**Psalm 23: 4**

**“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”**

Review: After walking with God for many years, David, in his old age, looks back upon his life and testifies that “The LORD is my shepherd!” (Psalm 23:1)

As his shepherd, the Lord had shown himself to be David's Provider, Protector, and Guide.

As his shepherd, the Lord had shown himself faithful to provide David with the peace, comfort, and the satisfaction of soul that comes with God's salvation (Psalm 23:2)

David also testifies that his Shepherd also provided the greatest of all human needs -- **Restoration**! David declares, “He restoreth my soul!” Psalm 23:3

When we studied the Hebrew word that is translated into our English word – restoreth – we found out that it has many ideas of restoration.

The Lord is my Shepherd - He **recovers** my soul from death and destruction.

The Lord is my Shepherd - He **relieves** my soul in its distresses

The Lord is my Shepherd - He **revives** me when I am in spiritual decline

The Lord is my Shepherd - He **refreshes** me when I am weary

The Lord is my Shepherd - He **restores** me when wandering

With restoration the Shepherd is also involved in leading His Sheep “in the paths of righteousness for his name sake.”

With divine restoration, God always leads his sheep into the paths of righteousness!

The Shepherd leads His Sheep into many different paths of righteousness:

He leads them to the place of imputed righteousness through repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He leads into paths of fellowship and communion with God (like Enoch)

He leads into paths of faith (like Abraham)

He leads into paths of forsaking all to follow the Lord Jesus Christ (like Moses)

He leads into paths of obedience to His will (like all children of God)

He leads into paths of love – for God and for their neighbor

He leads into paths of chastening which yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness

He leads into paths which lead to Heaven.

He leads His Sheep by the Truth – through providential circumstances – in answer to prayer – and by the Spirit of God.

**The Shepherd also leads His Sheep into paths with are often times uncomfortable.**

David also speaks of the times when his Shepherd led him into areas filled with darkness and shadows.

During dark times we must answer these questions:

Is our Shepherd a hireling who only stays with the sheep while things are going well?

Or, is He a true shepherd who is always with his sheep even as they walk through the valley (the ravine) of the shadow (darkness) of death?

David knew the Lord Jesus Christ as the Shepherd who was always with His Sheep even and especially during times when they are squeezed in on every side and the shadow of death hangs overhead.

**First: Yea, though I walk** --

The sheep walk in places where their Shepherd leads them. Therefore we may conclude that they have been led into this valley with all its shadows and all its potential terrors.

It is a mistake to believe that all good comes from God but that all evil (as we perceive it) comes from Satan, evil men, or even from bad luck.

If our Shepherd is leading us when we arrive beside the still waters and come into green pastures, then we may be assured that He is also leading us as we enter the ravine of darkness.

**“Though”** –

Not “if” I walk but “though” I walk. The psalmist is indicating that he has often walked through this valley and that he is presently walking through “the valley of the shadow of death”. It is a ravine of darkness.

**“Walk”** --

He is not madly running in a frantic attempt to get free from this valley.

He is not merrily skipping through this valley as though he were oblivious of his situation.

He is not stoically enduring every step of his pathway.

He is not stubbornly resisting the way in which he is being led. He is not a goat which resists his master's will. He is a sheep and all sheep hear the voice of their Shepherd and follow Him.

He is not discouragingly going on his way. He is not despairing of life because he knows that all life is found in His Shepherd - the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is simply **walking** -- confidently – quietly – and patiently - walking through the way in which his Shepherd is leading.

**Second: Through the valley --**

 **“Through”** -- He is walking in a manner which indicates that he is confident that there is an end to this valley and a well lit place on the other end.

 **“The Valley”** – This valley may be defined as a ravine with steep walls on both sides.

**It is not a place which can be avoided.** The pathway to the celestial city runs through many such valleys.

**It is not a place which affords the sheep with short cuts**. The walls rise so steeply on both sides as to make it impossible for any who enter this ravine to escape. There are not short cuts -- in fact, there are no means of escape from this valley.

**Third: “The shadow of death”** – the word death refers to all that potentially separates from God - the life source - of all creatures and the spiritual life source of the elect sheep.

**No one can truly know and appreciate life until they have been close to death.** This is true regarding physical life and it is especially true regarding spiritual life.

**The reproofs of life** are valleys with the shadow of death in them which are meant to teach us the brevity of life.

**Sin brings us into valleys** which have the shadow of death over them.

**James 1:12-15** – “(12) Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. (13) Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: (14) but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. (15) Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”

**Holy Spirit conviction** brought us to the valley of the shadow of death to make us aware of the true nature of sin.

**Romans 7:9** – “For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and **I died**.”

**Ephesians 2:4-5** – “(4) But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, (5) **even when we were dead in sins**, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)”

**Times of spiritual declension** - when God seems so far away - are times when we feel the shadow of death hanging over us more intently.

**Psalm 9:13-14** – “(13) Have mercy upon me, O LORD; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, **thou that liftest me up from the gates of death**: (14) That I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation.”

**Psalm 33:18-21** – “(18) Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; (19) **To deliver their soul from death**, and to keep them alive in famine. (20) Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield. (21) For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name.”

**Psalm 107:10-15** – “(10**) Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death**, being bound in affliction and iron; (11) **Because they rebelled against the words of God**, and contemned the counsel of the most High: (12) Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help. (13) Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. (14) **He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death**, and brake their bands in sunder. (15) Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!”

 **Psalm 118:17-18** – “(17) I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD. (18) **The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.**”

**There are times in which the Shepherd leads us to experience the shadows of death over our self-will.** He leads us into more selfless service for our Saviour.

**John 12:24** – “Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die**, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”

**II Corinthians 4:7-12** – “(7) But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. (8) We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; (9) Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; (10) Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. (11) For **we which live are alway delivered unto death** for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. (12**) So then death worketh in us**, but life in you.”

**There will be a time when our life will end upon this earth in which the shadow of death will draw nearer than it has ever been before.**

But in the death of Christ the death of death has been accomplished. In the resurrection of Jesus Christ the sting of death has been removed and death has been swallowed up in victory.

**Psalm 48:14** – “For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.”

**Fourth: I will fear no evil; for thou art with me** --

 **“Fear no evil”** -- That which is natural with all mankind but which has been removed from those who have been converted – who have the “fear of God” in their hearts.

 **“For thou art with me”** -- The confidence of the sheep is not found in themselves. It is the nature of sheep to be easily frightened. Their fear is allayed by the presence of their shepherd.

David can make this statement – not because he was a mighty warrior – not because he is king in Israel – not because he has been responsible for defeating all Israel’s enemies --- but because his Shepherd was with him in those things and in every day of his life.

**He is with us as we face trials** -- **Isaiah 43:1-2** – “(1) But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. (2) When thou passest through the waters, **I will be with thee**; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”

**He is with us as we serve Him – Matthew 28:19-20** – “(19) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (20) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

**Acts 18:9-10** – “(9) Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: (10) For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.”

**He is always with us -- Hebrews 13:5** – “…he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”