



The Incredible  
Journey

# Psalm 23

“The LORD is my *shepherd*...”

Gary Kent



# *PSALM*

# *23*

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# *PSALM 23*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Psalm 23 is one of the most well-known and best-loved passages of scripture. It has been called the “Heavenly Pastoral”, the “divine ode”, the “pearl” of psalms (Spurgeon, 2021). It has been the subject of numerous sermons, poems, and songs. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), who wrote a Bible commentary still used by many people today, wrote of how Psalm 23 is a “psalm full of comforts, and the expressions of delight in God’s great goodness”. In his sermon on Psalm 23, the famous preacher Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) wrote, “Oh that we may enter into the spirit of the psalm as we read it, and then we shall experience the days of heaven upon the earth!” Poetical settings of this psalm include those of Francis

Rous, Isaac Watts, and Henry W. Baker. Musical settings have been composed by Franz Schubert, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and John Rutter.

Perhaps it is not surprising that Psalm 23 has been one of the most popular psalms to be treated artistically, as it was written by King David, the "*sweet psalmist of Israel*" (2 Samuel 23:1). From the Biblical account, we know that David was a skilled musician. Although he eventually ruled as king of Israel, from approximately 1010-962 BC, David was not born into a royal family. Rather, it seems his family were farmers; and as the youngest of eight sons, it was David's responsibility to care for the sheep. However, the young boy didn't just idle away his time. When not defending his sheep from the malicious attacks of lions and bears, David improved his time by playing a harp. He achieved such a high standard that when King Saul needed a musician

to play for him and calm his nerves, David was recommended and selected for the role.

Psalm 23 reveals that David was not only a skilled musician. He also had a deep personal relationship with God. From the position of this psalm in the book of Psalms, we can see that its key theme is trust in God. It follows the twenty-second psalm, which David also wrote. Psalm 22 begins with the despairing cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Psalm 23 is the answer to this ageless question. And following this much-loved psalm is the twenty-fourth psalm, also penned by David. Psalm 24 begins with the acknowledgment that, "*The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness.*" From this, we see that the twenty-third psalm is a key that shows how to move from despair and hopelessness to trust in God's power, guidance and protection. It is a psalm full of comfort, hope

and assurance. Understanding the background and context of this psalm can help us to find new beauty and meaning in its familiar words. Let's unlock its meaning by meditating upon it in greater depth.

## **PSALM 23**

*1. The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

*2. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.*

*3. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.*

*4. 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.*

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

*6. 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: GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU**

### ***1. The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.***

David knew from experience the relationship between a shepherd and his sheep. Reflecting on this, he sang, "*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*"

Sheep are very timid. They need the care of a shepherd. In the Middle East during Bible times, the care of a shepherd for his flock was untiring. A shepherd needed to watch his flock constantly, both day and night, to protect them from not only wild beasts, but also thieves. Perhaps this is best described by Jacob in his words to Laban,

*"In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes"* (Genesis 31:40).

The sleepless care of a shepherd for his sheep illustrates the untiring watchcare of God for His people. In Psalm 121:3,4 we read,

*"He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber"*

A prolific Christian writer expressed what this means for us personally like this:

If we will but listen, God's created works will teach us precious lessons of obedience and trust. ... God cares for everything and sustains everything that He has created. He who upholds the unnumbered worlds throughout immensity, at the same time cares for the wants of the little brown sparrow that sings its humble song without fear. ... No tears are shed that God does not

notice. There is no smile that He does not mark.

If we would but fully believe this, all undue anxieties would be dismissed. ... We should then enjoy a rest of soul to which many have long been strangers (White, 2017, pp. 85, 86).

***2. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.***

From the general statement of contentment in God's care in verse 1, verse 2 then states specific actions which a shepherd takes to care for His sheep. These every day actions, so familiar to the people in the time when the Bible was written, have deep spiritual parallels.

First, the shepherd makes his sheep lie down in green pastures. Sheep farmer Philip Keller (2020) explains that sheep need four things before they will lie down: Freedom from fear, freedom

from friction within the flock, freedom from annoyances, and freedom from hunger.

How does this relate to God's care for us? First, one of the greatest comforts in the Bible is that God can deliver us from fear. "*Fear not*," is repeated numerous times in the Bible (see, for instance, Genesis 15:1; Deuteronomy 1:21; 31:6; 1 Samuel 12:20; 2 Chronicles 20:17; Isaiah 35:4; Daniel 10:12; Luke 2:10; Revelation 1:17). God is not only all-powerful, He is all-loving. Nothing that happens on Earth escapes His notice. Although we cannot always understand His ways now, all that He does is for the eternal good of each individual, and of the entire universe. God gave up everything for us, when Jesus came to Earth to live, suffer and die in our place. This shows that we can trust God. God is the only one who can truly give us deep, constant freedom from fear.

Life on Earth is not easy. Building good social relationships takes energy, tact and willingness to cooperate with others. Then there are unexpected environmental downturns, economic changes, technical difficulties, and many other annoyances. Some people expect that Christians will not have to face these challenges in life. However, this is not what the Bible teaches. God does not promise to take us out of trials. God does not take us over, under or around the fire. Like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, God takes us through the fire (Daniel 3). This process is not always pleasant. But it is necessary. The fiery trials we face from day to day, whether large or small, are like the fire that purifies precious metals such as silver or gold.

Job was a Bible character who experienced many trials. But in the midst of these, he was able to say, "*But He (God) knows the way that I take;*

*When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold*" (Job 23:10). Jesus told His disciples plainly that they would have tribulation in this world. But He said, *"Let not your heart be troubled"* (John 14:27). Calmness during the trials of life can only happen when we have complete trust in Jesus, our divine Shepherd.

God also satisfies the hunger of His people. Psalm 107:9 says that God *"satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness."* The primary meaning of this is, that God will satisfy our spiritual hunger. As Jesus said, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness; for they shall be filled"* (Matthew 5:6). When tempted in the desert by Satan, Jesus said, *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4). Jesus also said, *"I am the bread of life... the words that I speak unto you, they are*

*spirit and they are life” (John 6:35,63).*

Have you ever felt a deep longing in your soul for something more than this world has to offer? That longing is the call of your Creator to Your heart. That is the hunger and thirst after righteousness that Jesus was speaking about. Only God can fill that need, and satisfy the spiritual hunger of your soul.

The Bible points forward to a time when there will be both literal and spiritual famines: famines for bread and for the word of God (Matthew 24:7; Amos 8:11). The Bible does not guarantee that God’s people will be taken out of the trouble, but that God will protect them during that fearful time. By the promises of God, they will live.

*“He leads me beside the still waters”.* Water is even more essential to life than food. Sheep cannot drink from rapidly flowing mountain streams. They need still water. In order to supply this need,

the Middle Eastern shepherd will build a dam of rocks in a stream, to create a still pool from which the sheep can safely drink. Jesus is not only the bread of life; He is the fountain of living water (Jeremiah 2:13). He said, *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink"* (John 7:37). In Jesus we find complete nourishment for all our spiritual needs.

It is also significant that this verse says that the shepherd *"leads"* his flock. In the Middle East, the shepherd does not drive his sheep, as is often the case in modern society. He goes before them and leads them. Jesus took up this idea in John 10:3-5, 27:

*"The sheep hear his (the shepherd's) voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know*

*the voice of strangers...My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."*

In one well-known illustration, a group of tourists saw a Middle Eastern man driving a flock of sheep. When the tour guide questioned the man about his behaviour, the man acknowledged, "Yes, it is true. A shepherd leads his sheep. But I am not the shepherd. *I am the butcher.*"

There is a spiritual butcher of God's sheep today. In the Bible he is called the devil, or Satan (Revelation 12:9). Jesus warned us about this "thief", that comes to "*steal, kill and destroy*" the sheep (John 10:10). Not only that, but Satan cunningly employs people to do his work of destroying God's sheep (Ephesians 2:2). Jesus warned His followers,

*"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves"* (Matthew 7:15).

Jesus gave many warnings about those who would claim to be Christians, while actually disobeying God. He warned His disciples not to just believe the words that people spoke, but to test all that they said and did by God's word, the Bible. These words to His disciples were included in the Bible as a warning to us. Jesus said,

*"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21).

Jesus then went on to say that many would claim to follow Him. These false teachers would be extremely persuasive, and would even work miracles in support of their claims! Like the Pharisees in Jesus' day, they would

say things that sounded wonderful. They would appear pious and holy on the outside, while inwardly being full of deception and hypocrisy. Jesus warned that there would be many of these false teachers just before His second coming (Matthew 24:4,5,11,24).

How, then, can we know who is teaching the truth? How can we be sure we are following Christ, our great Shepherd? The Bible gives the test of looking for the fruit (Matthew 7:16-20). Do these teachers have the fruit of the Spirit in their lives: genuine love, joy, peace and patience (Galatians 5:22,23)?

Further, Jesus said, these false teachers would "*practice lawlessness*" (Matthew 7:22,23). 1 John 3:4 tells us that sin is lawlessness; sin is breaking God's law, the Ten Commandments. So, these false teachers would not obey God's holy law of Ten Commandments.

Satan, who was actually created by God as a perfect, holy angel, named Lucifer, willfully sinned in heaven by becoming proud and determining to take God's throne (Ezekiel 28:12-18; Isaiah 14:12-14). In becoming proud and covetous, Satan was breaking God's law. The first commandment says that God is to be supreme in our lives, while the last says, "*You shall not covet*" (Exodus 20:3,17). Satan tried to abolish God's law in heaven, and ever since then he has been working in the most deceptive ways to undermine God's government. Satan's whole purpose is to change God's perfect, changeless law (Daniel 7:25; Psalm 19:7-9; 119:89). If someone is teaching that we do not need to obey God's law, that person is not a true follower of God. That person is a wolf in sheep's clothing. Jesus said, "*If you love me, keep My commandments*" (John 14:15). "*He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments,*

*is a liar, and the truth is not in him"*  
(1 John 2:4).

When Jesus came to Earth, He left all of heaven for us. Revelation Chapters 21 and 22 give us the tiniest hint of what that glorious place is like. Jesus left all of that to be born in the humblest of circumstances, and to live the most self-sacrificing of lives. He did not come to Earth as a mighty prince, but as a poor carpenter. After working selflessly for others for thirty-three years, He died the cruelest of deaths, to pay the penalty for our sins (Isaiah 53:6). Jesus said,

*"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd gives His life for the sheep... I lay down My life for the sheep"*  
(John 10:11,15).

By dying in our place, Jesus has shown in the most amazing way possible His great love for us. We know that we can trust Him. When we follow Jesus' selfless

example, which is complete obedience to God's law (John 15:10), we will have perfect peace and rest, because we will be following our great Shepherd, Jesus Christ (Psalm 119:165). We will then know by experience that we can trust God to supply our needs, just as sheep trust to the care of their shepherd (Matthew 6:25-34).

***3. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.***

There is a wealth of research today showing that human beings are wholistic: they have physical, social, intellectual and spiritual needs. Psalm 23:3 is one of many Bible verses showing that it is God's will that we be completely whole. And this wholeness comes only through being connected with God. He is the only One who can truly restore your soul, and mine.

Without God's help, the heart of every human being would break under the weight of the burdens of life. The heaviest burden of all is the load of sin. What is sin? We found earlier that sin is breaking God's law: the law of love, of service and self-sacrifice (1 John 3:4). One of the things that happens when a person sins, is that he or she feels a sense of guilt. The guilt of sin separates us from happiness, from others and from God (Isaiah 59:2).

Guilt is a heavy, crushing burden. There are many ways that people try to find relief from it. Some go on long pilgrimages, or perform acts of painful penance. Some pay large sums of money, or go to confess their sins to a priest. What does God's word say about how forgiveness can be found? Proverbs 28:13 says,

*"He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy."*

God has already paid the price for our sin. There is nothing we can do to earn forgiveness. Our part is to accept God's free gift. We do this by, first, confessing our sins to God, whom we have wronged by breaking His law (Psalm 51:4). If we have wronged any person through sin, we are also to make this right, as far as possible (Ezekiel 33:15; Matthew 5:23,24). As we do this, we may claim God's promise,

*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9).*

The promise of forgiveness in 1 John 1:9 is one of the most precious assurances of scripture. But this verse does not end with speaking of forgiveness. The verse goes on to say, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

God has power to not only forgive us, but to restore our soul—to recreate

our heart so that it is in harmony with His once more (Psalm 51:10; Ezekiel 36:26). This leads naturally into the second part of Psalm 23:3: *"He leads me in the paths of righteousness."* God's forgiveness is not just a cloak to cover or gloss over sin. God's forgiveness is the path to a new and transformed life. God's forgiveness prepares us for a place by His side, a place where we work with Him to uplift others from the ruin and degradation of sin.

Notice here a key point: restoration of the soul comes first, then the works of righteousness follow. We are not saved by our works, but we work because we are saved. We are not justified by works, but for works. As the apostle Paul puts it,

*"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them"* (Ephesians 2:10).

Faith in the Good Shepherd does not make void His law. On the contrary, Jesus' death for us demonstrates the eternal nature of God's law. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, posed the question, *"Do we then make void the law through faith?"* In the strongest possible language, he then denies this: *"Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law"* (Romans 3:31). If the law could have been changed in the least, then Jesus need not have died! Yet it has often been claimed that Jesus' death on the cross abolished the law. This is one of Satan's most deadly deceptions. The truth is that Jesus died to demonstrate that Satan's claims about God's law were false. The cross proclaims, as nothing else can, that *"the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 6:23).

Did Jesus teach all ten of the Commandments? YES! In Matthew 5:17, He said,

*"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill."*

All ten of the commandments—not five or eight of them—are affirmed in the New Testament. The Ten Commandments were taught by Jesus and all of the apostles (see, for instance, Matthew 4:10; John 4:24; Matthew 15:18,19; Luke 4:16; 6:5; Matthew 19:18,19; Luke 12:15; Hebrews 13:5). This shows that the "righteousness" spoken of by David in this psalm was not limited to the times of the Old Testament. It is as relevant and essential today as it was three thousand years ago, when Psalm 23 was written.

David's conduct is one of the examples given by Paul in Romans 4, of righteousness by faith. God does not have one plan of salvation for the Jews, and another for the Gentiles. God does not have one law for the Jews, and one for the Gentiles. The plan of salvation

has been open to every person on Earth since sin entered into our world. God chose the family of faithful Abraham to preserve His laws as a treasure for the whole world! God blessed Abraham, so that he and his family might be a blessing to everyone on Earth, telling them the good news of salvation (Genesis 12:1-3; Isaiah 56:6,7). Even in the New Testament, Paul spoke of the Gentiles as "grafted in" to the "stock" of Israel (see Romans 11). Those who obey God by faith become the children of faithful Abraham (Galatians 3:29).

Righteousness is, and always has been, a life lived in accordance with eternal, ethical principles – a life lived in accordance with God's will, His holy, sacred law (Psalm 40:8). The Good Shepherd leads His sheep in paths of righteousness through the gates into the eternal fold, for it is written in Revelation 22:14, *"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they*

*may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city."*

Psalm 23:3 says that God leads us *"in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake"*. In Bible times, a person's name was more than simply a label to identify that person, it was an indication of character. God's name, as He declared it to Moses in Exodus 34:5-7, is a list of character qualities that describe God: *"Merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty."*

Those who choose Christ as their Shepherd, become ambassadors for Him (2 Corinthians 5:20). Christians are to represent the character of God to the world. This is so important, because one of the ways in which Satan attacks God's government is by maligning God's character. Satan has many, many

deceptions about God: deceptions intended to trap as many people as possible. "God can never forgive you." "God doesn't care about you." "God won't mind if you sin just a little bit." "Sin won't hurt anyone." "No one will ever know." The Bible unmasks every single one of Satan's deceptions. By studying that wonderful Book, we will be safe from the attacks of the devil. Knowing the truth about God will set us free from Satan, and sin. Then, we can share this freedom with others.

***4. 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.***

The Heavenly Shepherd not only leads His sheep beside the still waters of rest and the righteous paths of service. In this verse we see that our heavenly Shepherd sometimes leads us through

trouble and sorrow. We noted above that being a Christian is not a guarantee of a trouble-free life. God does not always keep us from sorrow, but He is there to strengthen and help us through it. When the three young men of Babylon found themselves in the fire for conscience's sake, the form of the Fourth walked with them in the flames (Daniel 3). When the apostle Paul stood before Nero, he was not alone. In 2 Timothy 4:16-17, he says: *"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me!...But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me."*

However bright our path might be now, somewhere along the way—perhaps around the next turn—may sit the "shadow feared of man." Unexpectedly, we may come to the deepest, darkest valley of all—the valley of the shadow of death. But even there, the Shepherd is with us and we need fear no evil. His rod and His staff comfort us; His law and

His gospel contribute to our correction and support.

The word “through” in this verse is especially important. The psalmist doesn’t speak of going into the valley, as if it were a box canyon or a final destination. He talks about going through it, showing that he expects to emerge from its shadows into the light on the other side.

Once, a father was holding his little blind daughter on his knee. Then, without explanation, a friend who had called in to visit him took the young girl in his arms. The child didn’t cry or resist. In surprise, the father asked, “Aren’t you afraid, darling? You don’t know who is holding you!”

“No,” was the prompt reply. “I don’t know, but you do.”

This daughter’s faith in her father took away her fear. She didn’t need to know, so long as her father knew that it was

all right. And we may not know the “why” of many of our experiences. But if we trust our Shepherd, we can rest assured in His wisdom and strength.

*“I will fear no evil, for you are with me.”* Note the pronoun change in this verse. The psalmist has been talking about God in the third person (“He”). With this verse, he begins to use the second person (“you” and “your”). He is no longer speaking about God, but is instead speaking to God.

In Hebrew writing, the middle part of a passage was always the most important. The centre point of this psalm is, *“for you are with me.”* In the original Hebrew language, there are 26 words before this phrase, and 26 words after it. God’s saving presence is the focus of this psalm.

*“Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”* The shepherd’s rod was a sturdy club for use against wild animals that

would otherwise prey on the sheep. The shepherd's staff was the familiar long rod with a crook on one end. The shepherd would use his staff to guide sheep and to pull them back from dangerous places.

The rod and staff were comforting to the sheep, because both were intended for the sheep's benefit. But above all, they were comforting because they were in the hands of a caring shepherd.

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

Throughout Psalm 23, David calls God not only his "Shepherd", but his "Lord". In Psalm 24:8-10, David identifies that the Lord is the "King of glory". Jesus told a parable about a King, who prepared a great feast and invited many guests (Matthew 22:1-14). The king in this parable represents God, while the

guests represent His followers. Jesus also said that when He returns as the King of glory, He would place His true followers, His "sheep on His right hand" (Matthew 25:31-33). Thus, in Psalm 23:5, God's followers are not just eating in the presence of a humble shepherd; they are invited into the palace of the King of kings!

In Bible times, to eat at a king's table was considered a very great honour, reserved for only the most distinguished persons. When King David invited Mephibosheth, the lame son of his close friend Jonathon, to the palace, one of the special privileges he was offered was to eat at the king's table (2 Samuel 9:10). Psalm 23:5 shows that God is not trying to exalt Himself at the expense of others. God wants every individual to reach their highest potential, a goal which can only be realised through total obedience to His infinitely wise plan. As James 4:10 says,

*"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."*

God, our Shepherd and our King, supplies all our needs even in the presence of our enemies. This verse is talking about more than just physical enemies. It is also the conflict of the universe—the war between good and evil. God protects and provides for us here in this world during the trials and challenges we face. And ultimately those who are faithful to Him will be guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9).

*"You anoint my head with oil".* In Bible times, anointing oil was used for various purposes: for healing, for burial, and for expressions of grief or joy. For a shepherd, the healing purpose would be especially significant. Oils and ointments were used as a salve for wounds and insect bites. When we have been through the valley of sorrow, God has the power to heal our souls.

At feasts in Bible times, the heads of the distinguished guests were anointed with perfumed oil. The woman in the gospel story poured the flask of precious ointment upon the head of our Lord (Matthew 26:6,7), a courtesy that the host would normally have performed.

Samuel anointed David with oil to signify that he was to become king (1 Samuel 16:13). Even so, when the psalmist says that God anoints his head with oil, this means that God has set him apart for a significant role. And this is true of all of God's followers. Those who accept Christ as their Saviour, become part of the royal family of heaven. They are adopted into the family of God, and are "*accepted in the Beloved*" (Galatians 4:7; Ephesians 1:6).

Notice the final part of the text, "*My cup runs over.*" The original Hebrew word here suggests abundance—even superabundance. The visual image of a

cup overflowing with water represents the many blessings God gives. This overflowing cup symbolises God's generosity. There are no halfway measures when it comes to God's care for us. Favour is heaped upon favour, gift upon gift. *"Of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace"* (John 1:16).

***6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.***

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus leads His people to green pastures, to still waters and in paths of righteousness. But not only does God lead us, His goodness and mercy surrounds and follows us all through life. Isaiah the prophet echoes this when he says, *"For the Lord will go before you, And the God of Israel will be your rear guard"* (Isaiah 52:12). And again, *"your righteousness shall go*

*before you; The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard"* (Isaiah 58:8 KJV). What does this mean?

Like the ripples that spread out from a stone thrown into the water, a true follower of Christ lives a life that has a positive influence on others. As a true Christian, you will leave countless blessings behind you, blessings that will touch the lives of others, bringing glory and honour to God, and even resulting in happiness to yourself.

It is true that those who love and obey God will encounter opposition and even persecution in this life from those who reject God's tender entreaties. But many people who seem hardened against God are not beyond the reach of His Holy Spirit. When a true Christian acts with kindness and love (see Isaiah 58:6,7), even in the face of persecution (Matthew 5:44), this often touches hearts that seem as hard as stone. Persecutors can become disciples, as in

the case of the apostle Paul. As King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, said,

*"If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; For so you will heap coals of fire on his head, and the LORD will reward you"* (Proverbs 25:21,22).

When those who reject God begin to change, and to treat God's followers with kindness and respect, this is due to the working of God's Holy Spirit upon their hearts. This is the glory of God, following His people and lighting up the path behind them.

Even if people ignore or abuse your kindness, God can overrule events to frustrate their evil plots and protect His followers. Psalm 34:7 says, *"The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them."*

God can bring good out of the worst of situations. Above every other blessing,

those who choose to obey God will have the peace of a clear conscience and the hope of the future, immortal life.

The final phrase of Psalm 23 is filled with this bright hope of an eternal future in a world of bliss: *"I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever."*

As a follower of Christ, the good Shepherd, there will be difficult and painful experiences for you to meet in this world. But what is this compared with the hereafter? There *"they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."* Revelation 7:15-17.

**PSALM 23: LINE BY LINE**

*The Lord is  
my shepherd;* = Relationship

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*I shall not want.* = Supply

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*He makes me to  
lie down in green  
pastures;* = Rest

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*He leads me  
beside the  
still waters.* = Refreshment

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*He restores  
my soul;* = Healing

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*He leads me in  
the paths of  
righteousness* = Guidance

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*For His name's sake.* = Purpose

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*Yea, though I walk  
through the valley of  
the shadow of death,* = Testing

*I will fear no evil;* = Protection

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*For You are with me;* = Faithfulness

---

*Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.* = Discipline

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*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;* = Hope

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*You anoint my head with oil;* = Consecration

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*My cup runs over.* = Abundance

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*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.* = Blessing

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## NOTES

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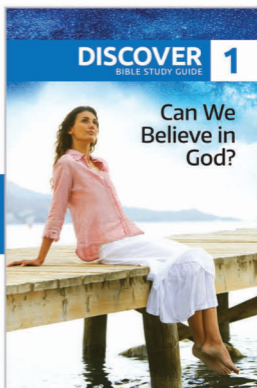
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**Australia**

0481 315 101

[info@tij.tv](mailto:info@tij.tv)

The Incredible Journey  
GPO Box 274  
Sydney NSW 2001

**New Zealand**

020 422 2042

[infonz@tij.tv](mailto:infonz@tij.tv)

The Incredible Journey  
PO Box 76673  
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Psalm 23 is one of the most well-known and best-loved passages of scripture. It is a psalm full of comfort, hope and assurance. In this booklet, we explore the background and context of this psalm to find new beauty and meaning in its familiar words.



Pastor Gary Kent is Speaker for The Incredible Journey ministry. He holds a B.A. in Theology, M.A. in Ancient History & Archaeology, and M. in Divinity. He has produced and presented numerous documentaries on subjects including the Bible, Bible prophecy, world events and natural health. His passion is to share the good news of Jesus' imminent return.

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Website: [www.tij.tv](http://www.tij.tv)

Australia  
0481 315 101  
[info@tij.tv](mailto:info@tij.tv)

New Zealand  
020 422 2042  
[infonz@tij.tv](mailto:infonz@tij.tv)



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