

Valleys

Read the 23 Psalm:

God is the Creator of valleys because the Father knows best that we grow most in the green grass of low places in our lives.

Psalm 23:4 challenges us with the question: Can you trust the Shepherd?

Psalm 23 is shared at funerals, deathbeds, hospitals and in places of worship.

This Psalm is divided into three parts:

First David takes us into the Valley, then he takes us down into the Gorge.

And, finally, on to Glory.

- ***The One who can take care of our Frailty - The One who can take care of our Enemies - The One who can take care of our Future***

OR "The secret of a happy life, a happy death, a happy eternity."

It's interesting that each of the O.T. names for Jehovah are seen in this Psalm:

Jehovah-Jireh – "The Lord will provide" (Gen. 22:13-14).

Jehovah-Rapha – "The Lord will heal or restore" (Ex. 15:26).

Jehovah-Shalom – "The Lord our peace" (Judges 6:24)

Jehovah-Tsidkenu – "The Lord our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6)

Jehovah-Shammah – "The Lord is there" (Ezek. 48:35)

Jehovah-Nissi – "The Lord our banner" (Ex. 17:8-15)

Jehovah-Rohi – "The Lord my shepherd" (Ps. 23:1).

It is a familiar idea throughout the Bible, that the Lord is a Shepherd to His people.

THE SHEPHERD TRILOGY – It's significant where Psalm 23 is in Scripture.

Psalms 22-24 are known as the Shepherd Trilogy because these three chapters point to the three-fold Shepherd ministry of Jesus Christ to His followers.

Psalm 22 – Jesus is THE GOOD SHEPHERD who died for the sheep. This chapter is a portrait of the Cross and begins with the famous quote of the Savior as he died for our sins on Calvary: "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" It is a foreshadowing of the Savior who died for His sheep as He said of Himself in - -

John 10:11: "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

Psalm 23 – Jesus is THE GREAT SHEPHERD who lives for the sheep.

- He can lead us through the “valley of the shadow of death”
- He has conquered death by His resurrection from the grave.

Hebrews speaks of Jesus, a fulfilment of this prophetic chapter:

Hebrews 13:20 - Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

Psalm 24 – Jesus is THE CHIEF SHEPHERD who returns for the sheep.

Psalm 24 ends with a question: “Who is this King of Glory?”

Then, David, supplies the answer of the heart of every true believer in Christ:
“Let Him come in!”

- Clearly, this is a portrait of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, who will one day come to this earth and reign as King.
- The first time He came to suffer and die for our sins. (Our Lamb)
- The second time He is coming to reign as Sovereign King. (Our Lion)

Peter points to that great day: 1 Peter 5:4: “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.”

- Jesus is the Good Shepherd who DIED for the sheep.
- Jesus is the Great Shepherd who LIVES for the sheep.
- Jesus is the Chief Shepherd who COMES for the sheep.

WHAT DO THE SHEEP HAVE? A sheep in its foolishness knows, its dependency must be in the Shepherd.

Charles Spurgeon said that before a man can truly say, “The Lord is my shepherd”, he must first feel himself to be a sheep by nature, “for he cannot know that God is his Shepherd unless he feels in himself that he has the nature of a sheep.”

- The Sheep of Psalm 23 are loved, cared for, protected and well-fed.
- The Shepherd knows each sheep by name, and they know His voice.
- He speaks to His sheep. Do you hear His voice?

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

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What is the first thing He speaks to our hearts?

Psalm 23:1 "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

What does that mean? "I shall not want" means, "All my needs are supplied by the Lord, my Shepherd." Not my greed's, my needs.

"I shall not want" is the theme for the entire chapter of Psalm 23:

In v.2 "I shall not want" for rest and refreshment.

In v.3 "I shall not want" for restoration & righteousness.

In v.4 "I shall not want" for protection in times of trouble.

In v.5 "I shall not want" for provision even in the wilderness.

In v.6 "I shall not want" for a home to go to at the end of the day.

CAST DOWN SHEEP - David cried out in Psalm 43:5 - Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.

David was depressed and discouraged as he ran for his life from jealous King Saul.

- The term he uses "cast down" comes from the language of a Shepherd.
- David served as a Shepherd for years as a young man before God called him to be King of Israel.
- When a sheep is cast down, it is flat on its back, unable to get up.
- Have you ever been in a situation like that?
- Do you remember looking up to God, wondering where He was.

When a shepherd found a sheep that was cast down, he knew it came from one of 3 reasons:

- Overweight – the sheep was overweight by eating too much. Sometimes we feed ourselves on the wrong spiritual diet and it brings depression to our souls.

- **Looking for Soft Places** – sometimes sheep will find a nice, soft, hollow spot and lie down. The rest is great, but ***the soft spot becomes a trap***, and ***the sheep is unable to get on its feet***.
- **Don't look for a cushy spot in life** to serve the Lord. He calls us to a Cross ***to follow him***.
- **Wool matted with mud** – a sheep can ***get stuck in the mud*** when the dirt sticks in the thick wool.
- **Wool in the Bible is a symbol of our selfish, sinful nature.**

When we ***allow our "wool to get dirty"*** and have ***sin*** in the heart ***without confession and repentance***, we may ***fall into*** pit ***we created ourselves***.

Luke 15, Jesus tells three parables: Lost Coin, sheep, and Son. All illustrating God's love and desire for the lost to return. (Cast down, come home!)

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THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

Psalm 23:4 is a ***unique verses in the Bible***. It is about ***walking through valleys***.

- Valleys are ***low places*** in life where we learn to grow.
- I am convinced that ***God is the Creator of valleys***.

Let's take a word-by-word analytical look at this great verse:

"THOUGH" - I have never thought about how important the word, **"though"**, is in Scripture. It is a word that means, ***"in spite of the fact"***.

Scripture using the word, **"though"** -

- **Job** said, ***"THOUGH*** he slay me, yet I will serve Him" (**Job 13:15**).
- God said to **Isaiah**, ***"THOUGH*** your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (**Isaiah 1:18**).

YEA, THOUGH I "WALK" - ***The Christian life is a walk with the Lord through the valleys and to the mountain top.***

Psalm 23 describes ***the journey of sheep*** which walk ***with their Shepherd through the valley*** to the green pastures.

There are so many *great verses in Scripture* which talk about our walk:

- 2 Corinthians 5:7 - For we walk by faith, not by sight.
- Colossians 2:6 You have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.

WALKING implies several things:

- You must have life. You are moving either forward or backward.
- You must take one step at a time. You need the light to see your path.
- All these things point to our life in Christ.

THE "PATH" he has prepared for our lives, it makes so much sense "*He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.*"

What happens when we get off the path God has set for us?

The result is chaos, just like Samson, Saul and Peter in Scripture.

- Many more names of *biblical heroes could be mentioned* from Scripture.
- I am so glad that *the Bible paints the heroes of faith warts and all*.
- The Bible does not glorify man, but God.

"THE VALLEY" - Valleys are low places between mountain tops.

It is amazing how much God says in Scripture about valleys:

1. The Valley of Siddim - This is a valley where sin abounded.

This represents a valley in our lives, the valley of SIN.

- The valley of Siddim is where Sodom and Gomorrah were.
- God looked down and saw the wickedness of these cities and said,
- "*I am going to rain fire and brimstone on them*" (Genesis 19).

2. The Valley of Eschol – We've made wrong choices in the valley of decision.

- Eschol is located just inside the Promised Land.
- Do you recall the grapes of Eschol?
- The Israelites came to the Promised Land, and they appointed twelve spies.

- Those twelve spies went over into the Promised Land.
- They said it was land that flowed with milk and honey.
- They brought back grapes that were so big it took two men to carry one.
- But they made the wrong choice in the VALLEY of DECISION!

3. The Valley of Elah - It is the VALLEY of BATTLES

Elah is where David looked out and heard Goliath shout his challenges across the valley. David took his slingshot and faced Goliath in the valley of Elah.

- There he slew Goliath..
Are you in the heat of battle? You are living in the Valley of Elah.

4. The Valley of Achor - Achor is the VALLEY of CHASTENING.

- Where Achan was stoned to death for lying to God and stealing from God.
- The Lord said, "Do not take anything that is in Jericho. "
- He paid a dear price for selfishness.

Are you hiding something from God? Are you living in the Valley of Achor?

5. The Valley of Gehenna - The garbage dump of Jerusalem. It's a place of death.

- Scholars believe it is the VALLEY of the shadow of DEATH.
- Are you nearing the gates of death in your own life?
- You may be near to the Valley of Gehenna.

Things you and I need to remember about valleys in our spiritual life.

A valley is a low place or a place where our faith is tested.

1. VALLEYS ARE INEVITABLE –

John 16:33 - Jesus said that "in this world, you shall have tribulation."

- Mark it down - God has already planned valleys on your calendar
- This is where we grow the most, not on the mountain top.

2. VALLEYS ARE UNPREDICTABLE - Jeremiah 4:20 - Jeremiah said that *“Disaster follows disaster; the whole land lies in ruins. In an instant my tents are destroyed...”*.

3. VALLEYS ARE IMPARTIAL - Jesus said, **Matthew 5:45** that *“it rains on the just and the unjust”* and not just the just! Unbelievers have plenty of troubles, too.

4. VALLEYS ARE TEMPORARY - 1 Peter 1:6 - On that day you will be glad, even if you have to go through many hard trials for a while.

- *The clouds come, the storm hits, and the SON appears.*

5. VALLEYS GROW OUR FAITH - If you are in a valley, it's not a disappointment, it is HIS-APPOINTMENT.

James 1:1-4 - James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.

Profiting from Trials - - - 2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces [a]patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be [b]perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

- Believers in Christ should **rejoice & praise God when trials come!**
- Because **God is answering our prayer** and growing our faith!

DON'T WASTE YOUR VALLEYS!

We have wasted our valleys!

We complained to the Lord when He put us in a valley not understanding that it was sent to lead us to the mountain top.

1. **We can waste our valley** if we **do not** believe it was designed for us by God.

2. ***We can waste our valley*** if we think it's **a curse** and not a gift from God.

3. ***We can waste our valley*** if we spend too much time **WORRYING** about the valley and not enough time **WORSHIPPING** Jesus.

4. ***We can waste our valley*** in self-pity instead of deepening our relationships.

5. *We can waste our valley* if we *grieve as unbelievers who have no hope.*

7. *We can waste our valley* if we fail to *use this painful trial* as a means of *witnessing to unbelievers.*

NO RAIN - NO GAIN - If you are going to grow in Christ, you must walk through valleys. You *never walk alone* in your valley for “You are with me”.

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“THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH”

Hinnom Valley was where horrific things took place.

- *Pagans worshipped the god Molech, they would sacrifice their children to a god who was really a demonic spirit.*
- *Burned alive* or *sacrificed.*
- Their bodies were *burned and placed into the Valley* of Hinnom.

After the Jews returned to Israel from the Babylonian exile,

- *Hinnom became a garbage dump where anything unclean was put.*
- *Dead animals & bodies of executed criminals* along with *all trash.*
- *Fires had to be burned here non-stop so the waste would not take over.*

This valley was dark, difficult and scary to pass through.

Jesus taught about eternity in Hell (Gehenna), meaning “a place of waste.”

Wasted lives - Wasted grace - Wasted opportunity - Wasted time.

- When Jesus taught about faith *he compared it to the Mustard seed.*
- Ironically, Mustard trees grew everywhere *in the Valley of Hinnom.*
- Jesus was saying, *even though faith is small, it can accomplish big things.*

“I FEAR NO EVIL.....FOR YOU ARE WITH ME”

I have witnessed the death of people *who walked with their Shepherd* to their Heavenly Home. *The peace on their faces* has been an incredible *miracle for me to behold* throughout my ministry.

Hebrews 13:5b For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."
The opposite is true for those who do not know Christ.

- **Robert Ingersoll**: "O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul!"

The difference when a child of God who knows where they are going.

D.L. Moody: "Earth recedes. Heaven opens before me. If this is death, it is sweet!
There is no valley here. God is calling me, and I must go."

I heard a story about a king one time and a court Jester who entertained him. One day he said to the court jester, "O, court jester, you are the biggest fool I know." He extended to him his royal scepter. He said, "Court jester, you are the biggest fool I know. Keep it until you find a bigger fool than yourself."

The court jester kept the royal scepter of the king. Then the days came when the king knew he was going to die.

He called for his court jester to come in and he said, "**O court jester, I am going on a long journey, never again to return**."

The court jester said, "O, sir, what preparations have you made for this long journey?" The king shook his head and said, "Alas, I've made none."

In that moment the jester extended to the king his scepter. He said, "**Here sir, you are a bigger fool than I**."

CLOSE: John 1:12 - But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

- *Valleys are low places in life where we learn to grow.*
- *A valley is a place where our faith is tested.*
- **DON'T WASTE YOUR VALLEYS!**
- *If you are going to grow in Christ, you must walk through valleys.*
- Make sure you have your reservations for eternity.
- Trust Christ as your Savior today by inviting Him into your life.

Psalm 23 - The Lord the Shepherd of His People - A Psalm of David.

23 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.

3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.

4 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.