

# DEFEATING DESPAIR - Part I

Misery - hopelessness - anguish - gloom - depression - dejection

23 Psalm

## INTRO

- Next **3** sermons - we'll focus on a much loved Bible passage ... the **23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm**
  - Holy Spirit inspired David to share how God supplies all the needs of His sheep ... David expressed these valuable concepts based on his experience as a shepherd
    - One reason this psalm is so loved ... David's use of the first person **pronouns** ~~ such as: I, my, mine, and me
      - There are **17** first-person pronouns in six short verses
- Because of his writing style ~ the **23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm** takes us from an impersonal religion to a **personal relationship** with our loving Heavenly Father
  - David shares **seven** great promises in this Psalm ... and when we have a loving relationship with God ... each one enables us to defeat despair
    - Today ~ we'll look at the **first three** of those assurances ...

## **PROMISE # 1 ~ THE LORD WILL PROVIDE FOR US**

- A main reason for despair is **worry** ... best cure for worry is **Psm 23:1**
  - *The remainder of the psalm elaborates on the fundamental point*
- Look closely at **V 1** - notice the word LORD is in all capital letters ( **seen this before** )
  - It translates the Hebrew name Yahweh [ in English ... Jehovah ]
    - This name for God refers to the eternal ~ all-powerful characteristics of God who promises to take care of His people
      - We can learn a key truth @ Jehovah from Abraham at Mt. Moriah
        - **Gen 22:11 – 14**
- So, **Psm 23:1** could be read:
  - When the Lord is my Shepherd ~ I'll have everything I need
    - **When we really believe** God is **Jehovah** ( *the all-powerful Heavenly Father Who promises to take care of His children* ) ... **we won't worry**

- The great Jehovah who spoke the Universe into existence ... promises to care for us
  - If the **LORD** is our Shepherd ~ we'll not need anything ~ ~ **Phil 4:19**
- Let me stress an important point which **Satan** wants us to overlook ...
  - **V 1** uses the personal pronoun - "**MY**"
    - *Jehovah won't be our Shepherd ~ until the God in Heaven **is our** Lord*
      - When the Great Shepherd is **our** Lord ... He's **our** Boss - CEO - CC
        - "LORD" means He calls the shots and has the final word in **all** situations ~ as **Abraham demo** in Gen 22
    - ***If Jehovah isn't Lord of our life ... He's not our Shepherd***
      - **John 10:14** then **John 10:27**
- When Jesus is our Shepherd ... we **know** ... **listen** ... and **follow** Him
  - We can't say: "God -- I want Jesus to be the Shepherd of my life ... but **NOT** the Lord of my life."
    - We must accept Jesus as **BOTH** Savior and Lord in our lives  
[ Phil 3:20; 1 Tim 1:1,2; 2 Pet 1:1,2; 1:11; 2:20; 3:18; and Jude 25 ]
- If Jesus Christ is not our Lord ~ ~ He's not our shepherd ... and something else is
  - May be ourselves ... our job ... our education ... a significant other ~ ~ whatever
    - When Jesus **isn't** our Shepherd -- **Satan** is free to fill our lives with worry ~ which leads to despair

**TRANS:** Defeating despair requires believing Promise # 1 ~ The Lord will Provide

## **PROMISE # 2 ~ THE LORD WILL PACIFY US**

- The word "pacify" in this promise means to make things peaceful
- Another major reason for despair is **fear**
  - **I. E.** I knew a sheep farmer once ~ **MSU - Sociology Professor**

- He explained: *You can't make a hungry - frightened sheep lie down ~ only happy, contented sheep will lie down*

## **Psm 23:2**

- **Green pastures** = lovely place of fresh, tender grass
  - Is emphasizing pleasantness of location ... not quality of the grass
    - Sheep don't eat while lying down !
- **Still waters** = waters of rest - tranquility
  - Sheep are afraid of fast moving waters
    - If it fell into the water ... its heavy wool would quickly become saturated and the animal would drown
  - In Biblical times ~ a good shepherds would find still water for their flock
    - If they couldn't ... they'd gather large stones and make a damn across the stream ~~ thereby slowing down the water
      - Even in the midst of a dashing scary stream ... the Good Shepherd provides quiet ~ still waters
- As fast, running waters frighten sheep - many things in this life **frighten us**
  - Might be relationship challenges ~ health issues ~ parenting fears ~ financial worries ~ job challenges
    - Let me remind you what our Good Shepherd shares in **John 14:27**
  - **AA/84**: *This peace is not the peace that comes through conformity to the world. Christ never purchased peace by compromise with evil. The peace that Christ left His disciples (including His 21<sup>st</sup> Century Disciples) is internal rather than external and was ever to remain with His witnesses through (all) strife and contention.*
- Unfortunately ... some people have great difficulty finding peace ... and they blame their circumstances
  - God provides a **better** promise ~ **Psm 29:11**

**TRANS**: Defeating despair requires believing God's Word:

- Promise # 1 ~ The Lord will Provide for us
- Promise # 2 ~ The Lord will Pacify us

### **PROMISE # 3 ~ THE LORD WILL PRESERVE US**

- Notice how David expresses this truth ~ **Psm 23:3** Let's focus on the **first line**
  - The word translated **restores** literally means "return" or "go back"
    - It could be translated: ***He brings me to repentance***
- When we get off course ~ spiritually ... .. we need religious restoration
  - This is critical to understand -- for nothing makes us feel despair like **guilt**
    - **Psm 38:4 – 8**
- Since **David** was a shepherd ... he knew sheep have a bad habit of wandering away
  - One of the animals might be attracted to some green grass and roam away
    - Therefore ~ when night comes the shepherd counts the sheep
      - When one's missing ... he finds the lost animal and returns it to the flock
- When we wander from God's sheep pen ~ He tries to restore us - **w/o** *violating free will*
  - When we wander, spiritually ~ we can be overcome w/ **guilt** - thinking God doesn't want us back ... .. this leads to feelings of great despair
    - You might be thinking: ***You just don't know what I've done***
      - You're right ... I don't ~ ~ **good news** is that it doesn't matter
        - Forgiveness isn't based on our sins ~ but on **God's Grace**
          - **2 Pet 3:9**
    - Doesn't matter what we've done ~ what matters is what **Jesus** has done
      - **Rom 3:23, 24**
- God allow us to **choose** what to focus on: **sin / grace** I. E. **POWs in N Viet**
  - Service men given a banquet of **real** food ~ afterward got letters from home

- Writings from loved ones were removed ... there was despair and anger
      - They began to notice **American Flag** was planted on the moon
- Jesus has **already paid** for all our sins ... all our the **past** sins ... all our **present** sins ... and any **future** sins we confess
  - God freely justifies us because of what Jesus did for us on the Cross
    - When we sin ... God as the Good Shepherd wants to restore us and wipe the slate clean and give us a clean slate
      - ***Your past doesn't matter***
- A parallel point I want to ensure we all know ... and remember:
  - When we feel guilty @ a sin we're already confessed to God ~ guilt is **not** from God
    - When we confess our sins ... **God** is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us { 1 John 1:9 }
- **Satan** wants us to feel guilty ... **he** wants us to feel unworthy
  - Before we sin, **Satan** minimizes our actions by helping us to think it's no big deal
    - Then after we sin, **Satan** says: *This sin is so bad ~ God can never use forgive you*
      - **Satan** wants to remove us from of God's Kingdom ... terminate our service for God
      - **God** wants to restore us into His Kingdom ... return us to advancing His Kingdom
  - It's really a matter of whom are we going to believe: **God** or the **Evil One**
    - When we believe God and allow Him to restore us ... we can claim the promise in - **Micah 7:19**
      - **There's more: Ish 43:25** ~ ~ **HE** FORGETS OUR SINS
- When we confess our sins ... God completely forgives us ~ ~ and forgets them

- God literally makes it as though the sin never happened ~~ He doesn't want us to feel guilty about something that never happened

- God always wants to forgive ~ forget ~ and restore us: **Phil 1:6**

**CONCLUSION:** So where have we been today ~ what have we seen:

- **23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm** is based on David's early life as a shepherd in the hills @ Bethlehem
  - There he was responsible for caring for his father's sheep
    - Although he was young & small ... he was strong and skilled as a shepherd
      - He led **Jesse's** flock of sheep thru the desert wilderness of Judah
- **V 1** – *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want*
  - David's knowledge of shepherding was excellent
    - He was familiar with the demands placed on a shepherd to locate food and water for the flock ~ both scarce in the parched desert
- **V 2/3** – *He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want*
  - David knew of the few underground springs hidden in the rocky crevices of the wilderness
    - There he'd lead his sheep to the pools of fresh water ... where the animals could drink and be restored
- Was common to spend the night with the flock out in those desert hills ...
  - ... as the sun set, the wilderness became rows of hills/valleys w/ dark shadows
    - ... the mountains blocked the fading twi-light ~ causing gloomy ravines
      - As David experience these frightful moments ... **he felt despair**
        - **Have a strong irrational fear where dusk arrives**

Defeating despair requires understanding and believing the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm:

- Promise # **1** ~ The Lord will Provide for us

- Promise # **2** ~ *The Lord will Pacify us*
- Promise # **3** ~ *The Lord will Preserve us*