

# THE SHEPHERD'S CRUCIBLE

Lesson 1 for July 2, 2022

**Psalm 23 is undoubtedly the most known and memorized psalm.**

**It begins with the following scene: a flock of sheep grazing in green pastures by still waters.**

**Then, a journey towards a glorious destination begins. The Shepherd leads us in the paths of righteousness. We may walk fearless in the valley, safe from our enemies.**



**In the paths of  
righteousness**

**Towards a  
glorious  
destination**

**Safe from my  
enemies**

**The Shepherd  
leads me**

**Fearless in  
the valley**



# THE SHEPHERD LEADS ME

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters." (Psalm 23:1-2)

It's clear who the Shepherd is in the Bible. Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd" (Jn. 10:14). He's called the "great Shepherd of the sheep" (Heb. 13:20).

Therefore, we are sheep. We are defenseless in a world that's dominated by evil. What does the Shepherd do for us?



**Is. 40:11. He protects us and tenderly takes care of us when we're weak**



**Ez. 34:12. He knows us, and He rescues us on dark days**



**Ez. 37:24. He gives us directions to live correctly**



**Jn. 10:11. He gives His life for us**






**Jn. 10:16. He brings us together**



# IN THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

*"He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." (Psalm 23:3)*

The flock is in their way. The Shepherd leads us in "the paths of righteousness," in the good way. Which is the good way?

-  The one that leads to the right destination: the Shepherd's home, the New Jerusalem
-  The one that leads us to live according to the Shepherd's desire
-  The one that transforms us in righteous people

We can be sure that God will lead us to our glorious destination, no matter how easy or hard the way is.



# FEARLESS IN THE VALLEY

**"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." (Psalm 23:4)**

How hard it is to trust God when we don't see His hand! We may think God has abandoned us when we are surrounded darkness, pain, suffering, and fear.



God constantly repeated "Do not be afraid" in His Word (Gn. 15:1; 21:17; 2K. 19:6; Is. 41:10, 13; Jer. 1:8; Acts 27:24; Rev. 2:10). He promised He will always be with us, even if we cannot see Him.

We can find comfort and guidance in His "rod" and "staff" (which might represent the Bible and the Law).



# SAFE FROM MY ENEMIES

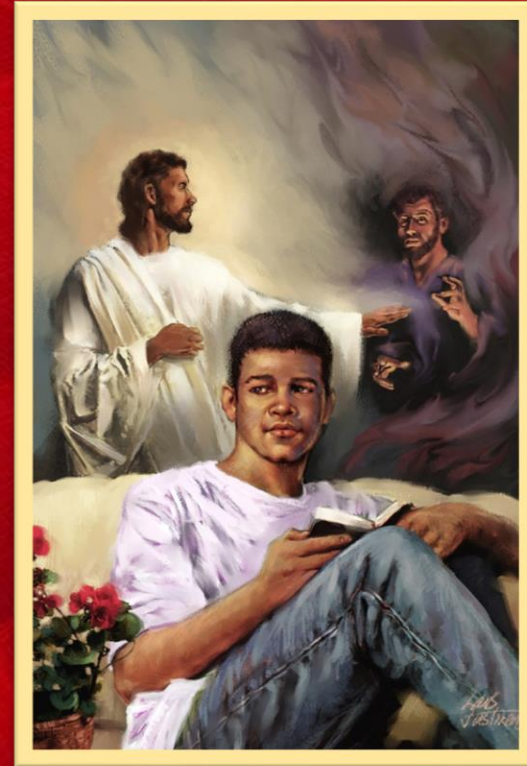
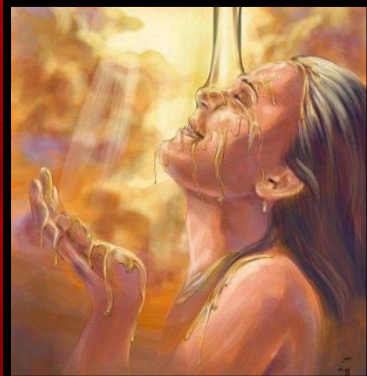
**"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over." (Psalm 23:5)**

**Something unexpected is introduced in verse 5:  
"the presence of my enemies."**

**Do believers have enemies? Sure, both visible  
and invisible ones, both known and unknown  
(Phlp. 3:18; Eph. 6:12).**

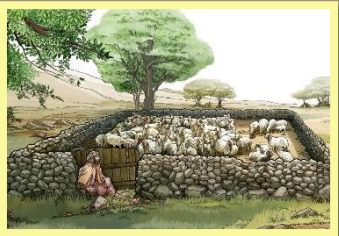
**However, if we focus on what God's is doing for  
us (preparing the table, anointing us with oil,  
making our cup run over...), the presence of our  
enemies will be overshadowed.**

**No enemy—either visible or invisible—can take  
away what the Shepherd has given us, as long as  
we're with Him.**



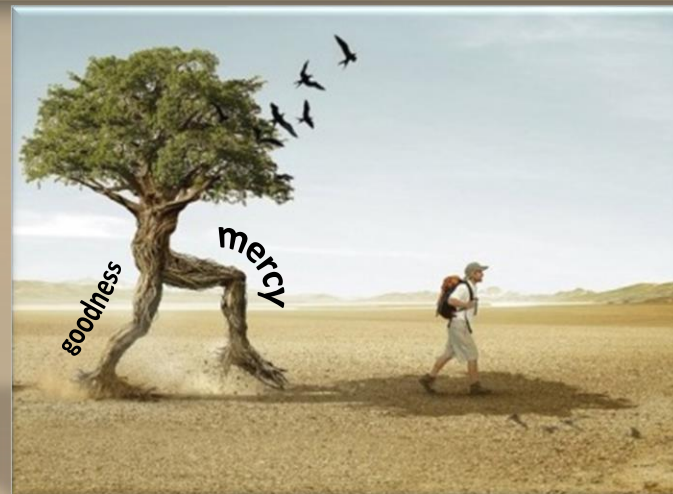
# TOWARDS A GLORIOUS DESTINATION

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” (Psalm 23:6)



David was sure of two things. First, good and mercy would always follow—or “chase”—him.

No matter how deep the valley or how persistent the enemies, the certainty of God’s goodness and unfailing love and the certainty of His guidance to the very end of our journey is unquestionable.



Second, we have an everlasting home where we will dwell in the presence of God Himself (Rev. 22:3-4).

“Therefore comfort one another with these words.” (1Ts. 4:18)



**“Satan will seek to discourage the followers of Christ, so that they may not pray or study the Scriptures, and he will throw his hateful shadow athwart the path to hide Jesus from the view, to shut away the vision of His love, and the glories of the heavenly inheritance. It is his delight to cause the children of God to go shrinkingly, tremblingly, and painfully along, under continual doubt. He seeks to make the pathway as sorrowful as possible; but if you keep looking up, not down at your difficulties, you will not faint in the way, you will soon see Jesus reaching His hand to help you, and you will only have to give Him your hand in simple confidence, and let Him lead you.”**

**E. G. W. (Messages for Young People, cp. 14, p. 63)**



**“As an earthly shepherd knows his sheep, so does the divine Shepherd know His flock that are scattered throughout the world [...]**

**Jesus knows us individually, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows us all by name. He knows the very house in which we live, the name of each occupant [...]**

**Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died [...]** He cares for each one as if there were not another on the face of the earth.”

**E. G. W. (The Desire of Ages, cp. 52, pg. 479)**