

“The Lord is my Shepherd” – A In-depth Study of Psalm 23

Teacher: Nick Watts * Verse 6

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

In This Session, We Will Learn:

1. A fascinating nuance behind the phrase, “followed” by “goodness and mercy.”
2. Once again, why it does our heart good to focus on the hope of the “greater reality”: heaven.



Introduction

- For a brief introduction to the Psalms, Psalm 23, Christ’s presence in the Psalms, and of Christian author/shepherd, W. Phillip Keller, please see “Session One.”

Psalm 23:6

- **“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”**

1. “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life”

A. Earthly Observations

- 1) Keller - Throughout the study of this Psalm, continuous emphasis has been put upon the care exercised by the attentive shepherd. All benefits enjoyed by the flock have been provided by his skilled and loving care. Now, David sums it all up in one **brave** but **simple** statement, *“Surely goodness and [love/mercy/loving-kindness] will follow me all the days of my life.”*
- 2) Keller – (Why describe this statement as “brave?”) The sheep with such a shepherd can know for certain that, **no matter what comes**, goodness and mercy will be in the picture. (To truly believe that is very brave.)

B. Biblical Implications Based on Earthly Observations

- 1) Spurgeon – “Goodness” provides our needs; “mercy” blots out our sin. These twin angels will always be at my back, and at my beckoned call.
- 2) The Hebrew word rendered “follow” literally means **“to pursue.”**

- 3) VanGemerem – Instead of being pursued by enemies who seek our destruction, we are be “pursued” by God’s “goodness and mercy/love”.
- 4) Waltke & Houston – God’s “goodness & mercy” will pursue me as in a chase or hunt so as to not allow us to escape God’s unfailing love.
 - a) Romans 8:38-39 (amp) For I am persuaded beyond doubt (am sure) that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things impending *and* threatening nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- 5) Lawson – Through thick and thin, in every extremity of life, God’s blessings were chasing David.
 - a) Keller – How many Christians actually feel this way about Christ? How many of us truly believe that no matter what occurs in our lives we are being followed by goodness and mercy?...What about when we lose our health? Lose our job? When we are betrayed by “friends”? When we lose a child? These are the occasions when life is far more than a list of pious platitudes.
 - b) When my world caves in around me, can I honestly say, “Surely – goodness and mercy and love will follow me all the days of my life?” God tells me I can.

2. “and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

A. Earthly Observations

- a. Keller – The caring shepherd has taken his flock from the green pastures and quiet waters of the home ranch, up through the dark, dangerous mountain passes onto the high tablelands of the summer range. Fall has come with its storms and rain and sleet that drive the sheep down the foothills and back to the home ranch for the long, quiet winter. **In a sense, this is coming home.**
- b. Keller –During the seasons of the year, with their hazards, dangers and disturbances, it is the shepherd’s alertness, care, and management that have “brought the sheep home.”

B. Biblical Implications Based on Earthly Observations

- a. David infers that nothing – not even death – can prevent him from living in the Lord’s presence. (cf. John 11:25)
- b. Lawson – Even death, itself, would serve David’s greater good, which would usher him into God’s **immediate** presence where he would enjoy the goodness and love of God **forever**.
- c. Keller – The word “house” actually refers to the family/household of God.

- d. Spurgeon – While I am here [on earth] I will be a child at home with my God; the whole world shall be his house to me; and when I ascend into the upper chamber I shall not change my company, nor even change the house; I shall only go to dwell in the upper story of the house of the Lord forever.

Conclusion: Psalm 23 – Final Thoughts

1. 2 Samuel 23:1 - Now these are the last words of David: ...the son of Jesse,...the sweet psalmist of Israel.... We thank God that He used David to give us this sweet psalm.
2. Craigie – There are few psalms which are so well-loved and well-known as Psalm 23. Its appeal lies partly in the simplicity and beauty of its poetry, strengthened by the serene confidence which it exudes. But more than that, the genius of the psalmist is to be found in his extraordinary expression of **a trusting relationship with God.**
3. Henry Ward Beecher (cited by Spurgeon’s *Treasury of David*) – Psalm 23 has charmed more griefs to rest than all the philosophy of the world. It has remanded to their dungeon more dark doubts, more thieving sorrows than there are sands on the seashore. It has sung courage to the army of the disappointed. It has poured balm and consolation into the heart of the sick and the lonely. Dying soldiers have died easier as it was read to them. Like with Peter in Acts 12, it has visited the prisoner, broken his chains, and sung him back home again.
4. It has helped a dad who lost his 19 year old son to suicide from losing his mind. But, more than that, it has reminded that dad of the Shepherd – of His infinite power & never-ending/all-sufficient presence.
5. Keller – **All** the care, **all** the work, **all** the alert watchfulness, **all** the skill, **all** the concern, **all** the self-sacrifice – are born of **the Shepherd’s love for me.**
6. Both Ezekiel & Micah predicted Messiah’s role as a shepherd (37:24; 5:2, 4)
 - a. Micah 5:2, 4 - But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days...**And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God....**
 - b. John 10:11 – [Jesus said,] **I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.** (cf. 1 John 3:16)

**The Lord is my Shepherd.
He is Jesus Christ.**