(ii) BELIEVERS.

Hold up and hold on.

Conquer with and like Christ.

Build for His Kingdom and glory.

Mortify the flesh.

Walk in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Do not grow fainthearted in the valley of the shadow of death.

Christ wins and we get to win with Him.

THREE CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS

MEMORIZE THIS PSALM! (**WHOLE FAMILY**) **BOYS AND GIRLS**

SING THIS PSALM!

LIVE BY THIS PSALM!

Hebrews 13:20-21 "20 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, 21 equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Big-Picture / Introductory Questions

1. The sermon states the main doctrine of Psalm 23: *"Christ's sheep are benefited and blessed beyond measure, both now and forever."* How does this single truth summarize the entire psalm?
2. Why does the preacher emphasize that **not everyone** has Jesus as their Shepherd? What two Bible passages does he use to support this, and what do they teach?
3. The sermon gives two simple tests for knowing you are one of Christ's sheep (John 10). What are they? Why does the preacher say both are necessary?

Section 1: How to Know You Are One of Christ's Sheep

1. What does it mean to "trust in Christ alone for salvation"? Why is it dangerous to trust in a prayer, baptism, works, or obedience instead?
2. The second test is: "My sheep hear my voice and they follow me" (John 10:27). What does "following" look like practically? How does the sermon balance faith alone with the necessity of obedience?
3. The preacher warns that someone who claims faith but does not aim to obey is a liar, and someone who tries to obey but does not rest in Christ's blood alone is also a liar. Why must both be true?

Section 2: The Eight Blessings of Christ's Sheep

1. **Blessing 1 – Provision** ("I shall not want"): What does this promise mean? How should it affect a Christian who has very little money or resources?
2. **Blessing 2 – Rest and Nourishment**: What are the four ordinary means the Lord uses to give spiritual rest? Which one do you need to strengthen most right now?
3. **Blessing 3 – Restoration of the Soul**: Share a time when you experienced the Lord restoring your soul after backsliding. How does the parable of the lost sheep (Matthew 18) encourage believers who wander?
4. **Blessing 4 – Leading in Paths of Righteousness**: Why does the sermon say Jesus is both Savior *and* King/Leader? How does this apply to everyday decisions?
5. **Blessing 5 – Presence in Suffering**: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me." What is the difference between Christ *permitting* suffering and Christ *sending* suffering? How should the rod and staff comfort us?
6. **Blessing 6 – Protection and Blessing Before Enemies**: What does the prepared table in the presence of enemies picture? How can the statement "If Christ smiles at me, it does not matter who frowns" help when facing opposition?

7. **Blessing 7 – Goodness and Mercy Following All Days:** How does the image change from us following the Shepherd to the Shepherd chasing us? What does this teach about God's pursuing love?
8. **Blessing 8 – Dwelling in the House of the Lord Forever:** How do the New Testament passages (Revelation 5:10, 22:5; 1 Peter 5:4) expand on this promise?

Personal Application & Self-Examination

1. Can you confidently say, "The Lord is *my* Shepherd"? Use the two tests from the sermon to examine your own heart.
2. Which of the eight blessings do you need most to remember right now, and why?
3. The sermon challenges believers to "conquer with Christ and like Christ." What is one area of your life where you need to mortify the flesh and walk in paths of righteousness?

Group / Church Application & Prayer

1. How can our group/church better function as sheep who listen to the Shepherd's voice and follow him together?
2. The preacher gives three final exhortations: memorize Psalm 23, sing it, and live by it. Pick one and share a practical plan for doing it this week.
3. Close your discussion by praying through the sermon's closing prayer, asking God to save those who are not yet his sheep and to sanctify those who are.

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Well, Psalm 23 is all about the blessings and benefits of having Jesus Christ as your shepherd. The blessings and benefits of having Jesus Christ as your shepherd. Look at the beginning of this psalm in your own Bible. A psalm of David. So David is the author who was himself a shepherd before his ascendancy to king, but he was a shepherd. And so he uses this metaphor of the Lord's relationship with his people. And he uses it in a way that is very familiar to him and would be very familiar to those who would first sing this song in ancient old covenant Israel. And even for us, we do not see shepherds. We do not see them in the fields. But if you grew up in church, you are probably just really familiar with that metaphor. And it is because it is a recurring theme in the Bible. The scriptures speak of sheep 176 times in the scripture, of lambs 164 times, and of shepherds the Bible speaks 80 times. So it is a recurring theme in the scripture about shepherds and sheep. Sometimes the Lord is the shepherd. Sometimes the king in the old

covenant Israel is seen as a shepherd who is supposed to tend to the sheep, the citizens in his kingdom. Sometimes pastors or where we get our very word pastor that means shepherd. So the head human authorities in the local church are shepherds. So it is all throughout the scriptures. But the best use of that metaphor is here in Psalm 23. It is not the pastors of the church are my shepherd. It is not the president of the United States is my shepherd. It is the Lord Jesus Christ is my shepherd. He is my shepherd. He is responsible for me. I belong to him. He belongs to me. So the doctrine of this psalm is simply this. Christ's sheep are benefited and blessed beyond measure. Both now and forever, Christ's sheep are benefited and blessed beyond measure. Both now and forever. That is this whole psalm. As you heard Pastor Brandon read through it, it is just all of these blessings that David is sure of and that are certain for us as well if we belong to Jesus. The blessings and benefits. But you need to know this at the outset. Not everyone belongs to Christ. Christ is not everyone's shepherd. Christ is not the shepherd of everyone indiscriminately in some way that in the same way that he is the creator of everyone indiscriminately. He is the king of everyone indiscriminately. Some people do not submit to him as king, but he is still their king, but it is not the same as the shepherd. Christ is only the shepherd of those who belong to him through faith. Jesus, here is a couple of examples. Jesus looked at the apostate Jews who refused to believe in him and said, "You are not among my sheep. You are not one of my sheep." John 10:26. Then in Matthew 25:31-33, Christ says, "When the Son of Man comes in glory, speaking of the second coming, the great judgment, we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." 2 Corinthians 5 tells us Jesus is speaking of the second coming. When the Son of Man, that is Jesus, comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right but the goats on his left. Not everyone is one of Christ's sheep. So the question that we need to answer that is before us before we get to the blessings and benefits of Psalm 23. We need to answer how can I know that I am one of Christ's sheep? Or another way you can ask it is, how can I with confidence say that first little clause in Psalm 23 upon which everything else in the psalm is dependent? The Lord is my shepherd. I want to just ask you to examine yourself. Can you say that with certainty, with confidence? Not just the Lord is a shepherd or the Lord is the shepherd of his people, but look at the confidence David has. David could say, "The Lord is my shepherd. That is why I will lack nothing. That is why I get all these blessings and benefits. Not because me, not because Jesus is a savior." He is saying Jesus is my savior. He is my shepherd. So, how can I be sure that the Lord Jesus Christ is my shepherd? Here is I want to give you two simple answers. First, you trust in Christ himself and what he has done on the cross to cleanse you from your sins. It is as simple as that. How do you know you belong to Christ? You are one of his sheep. It is another way of saying, "How do you know you are actually a Christian?" Oh, your faith is in Christ alone and what he has done on the cross to cleanse you from your sins. Jesus says in John 10, I am the

good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the what? For the what? Sheep. So the ones he lays down his life for are his sheep. How do I know Jesus laid down his life for me? You trust and rest in him alone for salvation as he has offered to you in the gospel. You trust that his death was in your place to forgive you of your sins. So there is the first one. I am the good shepherd. Christ says the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. So your faith is in Christ alone for salvation. That is how you know you are one of Christ's sheep. If Christ died for you so that you would be forgiven, then he is your shepherd. You can only know you are forgiven and you are one of Christ's sheep if you are trusting not in a prayer that you have prayed, not in your works, not in your baptism, not in your obedience, but in Christ's blood alone. If your faith is in Christ alone for salvation, well, there you go. That is how you know you are one of his sheep. But there is a second answer and it is also in John 10. And this is the one that makes reformed Christians more uncomfortable because they cannot stand anyone to ever say your obedience is actually indicative of whether or not you are a Christian. Like no, no, no. It is faith alone. Yeah. And that faith will result in wanting to obey Jesus. Listen to this. John 10:27. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. John 10:27, "My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me." The metaphor for following is just like a shepherd. The shepherd leads, the sheep follow the shepherd. And he is saying, "I am the shepherd. You can know someone is one of my sheep if they are following me." Which simply means what Jesus says we should believe and what Jesus says we should do. That is what we are aiming for. That is where we are going. We are not going, I am going to go my own way. I am really thankful Jesus has died for my sins so that I can live however I want. If that is you, you are not a Christian. His sheep hear his voice. He knows them and they follow him. Jesus saves us from the penalty of sin through his cross. He saves us from the power of sin through his resurrection and through him making us alive. And so we desire to obey Jesus. What Jesus says I should believe, that is what I want to believe. What Jesus says I should do, that is what I want to do. None of us does it perfectly. We all stumble in many ways, but we are following after Jesus. So, how do I know that Jesus is my shepherd? You trust him alone for salvation, and you follow him. If you say, "I have faith in Christ for salvation, but you do not aim and labor to obey to follow Jesus," you are a liar. If you aim to obey and follow Jesus, but you are not resting and trusting in his blood alone for salvation, you are a liar. We have to rest, trust in him alone for salvation. And that results in a desire by the power of the Spirit that we want to obey and glorify Jesus. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Christ says there is the cross. John 10:27, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them. They follow me." He is saying, "If you do not follow me, it is evident you are not one of my sheep." If your faith is in Jesus to cleanse you from sin, your devotion will be to him to walk away from sin and towards Christ. His sheep listen to his voice. If you do not follow him, that is revealing he is not your shepherd. But believers, it is as simple as that. How do I know I belong to Christ? How can I know? I could say with David, the Lord is my shepherd. You trust in him

alone for salvation and you want to obey him. If your faith is in Jesus to save you and your obedience is aimed at Jesus to lead you, though you stumble in many ways, as we all do, then he is surely your shepherd. And you can say with David, "The Lord is my shepherd." Now look with me at the rest of this psalm and see all the blessings Christ's sheep have according to his love and mercy. There are at least eight blessings and benefits that come with being one of Christ's sheep. The Lord is my shepherd. And then eight things that result or that come from that. If Christ is your shepherd. So all these things I present to you begin with if Christ is your shepherd then this is true. Okay? So you take notes if Christ is your shepherd. And then you do not have to write that every single time, but you need to know that that is a prerequisite for all of this. If Christ is not your shepherd, none of these things are true for you. But if Christ is your shepherd through simple faith, then all these things are true for you. Look what he says first. I shall not want. That means I shall not lack anything that I need. Want in the old sense of the word, it does not mean I will not have any desires. I will not want anything. It means I will not lack anything that I need to enjoy and glorify the Lord. This is what the truth is. If Christ is your shepherd, first he will provide everything you need. He will provide everything you need. The way the Apostle Peter puts it is he has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. Meaning, he is not going to give you everything you desire. He is not going to give you everything you want. He is not going to give you everything you wish you could have in this life. But he is going to give you everything you need in order to love him and live for his glory. Some of you may have very little monetarily speaking in this life, but he has providentially chosen to give you that portion and you are charged and equipped to use it for the glory of the Lord. To some he may give you an extreme abundance and you are charged and equipped to use that for the glory of the Lord. But David can confidently say when he is on a throne or he is hiding in a cave from his enemies who want to kill him, "The Lord is my shepherd. I have got everything I need for everlasting joy. I have got everything I need in order to love the Lord and to glorify him. Christ will provide everything you need. Isaiah 40:11. He will tend his flock like a shepherd. He will gather the lambs in his arms. He will carry them in his bosom and gently lead those that are with young. Romans 8:32. He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" Believers, for some of you, you just need to maybe be corrected, maybe rebuked, maybe reprov'd, and hear that whatever you have got, if you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ through faith, you have everything you need in order to love God and glorify him. If the Lord is your shepherd, you got everything you need. His providence chooses to give some less, some more, some great talents, some hundredfold, some tenfold. But you have got everything you need, the giftings you need, the church that you need, the friends that you need. You have got everything you need to glorify and enjoy the Lord. The question is, will I be faithful with what the Lord has given me? Will you be faithful with what the Lord has given you? See also how truly poor the one is who does not have Christ as their shepherd. Money will fly away. Beauty is vain and fleeting. Worldly comforts can

be ripped from your hands at a moment's notice. The opinions of men may turn against you and destroy your reputation tomorrow. But the one who can say the reason I have all I need is because Christ is my shepherd, they never lack anything they need for life and godliness. William Plumer said, "How can the saints lack anything? The Lord will give them every good thing, every good cross, every good comfort, every needed chastisement, every needed supply, all timely lessons, all good deliverances." Christ will provide everything you need for life and godliness if he is your shepherd. Second, if Christ is your shepherd, he will give you rest and nourishment. He will give you rest and nourishment. Look at verse two in Psalm 23. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. This is the picture of a shepherd giving nourishment, green pastures, and rest to the sheep that he leads. He makes me lie down in green pastures. I can just lie there and rest. I do not have to worry about the wolves. I do not have to worry about danger because the Lord is my shepherd. I can just lie down and rest. He leads me beside not tumultuous waters that are dangerous to get near to take a drink, but still waters. I have all I need for nourishment, for rest. That is the metaphor that David uses. Like a lamb that can lay down without fear of anything. Like a little lamb who can approach the water's bank without worrying about getting sucked into the river. No, I can lie down in green pastures. And he leads me beside still waters. This is obviously not just a physical promise like you are going to get really good sleep every night. It is deeper than that. It is even better than that. It is you are going to have the deep spiritual rest and nourishment that you and I so desperately need. Peace of conscience. Peace knowing that God has reconciled himself to me. God is not mad at me, though I do things every day that deserve to have him very angry with me. But because Christ is my shepherd, he has forgiven me of my sin. He has reckoned me righteous. He gives me rest and nourishment. Ezekiel 34:15 says, "I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord." Same thing, they get to lay down because I will protect them. I give them rest and nourishment. So, let me just ask quickly and give you a few things to think about. How does the Lord ordinarily give this rest and spiritual nourishment to his people that David says he gets? It is very simple. Four things. Through worship first, and I am lumping in private, family, and public worship together. Through worship does the Lord give spiritual rest and nourishment. Secondly through scripture. Through the scripture hearing and reading. Hearing primarily, reading yourself secondarily. The means of God using the scriptures are primarily delivered through the proclamation, the explanation, the application of his word by those who have been gifted to preach the word. But reading on your own secondarily also is a means by which God gives us rest and nourishment. Thirdly through prayer and meditation. Through prayer and meditation praying back the scriptures even meditating on the truths revealed in God's word. Then fourthly, how does the Lord ordinarily give rest and nourishment? Fourthly, through encouragement from other Christians. Through reminding you of your duty or God's promises to you in Christ, reminding you when you are in a dark season of a precious promise that will get your face up and get

your eyes up to Christ. Reminding you when you are being prideful that you are clay and Christ is the potter so that we are humbled as we should be but through encouragement from others from other Christians. These are the ordinary ways that God builds up and gives us blessings with this rest and nourishment through worship through the scriptures through prayer and meditation and through Christian fellowship. He will give you rest and nourishment if you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. Thirdly, look at the first part of verse three. David writes in this psalm, he restores my soul. Now, the word restores there, it really means he returns or he brings back my soul. It is not restore in the sense of like you bought a 57 Ford and you restored it. It is restored in the sense of someone has been restored to fellowship with your family who was once outside. Something like that. It is a restoration of a positive and peaceful relationship, not a restoration of an old car, something like that. So it is not vague. We could say it like he helps me repent. He will not abandon me to keep going even when I backslide. So here is the truth that you should learn from the first part of verse three. If Christ is your shepherd, he will never abandon you when you wander. He will bring you back when you go astray. That is what he means by he restores my soul. He returns. He brings back my soul. When I have backslidden, David is saying the Lord brings me back. He does not watch me backslide. He does not watch me cool off in my zeal and just say, "Idiot."

But he helps me repent. He brings me back. He restores me. He returns me. He will never abandon you when you wander away. He will bring you back when you go astray. If Christ is your shepherd, you will never totally and finally fall away from Christ. Through your own negligence of the ordinary means of grace, through your own peace treaties with that which is sinful, you can go through periods of an unbelievable lack of assurance. You can go through periods of terrible backsliding. But if you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, he will leave the 99 to go after the one, and he will bring you back. He will not allow you to finally fall away. That is what David is saying. He restores my soul. He returns my soul. He brings back my soul. Calvin said, "As it is the duty of a good shepherd to cherish his sheep and when they are diseased or weak to nurse and support them." David declares that this was the manner in which he was treated by God. Meaning Christ's heart towards you Christian even in a state of sin backsliding even in a state of neglecting the ordinary means of grace that you know better than to do that even in those states Christ is not looking at you in anger Christ is looking at you with tender pity like you are sick and he will nurse you back he will bring you back. He restores my soul. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the 99 on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? Matthew 18:12.

Beloved, how many times have you gone through periods of backsliding in your life?

Whether it be making peace with some sin or it be neglect of the simple ordinary means of grace that you and I all know better than to do a lot. Most of the time they go hand in hand. Bunyan said prayer will choke out sin or sin will choke out

prayer. A lot of times those things go hand in hand and neglect of the ordinary means of grace leads to making peace with sin for a time and finding yourself cold, unaffected. How many times has that happened to you and then graciously you are restored? It does not last forever. The darkness lifts. You see Christ's face more clearly than you did in that period of darkness and backsliding. Beloved, that is because if Jesus Christ is your shepherd, he will never abandon you when you wander away. He will bring you back when you go astray. Christ paid too high of a price to let you finally fall away. He will restore your soul. Fourthly, look at the second part of verse three. He says, "He leads me in paths of righteousness for what purpose? For his name's sake, for his glory. He leads me in paths of righteousness." This is simply he leads me to be diligent to obey God's moral law as revealed in the ten commandments. That is what paths of righteousness are to walk according to the commandments through faith in Christ Jesus your savior. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. So here is the truth. If Christ is your shepherd, he will direct your paths in righteousness for his glory. That is what for his name's sake means, for his glory. So he will be magnified as we are enabled by him and led by him to walk in paths of righteousness. Again, my sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me. That is what Christ says in John 10:27. And David is saying the same thing here. I am led by the Lord in paths of righteousness for his glory. So if Christ is your shepherd, he will direct your paths. Keep your eyes fixed on the person and work of Christ and the law that he holds in his right hand. He will direct your paths. He will lead you in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Boys and girls, look up here at me. Jesus is not only a savior to forgive us of sin. He is a leader to show us how to live. You know that he is not just a savior to save to deliver us. He is a king to rule us. And so our job is simply to trust Christ alone for salvation and to labor to obey him for his glory. Is that not like the simplest thing in the world, kids? That idea. Is that really hard to understand that our the whole Christian life looks like trusting in Christ alone for salvation and obeying Jesus? Like that is the whole Christian life. You need to understand those two truths right there from an early age. And if you keep that in the forefront of your mind, like you are not going to go wrong. Like that is the whole Christian life. Trusting Christ to save us, obeying Christ for his glory. Adults, I cannot tell you how many Christians I talked to that it seems to me do not have those two things really clearly in their mind. Just this past weekend when me and my fellow pastors and some other brothers were in Utah talking to people about abortion, about abolition, I had multiple conversations with people that they saw what we were saying about laboring to abolish abortion, not regulating it, not just trying to like take an incremental step even though it is an unrighteous thing that God forbids us from doing. Trying to talk through this and the guys who were pushing back against us, it always came down to, well, I think this will work best and we should do what would work best. And I just had to say, we think we should obey Christ.

Period.

And if what you are saying will work best is disobeying a clear command of Christ,

it is like, how is this even how are we even talking about this? I think it will work better though if we use unequal weights and measures and show partiality to the wicked and do not establish justice and only justice. That is what they are saying functionally. I am like, but our goal should be to obey Jesus. So if he said specific things that we are forbidden from doing and you are saying, "But I think if we do those, it will be good." It is like, "What? How are we having this?" The Christian life is trusting Christ alone for salvation and trying to obey Jesus. We all need to understand that and have that real clear. It is as simple as that. Trust and obey. For there is no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey. We need to sing that song soon. So he will direct your paths in righteousness for his glory. Boys and girls, trust Christ, obey Christ. That is the whole Christian life. Look fifthly, look at verse four at this fifth truth. This blessing and benefit that comes if Christ is your shepherd. He will be with you when you suffer, comforting you so that you may fear no evil. That is the truth. If Christ is your shepherd, he will be with you when you suffer, comforting you so that you may fear no evil. I mean, this has to be the most famous verse of the psalm, does it not? Maybe verse six is I think verse four probably is. Even 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. I bet some of you who are older, you probably have it memorized in the King James because you probably memorized it before we even had like the NASB 95 or the ESV. You probably memorized it when you were so young. It still comes out King Jamesy. I think I memorized it when I was so young. It was like NIV. The ESV was not out yet. NASB95 was not out yet. It is a popular verse, but I think it is unbelievably misunderstood. I will fear no evil. What does that mean? It is not talking about Satan, demons, sin. It is talking about suffering. Suffering. I will fear no evil. The evil in this context through the valley of the shadow of death. He is talking about affliction and suffering. I will I do not have to fear any affliction or suffering. Why? Because you are with me, Lord. Because Jesus is with me. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no suffering, no affliction, no evil. For you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. So Christ will be with you when you suffer and he will comfort you when you suffer. Christ will not keep you from affliction in this life. He will use affliction. He will even send you into affliction for his glory. Here is one example. I spoke with a man this week who had a booth at the conference we were at. He has a podcast wherein the whole point is he interviews people that just have these amazing testimonies of how Jesus saved them. And the one example that he gave to me was this lady in Texas. She was a mother of four. She was falsely convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison. She always maintained she was innocent. She did not do it. Falsely convicted of murder. Just jumping to a little later, eight years after the conviction, it was overturned because they appealed and more evidence came out and they exonerated her. But she is in prison for eight years for a murder that she did not commit. She was not a Christian. She becomes a Christian and ends up starting a Bible study in these Texas at this Texas woman's prison. And you can only meet in groups of four at a time. So she started meeting with these three

other ladies. She leads them to Christ, trains them up. Then those ladies go and start Bible studies. And each of them leads one with three other ladies. And thousands of these ladies have now come to Christ. And the whole Texas prison system, the women's prisons in Texas are filled with these like four women Bible studies and they are constantly preaching the gospel and reaching people for Christ. And it was all started by a lady who was falsely convicted for a crime she did not commit. Released now. And now her testimony is, I came to a point while I was in prison knowing not simply did Christ permit this to happen, but Christ is sovereign over this and he sent me into this prison even through the hands of the injustice of men. She said, "So what has the Lord sent me here to do?" And it was to reach people with the gospel. So, it is not merely that Jesus will allow you to suffer or just say, "I am so sorry that you are suffering. I will be with you." Jesus will send you into the valley of the shadow of death. Jesus will cause the affliction and the suffering. But his promise is, "But I will be with you, and you do not have to fear any suffering. I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Thomas Watson has a great sermon on that verse. And he sees in the verse rod and staff two different things. He sees staff as the symbol of providential protection by the shepherd and he sees rod. I think rightly as the rod that the shepherd would use to hit the sheep to afflict the sheep to bring them back to faithfulness. So Watson's whole sermon, excellent. I will recommend that you read it. He says he has got a rod to afflict you when you need it. He has got a staff to protect you when you need it. And David is saying, "Whether it is the rod or the staff, they both comfort me." Because when I need to be afflicted to grow, it comforts me that the Lord is the one holding the rod. When I need to be protected from this great suffering or persecution or the wicked, he has got a staff. So the rod comforts me, the staff comforts me. When was the last time, believer, you were in the valley of the shadow of death?

Jesus was there with you.

Christ was providentially preserving you, even if it was the rod that was laid to your back. When will you walk through the valley of the shadow of death next? I do not know. But when you do, Christ will be with you. And his rod and his staff, they should comfort you greatly. No affliction is outside of the providential working of the Lord Jesus Christ. So even when you are afflicted, even if like, is this for my sin? I do not know. Is it just persecution because it is promised to us? I do not know. But I know who holds the rod. And that comforts me greatly. Christ holds the rod. It may be the rod of affliction or it may be the staff of protection, but both are a comfort to Christ's sheep. He will be with you when you suffer, comforting you so that you may fear no evil. Sixth, the sixth truth we learn here is in verse five. Look at it. He says, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows." What he means is the banquet table is not back in the tent behind the vanguard. The banquet table is on the front lines and the Lord is sovereignly doing all things so that the banquet table where I am feasting with Christ is set up right here and my

enemies are right there and I can sit down and feast. That is how safe I am. I am not hiding somewhere else. I am not behind the army. I am out front. I am in the presence of my enemies. And you have prepared a table for me. You anoint my head with oil, the sign of God's favor and God's Spirit being poured out on us. My cup overflows. Not only is my cup half full or full, it is overflowing with salvation. The point is he will protect you from all your enemies and bless you at his table. He will protect you from all your enemies and bless you at his table. We are treated as impostors, Paul says, and yet are true. As unknown and yet well-known, as dying and behold, we live. As punished and yet not killed. As sorrowful yet always rejoicing. As poor yet making many rich. As having nothing yet possessing everything. He will prepare a table before you in the presence of your enemies. Christ says, "You will be hated by all for my name's sake, but not a hair of your head will perish." Beloved, the picture is you are going to have enemies. All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. If they hated Christ, they are going to hate you. And you got nothing to worry about. All those things are true and you got nothing to worry about. He prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies. I do not have to hide from my enemies. Christ is blessing me right in front of my enemies. And I have nothing to fear. Let me encourage you. Who cares that the world hates you if Christ loves you? What does it matter if you have great enemies if your redeemer prepares a banquet table before their scoffing eyes? So what if the wicked fill up a cup of condemnation? Christ has filled up the cup of salvation. Who cares if the unrighteous try hard to hurt you with slander and false accusations when Christ aims to bless you with favor and benedictions? So what if the world throws garbage at you? Christ anoints your head with oil. Get your chin up. He prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies. He anoints my head with oil. My cup overflows. So I ask you to examine yourself. Do you care more about Christ's enemies' anger at you than your redeemer's delight in you? What affects you more? When people dislike you for righteousness' sake or the fact that Christ loves you for his name's sake? Which affects you more? It should be that Christ delights in me. Christ is my savior. He is my king. Who cares what the enemies think? He prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies. I am feasting while they are scoffing. Say this to yourself frequently, beloved. If Christ smiles at me, it does not matter who frowns. Say that to yourself. If Christ smiles at me, it does not matter who frowns. Some of you, you just need to know the more you speak up and act out for Christ's glory, not in radical ways, in simple just Christian ways. The more you actually do that, the more false professors and just outright God-haters will not like you. They will slander you. They will lie about you. They will try to shame you. The more you do that, the more that is going to happen. But here is something else. The more it happens, the easier it gets. The more it happens, the easier it gets. I remember when we first planted the church. 15 years ago, this church was planted. And back then, it was like people thought we were insane because we were not teetotalers. Only like half of the church even ever drank anything. But we were not teetotalers and we were Calvinists. And we were like insane. We were not

patriarchal. Like we were squishy evangelical jellyfish. We were not confessional at the planting of the church. Like we had no bones, but we were like, "No, Calvinism is true. Yep, that is true." And we were convinced that a teetotaling position, which means it is sinful for anyone to have a drink of alcohol ever, that position was like, "No, that is not biblical." It was just those two things. I was like, man, that is really simple. But we were hated on, slandered, all that. And it affected me like I cannot explain. And now, I mean, something happened, I think Friday night. I shared something again that I thought I had no idea this would be controversial. And then I see people are upset about it, and it is just kind of like, oh, okay. Well, anyways, moving on. It gets better. Keep your conscience clear, meaning obey Christ. And if you know Christ is smiling at you, who cares who frowns? He will protect you from all your enemies and bless you at his table. He will prepare a table before you in the presence of your enemies. He will anoint your head with oil and overflow your cup. Look, seventh, second to last, the beginning of verse six. Surely goodness and mercy, it is that mercy word is that hased word in Hebrew. It is loving kindness. It is the covenant love of God. If you are in God's covenant, it is his loving kindness that he bestows upon you. So surely goodness and mercy or goodness and loving kindness shall follow me all the days of my life. Surely goodness and loving kindness shall follow me all the days of my life. Here the metaphor switches from us following a shepherd to the shepherd chasing us down. And the shepherd is personified as goodness and loving kindness. What should we learn from this? If Christ is your shepherd, he will chase you down with loving kindness until you die. All the days of my life. The first part of verse six is about what we call this life. The second half of verse six is about what we call the life to come. Meaning after the second coming of Christ, after our death, the second coming of Christ, he consummates the kingdom, a new heaven and a new earth where we reign with Christ. That is the second half of verse six. The first half is just talking about this life. All the days of my life, Christ will chase me down with loving kindness. Boys and girls, look up here at me. Are you faster than Jesus? No way. Are you better at hide and seek than Jesus? You think you could beat Jesus at hide-and-seek? No way. He can find you and he will. He can catch you and he will. And David is saying, Jesus will never let me get away from him. He will chase me down and catch me and be kind and loving to me until I die. No matter how hard adults, you know this from your experience, no matter how hard you try to run, if you belong to Christ, he is the hound of heaven who will not let you get away. He will chase you down with loving kindness until you die. Then look lastly, the eighth truth that we can learn here. He will have you reign with him forever. And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. And the house of the Lord is a palace, beloved. He will have you reign with him intimately forever. So he will chase you down all the days of your life and at the end of your life you will be with him face to face ruling and reigning with him glorified like him seeing his face. Revelation 5:10. You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth. Revelation 22:5, they will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will

be their light, and they will reign with him forever and ever. 1 Peter 5:4, "When the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." He will chase you down with loving kindness until you die. And when you die, he will have you reign with him forever. So, in conclusion, let me just say this. Unbelievers, do you not want Christ as your shepherd? Do you not want all these things to be true for you? He has created you. You are made for him. You have sinned against him. And he came into the world as a man to live without sin like you have not. To die paying the penalty for sin that you deserve. To arise from the dead conquering Satan's sin and death. And he just says, "Come and rest in me alone for salvation, and I will be your shepherd. You will not lack anything. I will make you lie down in green pastures. I will lead you beside still waters. I will help you repent when you need to. I will lead you in paths of righteousness for my glory. I will be with you when you suffer. I will even cause you to suffer for your own good, but I will be with you to comfort you. You do not have to fear any of your enemies. I will anoint you with oil. I will overflow the cup of salvation for you. I will chase you down with loving kindness all the days of your life. And when you die, you will be with me in eternal happiness forever. That is what Christ says. Do you not want that? Come to Christ through faith and it will be yours. He will receive you. Believers, hold up and hold on. You will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Conquer. In the meantime, conquer with Christ and like Christ. Build now for his kingdom and for his glory. Mortify the flesh. Walk in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Do not go faint-hearted in the valley of the shadow of death. Christ wins and we get to win with him. So, let me give all of you these three exhortations. Memorize this psalm. Memorize this psalm, children. Memorize Psalm 23 if you have not already. Memorize it, sing it, and live by it. That is what we should do with this psalm. Memorize it, sing it, and live by it. Praise God. Let us pray. Our Father, we come to you in Christ's name and we ask you to accept all of these things that we offer up to you in worship. We ask you to save those who are not yet united to Christ. Sanctify us who are. Help us to memorize, sing, and live by faith in this wonderful psalm that you had David write. Please purify your Church. Amen.