

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

A CHRISTIAN MAN'S JOURNEY OF TRUST AND
DELIGHT IN THE GOOD SHEPHERD

*Mount Calvary Baptist Church
Man of the Word
Spring 2019*

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THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

THEME PASSAGE

The Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not want.

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

He restores my soul;

He guides me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

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

You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.

Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me
all the days of my life,

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Psalms 23

TIME

10 weeks: January 26 – April 6, 2018

GOALS

1. Grow in my dependence on, delight in, and trust in the Lord, my Shepherd.
2. Develop a mutually edifying relationship with my prayer partner through prayer and encouragement.

MY PRAYER PARTNER (NAME, PHONE NUMBER, EMAIL):

MAN OF THE WORD PROGRAM

The leadership of Mount Calvary Baptist Church created the Man of the Word program in obedience to the command of 2 Timothy 2:2: "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." This ministry functions under the leadership of Pastor Mark Minnick, Pastor John Tipton, and Chris Baker, elder. The following men are the current Man of the Word officers.

President Malcom Evans

Vice President Jerry Broere

Treasurer Ken Brackbill

Food Director David Baker

Project Coordinator Jesse Keck

Manual Director Timothy Hughes

We are grateful to Pastor Mark Minnick for his encouragement and leadership and for his vision for the men of Mount Calvary Baptist Church. We would also like to express our gratitude to the men who have donated their time, energy, and gifts by writing spiritually edifying articles for our growth and encouragement.

PREFACE

This booklet is a ten-week study designed to strengthen us as the men of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in our dependence on, delight in, and trust in the Lord, our Shepherd. Each week's resources consist of:

- SCRIPTURE READING – A passage pertaining to the week's article to be read and considered throughout the week (and perhaps used during family worship)
- TRUTH FOR MEDITATION – A verse or passage of Scripture that deals with Biblical Meditation
- BOOK READING—
 - *The Shepherd Psalm*—*Psalm 23* by F. B. Meyer
- QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION – A motivational quote from the book we are reading that underscores the goals for this cycle
- M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE – A way to keep on track in reading through the Bible in 2019 using the M'Cheyne system
- ARTICLES – Testimonies and devotionals on the theme, by Mt. Calvary Baptist Church men

Don't let these materials become daunting. Let whatever you do be a delight. If you can't keep up every component, choose the ones that you can use consistently and stick with them.

May God use this emphasis to kindle in our hearts—and in our families—a greater, more worshipful, and more dependent trust in the Lord, our Good Shepherd.

Timothy Hughes, January 2019

A Dedication

Mount Calvary Baptist Church programs are instituted to meet the needs of our flock. In 1993 a men's ministry called Man of the Word began as a result of a burden our leadership had for our men. Pastor John L. Tipton has been the Assistant Pastor who has ministered to our officers over many years, providing leadership and demonstrating many of the qualities we desire to grow in our men.

The Tiptons came to Mount Calvary Baptist Church in 1976. Pastor Tipton joined the church staff part-time in 1983 and full-time in 1994. He has faithfully ministered in many areas. He has overseen three major building projects, pastored the College and Career Class, provided administrative expertise, ministered to many in the hospital, taught Sunday School, preached many sermons and touched the lives of many families. For many of us, he has been there for us in our very darkest hours, bringing practical help, spiritual encouragement, and demonstrating the warm-hearted love of a compassionate under-shepherd.

In honor of his faithfulness, love and self-sacrifice to our men and the families of Mount Calvary Baptist Church we dedicate this Man of the Word Spring 2019 cycle on Psalm 23 to Pastor John L. Tipton.

January 26 – February 1

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 23

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

*"The Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not want."*

BOOK READING

The Shepherd Psalm—Psalm 23 by F. B. Meyer, Chapter 1 "The Psalm of Psalms" and Chapter 2 "The Shepherd-Lord"

QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION

"This Psalm has sometimes been called the Psalm of the Crook. It lies between the Psalm of the Cross and the Psalm of the Crown. If the twenty-second tells of the Good Shepherd, who died; and if the twenty-fourth tells of the Chief Shepherd, who is coming again; the twenty-third tells of the Great Shepherd, who keeps His flock with unerring sagacity and untiring devotion. No hireling is He. He asks no wage; He takes no reward. He counts not the cost. The sheep are His own. And in these sweet words we learn what He is towards them to-day, in all His shepherd tenderness and love." *The Shepherd Psalm—Psalm 23* by F. B. Meyer, Chapter 1

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Jan 26	Gen 27	Matthew 26	Esther 3	Acts 26
Jan 27	Gen 28	Matthew 27	Esther 4	Acts 27
Jan 28	Gen 29	Matthew 28	Esther 5	Acts 28
Jan 29	Gen 30	Mark 1	Esther 6	Rom 1
Jan 30	Gen 31	Mark 2	Esther 7	Rom 2
Jan 31	Gen 32	Mark 3	Esther 8	Rom 3
Feb 01	Gen 33	Mark 4	Esther 9-10	Rom 4

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

ETHAN HAMILTON

In this verse we have a simple structure: *the truth stated*, “The Lord is my Shepherd,” and *the truth applied*, “I shall not want.” *The truth stated*. The Psalmist draws on the image of a shepherd and his sheep to help visualize the truth he presents. What does the Scripture tell us about this image? It describes sheep as very needy creatures which naturally scatter (1 King 22:17; Jer 31:10; Jn 10:12) and go astray (Is 53:6) without someone to lead and provide for them (Num 27:17). Shepherds, we’re told, lead (Num 27:17; 2 Sam 5:2; 1 Chron 11:2), protect (Ps 23:4), heal (Zech 11:16), goad (Ecc 12:11), feed (Ezek 34:15), and carry (Is 40:11; Ps 28:9) their sheep. In short, they take care of all their flocks’ needs. One self-apparent but fundamental point regarding this image should be stated: the sheep receive the benefits of a shepherd because *he is with them* (Ps 23:4). Their fragile nature requires constant attention and close care. The image of a shepherd and his sheep powerfully communicates intimate oversight and, therefore, provision.

But to whom is the image ascribed? “The LORD...” Is He truly so great that the Psalmist may peacefully conclude that, under His shepherding, he lacks nothing? Consider the following three things concerning God: 1) He knows everything (Is 44:8) and with perfect wisdom acts on what He knows (Ps 104:24). But what if He lacks the power to act on what He knows? Consider, then, that 2) He possesses limitless ability (Jer 32:17) and owns all power (Ps 62:11). But what if in His complete knowledge and infinite ability He’s a tyrant? Then consider lastly, that 3) He is benevolent towards His creatures (Acts 14:17).

However, He reserves an affectionate (Rom 8:39) and loyal (Heb 13:5) degree of care towards those who, by faith in Christ, have become part of His flock and can truly say, “The Lord is *my* shepherd.” Of them it is said that He gathers them in His arms, carries them in his bosom, leads them gently (Is 40:11) to restful places (Ezek 34:15; Ps 23:2-3), shows concern for them (Jn 10:13) and lays down His life for them (10:15). The description of the Lord as my Shepherd powerfully communicates *His* intimate oversight and, therefore, sufficient provision for His sheep.

To whom is the implied image of a sheep ascribed? The Psalmist, the great King David of Israel. He humbly accepts the image of a sheep with all its needy connotations.

The truth applied. Is the conclusion that the Psalmist will not lack anything with the LORD as his shepherd true in experience? I think all of us living in the United States know the Lord's *abundant* provision in all of our physical necessities. However, Paul testifies that he was "often without food, in cold and exposure" (2 Cor 11:27) "suffering need" (Phil 4:12). But he did not consider himself lacking (Phil 4:11) because his Good Shepherd sufficiently strengthened him for these circumstances (v. 13). The Lord's provision, then, is not always the removal *of*, but the strengthening *for* difficulty. And, believe it or not, this is motivated by His love for us. For example, because the Lord loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (Jn 11:5), He delayed two days longer in coming to them, allowing time for Lazarus to die (v. 6), so that they would believe (v. 15).

For God's people to experience His provision, they must receive it, take it, and use it. There is no question that real sheep would take advantage of such pleasant provision as seen in Psalm 23:2-3. Paul took advantage of the Lord's provision of grace for His thorn in the flesh. It was so pleasant to him that he came to glory in his neediness, so that he might experience more provision, namely, the power of Christ dwelling in him (2 Cor 12:7-10). On the threshold of the promised land the Lord provided promises for Joshua to conquer. Joshua simply needed to act on the basis of the promises to experience the abundant provision.

Brothers, in what areas do we find ourselves lacking most? Consider the responsibility of the spiritual leadership of our homes. We lack so much personally to do this Scripturally, humbly, firmly, lovingly, and consistently! Consider the responsibility of walking in purity. We lack personal strength to resist our strong and sinful passions! Consider our very cold and weak love for the Lord especially in light of all His mercies to us. He has given us abundant provision for these and all areas of weakness. He's provided Divine strength for our obedience (Phil 2:12-13; 4:13) and forgiveness and cleansing for our failure (1 Jn 1:9). And more than these, since "He who did not spare His own Son...delivered Him over for us all...will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Rom 8:32). Brothers, we certainly do not and will not lack anything that we need in Christ Jesus!

WEEK 2 GREEN PASTURES, STILL WATERS

February 2 – February 8

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 100

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

*"He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside quiet waters."*

BOOK READING

The Shepherd Psalm—Psalm 23 by F. B. Meyer, Chapter 3 "Pastures of Tender Grass and Waters of Rest"

QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION

"And now, O timid soul, be at rest! The blood-red brand which is upon thee is a sure token that thou art safe. He cannot have done so much for thee to lose thee now. In all moments of peril or dread, softly murmur His name, Jesus! Jesus! and He will at once comfort thee by His presence and by His voice, which all the sheep know; and this shall be His assurance: 'My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.'" *The Shepherd Psalm—Psalm 23 by F. B. Meyer, Chapter 3*

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Feb 02	Gen 34	Mark 5	Job 1	Rom 5
Feb 03	Gen 35-36	Mark 6	Job 2	Rom 6
Feb 04	Gen 37	Mark 7	Job 3	Rom 7
Feb 05	Gen 38	Mark 8	Job 4	Rom 8
Feb 06	Gen 39	Mark 9	Job 5	Rom 9
Feb 07	Gen 40	Mark 10	Job 6	Rom 10
Feb 08	Gen 41	Mark 11	Job 7	Rom 11

GREEN PASTURES, STILL WATERS

KARL WALKER

At its core, Psalm 23:2 presents to us a picture of a sheep at rest. Picture yourself as a sheep. What would rest look like to you? Would it be to climb rugged mountains? Walk on unstable cliffs? Trudge through swamps? Flee from wolves? Or would it be to lie down in a rolling green pasture, full of thick, luscious green grass to be fed to our hearts content situated next to a bubbling brook? I think if most of us were sheep, this setting would be described as the “good life.” The good life for a sheep is one of rest.

The Lord desires his sheep to be experiencing rest, both physically and spiritually. However, when you and I consider our day to day lives, rest is often the one thing we may believe we lack the most. We wake up and attend classes, or drive to work, or travel for our business. Then after a long exhausting day, we come home to a busy family, or a load of assignments, or work projects at our house. We go to bed and wake up early the next day, only to repeat the vicious, exhausting cycle that eventually runs us ragged. To compound our need of rest, trials and tribulations enter our lives and add to the daily fatigue we experience. We face the pressure of looming financial payments, upcoming surgeries, the family member who has ostracized himself from everything he has ever known, or the unanswered questions about our future careers. The list goes on and on. Adding to the burden, every waking moment can be occupied by the things of this world. The political updates and latest news that can arrive at the touch of our fingertips, or the latest photo uploaded to social media, the condition of our stocks and investments or the latest weather forecast. All these voices drown away that internal voice urging all Christians to step away and rest. But instead of the feeling of being at rest, we instead possess the feeling of being rushed. We get in our cars and race to and fro, performing life’s daily tasks when inwardly our souls crave rest.

I took a moment during the first week of this school semester to take inventory of the free moments to experience rest both physically and spiritually I had during that day. What I saw when I looked back on the day was a day of meetings, classes, receiving loads of details, and looking at my phone. The time I had to really to rest and meditate on my Savior and his love for me and my response towards him was to my shame almost non-existent outside of my personal time in the morning. I had done what probably many of us have been guilty of many times,

and that is going whole days without meditating or stopping to dwell on the glories of our relationship to God through Jesus Christ, or His works, or His sovereignty. And even the moments I had that were somewhat free, I was walking somewhere or talking to someone. What is the problem with this? While I may be able to experience a day or two like this without seeing the negative consequences manifested right away, overtime a lifestyle like this for a month or two months, or a year, will yield serious consequences spiritually. We will begin to question things we never questioned before about God, like His goodness or His love, despite our circumstances being the same. We will begin to believe our works merit His grace or perhaps we will lose the consciousness of the close presence or immanence of our God. These losses should spur us to take time and rest our souls, however an even greater motivation to experience this rest should simply be the loss of intimate communion with our God and Savior. One cannot experience the heights and joys of a rich relationship with God during days in which that individual never stops to rest and refresh spiritually. So, what are encouragements to help us experience this rest? How can we get rest spiritually from all the cares of this world so that we may delight more in our Good Shepherd and Savior?

The rest we need for our souls is contingent on two primary things. Our Shepherd and our attitude towards our Shepherd. First, without our Shepherd we could never experience the joys of rest. Think of the verse, "He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters." Who is the subject of this verse? It is our Good Shepherd! Our being positioned in green pastures and beside still waters is dependent first on our Shepherd leading us! He leads us into these places in life! Within the idea of green pastures is the concept that just like a sheep feeds on grass, our shepherd leads us to a place where we are fed spiritually. (Ez. 34:14, Jn. 10:9) Yet when we spend our days whittling life away on all our responsibilities, which many times are important nonetheless, we have no time to rest and feed our souls on the food that the Lord has provided for us. God has provided for us satisfying, spiritual food found in his Word that can feed each of our soul's deepest needs. But many times, we don't access it. Do you meditate on the Word of God and find rest from the rush and common busyness of life or do you move from one task to the next, your gear being stuck in "go mode"? How are you going to break out of the ruts of busyness and steer your thoughts towards spiritual things? A disconnect between the food we give ourselves spiritually in the morning and what we feed on throughout the

day will keep us from resting spiritually. Let us feed our souls through meditation on God and his Word throughout the day because of our Shepherd's great provision.

The second thing our souls need in order to experience the rest the Lord has provided for us is the correct attitude. An attitude of submission. What would it be like for a sheep to have the perspective of "the grass is always greener on the other side?" This sheep who goes around always looking for something better would starve for failure to miss what is right in front of him. The sheep must trust the Shepherd. Many times, for us as Christians we have the perspective of looking for the next best option to satisfy our spiritual need for rest. Therefore, we miss the green pasture the Lord has currently put us in and lose the potential to magnify his provision for us as our Good Shepherd. This is a lack of trust in our Good Shepherd! Submissive sheep bring the Shepherd joy and delight as they trust his leading and enjoy his provisions. Are you content with what the Lord has provided you with or are you searching for the next best thing? Meditation on the Lord and the characteristics of His leading will cultivate our attitude of submission to his perfect leading.

With the Lord as our Shepherd, may he lead us to green pastures as we are content with his guidance, energized by the knowledge that his rest alone will satisfy our souls.

February 9 – February 15

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 119:169-176; Isaiah 40

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

"He restores my soul"

BOOK READING

The Shepherd Psalm — Psalm 23 by F. B. Meyer, Chapter 4 "He Restoreth My Soul"

QUOTATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

"There are many signs of the declension of the soul: Its restlessness; its spirit of captious complaining; its want of interest in the concerns of Christ's Kingdom; its inability to testify for Christ, or against sin; its unwillingness to admit that it is any different to what it used to be; its wincing beneath contact with the Word of God faithfully preached, and with the experience of others who are living in soul-health and in happy fellowship with God."

"Oh, do not wait for days or weeks to elapse ere you apply to Him for His restoring grace! But just as you are, dare to trust Him to do it now. Whilst the throb of passion is still beating high, and the deed of shame is recent, look up to Him, and claim forgiveness...And then, though as yet no answering joy thrills your heart, you will be able to exclaim, in the assurance of faith, 'He restoreth my soul.'"

The Shepherd Psalm — Psalm 23 by F. B. Meyer, Chapter 4

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Feb 09	Gen 42	Mark 12	Job 8	Rom 12
Feb 10	Gen 43	Mark 13	Job 9	Rom 13
Feb 11	Gen 44	Mark 14	Job 10	Rom 14
Feb 12	Gen 45	Mark 15	Job 11	Rom 15
Feb 13	Gen 46	Mark 16	Job 12	Rom 16
Feb 14	Gen 47	Luke 1:1-38	Job 13	1 Cor 1
Feb 15	Gen 48	Luke 1:39-80	Job 14	1 Cor 2

HE RESTORES MY SOUL

TIMOTHY HUGHES

The LORD is my Shepherd. He restores my soul.

He restores my soul from sin by showing me that Christ and His ways are always better. He shows me that His ways are better than what my flesh lusts for. He shows me that His ways are better than what my eyes wrongly turn to and long for in this world. And He shows me that a meek and lowly resting in Him is a position far more exalted than any earthly position my grasping, ambitious pride could desire in this life.

His way of love is better than my way of selfishness. His way of joy is better than my ways that would only result in despair. His way of peace is better than the wars and fightings my flesh would always have me waging against others. His way of patience is far better than my desire for instant gratification. His way of kindness is so much better than the mean, angry, harsh spirit that would rule over my relationships with others without His intervention. His true goodness is beautiful and life-changing. Without Him, my best works would on be as filthy rags. He took me, a faithless sinner, brought me to faith, and is teaching me His faithful ways. He would take my anger and teach me gentleness. He would take my intemperate pursuit of my own wants and desires and give me instead a Spirit-filled self-control.

And when I turn my gaze to Him in simple, repentant faith I hear my Shepherd remind me in words He used during His journey on earth, “Your sins are forgiven you.”

He restores my soul from doubt and fear by showing me that His Word is better. He takes my confidence in self—my intellect, my experience, my traditions, my understanding, observations, and opinions—and replaces it with simple trust in His Word. When I am tempted to doubt Him, tempted to look away, tempted to place confidence again in the broken cisterns of man’s empty reasoning, He calls me instead to drink from the fountain of His soul-satisfying river of the incomprehensible pleasures of God. And He teaches me that the fear of the Lord is the be-

ginning of knowledge—the only sure source of wisdom and truth about the world around us and the world inside us and the world we cannot see and the world to come.

And when I turn my gaze to Him in uncomplicated, totally dependent faith I again hear my Shepherd remind me in words He used during His journey on earth, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

He restores my soul in times of weakness and hurt by showing me that His strength is made perfect in my weakness. He lifts my gaze from small things to behold His greatness. I look at His glories and my sight is restored. I rise to follow Him and my halting lameness is healed. He loosens my tongue to speak of His glory. And He makes my weakness a testimony of His strength.

When I realize how fleeting life is, I remember that He is the Creator of Eternity. When I am pressed by the pressures of a hostile world, He is my Prince of Peace. In my weakness, He is my Mighty God. In my perplexities, He is my Wonderful Counselor. In my earthly sorrow, He is my enduring Joy. In my defeat, He is my great Victory. In my fear, He is my Confidence. In my darkness, He is my Light. In loss, He is my great Gain. In poverty, my true Wealth. In my uncertainty, He is my sure Hope. In death, He will be my everlasting Life.

My Shepherd walked the path of human suffering long ago, and He leads me faithfully today, every step of the way.

He restores my soul. Our Shepherd calls broken, hurting, and helpless sinners like me and says, “You are mine, I have redeemed you—don’t be afraid.” He comes to failing, faltering saints—and He tests our love—restores us—and repeats these words, first spoken during His earthly journey long ago as He restored another disciple to usefulness: “Feed my sheep.”

Praise my Savior, my Good Shepherd and the Restorer of His beloved sheep! For *He restores my soul.*

February 16 – February 22

SCRIPTURE READING

Hebrews 13:20-21; Ezekiel 34

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

*"He guides me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake."*

BOOK READING

The Shepherd Psalm — Psalm 23 by F. B. Meyer, Chapter 5 "The Shepherd's Leading"

QUOTATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

"If you do not know which way to go, wait till you are sensible of the leadings of the Good Shepherd. Your life is wonderfully interesting to Him; every step of it is the subject of His thought. It will be a sore mistake and wrong for you to act without being sure of what He wishes you to do."

"Not always beside the gentle streamlet flow; but sometimes by the foaming torrent. Not always over the delicate grass; but sometimes up the stony mountain track. Not always in the sunshine; but sometimes through the valley of the shadow of death. But whichever way it is, it is the right way, and it is the way Home. Christ's leadings are always along 'paths of righteousness.'"

The Shepherd Psalm — Psalm 23 by F. B. Meyer, Chapter 5

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Feb 16	Gen 49	Luke 2	Job 15	1 Cor 3
Feb 17	Gen 50	Luke 3	Job 16-17	1 Cor 4
Feb 18	Ex 1	Luke 4	Job 18	1 Cor 5
Feb 19	Ex 2	Luke 5	Job 19	1 Cor 6
Feb 20	Ex 3	Luke 6	Job 20	1 Cor 7
Feb 21	Ex 4	Luke 7	Job 21	1 Cor 8
Feb 22	Ex 5	Luke 8	Job 22	1 Cor 9

PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

CHARLIE HATCHETT

The images and other scriptures that come to one's mind when reading this Psalm are many and they are instructive. The shepherd is the Lord Himself, who died for the sheep. He knows His sheep and calls them to follow Him, and they know Him. (*John 10:14, I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.*)* He is the One that knows the path and the sheep are to follow Him. The path He walks is always the righteous path; and if the sheep are to enjoy the pleasure of His fellowship, His provision and protection, they must walk this path too. (*1 John 1:5-7 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*)

This path is not easy, nor is it a familiar path. In fact, it is a hard and narrow path, one that is not well known by the sheep and found only when they follow the Shepherd. (*Matthew 7:13-14 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*)

As sheep, we also need to remember this passage is giving us instruction. Although I have never had to care for sheep, I have observed a few. I would not consider them especially smart or able animals. In fact, the Scriptures again give us some insight in to their vulnerability if they are without the protection of the shepherd. (*John 10:12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.*) There are many wolves out there; and the Bible warns us many times over to be watchful, because they desire to prey on us—the sheep. (*Matt 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*) There are not only wolves seeking to scatter the sheep, there is a raging roaring lion who desires to devour us. (*1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*) He is a powerful, vigilant foe; and there are many demons with him to help scatter, destroy, distract, derail or delay the sheep. (*Ephians 6:12 For we wrestle not against*

flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.)

So what should our “take-away” be from this?

First, we are vulnerable! Well, this is not news; but have we really considered just how vulnerable we really are? Do we really realize that we are in a battle—NO, a war—for our very souls?

(Matt 10:28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.) Have we really considered the consequences of not being on the righteous path? Are we putting forth the effort necessary to find and walk that path?

Second, like sheep we very easily go astray. If we lose sight of the Shepherd, we might think that we are on the right way when we are really on the wrong path entirely. *(Proverbs 14:12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. Proverbs 16:25 There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.)* We have a double warning here! There are many distractions and attractions to cause us to get off the righteous path. (Consider the allegory that was taught in Sunday school a couple of years ago — Pilgrim’s Progress. Pilgrim and others that were on the path of righteousness lost their way many times, and the consequences were not good.) We are to be strangers and pilgrims in this world, looking forward to a city whose builder and maker is God. Keeping our eyes on the Shepherd, and the path that He has set before us, is the only way to help us reach our goal so we do not stray from the path into sin and shame. *(Romans 6:20-21 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.)*

The path is not easy, and the distractions and pitfalls are many. We live in an evil world that is steadily growing more evil. We not only have the world to contend with, we have our old, fallen nature that continually attempts to draw us away. The world, the flesh and the devil are mighty and vigilant foes. The lust of our flesh, the lust of our eyes and our pride make us very vulnerable and receptive to the many enticements and temptations that are present everywhere. It is very easy to get off the righteous path, but He has not left us without help. We have His indwelling Spirit, godly leaders, counselors, and our consciences to help us stay on the path. A proper response to these guides and constant and

correct use of His Word, our Guidebook, in our everyday life is the answer to walking in the narrow way. We must read, memorize and meditate on the Guidebook He has given to us if we are to avoid the many destructive forces that are constantly attempting to move us off the righteous path. Our attitude in this is critical. The saying "attitude is everything" applies here. One of my favorite passages to demonstrate the attitude we must have as we approach the Scriptures is *Proverbs. 2:1-5* *My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.* I continue to be impressed with the progression that is called for in our attitude toward Scripture in this passage. First, we are admonished to receive (read) the Word, then we are told to hide (take It into our mind and heart) His commandments, then to incline the ear (give heed or close attention) to the wisdom contained in the Word, then to apply what we have read (begin to live out) what we are reading. Next, we see the intensity growing as we are instructed to cry after knowledge and lift up our voice for understanding. We are to pray and plead for the Holy Spirit's teaching and help for understanding and obedience so that we then value the Word as we would silver or gold, for it contains hidden treasure that we **must** have in order to stay on the righteous path. (*Prov. 2:9 Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.*)

Throughout the Psalms, David refers to the importance and need of the Scriptures in our daily life and walk. If we are not "Men of the Word", we will no doubt get off the righteous paths and remove ourselves from the fellowship of our Savior and God. It is in His presence that we find ourselves on the righty path. (*Psalms 16:11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*)

**Scripture quotations in this article taken from the King James Version.*

February 23 – March 1

SCRIPTURE READING

John 10:1-18

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

*“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil, for You are with me”*

BOOK READING

The Shepherd Psalm — Psalm 23 by F. B. Meyer, Chapter 6 “The Valley of Shadow”

QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION

“Sorrow and dying make Christ’s presence real. Have you ever noticed the change in the pronoun? Hitherto the Psalmist has spoken of the Lord in the third person; but now, as he moves down into the dark, he draws closer to the Divine Leader and Guide, speaking to Him in a whisper, and saying, Thou. In the green pastures it was enough to speak of ‘He;’ but now there is need for the closer, tender address. When things are going well with us, we may content ourselves with talking about the Lord; but when the sky darkens we hasten to deal with Him, and talk to Him directly. The child which had been playing about the room will run to your knee and cling closely to your bosom as soon as the thunder-clouds gather and the wind moans through the house. In this way death chambers become Presence-chambers.”

The Shepherd Psalm — Psalm 23 by F. B. Meyer, Chapter 6

M’CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Feb 23	Ex 6	Luke 9	Job 23	1 Cor 10
Feb 24	Ex 7	Luke 10	Job 24	1 Cor 11
Feb 25	Ex 8	Luke 11	Job 25-26	1 Cor 12
Feb 26	Ex 9	Luke 12	Job 27	1 Cor 13
Feb 27	Ex 10	Luke 13	Job 28	1 Cor 14
Feb 28	Ex 11:1-12:21	Luke 14	Job 29	1 Cor 15
Mar 01	Ex 12:22-51	Luke 15	Job 30	1 Cor 16

THROUGH THE VALLEY

ANDY MARTIN

The Lord is my shepherd. I will not fear in the valley because He is with me. In the first three verses of Psalm 23, David reminds the reader of the Lord's provision, leading, guidance, and restoration. Now we come to verse four where in the middle, David says to the Lord, "for You are with me" reflecting his confidence in God regardless of the circumstances. David knows God. David knows God's promises. David knows God's presence.

How do we respond when we face the valleys? Charles Spurgeon describes the response in Psalm 23:4 this way, "as if the believer did not quicken his pace when he came to die, but still calmly walked with God. To walk indicates the steady advance of the soul which knows its road, knows its end, resolves to follow the path, feels quite safe, and is therefore perfectly calm and composed." So, do we panic in the valley? Are we distraught or out of control? Psalm 46:10a says, "Cease striving and know that I am God." The calm walk requires knowing God. We must see our circumstances with a mind saturated with God's Word. We must know God! Let us look at a couple questions from our catechism study. *How can I know about God?* Answer: *I can know about God by His creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which are before my eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate "the invisible things of God"* (Belgic Confession, Article 2, quoting Romans 1:20). How can I know about God most completely? Answer: *I can know about God most completely by the Holy Scriptures.* God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path as we are taught in Psalm 119. God's Word teaches us about God and when we know Him, we will cease striving and walk calmly through the valley.

As we look at this walk in Psalm 23:4, we see that David is walking through the valley. The valley is often associated with times of darkness and trouble. The valley is a situation that naturally causes strife in our minds or a sense of panic. We may be encouraged by some to endure the valley because the mountain top experience is surely on the way. On the contrary, the mountain top is not getting out of the valley but is growing closer to and knowing God while we are in the valley. Our peace does not come from "better" circumstances but from a growing knowledge of our great God. In Colossians 1, Paul prays for the Colossians growth that

they be filled with the knowledge of His will and that they will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. Our worthy walk is certainly dependent on our knowledge of God. When the valleys come, our knowledge of God is revealed. The valley is not the time to rely on our own strength and wisdom. The valley is not the best time to make a commitment to know God better though the Lord may use a valley to get our attention. Our getting to know God should be a daily commitment in our lives whether faced with a trial or not. Jeremiah 9:23-24 tells us, "Thus says the Lord, 'Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not a mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things' declares the Lord." We must know our God and that is not just for the valley but for a daily walk that is worthy of the Lord.

In the context of Psalm 23:4, what is the valley? It is the valley of the shadow of death. Again thinking about Spurgeon's quote, "The believer did not quicken his pace when he came to die," we realize that our knowledge of God keeps us at peace even when facing death. We continue the pace in a calm walk and not in some out of control panic. This calmness is God's doing! David saw beyond this life on earth. David had the same mentality as is mentioned of Abraham in Hebrews 11:10 which states, "For he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." As we learn more about God and His promises, the more we long to be with Him and therefore we do not fear death. Knowing God teaches us to trust Him.

David says that even though he walks through the valley of the shadow of death that he will fear no evil. David has come to realize who is in absolute control. David is not in control. Evil is not in control. Those who do evil are not in control. God is in control. David understands God's providence. We have learned about God's providence in our Treeology Theology catechism study which defines God's providence as *His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing of all His creatures and their actions to His own glory* (Adapted from the Westminster Shorter and Larger catechisms, Qs. 11, 18). Our God is in control and we need not fear evil. We need not fear at all. Learn of Him! Trust Him! Pray for His help! We will falter. God will never fail. We can trust the promises of God. II Corinthians 1:20 says, "For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes, therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us."

So David concludes that even though he walks through the valley of the shadow of death that he will fear no evil with a reason why and that is God is with him. David says, "For you are with me." We all know and understand the security provided by the presence of someone in a time of crisis especially when that someone is one we know and trust. David can boldly say that he does not fear evil or anything to do with the valley of the shadow of death because his God is with him. David's God is our God and we can have this same confidence. We gain confidence of God's presence with us by knowing what He tells us in His Word. We must have a daily sustained effort to learn more about our God. God often reminds us that He is always with us. Here are three examples:

Joshua 1:9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Isaiah 41:10 Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

Deuteronomy 31:6 Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.

Your knowledge of and confidence in God is reflected in all circumstances of life. David testified confidently that he could face the valley of the shadow of death without fear because God was with him. This confidence comes from a true knowledge of God. We can gain this knowledge of God through His Word as we prayerfully read and study the Holy Scriptures. May the Lord find us faithful.

March 2 – March 8

SCRIPTURE READING

John 10:19-30

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

“Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”

BOOK READING

The Shepherd Psalm — Psalm 23 by F. B. Meyer, Chapter 7 “Comfort Through the Rod and Staff”

QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION

“The myriad stars of heaven seem to make up one huge flock. Their Shepherd is God, who is driving them through space; or who watches them, as it were, resting on the heavenly slopes as a flock of sheep on the downs at night. And He has a name for each of them. Is it therefore to be supposed that He will not be as minute in His care of each one of us? Will He not have a name for each of us? Will He not number us when He tells the tale of His sheep, even as He numbers the hairs of our heads? This very morn He touched you with His staff and counted you. You are the destined object of His care.”

The Shepherd Psalm — Psalm 23 by F. B. Meyer, Chapter 7

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Mar 02	Ex 13	Luke 16	Job 31	2 Cor 1
Mar 03	Ex 14	Luke 17	Job 32	2 Cor 2
Mar 04	Ex 15	Luke 18	Job 33	2 Cor 3
Mar 05	Ex 16	Luke 19	Job 34	2 Cor 4
Mar 06	Ex 17	Luke 20	Job 35	2 Cor 5
Mar 07	Ex 18	Luke 21	Job 36	2 Cor 6
Mar 08	Ex 19	Luke 22	Job 37	2 Cor 7

YOUR ROD AND STAFF

STEVE LAROCO

I have three children, ages 6, 4, and 1. As a father of small children I have often had occasion to reflect on my own fleeting memories of being a little boy. I remember the times when I would call out in the night because I had a frightening dream or I was sick. I knew it would be all right when the “big people” (my Mom and Dad) showed up.

Even as an adult, I feel less prone to worry when I see the “big people” from my perspective present. When I take my small children and wife to a crowded event like a ballgame or am just trying to keep track of everybody walking down a busy sidewalk or through a crowded shopping mall, I am very thankful to see a muscular security guard or multiple police officers or even just a squad car or two present!

Even as responsible adults, we men recognize the need for somebody “bigger” than us to help us and protect us. David was a highly capable leader. Even as a young man, others described him as “a mighty man of valor, a warrior, one prudent in speech, and a handsome man.” Yet the most important qualification for David is found at the end of that list: “The Lord is with him” (1 Samuel 16:18). David himself needed a Shepherd who would lead him in the right paths and would always be with him even in the “valley of the shadow of death” (Psalm 23:3–4). Only then, could David “fear no evil.”

The comfort that David derives from the Lord’s presence comes from the Shepherd’s rod and staff. The rod and the staff are instruments of discipline! How do instruments of discipline bring comfort?

First, let’s consider what these instruments are and their uses. The rod is heavy club, used by a shepherd to ward off predators. David faced predators like these when watching his father’s sheep. He described to Saul how that he fought off both lions and bears that came to snatch away the sheep, even rescuing the animal from the mouth of the wild beast before killing the predator (1 Samuel 18:34–35)! The staff, however, has a far different use. While the rod is used against other animals, the shepherd uses a staff to deal with the sheep themselves. The staff is the shepherd’s crook. The sheep pass under it one by one to be numbered. By this crook, the shepherd restrains the sheep from wandering and pulls them out of

holes they may have fallen into. He also uses this staff to correct the sheep when disobedient.

How then does the rod comfort us? We men have great foes. Our adversary, the Devil “prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). We also face many malicious human foes. David faced many throughout his life like Saul, Absalom, even his close counselor Ahithophel. Today, there are still “savage wolves” that come into our assemblies “not sparing the flock” (Acts 20:29). We are often in dread of these foes. We feel so powerless before temptation. The fear of man is very strong. Our foes may seem especially strong when we are at our hour of greatest need when we are led through “the valley of the shadow of death.” Our Good Shepherd, however, will never fail to defend and deliver us. Unlike the hired hand who sees the wolf coming, leaves the sheep, and flees, our Lord even laid down His life for us, His sheep (John 10:11ff)! So, brothers, “if God is for us, who is against us?” Even Satan himself cannot prevail in his accusations against us. Our Shepherd has died, been raised, ascended to the right hand of God, and now makes intercession for us. “In all these things, we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us” His sheep (Romans 8:31ff).

What about the staff? How does the staff comfort us? Remember the first use of the staff. The shepherd numbers the sheep with it as they pass into the fold. Likewise, our Good Shepherd knows each of us by name (John 10:3). He knows those who are truly His and those who are merely pretenders. Someday, He will separate the two “as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats” (Matthew 25:32). Remember also, the second use of the staff. The shepherd restrains and rescues the sheep from many dangers. Likewise, “the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls” (1 Peter 2:25) must often restrain and rescue us. “All we like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way” (Isaiah 53:6). Jesus reminded his listeners that even if a man has ninety-nine sheep, he will go to look for one lost sheep until he has found it (Luke 15:4ff). He observes at another time, “How much more valuable is a man than a sheep!” (Matthew 12:12). Aren’t we glad that our Shepherd found and rescued us? He himself promised to do so in Ezekiel 34:11ff. “I myself will search for My sheep and seek them out ... so I will care for my sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day.”

Let's also remember the final use of the staff. The shepherd disciplines his sheep. Likewise, our Lord admonishes us, "Do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him. For those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines" (Hebrews 12:5-6). When a sheep goes astray, he may be seriously injured. Sometimes our own foolish wandering can bring severe consequences. Our Lord addressed this concern in the same passage on discipline. "Strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble and make straight paths for your feet so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed" (Hebrews 9:12-13).

Brothers, our Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, is also our Great Shepherd, the Sovereign of all creation! There is always One who is bigger than us to defend us, to rescue us, and to discipline us in order to make us more like Himself. May He "equip us in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight" (Hebrews 13:21).

WEEK 7 IN THE PRESENCE OF MY ENEMIES

March 9 – March 15

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 28

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies”

BOOK READING

The Shepherd Psalm — Psalm 23 by F. B. Meyer, Chapter 7 “The Banquet”

QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION

“See that ring of hostile faces, darting fierce glances and chafing to rush upon the beleaguered soul! —but they cannot cut off the supplies that come hourly from above. They cannot hinder the angel ministers who spread the table and heap it up, and then form themselves into an inner ring of defense. They may gnash their teeth at the vanity and futility of their rage; but when God elects to feed a soul, fed that soul shall be, though all hell attempt to say it nay!”

The Shepherd Psalm — Psalm 23 by F. B. Meyer, Chapter 7 “The Banquet”

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Mar 09	Ex 20	Luke 23	Job 38	2 Cor 8
Mar 10	Ex 21	Luke 24	Job 39	2 Cor 9
Mar 11	Ex 22	John 1	Job 40	2 Cor 10
Mar 12	Ex 23	John 2	Job 41	2 Cor 11
Mar 13	Ex 24	John 3	Job 42	2 Cor 12
Mar 14	Ex 25	John 4	Pro 1	2 Cor 13
Mar 15	Ex 26	John 5	Pro 2	Gal 1

IN THE PRESENCE OF MY ENEMIES

CLAUDE STINE

In preparation of Psalm 23:5, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies," I searched Noah Webster's definition of an enemy. He says, "an enemy is an adversary or opposing force." David, of course, had many hateful enemies. They came from all around – his own family, wife and son, and so-called friends. I have never had such an enemy as David but I do have opposing forces which are my enemies. I am reminded in scripture God has not only allowed it, but He has prepared that table of my life. God said in Job 2:3 He is in control. We are also reminded of this in Daniel 4:35 (the saved and the lost) and Dan. 5:21 (even kings and presidents), Genesis 50:20 (it is for my good), and most recently we were reminded of this in Lamentations 3: 1-18. Although I may not experience as David did, I do have enemies. I was once told living in America can be a curse to a Christian. I will use the word "enemy" instead of "curse." In my Bible I have a card that keeps me reminded of my enemies.

First, I must regularly ask myself, "Am I making the honor of God the great object of my life"? Is whatever I do, done with the Lord in mind? (Catechism card 1 and 1 Cor. 10:31).

Second, am I allowing circumstances to regulate my life? God's Word is to be my regulator. Do I allow heavy traffic, work or home experiences, illness, or loss of a job, to affect me in such a way that I put aside what the Bible says as to how I am to respond to these circumstances in my life?. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Luke 6:31) and do not return to others the same or worse than they did to you (Matthew 5:38-48).

Third, I am commanded to be like Christ. I must never lose sight or forget that God's Word is full of commandments. It is not full of suggestions, requests, recommendations, nor is my opinion sought. His Word does not need to be endorsed by me. It is forever settled (Psalm 119:89). I am to obey all Scripture and not pick and choose. All of the Bible is true, important and should be studied, reflected upon and carefully applied. We are indeed to continue in the faith, stable, steadfast and persevering (Col 1:23).

Fourth, another of my possible enemies is neglect of Bible reading and prayer. Throughout the Scripture we are told to study and pray. The

Holy Spirit was given to Christ's own (John 14:26), to bring to our remembrance the things He has taught us. How am I to know what He teaches if I don't search the Scriptures? In Acts 17:11 I am given an example to receive the word with eagerness and examine the Scriptures daily (2 Tim 2:15). The Scriptures help us in our daily walk (2 Tim 3:16-17). We are told to pray always in 1 Thess 5:16-18. Our Lord gave His children direction in prayer (Matt 6: 5-15). Throughout the Old and New Testament we are admonished to pray and study. I was reminded by someone who once stated that to not read the Bible and pray would be like telling God I don't need you.

Fifth, I must keep in mind right living is sustained by right feeding. Smart phones, TV, computers, radio, music or books are not bad in themselves but it's how I use them. What am I allowing them to feed me? Carefully, prayerfully read the hymn "Living for Jesus".

If I am not satisfied with my life, I am calling into question God's wisdom. He has prepared a table before me in the presence of my enemies and has ordained the circumstances of my life. Spurgeon in the late 1800's said, "Christians are no longer strict and puritanical, questionable literature is read on all hands, frivolous pastimes are currently indulged, a general laxity threatens to deprive the Lord's peculiar people of those sacred singularities which separate them from sinners." He goes on to say, "be it my aim in heart, in word, in dress, in action to maintain the broad wall, remembering that friendship of the world is to be an enemy of God." What would he say today? I say, who wants to be God's enemy?

Let us not lose sight that God is in control. He has done all the preparing, and it is all to be considered as a light affliction and not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed in us (2 Cor. 4:17; Rom 8:18). May God help us to be a picture of what we should be, an exact picture of Christ ALWAYS as He leads us into growing conformity to His image for His glory.

WEEK 8 OVERWHELMED WITH HIS BLESSINGS

March 16 – March 22

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 15

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

“You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.”

BOOK READING

The Shepherd Psalm — Psalm 23 by F. B. Meyer, Chapter 9 “Thou Anointest My Head With Oil” and Chapter 10 “The Overflowing Cup”

QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION

“We have nothing to say now about the texture of life's cups. They may be of gold, or silver, or tin, or alabaster, or glass. There is an infinite variety in the raw material of which our lives are made...And, after all, the great differences that come to men's lives are much more in their contents than in their outward seeming. Cease looking disconsolately on the outside of thy cup and platter, but look thankfully on the contents, which may be sweeter and richer for thee, albeit that they are held in a cup of common texture, than are the contents of other lives which thou dost envy, not knowing how bitter is the draught contained within.”
The Shepherd Psalm — Psalm 23 by F. B. Meyer, Chapter 10

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Mar 16	Ex 27	John 6	Pro 3	Gal 2
Mar 17	Ex 28	John 7	Pro 4	Gal 3
Mar 18	Ex 29	John 8	Pro 5	Gal 4
Mar 19	Ex 30	John 9	Pro 6	Gal 5
Mar 20	Ex 31	John 10	Pro 7	Gal 6
Mar 21	Ex 32	John 11	Pro 8	Eph 1
Mar 22	Ex 33	John 12	Pro 9	Eph 2

IT'S ALL CONNECTED!

CHRIS BAKER

Psalm 23 may be the favorite Psalm of all times. It supplies a leader (the Shepherd), the provisions-nourishment, and the warnings with the remedy. In verse five the sheep is in the presence of his enemies, that is he is in a "tight place" of some kind and it causes him to have anxiety. So the enemy could be a person, a sickness or a situation that puts the person in a "tight place" and causes anxiety. The word oil could refer to "fruitful, richness or perfumed." So, when we are anxious because of an adversarial situation or a "stink," the Lord, the Good Shepherd, gives us His Word to "perfume" the stench. The Word is referred to as the "rod" and "staff" in verse four that gives the comfort, thus relieving the anxiety by correcting and guiding us.

Recently a dear brother in the Lord sent me this quote from C. H. Spurgeon. Spurgeon found that his great suffering drew him closer to God. In an address to ministers and students he says, "I daresay the greatest earthly blessing that God can give to any of us is health, with the exception of sickness. I am afraid that all the grace I have got of my comfortable and easy times and happy hours might almost lie on a penny. But the good I have received from my sorrows and pains and griefs is altogether incalculable . . . affliction is the best bit of furniture in my house. It is the best book in a minister's library."

This came alive to me after a recent surgery. I went to a rehabilitation facility and had a private room, the Bible, encouraging conservative Christian music and time with the Lord. The more time I spent with the truth, meditating on the truth and with the God of truth, I found that the words and thoughts came out in my conversations very easily and boldly . . . filled with truth. My cup running over, you might say. And though there were times when other people talked error and could have caused anxiety, the truth, or God's Word, guided me and kept me in "perfumed" in the way.

So, it appears that there is a correlation between the amount of time and effort to meditate on God's Word and the time we spend in other things that we are warned about in Psalm 1:1, like the counsel of the ungodly, or standing in the way of sinners or sitting in the seat of those who scorn.

May God help us to spend the needed time with the Lord around His Truth so our souls will be a cup that runs over.

WEEK 9 GOODNESS AND MERCY ALL MY DAYS

March 23 – March 29

SCRIPTURE READING

Micah 7:14-20; Psalm 28:6-9

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

*“Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me
all the days of my life”*

BOOK READING

The Shepherd Psalm—Psalm 23 by F. B. Meyer, Chapter 11 “The Celestial Escort”

QUOTATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

“Goodness AND Mercy. Not goodness alone; for we are sinners needing forgiveness. Not mercy alone; for we need many things besides forgiveness. But each with the other linked. Goodness to supply every want; mercy to forgive every sin; goodness to provide; mercy to pardon.”

“Surely: because God has never failed in the past. Surely: because it would not become Him to take in hand and not complete. Surely: because He has pledged Himself by-exceeding great and precious promises. Surely: because the united testimony of all His saints attests that He never fails or forsakes. Surely: because if He has set His love on us in Eternity, He is not likely to forget us in Time. So surely shall never a day come in our earthly pilgrimage, in which God shall not be at our side in goodness and mercy.”

The Shepherd Psalm—Psalm 23 by F. B. Meyer, Chapter 11

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Mar 23	Ex 34	John 13	Pro 10	Eph 3
Mar 24	Ex 35	John 14	Pro 11	Eph 4
Mar 25	Ex 36	John 15	Pro 12	Eph 5
Mar 26	Ex 37	John 16	Pro 13	Eph 6
Mar 27	Ex 38	John 17	Pro 14	Phil 1
Mar 28	Ex 39	John 18	Pro 15	Phil 2
Mar 29	Ex 40	John 19	Pro 16	Phil 3

GOODNESS AND MERCY ALL MY DAYS

AL ELLISON

Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me all the days of my life. (Psalm 23:6a)

After recounting the goodness of his Shepherd in verses 1-5, David begins this final verse with the word surely. The idea is certainly, without doubt, unquestionably, for sure. His strong assurance comes from the many times in the past that He has experienced his Shepherd provide: rest (v2), leading (v2), restoration (v3), guidance (v3), deliverance (v4), comfort (v4), protection (v5), abundant blessing (v5).

Faith in what God's providence holds for us in the future comes from primarily two sources. The first and chief source is God's word. What God promises He is also able, by His mighty power, to perform. This is clearly seen first of all in His promises regarding our salvation and our security. God's work of salvation in a believer begins with His revealing Himself to us as the one and only Savior.

Isaiah 65:24 "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth, For I am God, and there is no other."

Salvation continues with a promise.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

Salvation is followed by assurances.

John 1:12-13 "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

The second source of our confidence for the future is looking back and remembering how God has led and provided abundantly in the past. God promised to provide all our needs when we "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness." None of us can honestly say that we have had a great need, while serving the Lord, and He failed to meet that need, whether it be physical or spiritual.

"God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent, Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken,

and will He not make it good?" Numbers 23:19

"Count your blessings, name them one by one and it will surprise you what the Lord has done!"

The testimony of God's promise to save and provide for His children should certainly give us greater faith. His testimony also helps us to have boldness in prayer that if we ask anything according to His will He will do it. The most certain way of knowing His will is by asking the Lord to reveal His will through His word. The study of God's word will show us the revealed will of God in all areas of our life.

Having experienced God's salvation and provision of all that he has needed, David now seems to focus on eternity. Whatever blessings he has experienced in the past are due to God's goodness and His loving-kindness.

Charles Bridges in his commentary on Psalm 119:68 says the following about goodness: "Indeed this is the true and genuine character of God. He is good (Ps.34:8, with Mic. 7:18) – He is goodness. Good in himself—good in his essence—good in the highest degree. All the names of God are comprehended in this one of **Good**. All the acts of God are nothing else but the effluxes of his goodness distinguished by several names according to the object it is exercised about. When he confers happiness without merit, it is grace. When he bestows happiness against merit, it is mercy. When he bears with provoking rebels, it is longsuffering. When he performs his promise, it is truth. When he commiserates a distressed person, it is pity. When he supplies an indigent person, it is bounty. When he succors an innocent person, it is righteousness. And when he pardons a penitent sinner, it is mercy. All summed up in this one name—Goodness."

David also acknowledges that as the goodness of God has gone before him so has God's lovingkindness (His "hesed", covenant love). This covenant love is mentioned numerous times in the Old Testament. Two references that talk about the scope of this love are **Psalm 33:5 "The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the Lord,"** and **Psalm 36:5 "Your lovingkindness, O Lord extends to the heavens, Your faithfulness reaches to the skies."**

David anticipated an eternity with God. We also, as His children, should view our lives not as coming to a finality but beginning an eternity worshipping and praising God for His goodness and lovingkindness. The following verses which contain our theme verse for 2019 is a fitting

summary of our anticipation for eternity. This also should be our hope and strong assurance.

Lamentations 3:22-24—“The LORD’S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. “The Lord is my portion.” says my soul. Therefore I have hope in Him.”

WEEK 10 IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER

March 30 – April 6

SCRIPTURE READING

2 Samuel 7; Revelation 7:15-17; Psalm 23

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

“And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

BOOK READING

The Shepherd Psalm — Psalm 23 by F. B. Meyer, Chapter 12 “The House”

QUOTATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

“It is very needful for us to invoke the aid of the Holy Spirit to maintain us ever in this attitude of surrender and faith, drawing down into our lives God’s constant grace...And if only we live thus, life will pass on happily and usefully. Its stay will shape itself into a Psalm like that which David the shepherd and king sang centuries ago. It may begin with the tale of the shepherd’s care for a lost and truant sheep...It will mount and soar and sing near Heaven’s gate: it will spend its days on the level of those shining table-lands where God Himself is Sun; and it will finally pass into that Holy and glorious Home-circle, each inhabitant of which may affirm without the least shadow of presumption or of fear: ‘I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.’”

The Shepherd Psalm — Psalm 23 by F. B. Meyer, Chapter 12

M’CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Mar 30	Lev 1	John 20	Pro 17	Phil 4
Mar 31	Lev 2-3	John 21	Pro 18	Col 1
Apr 01	Lev 4	Psalm 1-2	Pro 19	Col 2
Apr 02	Lev 5	Psalm 3-4	Pro 20	Col 3
Apr 03	Lev 6	Psalm 5-6	Pro 21	Col 4
Apr 04	Lev 7	Psalm 7-8	Pro 22	1 Thes 1
Apr 05	Lev 8	Psalm 9	Pro 23	1 Thes 2
Apr 06	Lev 9	Psalm 10	Pro 24	1 Thes 3

IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER

DOUG BECKER

A good friend of mine who recently passed through some very deep waters likes to point out that the most important word in this verse is the word “**and**”. I think His point is that in addition to all the wonderful benefits that the Lord’s sheep enjoy during the time they spend in His earthly fold, the best is yet to come. There is an “**and**” at the end of our journey. Our wonderful Shepherd is faithful to the end. He brings His sheep safely home. And they dwell safely in His house - FOREVER!

Ever since I was a child I’ve tended to think of the word forever in terms of a never-ending circle. The other day when I was downloading an app that seemed to be taking an unusually long time, I thought again of eternity. Eternity is like that circle of blue never ending. When it gets to the “top”, it just goes around again and again and again . . . Think about it, **forever** in the House of the Lord. Before I knew the Lord, thoughts of eternity scared me. Now I find them to be a source of great comfort.

In his classic work, *Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ*, John Owen points out that the people who will be most prepared to enjoy experiencing the Glory of Christ in the future are those who attempt to savor it in the present. If that is true, then I think we can assume that those who will most enjoy being in the House of the Lord for all eternity are the people who, like the author of this Psalm, learned to enjoy being in the Lord’s presence during their earthly lives. David well expressed his longing to be in the presence of the Lord in Psalm 27:4

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple. (KJV)

If we want to get the most out of this blessed truth we need to develop a growing desire for communion with the Lord and for times of worship in His appointed place – a local church. When that is our chief delight, we will receive great comfort from the thought of being safely in the presence of the Lord, in His house, forever. When the pleasures of this life capture our thoughts, our time, and our ambitions, thoughts of a never-ending life in the House of the Lord may seem a bit cloudy or even dull. But when we enjoy true fellowship with the Lord we cultivate a taste for what He has in store for His sheep when they arrive safely home.

It's only natural to wonder what we will be doing in the House of the Lord forever. After all, forever is a really long time. Revelation 7:14-17 gives us a window into the activities of some of those who will dwell in the presence of the Lord.

These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes. (NASB)

These tribulation age martyrs continue to serve their Master in the eternal future. The beautiful imagery of sheep being cared for by their loving Shepherd continues right into Heaven. He spreads His tabernacle over them, supplies all their needs, and removes all their discomforts. He guides them to the springs of living water and wipes every tear away from their eyes. We don't expect to be included in this group of martyrs, but we have the same Shepherd, and I believe it is safe to assume our experience will be very similar. Whatever we wind up doing in eternity, we can be sure it will be centered around the Great Shepherd of the sheep. We will live in His house, serve Him, and continually enjoy His loving ministry.

All the blessings given to us by our loving Shepherd during our earthly life serve as a foretaste of the eternal blessings we will enjoy in the House of the Lord – forever. I'm thankful for the “**and**” of verse 6. Truly, the best is yet to come!