

Psalm 23  
"The Way Through"

I have come to believe that what people want most is a way out. A way out of all the messiness of life. A way out of hardship, disappointment, failure, poverty, loneliness, oppression, depression, illness, etc. You name it, we want out. Tell me how to avoid all the ugliness of life and I am all ears. So, those who will tell us that God wants the same for us we flock to, only to be disappointed in the long run. The truth is God does not give us a way out of the messiness of life. God gives us the way through.

**Ecc 9:11-12** "I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all. Moreover, no one knows when their hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so people are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them."

**John 16:33** "'I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.'"

Church, God does not give us a way out of the messiness of life. God gives us the way through. If I told you otherwise, I would be doing you no good. David's life is a gleaming testimony of this truth. A man that God said was "a man after his own heart" (1 Sam 13:14) and yet David's life, like all our lives, was a combination of highs and lows, successes and failures, joys and disappointments, heartache and heartbreak, mountain top experiences and valley lows. And unlike most theologians, I believe David wrote this Psalm later in life for I see in his words someone who had experience with God. Someone who looked back over his life and in contemplating the faithfulness of God

wrote these words, Psalm 23. With this said, I want to share three important lessons we learn from these words of David.

**First lesson, God knows what's best for us.** 1-3 “The Lord *is* my shepherd; I shall not want. <sup>2</sup>He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. <sup>3</sup>He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.” This is the simplest lesson but in my opinion the hardest lesson to accept in life. God knows what's best for his sheep and if we are counted among the sheep of his pasture, we must learn how to listen to and follow his voice. We must trust him. Doing so keeps us out of harms way and leads to us avoiding unnecessary hardship. And in this age of “naming it and claiming it” my advice to all of us is to be slow to speak and quick to listen. Some of us are in need, in rough waters, find ourselves downtrodden because would not listen to and follow the voice of God. And so that we are clear, God's voice, Jesus' voice is heard most clearly through His word. And God's Holy Spirit will never tell you anything that is contrary to His written word, this word. God knows what's best for his sheep.

**Jer 23:21-22** “I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds.”

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

**John 14:26** “<sup>26</sup> But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

**Second lesson, God is still God in the darkest of valleys.** V4 “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.” We fight with all vigor to control the trajectory of our lives in hopes of avoiding “valley of the shadow of death” experiences. David’s life serves as a gleaming testimony that it is impossible to achieve such a feat. No human being escapes valley experiences. I don’t care how faithful you are, how well you serve, how much you give, or how much you pray. You step foot into this world trouble is sure to come. But the good news the psalmist declares is that God is there, too. God is not only the God of the mountain top, but he is the God of the valley low. And because God is there with us, we need not fear. Does not matter how dark the valley maybe we know that God can see in the dark. Church, stop worrying! Stop trying to control every aspect of your life! Such efforts are futile and only rob us of abundant life. Trust God! Trust Jesus!

**Isaiah 41:10** “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

**Psalms 139:11-12** “If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,” even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.”

**Psalms 125:1** “Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever.”

**Final lesson, God’s greatest provision is eternal.** V5-6 “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. <sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord

forever.” It’s good to have the respect of your enemies. It is good to be anointed by God. That is, chosen for specific service. It’s good to experience the goodness and mercy of God in this life. Church, all these things are good and even to be desired. But it is better to be assured of eternal residence with God in God’s kingdom. I contemplated why God call David a man after his own heart. Certainly, it was not because David was perfect. No, David, like all of us failed God. David sinned. So why? I have concluded it is because David in every phase of his life believed God. David trusted God. And think this is most evident not during his mountain top experiences but in his valley low experiences. There isn’t but one sin that will result in eternal condemnation, unbelief. Do you have assurance of God’s greatest provision, eternal life. Can you say like David, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.”? Not if you fail to believe God. That is, you reject his Son, Jesus the Christ.

**John 3:36** “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.”

**John 10:7-9** “Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup>All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. <sup>9</sup>I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.”

Church, God does not provide a way out of the messiness of life, only the way through. The Lord Jesus is our shepherd. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**