

# DEFEATING DESPAIR - Part II

Misery - hopelessness - anguish - gloom - depression - dejection

23 Psalm

## INTRO

- We return to the beautiful 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm ... which contains **seven** great promises ~ last Sabbath we looked at the first **three**: **PP Slides**
  - Promise # **1** ~ The Lord will **Provide** for us
    - *God will supply all our needs - thru Jesus* ( Phil 4:19 )
  - Promise # **2** ~ The Lord will **Pacify** us
    - *God can make things peaceful for us ... helps to remember He's **most** concerned with the state of our hearts – minds ~ not our circumstances*
    - **AA/84:** “This peace is **not** the peace that comes thru conformity to the world .... The peace (which) Christ left His disciples is **internal** ... and (will forever) remain w/ His witnesses thru (all their) strife & contention.”
  - Promise # **3** ~ The Lord will **Preserve** us
    - *God works His best to bring us to the point of repentance ...*
      - It's our choice ~~ will we grow into true disciples of Jesus ...
        - ... or are we content with just “playing at church”
  - Today we'll explore the next **two** promises ... starting with:

## PROMISE # 4 ~ THE LORD WILL PILOT US **PP Slide**

- *Our life can be viewed as a series of decisions* ~ and often we worry @ making bad choices – going the wrong way **worry - can lead to despair**
  - A great cure for worry is found in **Psm 23:3**
    - **God wants** to direct us along the paths of **righteousness** ...
      - ... but **HOW** do we go about allowing Him to be our Guide
- After accepting Jesus as our **Lord** ... He becomes our Shepherd ...
  - There are at least **3** things we can do which will allow Him to **lead** us along the paths of **righteousness**:

- First **ASK** for His **Assistance** and **Advise**
  - This behavior is simple to describe ... but so much harder to do
    - We must let go of our pride ~ and follow the advice of **James 1:5**
      - **Wisdom** is **NOT** human speculation - but a practical gift from God
  - **11<sup>th</sup> CC** **12<sup>th</sup>:** *If we don't know - **we don't know** ... we think we know*
    - **EGO** - often keeps us from asking God for assistance
      - EGO = **E**dge **G**od **O**ut ... and assume we know what's best
  - If we rid ourselves of this EGO ... we can then ask God to share His wisdom
    - **Wisdom** is the ability to use knowledge to make good decisions
      - God gives us the wisdom we need ... **WHEN** we ask correctly
        - **Matt 9:29**
          - Nothing limits God's ability to lead us along the paths of righteousness ... **like our lack of faith**
  - Therefore ... first we must ask God ~ IN FAITH ~ for His guidance - then:
- (2) **Wait on the Lord** for **Him** to Answer
  - The concept of waiting on the Lord distinguishes God's faithful from those who don't trust Him ~~ those who take things into their own hands ...
    - ... even sinking into sin ~~ especially idolatry
  - Maybe you're like me ... we ask God for wisdom and then hastily make a decision on **our** own
  - Here's the key ~ **Ish 40:31** *God operates on **His** Schedule ... **not ours***
    - David waited **20** years to become King
    - Abraham waited **30** years for his promised son
    - Moses waited **40** years in Midian
    - Noah waited **120** years for rain
    - The Hebrews waited *Thousands of yrs for the **Messiah***

- Bible shows people **waiting** on God ... **KEY POINT: Faith Waits**
  - With the help of the Holy Spirit ~ we must implement **Psm 5:3** [ pray ]
    - Then follow the guidance of **Psm 37:7**
  - Bible is clear & consistent ... for God to **pilot** us ~~ **we ask**, then **wait**
- **As we wait** ~ there's something else we must do: (3) **Listen to the Lord**
  - My generation grew up having their favorite AM radio station – listened in the car
    - To hear ... we had to find just the “right spot” on the radio dial

**VIDEO CLIP**

  - Some saints don't hear God's Voice ... because we're not tuned in **to Him**
    - **Job 33:14 - 17**
      - **SOO** ... **how** do we go about getting tuned into God so He will lead us along the path of righteousness ~ and help us make good decisions
- We explored the answer some last week ~ **John 10:27** [ Hymn # 590 ]
  - To “hear” the Voice of God ... *one needs to go to the places where He's at*
    - For example: group Bible Study - Worship ~ where 2 or 3 gathered
      - **220** members of the Auburn SDA Church
        - Average attendance at Worship @ **44%** of those saints
          - Attendance at SS @ **50 - 60%** of Worship
            - **Weekly Prayer Mtg** - less than a dozen
    - **How** do the majority of our members know which station they're listening to?

**TRANS:** Defeating despair requires believing Promise # 4: The Lord Will Pilot Us

- God will **lead** us ... when we **Ask** Him ~ **Wait** Upon Him ~ and **Listen** to Him

## PP Slide **PROMISE # 5 ~ THE LORD WILL PROTECT US**

- **Psm 23:4**
- Even w/ Jesus as our Shepherd ... life **won't** always be green pastures - still waters
  - Sometimes we will be walking through the valley of the shadow of death
    - This Earthly life is a mixture of:
      - Pleasure and pain
      - Blessings and problems
      - Mountain tops and valleys
- When we're walking through those dark valleys ~ helps to remember **3** things:

### **VALLEYS CAN BE LONG-LASTING**

- Seems most people associate the Valley of the Shadow of Death **only** with ... physical **DEATH**
  - **Might** also refer to the sorrow of living this life ( Terry & Deloris )
    - **Life isn't easy** - many times we must go through tough times
      - These should not surprise us - **Job 5:7**
- Dark valleys are a natural part of our sin-filled life on this Earth
  - When God expelled Adam/Eve from the **Garden** ... He told them things would be challenging
    - Remember ... this life is our preparation of Heaven - lot's to learn
- Not only can valleys be challenging ... but thankfully:

### **VALLEYS HAVE A PURPOSE**

- Helps to remember ... there's a Divine purpose behind every dark valley God allows us to walk through ~ **Jam 1:2**
  - Word we translate as **temptation** refers to adversity or trials (valley)
- But **why** should we consider our journey thru these valleys **joy** ..... **V 3**

- Want to **paraphrase** an insightful comment from **6T/365**: *It is our duty to be very jealous for the glory of God and (not to share with others any) evil report ... as if the requirements of God were a restriction upon our liberty .... (We are) privileged to bear a (our) testimony ... in (actions), in words, (and) in character, we are to (demonstrate that) service of God is good .... The bright and cheerful side of our religion will be represented by all who are **daily consecrated to God**. We should **not** dishonor God by the mournful (telling) of trials that appear grievous. All trials that are received (R = and perceived) as educators will produce joy.*
  - To conclude this important ideas ... let's look at **Jam 1:4** { **let** }
    - Last week we spent a few moments considering the importance of what we **choose** to focus on ( **repeat** last sentence of SOP )
      - Dark valleys can develop our faith and character - when we **choose** to focus on their **purpose**

### **VALLEYS CAN BE PERMANENT**

- Sometimes we have problems which won't go away ... Might be a relationship ~ a health issue ~ or a career challenge (*several medical conditions are unending*)
  - There's a Biblical example ~ **2 Corth 12:7, 8**
    - We don't know for sure what this thorn was - maybe poor eyesight
      - Paul asked for relief three times ... God's answer - **V 9 a**
  - God instructed Paul ~ and maybe **us** ~ "You must keep the thorn ... but I'll give you the grace to bear it"
    - **FOUR KINDS OF GRACE** in the **BIBLE**
      - Saving Grace [Eph 2:8]                      Empowering Grace [Acts 4:33]
      - Sustaining Grace [2 Corth 2:9]              Refining Grace [Col 4:6]
  - God gave Paul sustaining grace ... this is the kind we need when we're in a valley that seems to never end
    - When we're experiencing problems ~ and we pray, wait, and listen ...
      - God will either remove the challenge ...
        - ... **or** give us His sustaining grace to bear it

- Even in those dark ~ endless valleys ~ ~ **IF** Jesus is our Lord and our Shepherd we can say with David:
  - "***I will fear no evil – for You, God, are with me.***"
    - In the dark valley we can be **fearful** or **faithful** - our choice
- **If** we want to choose faith - then let's **claim** **Ish 41:10, 13, 14 a** {worm}
- Let's notice - David combines these beautiful thoughts ~ **Psm 23:4** {How}
  - As a shepherd, David carried a 2-3 foot long metal-tipped rod to ward off wild animals and a long crooked staff to "**restore**" sheep which strayed away
    - The **rod** represents God's protection
    - The **staff** represents God's guidance
  - In those dark valleys of our lives ... our Heavenly Father ~ **our** Good Shepherd ... wants us to find comfort in His protecting rod and guidance
    - Thinking @ God's rod & staff helps us better appreciate: **Psm 34:19**

## **CONCLUSION:**

Saints ... there is a great difference in the life of a Christian and a **non**-Christian

- Both have disappointments, get sick, go through relationship problems, face financial difficulties, experience tragedy, and loose loved ones .....
  - The difference is not the absence of dark valleys ~ the **Difference** is the presence of the **Shepherd** ... who is there **with** us

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

- |                      |   |               |                 |        |
|----------------------|---|---------------|-----------------|--------|
| • Promise # <b>1</b> | ~ | The Lord will | <b>Provide</b>  | for us |
| • Promise # <b>2</b> | ~ | The Lord will | <b>Pacify</b>   | us     |
| • Promise # <b>3</b> | ~ | The Lord will | <b>Preserve</b> | us     |
| • Promise # <b>4</b> | ~ | The Lord will | <b>Pilot</b>    | us     |
| • Promise # <b>5</b> | ~ | The Lord will | <b>Protect</b>  | us     |