

42. Psalm 23:5b

“The Great Shepherd” Pt.10

(8-2-26)

Psalm 23:1–6 (NKJV)

¹ The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. ³ He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. ⁴ 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. ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.

As we reflect on this psalm, it is helpful to keep in mind that David is recounting some of the events that take place in the life of a sheep during the course of the year.

David has taken us from the lowland which would include the shepherd's village from where he would lead the sheep out into the green pastures and along the still waters during late Fall through early Spring.

Near the latter part of Spring the shepherd would begin to lead the sheep up the mountain valleys to the high mountain 'mesa' or *table* for the summer months.

And here at this point in David's psalm, it seems that the sheep are now well up the mountain on some beautiful mountain mesa or meadow where there is green pasture and clear running springs (from snow melt), where they are enjoying close, intimate contact with their shepherd.

And yet even though the mountain top is beautiful and the sheep are enjoying the intimacy with their shepherd—there's a problem!

Phillip Keller, in his book “*A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*” talks about it—

“You see as the shepherds and sheepmen put it—summertime is ‘fly time.’ This refers to the hordes of insects that emerge with the beginning of the summer weather. Those who have kept livestock are only too familiar with the serious problems for animals presented by insects in the summer. These insects and their attacks on the animals can turn the beautiful summer months into a time of torture for the sheep. Sheep are especially troubled by the ‘nose flies’ or ‘nasal flies.’ These little flies buzz around the sheep’s head attempting to lay their eggs on the damp, mucous membranes of the sheep’s nose. If they’re successful the eggs will hatch in a few days giving birth to small, slender worm-like larvae that will work their way up the nasal passages into the sheep’s head where they will burrow into the flesh and become an intense source of irritation and inflammation. To get some relief from the torment, sheep will deliberately beat their heads against trees, rocks or bushes. They will rub them in the dirt and thrash around in the underbrush. In extreme cases of intense infestation sheep have been known to kill themselves in a frenzied endeavor to try and get some relief.”

Keller goes on to say that all of this activity and anxiety can have a devastating effect on the entire flock.

The sheep can’t lie down and rest; they don’t eat well and so they lose weight, become weak, irritable, and edgy.

He said a good, caring shepherd at the first sign of flies among the flock would apply some thick oil mixed with Sulphur and some spices to the head of the sheep—this would repel nose flies as well as any other insect pests.

When applied an incredible transformation would take place among the sheep—immediately, the anxiety, aggravation, and restlessness would be gone.

The sheep would start to feed quietly again, then they would lie down in peace and contentment.

This is a picture of the irritations in our own lives and how that—even when we’re on the mountain top with Jesus, really close to Him, enjoying His fellowship—there are still going to be people who are constantly ‘*bugging us.*’

Life is full of petty annoyances and frustrating circumstances that can ruin our day and our peace in Jesus—things that can drive us crazy where you feel like you’re beating your brains out.

Much of it coming from people you have contact with every day (the kids, co-workers, parents, siblings)—but also perfect strangers can really be used by Beelzebub (‘lord of the flies’ i.e., ‘Satan’) to bug you to no end!

Satan wants to steal our joy and peace and so often he’ll use little things to do it through—misplacing your keys, some guy on the road that cuts you off, long lines at the checkout counter (especially when there is a talkative lady in front of you that treats checking out like a social event)—and many other things!

The world is full of annoying people and circumstances that drive us crazy and make it so you want to ‘kill’ yourself (not really but the acronym KMN does run through your mind (‘kill me now’))!

But just as the sheep needed to be anointed with oil by their shepherd to keep the pests away and give them rest—so to there must be a continual anointing of God’s Spirit upon our lives to counteract these aggravations and petty annoyances of life.

In the Bible, oil is used as a metaphor for the Holy Spirit more than 200 times!

And just as one application of oil to the sheep wasn’t enough for the entire summer, they needed to be continuously anointed with fresh oil if it was going to be effective—the same is true for Jesus’ sheep also.

The Christian’s life doesn’t consist of one initial *anointing* or filling of the Holy Spirit if we’re going to have rest in the face of the irritations and aggravations of life—we need to be continually filled with God’s Spirit.

Paul made this clear in Ephesians 5:18 when he said—

Ephesians 5:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; **but be filled with the Spirit,**

Now what exactly does it mean to be *“filled with the Spirit”*?

Well, Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest gives four things from Ephesians 5:18 that come through in the Greek that will help us to understand what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

1. “Be filled with the Spirit” is a command (imperative in the Greek) that God expects us to obey.

It’s not a suggestion, it’s a command—a command that is plural in the Greek which means it applies to all Christians—not just to a select few like missionaries, pastors and church leaders.

It’s a command that applies to all Christians because we can’t begin to do the work God has called us to do without the power that comes from being filled with the Holy Spirit.

2. In the Greek the verb “filled” is in the present tense and denotes a continuous action—“be continually being filled with the Holy Spirit”.

Now this is important because God never intended us to be reservoirs to contain the Holy Spirit—but channels through which the Holy Spirit can flow to a lost and dying world.

In Israel, there are two major bodies of water, both fed by the Jordan River: The Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea.

The difference is that while the Sea of Galilee is teeming with life—not even a single-celled organism can survive in the Dead Sea. Why?

Because, although the Jordan River flows into both, it only flows out of the Sea of Galilee—in other words, the Dead Sea is devoid of life because there’s inflow but no outflow.

You and I will either be like the Sea of Galilee, giving out the Word, sharing our faith and full of the life of the Spirit as a result—or we will be like the Dead Sea, taking in but, because we don't give out—dead spiritually in our walk.

John 7:37-39a (NKJV)

³⁷ On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." ³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit...

To keep the Spirit flowing in and through our lives we must stay connected (in fellowship) with the Lord—How?

Well through things like morning devotions, fellowship with other Spirit-filled Christians—but I think first and foremost by staying in God's Word.

When Paul told us in Eph.5:18 to be continually filled with the Spirit—in Colossians 3 (the parallel passage) he substituted the phrase, "*Let the Word of Christ [continually] dwell in you richly*" (Col. 3:16) (Elaborate)

We stay in fellowship with the Lord (abiding in Jesus) by being in the Word of God, and as such we will then enjoy a constant flow of the Holy Spirit in and through our lives—as long as we're living obedient lives for Jesus.

3. In the Greek the verb "filled" is in the passive voice which indicates an action being done to us and not controlled by us.

In other words, we do not fill ourselves, the Holy Spirit does the filling, but our responsibility is to *permit* the Spirit to fill us (hence the command mentioned in point #1) by living holy lives.

The Holy Spirit will never force Himself on us but will fill us as much as we desire (surrender) or as much as He can depending how much we are already filled with sin and self.

(You can't fill an 8oz. glass with 8oz's of water if there is 6oz's of dirt in it—you've got to clean out the dirt first)

4. In the Greek the word “filled” expresses the idea of being “controlled by”.

Luke 4:28-29 (NKJV)

²⁸ So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,
²⁹ and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff.

When it says they were “*filled with wrath*” it means that “*they were controlled by wrath*” and for that reason tried to kill Jesus.

Acts 13:45 (NKJV)

⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.

“*The Jews were filled with envy*”—which means that the Jews were ‘*controlled by envy*’ and opposed the ministry of Paul and Barnabas.

To be “*filled with the Spirit*” means to be constantly controlled by the Holy Spirit in our *mind*, our *will*, our *emotions*—and of course in our *actions*.

It’s the same idea that Paul expressed in Galatians 5:16—

Galatians 5:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ I say then: Walk in the Spirit [live under the control of the Spirit], and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

One of the reasons why the Holy Spirit has so little control over so many Christians is because—yes, rebellion, but also, they think He works *automatically* in their lives.

And so, they’re waiting on Him to work but He is waiting on them to surrender.

It’s not automatic—

Galatians 5:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ If we live in the Spirit [we're saved], let us also walk in the Spirit [live under the control of the Spirit].

Just as the Holy Spirit didn't *indwell* us until we invited Jesus into our hearts, so too the Holy Spirit will not *control* us until we yield and surrender (on a daily basis) to His control over our lives.

I think that this is one of the great problems facing the church in America—too many Christians trying to control the Holy Spirit instead of allowing themselves to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. (Explain)

But getting back to people who 'bug' us.

The first fruit of the Holy Spirit that Paul mentions in Galatians 5 is '**love**' and according to the definition of God's love he revealed in 1 Corinthians 13:4 is that "*Love is patient and kind.*"

He goes on to say that God's love takes no account of the evil done to it—or in other words, it doesn't hold a grudge or tries to get even.

It simply overlooks and gives it to God praying for the person that has done you the wrong—even as Jesus prayed from the cross for those who had wrongfully put Him there that they would be forgiven by the Father.

But understand, the Holy Spirit won't *take away* the irritations of life—it's just that they won't bother or '*bug*' you anymore.

I have shared this advice with Christians over the years who want God to take away irritating and hurtful people from their lives—but in reality, God doesn't change everyone you come in contact with to make them non-irritating and nice.

What He does is to apply the Holy Spirit to our lives changing *us* and how *we* react to all the irritating and hurtful people we come in contact with—which I have experienced firsthand when I’m driving my car! (Explain)

It’s a great feeling to have victory over anger and aggravation when confronted with something that used to ‘bug’ you and drive you crazy—that’s the Shepherd anointing you with a fresh dose of the Holy Spirit!

“What do I have to do to have the Holy Spirit applied to my life afresh?”

Repent of your sins, get serious in your relationship with God, pray, (and be honest—don’t pray *“Lord I just don’t love them as I should”*...), get your eyes off the situation and on to Jesus, recognizing that Satan is trying to get you to react in the flesh and thereby destroy your witness.

But listen, summertime for the sheep wasn’t just *“fly”* time—it was also *“Scab”* time.

Keller explains,

“Scab” is an irritating and highly contagious disease common among sheep the world over. This is caused by a minute, microscopic parasite that proliferates in warm weather. Scab spreads throughout a flock by direct contact between infected and non-infected sheep. Sheep love to rub heads in a friendly and affectionate manner. Scab is often found most commonly around the head. When two sheep rub heads together the infection spreads quickly from one to the other.

In the Old Testament when God declared that a sacrificial lamb should be without blemish—this included skin diseases like Scab because these things were symbolic of the infectious contamination of sin. Again, the only thing that would effectively arrest the spread of the disease and promote healing was for the shepherd to rub the oil mixture, which he always carried with him, onto the head of the sheep.”

He goes on to say that, in the Christian life most of the ‘scab’ that defiles and diseases us spiritually and emotionally often comes as we rub our heads (our minds) together.

This is especially true when much of your day is spent working around non-Christians and then at home in front of the TV where ungodly thoughts, philosophies and situations are constantly being pumped into your mind.

As your mind comes into contact with the world, whether you realize it or not, these things are being slowly internalized defiling and diseasing your attitudes and thinking.

This was something Paul warned us about in 1Corinthians 15:33 we he said that “*Bad company [whether in person or on TV, the movies or the internet] corrupts good morals [thinking].*”

But don’t think for a moment that God’s sheep are immune from this kind of thing either.

When Christian minds meet for the purpose of fellowship—ideas and Scriptures are shared, and thoughts and attitudes are being transferred—which can lead to talking about others.

Gossip (a meeting of minds) in the name of ‘*loving fellowship*’ spreads quickly through a flock (church) infecting many and causing some real damage.

That’s why the Bible warns in Proverbs 10:19: “*Too much talk leads to sin, be wise and restrain what comes out of your mouth.*”

To guard against this kind of thing you must yield your mind constantly to the control of the Holy Spirit as the Bible says—“*Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*” (2 Cor. 10:5)

And as David prayed in Psalm 141:3—“*Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.*”

To apply the Holy Spirit to our lives is simply yielding to the Spirit’s control, and to walk to according to the Spirit means you will not obey the *lusts of the flesh* which will lead to the works of the flesh—

Galatians 5:19–23

¹⁹ The works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;

²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, heresies, ²¹ envy, drunkenness...and many other sins. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience with others, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control...

Paul goes on to tell us that the Law (religion) can't produce this kind of living—it is an evidence that the Spirit of God lives inside us (we're saved) and we are yielding control of our lives to Him.

But it all starts with your mind and the way you think. (Explain)

Let your mind meet with God in the pages of Scripture and you'll think thoughts that honor God—which is where all true spiritual warfare is fought and won.

Which means—don't watch, look at or listen to anything that is or might be defiling and the Spirit will keep you free from spiritual 'scab.'

This is something David purposed in his heart to do—

Psalm 101:2–3 (NLT)

² I will be careful to live a blameless life...I will lead a life of integrity in my own home. ³ I will refuse to look at anything vile and vulgar...

Psalm 23:5 (NKJV)

⁵ **You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.**

This is simply a metaphor for how the sheep are satisfied with how their shepherd has taken care of them and how that He has given them all they need and more!

This is something our good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, spoke of with regard to His sheep:

John 10:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.

The image of an **overflowing cup** is a picture of the kind of life our Shepherd provides for us—abundant, overflowing, a life full of joy leading someday to unspeakable glory!

Christians, as they walk through dark valleys sometimes lose sight of how much their cup overflows—maybe not physically or materially—but inwardly and spiritually.

We have Jesus, He has filled us with His Spirit, we have hope which gives us great peace which we so often take for granted.

The world is empty, broken, having no hope, no answers and no one to lean on for strength—we have Jesus!

If God never gave us another thing in the way of blessings—we'd still have our salvation and honestly—nothing on earth is worth more than that!

Which is why Paul could say, *“I’ve learned in whatever condition I find myself to be content!”*

In the NT when the idea of a cup is introduced it often can mean one of 3 things:

First of all, suffering:

Matthew 26:39 (NKJV)

³⁹ He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*.”

Second judgment:

Revelation 14:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

But here in Psalm 23 I believe David had in mind communion—the communion the sheep were enjoying with each other and with their shepherd as they were on the mountain top with each other.

The idea of a **cup** representing communion is something that Paul talked about in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11:

1 Corinthians 10:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

1 Corinthians 11:23–25 (NKJV)

²³ For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread; ²⁴ and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” ²⁵ In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me.”

Communion (the Lord’s Supper) is a remembrance of the death of Christ on Calvary’s Cross to redeem us out of the slavery of sin and death—but it also celebrates our oneness and intimacy with Jesus and His Church (sheep).

Let me end by saying, in light of what we talked about today about the shepherd anointing the head of the sheep with the special oil for peace and contentment—

When my mind is consecrated (anointed) by the Holy Spirit (oil), my fellowship or communion with Jesus and my family in Christ overflows and is abundant!