

Life With the Good Shepherd
“Picking Us Up and Leading Us On”
Psalm 23

Introduction:

1. Psalm 23 is all about a sheep in the good shepherd’s care. As a sheep, David is boasting of how wonderful it is belong to the good shepherd. He is speaking metaphorically, of course.
2. Jesus declared, *“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”* Listen to the words of Christ right before He uttered those words.
John 10:7-10
3. My friend, there is nothing like being in the care of the good shepherd, Jesus Christ. He gave His life on the cross so that we could be part of His sheepfold. This is the kind of shepherd that I want in control of my life - a shepherd who would lay down His life for me so that I could have life.
4. Why would I want to graze on the barren, burnt up pastures of Satan and this world system when I can be in the care of the good shepherd? If you have never yielded control of your life to Jesus Christ, isn’t it time to turn your life over to Him? You say, “Why should I take my hands off the steering wheel of my life and give Christ control?”
5. In this psalm, David is boasting of the benefits of having the good shepherd in control. This morning, let’s look at verse 3 and see two powerful reasons to give Christ control.

First, the good shepherd is there to pick us up when we fall.

1. The circumstances of life can knock you down. Job said, *“Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.”* **Job 14:1**
2. Did you know that sheep can be cast down? A cast sheep is a very pathetic sight. Lying on its back, feet in the air, it flays away frantically struggling to stand up, without success. Sometimes it will bleat for help, but generally it lies there in frustration, unable to help itself.
3. If the shepherd does not arrive within a reasonably short time and restore that cast down sheep, the sheep will die. This is why the shepherd keeps track of His sheep, and if one is missing, off he goes to find and restore that sheep that is cast down somewhere.
4. As you contemplate a cast sheep (on its back frantically trying to get back on its feet), does that picture describe you at times in your life? As you look into the Bible, you find that this was true of some of the greatest saints in God’s Word. David knew what defeat was. Moses ended up on the back side of a desert. Daniel ended up in a lion’s den. Samuel’s sons broke his heart.
5. Paul knew what it was to be cast down (**2 Corinthians 4:8-9**), yet he knew he was not destroyed. Why? He was in the care of Jesus Christ, the good shepherd. When we find ourselves cast down, Jesus stands ready to restore.
6. Sometimes Christ will work through another brother or sister in Christ to restore us when we are cast down. (**Galatians 6:1** – restore; to set a broken bone) We all

have those times when we feel like a cast sheep. This is where the local church is so crucial – having people who love you and care about you.

7. Sometimes, as we go through life, we find ourselves out of joint, cast down, with feelings of defeat and discouragement, and Christ will take His Word and use it to restore our soul. **Illustration:** After Peter sinned against Christ, along came Christ to restore Peter back to a place of useful service. **John 21:15-17**
8. Jeremiah knew what it was to be cast down, but there was the Lord to restore his soul. **Jeremiah 20:8-9**
9. Have you ever felt like there was nobody to help you? You feel all alone. Paul knew what this was like, but listen to Paul's testimony in **2 Timothy 4:16-17**.
10. There are many reasons why we find ourselves as a cast sheep. Whether it's sin, bad choices, or just the trials of life, Christ cares about you (**1 Peter 5:7**). He will never leave you nor forsake you. Christ loves to take His cast sheep and restore them in soul and heart.
 - **Illustration:** How the shepherd helps a cast sheep.

Second, the good shepherd leads us on to new heights.

1. One shepherd said, "Sheep are notorious creatures of habit. If left to themselves, they will follow the same trails until they become ruts, graze on the same hills until they turn to desert wastes, pollute their own ground until it is corrupt with disease and parasites."
2. For this reason, sheep must be kept on the move. It is crucial to their well-being. The shepherd makes sure that he is constantly leading the sheep to new ground.
3. This is precisely what the shepherd/king David had in mind when he said that the good shepherd "*leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*"
4. Jesus Christ loves you so much that He will save you right where you are in whatever condition you may be in. But likewise, once He saves you, He loves you too much to leave you in that condition. **Illustration:** maniac of Gedara
5. God's plan is to lead us in paths of righteousness. He wants to take us to new ground. The problem is that people tend to be like sheep. We tend to be stubborn and resistant and want to cling to the same old habits that we have seen ruin other lives. **Isaiah 53:6**
 - Turning to my own way simply means doing what **I** want, what **I** desire.
Proverbs 14:12
6. Jesus, the good shepherd said in **John 10:9**, "*I am the door: by me....*" Jesus saves us, but then desires to lead us to green pastures where we can grow and be spiritually healthy. He wants to lead us down those new paths - paths of righteousness.
7. But many times, we don't want to enter in. We don't want to be led down new paths of righteousness. We want to do it **our** way and we keep grazing on the same old land until finally it leads to our destruction.
8. When you got saved, at that moment, God placed His Spirit in you to begin leading you down a different path. **1 Corinthians 12:2; cf. Romans 8:14**
9. Do you know how God's Spirit leads you down paths of righteousness today?
Ephesians 6:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

10. As a loving shepherd has to cut away the old wool that is weighing the sheep down, matted with mud, manure, burrs and other debris, the Holy Spirit takes God's Word and begins to cut away that which only hinders us and will cause us to be a cast sheep.
11. As you yield to Christ and take in and digest God's Word, the Holy Spirit begins to transform and change you, and take you down paths of righteousness that you could have never dreamed of.
12. Then, all of a sudden, you look back to what you were, and you say, "Wow, I'm not the same person I was a year ago." The good shepherd has led me down paths of righteousness." **Galatians 4:19**

In Conclusion:

1. Why does the good shepherd do this? So that we can point to ourselves and boast of what we accomplished. Look at the end of verse 3. He does it "**for his name's sake.**"
2. Your life begins to reflect the person and the glory and the power of your shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. **2 Corinthians 4:10**
3. Whenever the shepherd opens up a gate to new pastures, the sheep are filled with excitement and will literally kick up their heels and leap with delight. They may not like leaving old ground they are comfortable in, but once they are led to new ground, nothing can compare with it.
4. Christian, are you a cast sheep today? The good shepherd stands ready to help. Christian, maybe you are just stagnant on the same old ground. Isn't it time to allow the good shepherd to lead you to new heights?