The Guide and the Path – Psalm 23

- The Guide along the pathway

"The Lord is my Shepherd" v. 1

Note the personal "my" and compare it with Jn. 10 where the Lord Jesus says, ***"I am the door of the sheep"*** v. 7; ***"I am the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep"*** v. 11; ***"I am the Good Shepherd. I know My own and My own know Me"*** v. 14.

- The certainty of all-sufficiency

"I shall not want." v. 2

The Shepherd will certainly see that my spiritual life doesn't lack any good thing, ***"The young lions suffer want and hunger, but those seek the Lord lack no good thing."*** (Ps. 34:10)

God will bring many good things into our lives as we follow Him obediently.

- The earlier stages of the path
  - ✓ Taught to lie still

    "He makes me lie down in green pastures." v. 2
  - ✓ Led by quiet ways in order to mature in growth

    "He leads me beside still waters." v. 2
  - ✓ Restored and renewed in every time of need

    "He restores my soul." v. 2
  - ✓ Taught the righteousness of God in the details of life

    "He leads me in the paths of righteousness." v. 3
  - ✓ The object of His careful training

    "For His Name's sake." v. 3

We are taught to be still in the hand of God and trained by the Shepherd to know what is according to His righteousness in the outward manner of our life. Guided by Him we are led on from faith to faith. In Rom. 1:17 we read, ***"The righteous shall live by faith"***.

- Going through deeper parts in the fullness of time
  - ✓ Step-by-step through periods of deep darkness

    "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil." v. 4

    Note that it is a walk **<u>through</u>**. There is a way out at the other side! A quiet steady walk with God in faith is the Lord's delight! See 1 Pet. 1:6-7.

    "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed."
  - ✓ The valley and its shadow

    "The valley of the shadow of death" v. 4

    The actual cup of death was fully drained to the dregs by the Shepherd Himself and He is a tender guide for the sheep as they are led through what is spiritually as a mere shadow compared to His passage through the reality of a terrible death on the Cross.

- ✓ The faith of a believer

  "I will fear no evil." v. 4

  In the green pastures and by still waters the believer learns to know the heart of the Shepherd. So now the believer can follow and trust Him without any fear.

- ✓ The Unseen Presence in the valley of darkness

  "You are with me." v. 4

  See Ps. 141:8-10, ***"But my eyes are fixed on You, O Sovereign Lord. In You I take refuge. Do not give me over to death. Keep me from the snares they have laid for me, from the traps set by evildoers. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I pass by in safety."***

- ✓ The support of the trusting heart

  "Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." v. 4

  In this way we are taught to live by every word that comes from the mouth of God. We are gently weaned from all reliance on experiences, emotions or outward supports. The Word of the Lord becomes our solid rock. For ***"the Word of the Lord shall endure for ever"***. Is. 40:8 and 1 Pet. 1:25

- The amazing life in the Sanctuary is realised
  - ✓ It is a spiritual banqueting house!

    "You prepare a table before me." v. 5

  - ✓ The anointing of the Holy Spirit

    "You anoint my head with oil." v. 5

  - ✓ The overflowing heart

    "My cup overflows." v. 5

  - ✓ The assurance of faith

    "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me." v. 6

- The decision of faith

"I will dwell in the house of the Lord." v. 6

Compare this with Ps. 66:10-12, ***"For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver. You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs. You let men ride over our heads. We went through fire and water, but You brought us to a place of abundance."***

Again in Ps. 84:6-7 we read, ***"As they pass through the Valley of Baca*** (meaning weeping) ***they make it a place of springs. The autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength till everyone appears before God in Zion."***