

Experiencing the Shepherd's Position

Getting to know our Heavenly Shepherd

Psalm 23:1

Disclaimer: The following are Dr. Jeff Stott's sermon notes and manuscript. They have not been carefully proofed for spelling or grammar. All Scripture quotes are from the New International Version unless noted.

Open your Bibles to Psalm 23. We are going to spend the next several weeks looking at one of the greatest passages in the entire Bible. It is full of meaning and encouragement.

Someone once said that Psalm 23 can be divided into three sections. In the first section, we see God as the one who can take care of our *frailty*. In the second section we see God as the one who can take care of our *foes*. In the third section we see God as the one who can take care of our *future*.

John Phillips, a great preacher of his day, went into his mother's bedroom the day after she had died. Lying beside her bed was her Bible and it was opened to Psalm 23. In the margins of her Bible she had written down a threefold description of Psalm 23. She had written, "The secret to a happy life, a happy death, and a happy eternity."

If you need hope, encouragement, direction, victory or peace you will discover them all in Psalm 23.

Today we are going to look at the Heavenly Shepherd's position in verse 1, we are going to discover He is to be our Lord. Look with me at **verse 1**, "The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want." Five things about our God you need see today. Five things if we understand to the point of application will change our lives.

1. Our Heavenly Shepherd is powerful: "The Lord"

Number one, our Heavenly Shepherd is powerful. Notice the first two words in **verse 1** describe our Shepherd as "The LORD." Notice how "LORD" is spelt with a capitol L, capitol O, capitol R, and a capitol D. Whenever you see the name "LORD" spelt like that in your Bible it is significant. It is the name Yahweh. The English translation of this name is Jehovah. Yahweh or Jehovah means "the self-existing One and the self-sustained One." He needs no one or nothing He is self-existing. Within Himself God has everything He needs. He is self-sustained. He is sovereign and in control. He is LORD.

Because God does not need anything or need anyone and has everything He is able to supply His people with whatever they need. Because of His self-existing and self-sustaining quality He is able to provide whatever it is that you need. As the self-sustainer He can create whatever He wants. If He wants light all He has to say is, "Let there be light and there is light." It is this self-sustaining, all powerful creator that wants to lead your life and be your Shepherd.

When the "LORD" is your Shepherd you will be able to say "I shall not be in want." Because if He has to, He can create out of nothing whatever it is you need. As the "LORD," He can make a way where there is no way. He can calm the sea where there is a storm. He can take a little and make it a lot. He can bring rain into a life that is a desert. He can bring hope where there seems to be no hope. Now that is the kind of Shepherd you want. When you have the Self-Sustainer as your Shepherd then you have everything to sustain your life in abundance.

2. Our Heavenly Shepherd is present: "is"

The Heavenly Shepherd is powerful and **number two, our heavenly Shepherd is present**. He not only is the God of the past and God of the future, but He is God of the *present*. The here and now. **Verse 1** says, "The LORD is my shepherd." He didn't say, "The Lord was my Shepherd..." Even though that is a good thing to be able to say. That He has led you through the years. He didn't say "The Lord will be my Shepherd..." Even though that is a good thing to say. It is good to know that God will be there to lead and help you in the years to come.

But what God wants us to see and hear and think about today is being able to say, "The LORD is my Shepherd." Right now. He is guiding me in my relationships. In my life now, He is leading me in my decisions, my beliefs, my career, my money, my ministry, and every area of my life. He "IS" my shepherd.

The Lord wants you to have a "present" relationship with Him. He doesn't want us to be caught up only in what our relationship used to be or will be. He wants us to have a current relationship that is fresh. He wants us to be able to say, "He is my Lord. He is the passion of my life. The Lord is my provider. The Lord is the one I follow. The Lord is the one want to be like. He is the Lord of my life."

God wants us to have an "is" relationship with Him. Do you have an "is" relationship? Or is your relationship with Jesus a "was" relationship? The time you were on fire for

Jesus the most “was” back when. You say things like, “I remember when I was reading the Bible all the time. I remember when I was involved in mission trips. I remember when I was singing in the choir, was telling people about Jesus, was tithing, was seeking after God and living for Him.”

God wants us to have an “is” relationship with Him. Do you have an “is” relationship? Or maybe you have a “will be” relationship. You say things like, “When my health gets better I will be more dedicated to God. When my finances improve I will be more faithful. When my life gets more settled I will be on fire for God. When they apologize to me I will be more forgiving.”

God doesn’t want your relationship to be defined as a “was” or a “will be” but as an “is” relationship. If you’ve got an “is” relationship with God the “was” and the “will be” is going to take care of itself.

The question you need to ask yourself is, “Does your life reflect the Lord as your Shepherd right now? The way you treat your spouse, does it reflect the “LORD” being your Shepherd? The way you manage your time and money, does it reflect Him as your Shepherd? The way you speak and react to people, does it show that God is your Shepherd? You want to be able to say in every situation that is currently happening in your life that “the LORD is my shepherd.”

3. Our Heavenly Shepherd is personal. “my”

Our Heavenly Shepherd is full of power to do whatever needs to be done and He is present to be there when it needs to be done and **number three, our Heavenly Shepherd is personal.** Notice **verse 1** says, “The Lord is my shepherd....” That little word “my” makes all the difference. For example: Which statement is more personal? “The child is dead” or “My child is dead.” How about this one: “Jesus is the Savior” or “Jesus is my Savior.” What a difference that word “my” makes.

When Jesus appeared to Thomas after the resurrection and Thomas realized who He was he said, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28).

Can you say that? Can you say that Jesus is your Lord and your God? Do you have a personal relationship with Him? Do you belong to Him and does He belong to you? Can you say, “The Lord is my shepherd.” God wants to have a personal relationship with you. God wants you to be able to say that He is your shepherd. How does the Lord become your shepherd? He becomes your shepherd by asking Him to forgive you of

your sins, to come into your life and help you turn away from your sins and to live a life for Him. If you cannot say, “The Lord is my shepherd” then I want you to seriously consider giving your life to Jesus Christ today. In a few moments you will have that opportunity.

What have we learned so far? We have learned that the Heavenly Shepherd is powerful. He is sovereign. He is LORD. He is in charge. We have also learned that He wants a personal relationship with you.

4. Our Heavenly Shepherd is practical. “Shepherd”

Number four, our Heavenly Shepherd is practical. He’s practical because He takes care of us in very practical ways. Psalm 23 begins with the statement, “The LORD is my shepherd...” What kind of shepherd is He? To understand what kind of shepherd our LORD is we need to look at the three New Testament statements that describe Him as a shepherd.

A. He is the Good Shepherd

The first time Jesus is described as our shepherd **He is described as the Good Shepherd**. Jesus said in **John 10**, “I am the good shepherd; I know My sheep and my sheep know me – (15) just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father – and I lay down My life for the sheep” (14-15). When Jesus says, “I lay down My life for the sheep” He is referring to the time He will die on the cross for the sins of His people. What makes Him the good shepherd is that He died for you. As the good shepherd He paid for the penalty of sin.

B. He is the Great Shepherd

The second time Jesus is described as our shepherd **He is described as the Great Shepherd**. Look at **Hebrews 13:20**, “May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, (21) equip you with everything good for doing His will...” Jesus is the Good Shepherd because He died for you and He is the Great Shepherd because He resurrected from the dead for you and overcame the power of sin.

C. He is the Chief Shepherd

Now watch this. Jesus is not only the Good Shepherd and the Great Shepherd, **but He is also the Chief Shepherd**. God's Word tells us in **1 Peter 5:4**, "When the Chief Shepherd appears [talking about His second coming], you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away." Listen carefully, Jesus is the Good Shepherd because He died for you. He is the Great Shepherd because He arose from the grave for you and He is the Chief Shepherd because He is coming back for you.

As the Good Shepherd He dealt with the penalty of sin. As the Great Shepherd He deals with the power of sin. As the Chief Shepherd He will deal with the very presence of sin.

The Lord is my Shepherd who died for me, resurrected for me and is coming back for me. What a practical God we have.

5. Our Heavenly Shepherd is a provider: "I shall not be in want"

Number five, our heavenly Shepherd is a provider. **Verse 1** says, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want." When you have a Shepherd who is powerful enough to do whatever needs to be done, present to be there when it needs to be done, who cares enough about you to want a personal relationship with you, who will die for you, resurrect for you, and come back for you then you've got to know He will take care you.

Psalms 34:9 says, "The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing" (9-10). **Philippians 4:19** says, "And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus." It does not matter what you are going through. If you are one of His sheep you will have what ever it is you need. You shall not want. Your needs will be met. Your Shepherd is the Great Provider. You can count on Him.

Conclusion

Earlier we saw that Jesus is the Good Shepherd and as the Good Shepherd Jesus said, "I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:15). Did you know that Jesus gave up His life so that you could have eternal life? Did you know that Jesus paid the price for your sin? He took the punishment on the cross so that you could have eternal life in heaven. To receive that eternal life you must believe that Jesus is Lord, that He died for your sins

and that He resurrected from the grave as Lord of all. If you will place your faith in Him He will save you [lead in a salvation prayer].