

The Statesman's Resource of a Personal Guide

It was King David who began Psalm 23 with words that should inspire every Statesman:

The LORD is my shepherd (Psalm 23:1).

He, as a ruler, was continually challenged with threats beyond his capacity. Here, he presents the image of himself as a vulnerable sheep dependent upon a protective shepherd to care for him and guide him – that shepherd being none other than God Himself. He skillfully uses that imagery throughout this short Psalm. This is a humbling analogy because the sheep represents a class of animals least able to protect themselves from their natural predators. The sheep's only hope for survival is a responsible and caring shepherd who would even risk his life to protect the sheep. Here, even though he was such a powerful ruler, King David recognizes his own inability to face his challenges by himself.

What seems even more amazing is that he recognizes God not only as his shepherd, but as his personal shepherd. Notice in King David's opening declaration the word "my": *The LORD is my shepherd*. Even though he is only one of the many kings in the world and millions of individuals, he recognizes that God is personally focused on meeting every one of his needs. King David describes God as able to give personal care as if he were the only person in all of creation.

Please meditate upon this expression by this king with me:

¹ The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack.

² He lets me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.

³ He renews my life; He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

⁴ Even when I go through the darkest valley, I fear no danger, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶ Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Let us briefly reflect on King David's meditation.

There is nothing I lack.

To paraphrase, he is saying: My God, Your care for me is perfect and You are not failing me in any way. There is nothing more I need than what you are providing for me. As my personal Shepherd, I know You are meeting my needs in spite of the challenges around me.

This also acknowledges that my personal Shepherd has everything around my life perfectly under control. There is also the acknowledgement that God's recognition of what I need is more accurate than my own interpretation.

Then, he begins to itemize specific areas:

² He lets me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.

God provides for me to be at continual peace, confident that no crisis can overwhelm me as I continually cling to the protective care of my Shepherd.

³ He renews my life; He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

He guides me to do the right and just thing. He does all these things for me with His reputation at stake. Because I declare myself to be dependent on Him, He promises to care for me, glorifying His name in the process. This gives me even more confidence than if only my personal well-being were at stake. I can do this because I trust Him in His perfect love for me.

⁴ Even when I go through the darkest valley, I fear no danger, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me.

No matter what challenge I face, I know You are by my side, caring for me. I know You are the active God intervening on my behalf, overcoming every challenge I face.

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

Even the presence of adversaries and critics cannot steal my joy and my peace.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

King David expresses a confidence of God's continual blessing upon him.

⁶ Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Application to the life of the Statesman. Am I able to envision Almighty God as my personal protector and caregiver as King David did? Can I envision all-powerful God as acting on my behalf as if I am the only person in the whole world? Am I able to have the same confidence of Almighty God's care for my life and my governing? Do I need to place a higher priority on developing my dependence upon God as my Shepherd and drawing Him into each step and action that I take?