

Let's quickly review where we are with the psalms and their divisions and what we've covered so far.

We started with the lament and petition psalms and one such psalm is the 53<sup>rd</sup>.

**Psalm 53:1-6** <sup>NAU</sup> For the choir director; according to Mahalath. A Maskil of David. The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God," They are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice; There is no one who does good. <sup>2</sup> God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there is anyone who understands, Who seeks after God. <sup>3</sup> Every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one. <sup>4</sup> Have the workers of wickedness no knowledge, Who eat up My people *as though* they ate bread And have not called upon God? <sup>5</sup> There they were in great fear *where* no fear had been; For God scattered the bones of him who encamped against you; You put *them* to shame, because God had rejected them. <sup>6</sup> Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When God restores His captive people, Let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.

Then last week we moved to praise and thanksgiving psalms and appropriately enough the very last psalm ends in just this way.

**Psalm 150:1-6** <sup>NAU</sup> Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty expanse. <sup>2</sup> Praise Him for His mighty deeds; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness. <sup>3</sup> Praise Him with trumpet sound; Praise Him with harp and lyre. <sup>4</sup> Praise Him with timbrel and dancing; Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe. <sup>5</sup> Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with resounding cymbals. <sup>6</sup> Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!

Today we will look at the trust psalms and get a glimpse into how the Holy Spirit has inspired His people to pen words that were meant to be put to music with the express purpose of demonstrating how God is a trustworthy creator and savior.

And one of the most read of the trust psalms and for that matter of all of the psalms is the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm.

**Psalm 23:1-6** <sup>NAU</sup> A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. <sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. <sup>3</sup> He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. <sup>4</sup> Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. <sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. <sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

This psalm must have been very dear to the heart of David as the Holy Spirit takes an integral part of David's life and brings it to bear upon how he too was in the position of being all that this psalm portrays.

### **How might that be?**

The early part of David's life was being a shepherd to his sheep. The context in which we first meet David is after God rejected the reigning king of Israel, Saul, for his disobedience.

**1 Samuel 16:1** <sup>NAU</sup> Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons."

**1 Samuel 16:10-13** <sup>10</sup> Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these." <sup>11</sup> And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are these all the children?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and behold, he is tending the sheep." Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here." <sup>12</sup> So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he." <sup>13</sup> Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

It would be some time later that this anointing would actually be enacted by God into a commission for which God chose David, where he goes from shepherd to king, and yet never really relinquishing his role as shepherd since he represents the King of

kings and Lord of lords who has placed David as ruler and protector of Israel.

And so, David is actually a type of Christ in that the Holy Spirit would use David's life as a word picture of how the Messiah would be shown through the life of David as One who would become the ultimate Shepherd and King over His people.

The first transition for David between shepherd and king takes place at the battle of Socoh where Israel would be confronted by the Philistines and in particular Goliath.

**1 Samuel 17:12-15** <sup>12</sup> Now David was the son of the Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, whose name was Jesse, and he had eight sons. And Jesse was old in the days of Saul, advanced *in years* among men. <sup>13</sup> The three older sons of Jesse had gone after Saul to the battle. And the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and the second to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. <sup>14</sup> David was the youngest. Now the three oldest followed Saul, <sup>15</sup> but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's flock at Bethlehem.

**It is no coincidence that we see David tending his father's flock at Bethlehem. Since David is in fact a type of Christ, as we have explained, in what way is David tending his father's flock at Bethlehem instructive of the Messiah to come many years later?**

The great Shepherd of the sheep of God would be born in Bethlehem, but whose reign and rule would be over Israel in Jerusalem, but it would be the new Israel, the Israel of God in the new Jerusalem on the new earth.

But if David is a foretaste, if you will, of the future shepherd Messiah, what would that Shepherd look like and what would be His function among His sheep?

Well, the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm begins to answer that as we are shown a Shepherd in whom we can trust for eternity.

**Psalms 23:1** <sup>NAU</sup> A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

**From one shepherd to another what is David saying?**

David knew the role of the shepherd. It is one in which there is a head and there are those over whom that head exists, namely the sheep.

David is a shepherd/king and here he makes it clear that he is still subordinate to the great Shepherd, his God and Lord. And because of that he has placed all of his trust in the only One who can effectively lead, guide and protect.

And so, David can say with confidence, because the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

### **What does David mean when he states that he does not want?**

It doesn't mean that David has lost the desire for wants. We all want things. We want a good job, we want good family and friends, we want a roof over our heads and to live in safety. There is nothing wrong with wants.

What David is saying is that all of his wants will be met according to the one who is Shepherd over him and only has his best interests in mind.

The NIV comes pretty close to what this verse is actually saying.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Psalm 23:1** A psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

<sup>NET</sup> **Psalm 23:1** *A psalm of David.* The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

And so, David begins this psalm of trust by saying that because my Shepherd knows more of what I need than even I do, (not unlike how sheep in the field are often clueless of their needs), I know that He will meet all of my needs and wants as He sees fit for my best.

Sometimes sheep will be under the impression that they need to move when the shepherd is not leading them. Maybe they get spooked by a loud noise or they may smell a predator nearby.

### **But if one of them decides to move without the shepherd leading them, what happens to the rest of the flock?**

And so, now you have chaos as sheep are running in all directions thinking they are doing the right thing instead of letting the shepherd do his job by keeping his sheep in one place as he takes care of the threat.

David knows how fickle his heart can be, and he also knows that his Shepherd has been there for him in the past. But, even if he

didn't, he has the sure word of those who went before Him that God is one who can be trusted.

He need only go back to the word of the prophets before him, specifically Moses, who wrote about God's faithfulness to Adam and Eve, to Noah and his family and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

God can be trusted whether or not He has met a particular need in our lives in the past. But the truth of the matter is that all of us in Christ have already tasted the most trustworthy aspect of God's promise found in His Son Jesus Christ who has given us eternal life and the hope of glory to come.

And so, even if we never got another blessing from God in this world, we are still promised the greatest blessing of all. Having said that, we can still and must trust God even in this world for all our needs and wants even as the sparrows do.

**Matthew 10:29-32** <sup>29</sup> "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. <sup>30</sup> "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup> "So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows. <sup>32</sup> "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.

And so, David knows that he lacks nothing because God is the creator and sustainer of the universe and that includes sustaining David himself.

But notices what happens from verse two on. Take note of the personal pronoun He.

**Psalms 23:2** <sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.

**Keeping in mind what David knows about sheep what is the significance of making David lie down in green pastures and being led to quiet waters?**

Sheep can be pretty skittish and their trust factor in their shepherd has to be pretty high to be able to relax and rest comfortably. This verse is interesting in that a more literal rendering might be, "He stretches me out in a meadow."

For those of you who have or have had pets, particularly cats or dogs, you've seen that animal relax as they stretch themselves out

either in a supine or prone position, which is to say either laying on their backs or on their stomachs with all four legs spread out.

That is a contented animal who trusts his environment and the people around him. That same animal who is about to be taken to the vet has an entirely different demeanor doesn't it?

Their eyes are wide open, their ears are back, their fur is standing straight up and their tails are usually between their legs.

### **What's the difference between those two scenarios?**

In the second scenario their trust is out the door, they're anxious because they know they are about to embark on something that is potentially scary and hurtful.

But what if their owner could communicate to them in such a way where he could relieve any fear by assuring them that they will not let any hurtful thing happen to them that isn't necessary even if it is scary?

My experience in the medical field is that even when you can communicate effectively with a patient and assure them that what they are about to experience will not hurt them and will actually help them, more times than not they are still scared and anxious.

And especially with kids, nothing, not even mom by their sides, will alleviate the terror in their eyes, until the test is over. It's like Dr. Jeckel and Mr Hyde. That child will fight you tooth and nail and is usually crying, but once you say those words, "all done", and mom is by their side again, the smile usually begins creeping back over their faces pretty quickly.

That's how we are with God sometimes. He assures us that He can and does give us the confidence that He is not only stretching us out in green, lush meadows, but is also taking us beside quiet waters, but the only thing we see is a field full of sharp, jagged rocks and raging rapids that are about to engulf us.

David had experienced both, but he can still write that God hasn't changed His attitude toward the sheep He loves and only desires their best.

**Psalm 23:3-4** <sup>3</sup> He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. <sup>4</sup> Even though I walk through

the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

**Why would there be a need for David's soul to be restored?**

Because prior to the restoration there was probably the terror we just mentioned. So, David is making it clear that God's intention is not to terrorize us, but in the affairs of life He allows us to walk down paths that are pretty scary, in paths that lead to the valley of the shadow of death.

**Now, why would God allow us to walk down such paths, keeping in mind the theme of this psalm?**

Because sometimes the only way to demonstrate trust in the One who loves us is to have that trust tested.

It's like that child who is just learning to walk. Remember when they were able to walk around a room only holding on to stuff. And you knew they were ready to take a few steps on their own. You held out your hand about three feet from them and encouraged them to take two or three steps assuring them that you would catch them. And they might let go of the chair they were holding on to as they wobble back and forth, and you say come on, come on.

And invariably, they shake their heads from side to side and grab back on to the chair. They are learning a couple of things. They are learning about their own abilities and they are learning about their desire to walk and yes their ability to trust that if they do fall you will catch them.

They eventually get it and their trust in you is secure after their attempts are met with success.

But what happens after those first steps turn into walking and then running after a time?

**At that point how prevalent is their need to trust you for that particular area of life?**

**In what other areas of life might that trust be put to the test again?**

This happens to us as well. We trust God for all sorts of things in life, but sometimes we achieve successes to where we don't think

we need God as much in that area of life and we can do things on our own quite well.

**However, our great Shepherd still desires our trust. So, what might He do to assure that we continue to trust, especially when we seem to have achieved success in an area where we don't think we need to trust Him as much?**

He might place us in an area where things are not very comfortable, like the valley of the shadow of death.

By the way, there is no indication in that verse that it is a valley of death. Only a valley of the shadow, or darkness of death. As kids we were sometimes scared of shadows. But shadows don't hurt anyone. And this is why David continues.

**Psalm 23:4** <sup>4</sup> ...I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

**Why does David not fear, either real or imagined dangers?**

Because he trusts his Shepherd. David knew what a rod and a staff were for. They were to lead and protect. And David knew that his Shepherd would do both in any circumstance, especially circumstances where he was forced to trust his God.

And in the final analysis our Great Shepherd is actually leading us some place not just causing us to wander aimlessly in this world.

**Psalm 23:5-6** <sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. <sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Our enemies may come against us in many different ways, but there will be a time in which God will bless us and bring us into the wedding feast as God prepares a table just for us. Jesus touches on this in the gospel of John and Matthew and the book of Revelation.

**John 14:2-3** <sup>2</sup> "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also.

**Matthew 26:27-29** <sup>27</sup> And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; <sup>28</sup> for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. <sup>29</sup> "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

**Revelation 19:7-9** <sup>7</sup> "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." <sup>8</sup> It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. <sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."

This is the marriage supper of the lamb that David longed for as he ends this 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm.

**Psalms 23:6** <sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

**Revelation 21:3-5** <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, <sup>4</sup> and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." <sup>5</sup> And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

Yes He can be trusted and He loves it when we trust Him as He leads us and guides us and protects us as only the Shepherd can, as He speaks to us and we listen attentively.

**John 10:27-28** <sup>27</sup> "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; <sup>28</sup> and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.