

“The LORD is My Shepherd.” Can you ever tire of hearing and pondering those words? The LORD, Jehovah is not only the Almighty creator of the universe, He is also the loving, gracious God who has made a covenant with sinful mankind. He has given His life for us to save us so that we can be His own sheep. He is MY Shepherd, the one who loves me and cares for me.

With the LORD as My Shepherd, I can have perfect contentment as we saw last week. “I shall not want” or lack any good thing. Today we are going to look at the second half of this beautiful Psalm and consider that with the LORD as our Shepherd, we not only have perfect contentment, but we can also have

Perfect Peace!

“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. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.”*

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

What is your favorite picture of peace? A glassy still lake giving a perfect reflection of the mountains behind? Or a beautiful sunset over a calm ocean? Or perhaps a picture of a sleeping baby? Or possibly a beautiful flower like the one on the bulletin cover.

King David gives us a very different picture of Peace — walking through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and being surrounded by enemies. Those pictures sound like the very opposite of peace. Those situations cause fear and anxiety, not peace. That’s the whole point. David reacted to those terrifying situations by saying “I will fear no evil” and to sit down to eat.

We all enjoy those peaceful moments in life but that’s exactly what they are - moments. None of them last very long. Life in this world is marked by many more desperate, fearful moments. If you can be at peace in the face of those fearful moments, then your whole life will be at peace. That’s Perfect Peace. And that is what David says we can have when we have the LORD as our Shepherd. Let’s consider this

Perfect Peace.

-I- Peace As We Walk Through Valley of the Shadow of Death.

First of all, what is the “Valley of the shadow of Death?” That’s not just a poetic way of talking about dying. If you look at the way the Hebrew word is used in other places you find: Psalm 107:10 uses it to describe the “darkness of a dungeon.” Jeremiah 2:6 uses it of going through the driest, desolate desert. Also the word for valley here is not a wide beautiful, fertile valley. This word describes a deep, treacherous ravine or canyon with steep cliffs and deep shadows where danger lurks around every corner. So in short, the Valley of the shadow of death describes every dark, dangerous, frightening situation in life where death casts its shadow — where there is a danger or fear of death. Or even the sorrow at the death of a loved one.

Isaiah 9:2 even uses the word to describe people living in spiritual darkness. Isaiah was talking about people who themselves were in the dark spiritually. They didn’t know their Savior. But in this context talking about believers walking through the dark valleys and dangers of life, it can also include spiritual dangers. Living in the world today can be frightening. There are so many things that threaten our faith and the faith of our children.

Look at the way King David faced those dark valleys or ravines of life. He said, “I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” With our Good Shepherd beside us we too can have peace in the midst of all the dark frightening things that surround us. Whether we are facing surgeries, have lost a job, or have lost everything in an accident, or a storm or fire, our Good Shepherd knows our troubles and He is right by our side in the middle of that dark fearful valley.

Jesus is well equipped to take care of every need. David says, “Your Rod and Your Staff, they comfort me.” Our Good Shepherd uses the Rod of His strength to protect us. He has power over every danger. He proved that when His disciples were in a sinking boat and Jesus calmed the storm. He can calm every storm in our lives also. He can grant successful surgeries. He can heal from diseases. He can protect from every danger. So we need not fear.

One of the great dangers of going through this type of deep ravine or canyon with all its twists and turns and many tributaries branching off in different directions, is that it’s easy to get lost. So it is in our life. It’s so easy to get sidetracked or lost along the way to eternal life. But we don’t have to fear when we have the Good Shepherd with us. He knows the way and He guides us with the staff of His Word.

We should also note that with the Lord as our Shepherd, we walk “Through” those valleys. Even death itself is something that we pass through to eternal life.

The **Perfect Peace** that our Good Shepherd gives us is also Peace

-II- In the Presence of My Enemies

Verse 5 is such an amazing picture. “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.” Try and visualize this picture. You are surrounded by enemies, snarling and growly at you, wanting to devour you, and Jesus prepares a table for you to sit down and eat. Could you enjoy a feast while surrounded by enemies? That doesn’t seem possible. But with our Good Shepherd we can.

King David had many physical enemies almost always threatening his life, yet he was confident and knew God’s blessings. We are more surrounded by spiritual enemies. The devil himself is prowling around “like a roaring lion seeking whom He may devour.” And he has his servants everywhere in the world. But Jesus enables us to be at peace and enjoy life in the midst of them all. That is Perfect Peace. With our Good Shepherd beside us, no matter how much our enemies rage, they cannot harm us. As Jesus said, “In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

This isn’t just a nice picture, this is a reality for us. We are surrounded by enemies today—spiritual enemies. The whole LGBTQ community has gone way beyond fighting for their rights as individuals. They are vehemently opposed to anyone who holds to a Biblical view of these lifestyles. Their fangs come out very quickly if they sense that you do not fully support their cause.

There is an all out battle going on over the lives of unborn babies. Tomorrow and Tuesday a new movie titled “The Matter of Life” will be shown in theaters across the United States. It defends the life of the unborn and promotes love and support for mothers with unwanted pregnancies. But it is being attacked and strongly opposed by the pro-choice movement putting pressure on theaters not to show the film. This film is not available anywhere in Canada. I’m not sure why not.

The Atheistic beliefs of evolution and humanism have permeated the universities and even the grade schools and high schools of our land fighting against any belief in a Creator. Yes, we are surrounded by enemies, yet we can sit down and feast at the table which our Good Shepherd has prepared for us. Our Shepherd still fills our lives with blessings to enjoy. Our cup is overflowing with blessings. most importantly, He provides a spiritual banquet for our soul to be filled and satisfied. Finally our Good Shepherd promises us

-III- Perfect Peace Forever

The last verse of this Psalm, verse 6 is the perfect conclusion to a life of perfect peace. “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.” As long as we live in this world that is corrupted and plagued with sin, there will be troubles and sorrows of every kind. But the “goodness and mercy” of our God will always follow us. The word translated “follow me” is really more forceful than that. It literally says that goodness and mercy shall “pursue me” all the days of my life.

This is an important point to take to heart. Our human nature always wants to pursue good things that we can enjoy. King Solomon tried to pursue meaning and satisfaction in life by pursuing all these things. Listen to what he says in Ecclesiastes 2:3-11 “I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might

see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives. 4 I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. 5 I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. 6 I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove. 7 I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me. 8 I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all kinds. 9 So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. 10 Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; And this was my reward from all my labor. 11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; And indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun.”

When we pursue the things we think are good, we will not find the goodness and mercy of the Lord. But when we pursue the Lord and follow our Good Shepherd, then His goodness and mercy will pursue us all our life. We will see His goodness in everything. As Jesus said, “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.” Matthew 6:33 The Goodness and Mercy of the Lord is not just found in good things, it is found in His love and forgiveness.

Best of all we will “Dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” We already dwell in God’s house or in His presence by faith when we continue in His Word and Sacraments. And this will continue on forever. When we do pass through the valley of death itself, Jesus will bring us through to our eternal home in His visible presence and we will live with Him forever.

The Lord is my Shepherd! There is no greater joy or privilege. With Him we can have **Perfect Contentment** knowing that He provides all our needs, physical and spiritual exactly as we need. And with Him at our side we can have **Perfect Peace** knowing that He is with us through all the fearful times and we will be with Him forever. May we all continue to enjoy that Perfect Contentment and Peace with Him and follow Him as our Good Shepherd.

Amen.