

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE *by Garth*

The Lord is my Shepherd ...Psalm 23:1

- **Q** A very valid question would be to whom was David the psalm writer referring to? He was of course referring to Jehovah, the Lord God of Israel. The God who is from everlasting to everlasting.

The Lord Jesus Christ testified that He is the Good Shepherd (ref : *John 10 v 11*). But who is this Christ? I believe *Col 1 v 15 to 20* sums it up perfectly.

Jesus said He is the way the truth and the light, He made statements/claims that no else ever did before or since.

We frequently find beautiful relationships in the bible between God and man and between a Shepherd and his sheep. This Psalm is one such passage of scripture.

- *I Shall Not be in Want* (declares David the psalm writer).

Such a statement suggests that the author of the promise can be trusted? It is a bold statement, a confident statement concerning satisfaction. I shall not want probably seems like a strange statement for David to make especially if you consider only his physical or material needs.

Anyone who knows about David's life will know the battles Saul had with him and how on more than one occasion Saul wanted to end David's life. Think of his own son Absalom and the sorrow and pain that he brought to David and his household.

While we may see David as this awesome king who greatly feared the Lord, and he was. Like many believers today David knew what it was like to experience hardship, personal poverty and anguish of spirit.

Remember the words of Jesus the great shepherd when He was amongst his disciples:

“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart I have overcome the world.”

It can be common to think if a Christian is prospering materially, that this is the result of the blessing of God upon his or her life. This is not always the case? *Revelation 3:17* : “You say, I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing. But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.”

I think it fair to say that David was not referring to physical or material poverty when he made the statement “I shall not want” in effect what David was saying was I shall not lack the expert care of my Master (The Shepherd).

The sheep that don't have a good master will not do well; they will lack good pasture and will be hungry, fearful and will not thrive very well and won't be content in their surroundings. In similar fashion we are the sheep of His pasture, we need to have that rest, that trust, that contentment, that only Christ can offer/give. Jesus said “*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep*”

People outside of Christ outside of the care of the Good Shepherd will never find that true peace, rest and contentment, it is reserved for Christ's sheep only.

- *He Makes Me Lie Down in Green Pasture.*

Anyone that knows anything about sheep will tell you that sheep are of all animals the most timid fearful creatures. They won't rest unless they feel secure, content in their surroundings free from friction with others in the flock, free from flies and parasites and free from hunger. Any hint of danger and sheep are ready to flee, even something as small as a rabbit can startle sheep if it appears unexpectedly.

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Sheep are very fearful; they will only lie down when they are free from fear. "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." (ref: Psalm 4 v 8)

Contentment - Should be the hallmark of the man or woman who has put his or her affairs in the hands of God. "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want." Why? He is the Shepherd who cares for His flock. He loves us; He is the owner who delights in His flock. For Christ there is no greater reward, no deeper satisfaction, than seeing His sheep contented.

He desires that we "cast all our care upon Him because He cares for you" (ref :1 Peter 5 v 7) . Why is it that many believers are not in this place of contentment or rest? May I suggest this morning it is because you are looking outside of Christ for that contentment? Perhaps you feel Christ cannot supply your every need.

☞ You can lie in green pasture and be hungry. You can walk in green pasture and be hungry. You can talk about green pasture and still be hungry. It is only when we taste and eat that we will be satisfied. Taste and see that the Lord is good".

• He leads me by still waters

A good shepherd of sheep would bring them to fresh water so that they could drink and be satisfied. In bible times the shepherd would have lead them to the nearest river or source of water so that they could receive that water. David when he penned this psalm or composed it, having been a shepherd of sheep was able to understand both the sheep' position and the shepherds.

☞ He leads me beside still waters."

He alone knows where the still, quiet, deep, clean, pure water is to be found that can satisfy His sheep. The sheep that takes direction from the shepherd or allows the shepherd to direct them will always fare well.

This reminds me of a shepherd who one day was leading his sheep down from some mountains to a magnificent stream that had pure clear water flowing from it. On the way some of stubborn sheep could not wait to get to the stream so they began to drink from small dirty, muddy, pools of water along the way. This water was polluted with urine and manure from previous flocks of sheep passing along this very way, still these stubborn sheep were quite sure what they were drinking was more than ok. Little did they know that such water was damaging to them as it contains liver fluke eggs which if left untreated eventually brings about internal diseases which will have a destructive impact, causing it to become weak and unhealthy.

In like manner as believers in Christ we can drink impure waters. This could be going somewhere or doing something that from a spiritual point of view has no function?

☞ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled (satisfied)- Matthew 5v6: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink." (ref. John 7 v 37)

To drink in the spiritual sense simply means " to take in or "to accept" or "to believe".

You can walk in a river and be thirsty

You can stand in the water waist high and still remain thirsty.

You can swim in a river and remain thirsty

A tree planted by water will remain in need until it reaches out by its roots to receive that water. Let us learn from the tree and let us reach out and drink.

☞ Ho everyone that is thirsty, come to the waters " Is 55 v 1. (free invitation)