

Memory Verse

Psalm 22:19

**But you, O LORD, do not be far off! O you my help,
come quickly to my aid!**



Selections from the Psalms

Part 7

Psalm 23

Being a Content Sheep



Psalm 23 is in the middle of a trilogy:
Psalms 22-24. *Psalm 22* is about **suffering**.
Psalm 23 is God's **provision and protection**.
Psalm 24 is about **exaltation** and an
ascension Psalm.

T. Earnest Wilson writes in, *The Messianic Psalms*, these 3 Psalms, "...speak of Christ as the **Sufferer**, the **Shepherd** and the **Sovereign**."

Psalm 23:1-6

A Psalm of David.

1The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still [quiet] waters. 3He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no

Psalm 23:1-6

evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. 5You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

In this Psalm, David describes God as a Shepherd and a Host of a meal. While the Shepherd motif carries over into the second, David uses poetic imagery to describe the Lord. In order to be a *content sheep*, we need to *understand our Shepherd*. We will look at this Psalm in context, and bring out **3 character qualities of God**.

A. *Psalm 23:1-3* – The LORD as Shepherd

1 – ...*The LORD* – God's covenant keeping personal Name: *YHWH*. David speaks of **God** in an intimate way. ...*is my shepherd*
First, this is **personal**, *not general*. Though God was a shepherd to the nation of Israel, He was also a *shepherd to individuals*, which included David. God *shepherded* Israel, but to *David* He is ...*my shepherd*.

A. *Psalm 23:1-3* – The LORD as Shepherd

Second: He protected sheep from predators and robbers, who would steal them. He built a pen for them to sleep in with **one** door and *slept there* to protect them. He provided for the sheep. He *led them* to the good pastureland and water. He *alone* had the responsibility to take care of them and go after one that got lost.

A. *Psalm 23:1-3* – The LORD as Shepherd

Third, if the LORD was *David's shepherd*, David refers to himself as...?

Sheep are stupid and stubborn! They don't know green grass from dirt. If the grass is gone, they will eat dirt and rocks. *They are helpless.*

A. *Psalm 23:1-3* – The LORD as Shepherd

There are many references in the Old Testament of God as the Shepherd of Israel: *Numbers 27:17, 1 Kings 22:17, Psalm 80:1, Isaiah 40:11, Jeremiah 31:10* and more.

A. *Psalm 23:1-3* – The LORD as Shepherd

...*I shall not want* – It means we *won't be in want* or won't lack the proper care needed. It means *God provides what we need*, as He promises in *Philippians 4:19*, in the context of giving. In *verses 2-3*, David gives **specifics** about *how* God took care of him through **4 action verbs** in *verses 2-3* about what the Shepherd did for David.

A. *Psalm 23:1-3* – The LORD as Shepherd

2 – ...*He makes me to lie down in green pastures* - the **first verb** is “*pastures of tender grass.*” God *makes* or *allows* the sheep lie down: **2 aspects: 1)**

Contentment*, 2) *Chastisement.

Contentment: Keller notes sheep will not lie down if there are bugs bugging them. Nor will they relax if they feel the *need* for food.

A. *Psalm 23:1-3* – The LORD as Shepherd

How can we be content?

1) It is *learned*.

2) It takes *time*.

3) It is *in Christ*.

A. *Psalm 23:1-3* – The LORD as Shepherd

Chastisement: Sheep like to *wander*.
Sheep **go astray** and the **shepherd**
rescues him/her and carries the animal
back on his shoulders. If that sheep goes
astray again, and again, the shepherd with
tears in his eyes, takes a leg of the lamb
and **lovingly breaks it**, so it *cannot*
wander off again.

A. Psalm 23:1-3 – The LORD as Shepherd

Green pastures are where sheep were taken care of properly. They ate, *enjoyed the freedom the shepherd gave them*, with *boundaries set by the shepherd*. This does **not** mean a *lush open field with a great abundance of food*. God can do that, but if He always did, we *wouldn't need to trust Him*.

A. *Psalm 23:1-3* – The LORD as Shepherd

...He *leads* me beside still waters – waters of rest or quiet waters. “Leads” here, means to *gently lead* or *guide*. It **doesn’t mean**, “force.” Most sheep won’t drink rushing water because of fear, though some may and be carried away. “*Still waters*” are *safe* and *clean*.

A. *Psalm 23:1-3* – The LORD as Shepherd

3 – ...*He restores my soul* – the **third verb** – *restores*. Keller explains this well. When we are “*cast down*” the Lord restores us.

...*He leads me in the paths of righteousness* – the **fourth verb** – *leads*, **different** from *verse 2*. This means to *govern, transport or rule* in one sense.

A. *Psalm 23:1-3* – The LORD as Shepherd

Why does He lead *His sheep* into paths of righteousness? ...*for His Name's sake* – for His glory. When we *do what is righteous*, God is honored and glorified. When we *do what is unrighteous*, He is dishonored.

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B. *Psalm 23:4-5* – The LORD as Protector

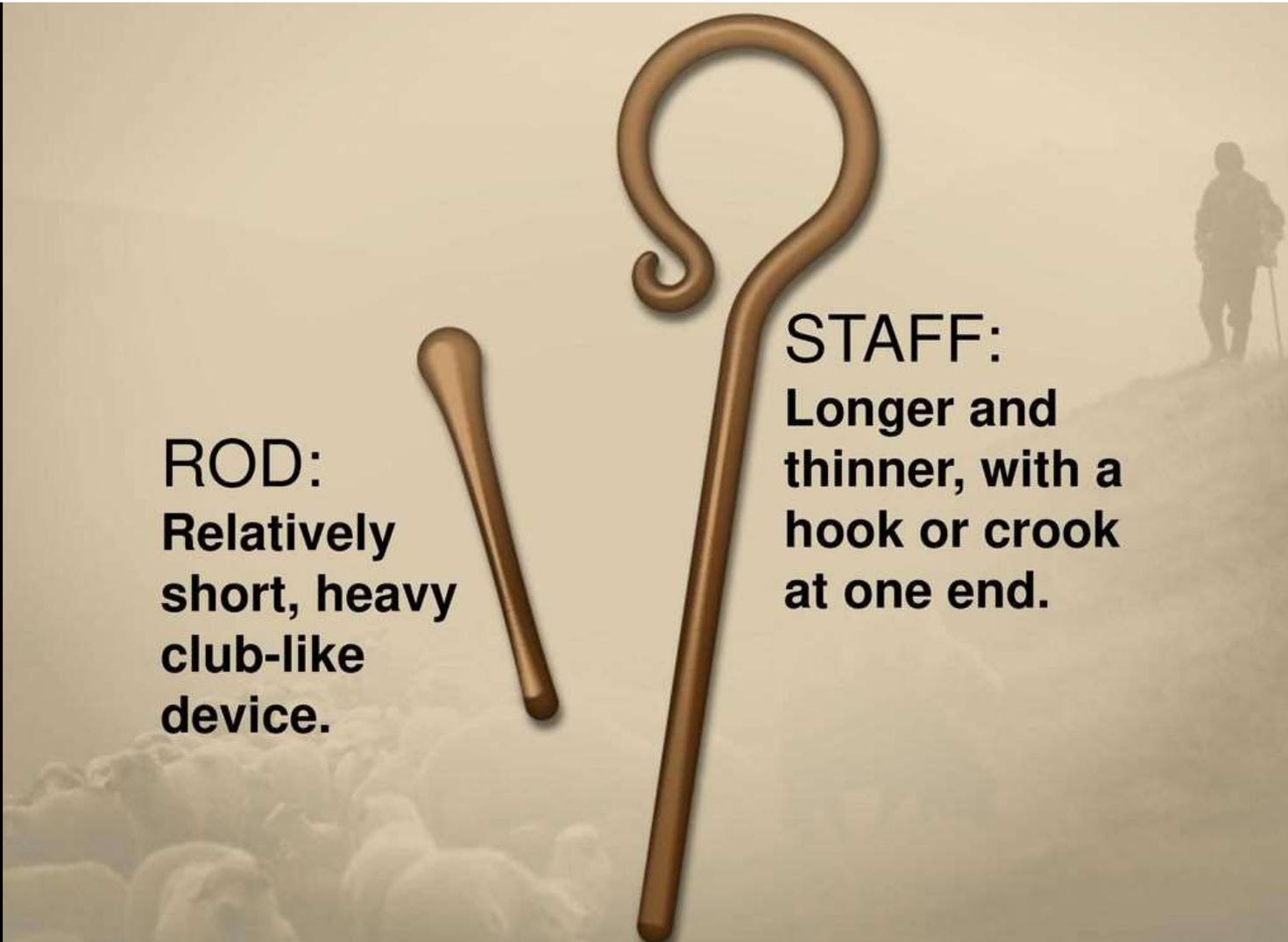
4 – There is a change in the Psalm in this verse. From talking *about* the Shepherd, David speaks *to* the Shepherd. He goes from the 3rd person to the 2nd person, from *He* to *You*. This is probably one of the *most misunderstood verses* in the Bible.





B. *Psalm 23:4-5* – The LORD as Protector

Therefore, the security the sheep felt was *because of the shepherd, not the situation*, which David describes. He *wouldn't fear* because of the presence of the LORD. He also speaks of the *protection of the LORD*, His *rod and staff*.



ROD:
Relatively
short, heavy
club-like
device.

STAFF:
Longer and
thinner, with a
hook or crook
at one end.

B. *Psalm 23:4-5* – The LORD as Protector

5 – This is where David shifts the *imagery* to God as a host of a meal. God prepared a table for him *in the presence of his enemies*. The word *...table* – a land area like a plateau or mesa.



B. *Psalm 23:4-5* – The LORD as Protector

David speaks of *being anointed with oil* and the *overflow of his cup* from his Shepherd. In *this text*, David speaks of *a journey of himself as a sheep*. He goes through the dark valley to graze in green pasturelands prepared by his Shepherd in the middle of enemy territory. Though at peace, there is a problem, which the oil fixes.

B. *Psalm 23:4-5* – The LORD as Protector

Keller notes there are *many bugs, parasites and insects* that make life miserable for a sheep. One of these is *like a fly* that lays its eggs in the nose of a sheep. When these eggs hatch, the *larvae* go up the nose towards the brain. Some sheep kill themselves because they are *driven crazy by these parasites*.

C. *Psalm 23:6* – The LORD as Provider

6 – This certainty was ...*goodness* – the good things of God. And His *mercy* or “*chesed*” translated as *mercy, grace* or *loving kindness* and means “*covenant faithfulness*.” These **2 things** ...*will follow me all the days of my life* – the word for “*follow*” is “pursue, run after, chase or hunt.”

C. *Psalm 23:6* – The LORD as Provider

He ...*will dwell in the house of the LORD forever – he will sit down, remain, live there.* In the Hebrew this has the sense of *marrying* and living somewhere in a permanent manner. David mentions the *house of the LORD* or the *Tabernacle*. He would be with God forever! Think of this from a *sheep's perspective*.

Prayer

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Philippians 4:6

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