

# Psalm 23: Guidance, Comfort and Confidence in Times of Crisis

## INTRODUCTION

How did you do this past week? How did you manage the 'new normal' this past week?

We live in a world in which many, if not most, people are engulfed with fear and anxiety. Some fear the future; they're anxious about what's going to happen. Others fear the past and they're anxious about what has happened. And still others fear even the present, anxiety has gripped their souls and they cannot imagine how they can cope with the ugliness of present circumstances in their lives. Thousands of people each day wake up with untold burdens to bear and anxiety with which they must deal. Are you one of these? Bearing secretly a heavy burden?

The question then becomes, "*How does God want me to respond to the anxiety in my life?*" Well, like all the great questions of life, Scripture affords us an answer. This time it comes from the life of David. David says, by way of example, in **Psalm 23**, that there *is* a constructive, God-honoring way to respond to anxiety in our lives. He says that we should trust God as the good and faithful Shepherd and rejoice in His grace.

**Psalm 23** is the best known and most beloved of the psalms. **SPURGEON** aptly called it "*the pearl of the psalms.*" It is arguably the most famous and cherished scripture in the Bible. It is the **John 3:16** of the Old Testament. The young and old know it. Seasoned saints, new Christians, and irreligious people are familiar with it. It is memorized by children, recited at weddings, read at sickbeds, preached at funerals, and consulted in counseling.

**Here's my Sermon in a sentence: We can experience guidance, comfort, and confidence in times of crisis as we \_\_\_\_\_ God as the good and faithful shepherd and \_\_\_\_\_ in Him as gracious host.**

*Let's dig in...*

I. \_\_\_\_\_ God as the Good and Faithful Shepherd... (23:1-4)

A. To \_\_\_\_\_ for you

1. His provision is rooted in \_\_\_\_\_

Without a doubt, **Psalm 23** is one of the greatest poems and most inspiring psalms ever written. It is known around the world and has been appreciated throughout the ages. But it is not a song that everyone can sing. **Psalm 23** is the exclusive testimony of those who have a personal relationship with the living God.

2. His \_\_\_\_\_ is perfect (23:2)

**The green pastures probably refer to the tender young shoots that grow up in the morning and are loved by the wildlife of Palestine. The quiet waters probably refer to a well-spring with fresh water.** The psalmist wants us to understand that this Shepherd goes all out for his sheep.

Listen to what Paul said the good Shepherd has done for His people: "*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for all of us, will He not then, along with Him, graciously give us all things*" (Romans 8:32).

3. His provision \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (3a)

**The shepherd literally revives the life of the sheep under his care.** God's provision for David and for us accomplishes similar ends. Whether it is physical needs that are met or spiritual, it revives or rebuilds us. Ultimately it strengthens our trust in God and enlivens our spiritual sensitivities toward Him. **It satisfies our longings to receive from His hand.**

*God's faithful provision is only part of what He does for those who know and love Him.*

**B. To \_\_\_\_\_ you (23:3b)**

*"He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake."* I want you to notice two things here:

**1. He guides you in \_\_\_\_\_ paths**

God desires to lead us into greater and greater righteousness in our lives. Therefore, we must keep a short account with God.

*But notice why He leads and guides us.*

**2. He guides you for \_\_\_\_\_ name's sake**

The end of **verse 3** gives the reason why God was such a faithful Shepherd to David and still is for us today. He does it for His own name's sake. That is, it is for the sake of the glory and reputation of His own name and honor.

**C. To \_\_\_\_\_ you (23:4)**

Notice that in the **first three verses**, David refers to God in the third person: *"The Lord is my Shepherd. He makes me lie down . . . He leads me . . . He restores my soul."* Then, in **vv. 4-5**, David shifts, referring to Him in second person: *"I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me... You anoint my head with oil."* And then, he closes by returning to third person: *"Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."*

Why does David switch from talking about God with '*He*' to talking to God with '*You*,' and why does it happen in **v. 4**? **We're more prone to talk about God when we are in the green pastures and more prone to talk to God when we're in the dangerous ravine.** In the light, we are prone to wander off in pursuit of greener grass. But in the dark, we cling unto Him.

The question that arises as we've looked at **Psalm 23** is, *"How should I respond to problems and pain in my life?"* The first portion of the psalm encourages us to trust in God as the faithful Shepherd, rather than allowing ourselves to be overwhelmed with anxiety.

*But it doesn't stop there, for David's example also encourages us to....*

**II. \_\_\_\_\_ in Him as gracious host (23:5-6)**

**A. Because He spares no \_\_\_\_\_ (23:5)**

The picture here is of God as a gracious host, throwing a banquet as it were, sparing no extravagance for the invited guest.

**B. Because it results in constant \_\_\_\_\_ with Him (23:6)**

Not only can you count on God throughout this life; you can also count on God beyond this life. You can count on God for all eternity. This closing statement of **Psalm 23** reminds us that when the Lord embraces you, He will never change His mind about you.

Do we realize how gracious God has been to us in Christ, forgiving our sin against Him and giving us His Spirit to enable us to walk with Him (**cf. 1 Corinthians 2:12**)? We ought to rejoice in God's grace toward us, rather than be overcome with anxiety over the circumstances the good Shepherd allows in our lives.