

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning
Week 22 (May 24-30, 2015)

Continue to read the 23rd Psalm each day this week as we complete our study. (Reprinted from week 35, 2012 with some changes)

Sunday, May 24 (Psalm 23:4)

. . . I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4b)

A shepherd uses his **rod** for protection against wild animals. He becomes an expert at striking predators with it. He also uses the rod to discipline wayward sheep. A third use for it is to count the sheep as they pass “under the rod” (see Ezekiel 20:37). The sheep and the predators are all aware of the authority of the rod. Likewise, God uses the rod to picture the power and authority of **His Word**. Our Lord’s Word protects us from predators (especially in pulpits), disciplines us so that we will not face the judgment of the world (see 1 Corinthians 11:31-32), and assures us that we **will be counted** among the faithful. The **staff** is useful to the shepherd as a walking stick, but it is also used to lift a newborn lamb and place it with the mother, thus avoiding the scent of a human that could cause her to reject her young. A third use is to draw sheep close to him so that he can examine them for parasites. This pictures the **Holy Spirit’s** work in us. We will continue this subject tomorrow.

Monday, May 25 (Psalm 23:4)

Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4b)

The shepherd’s staff provides **comfort** for both him and the sheep. As I stated yesterday, the staff pictures the **Holy Spirit** and His work in the lives of believers. Jesus refers to the Spirit as the **Comforter** in John 14:16, 15:26 & 16:7 (KJV). The Spirit teaches us God’s Word (see 1 Corinthians 2:14) so that we can stand up against the predators who misuse it for their own personal gain. He (the Spirit) also brings us together in harmony with other believers. We love to sing, “There’s a sweet, sweet spirit in this place.” Preachers can prepare sermons and bring in wonderful music to their worship services, but if the people are not allowing the Spirit to work, nothing of lasting worth takes place. Do you find comfort in God’s Word (rod) and Holy Spirit (staff)? If so, you feel the presence of the Shepherd walking with you!

Tuesday, May 26 (Psalm 23:5)

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies (Psalm 23:5a)

In many sheep herding countries, the shepherd takes his flock up the mountains during the summer months. There, they can find greener grass as well as good supplies of clean, clear water. These mountain areas are known as **tablelands**. This is what David had in mind as he penned this verse. The shepherd goes up to remove poisonous weeds and predators **before** leading the flock “through the valley of the shadow of death” on their way up the mountain. Likewise, Jesus became a man so that **He** could be tempted in every way just as we are (see Hebrews 4:15). He was preparing His “tableland” for us. He defeated our enemy, Satan, on Calvary, having withstood all his temptations (see Matthew 4:1-11). Nothing will ever enter the life of a believer without His permission (see Luke 22:31-32). Praise the Good Shepherd for His preparation for our mountaintop experiences!

Wednesday, May 27 (Psalm 23:5)

Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. (Psalm 23:5b)

The shepherd anoints the heads of his sheep with oil for at least three reasons: 1) to repel flies, 2) to protect them when they butt heads during mating season, and 3) to prevent scab disease from spreading. The Bible uses oil (as well as water) to represent the Holy Spirit. It is His job to keep Christians from being bothered by every little annoyance that comes their way (see Isaiah 26:3). The Spirit also calms situations when Christians “butt heads.” As humans, we will always disagree on many subjects, but we don’t have to be so disagreeable. Finally, spiritual disease can exist and grow within the “flock” unless the Spirit is allowed to have His way. Jesus said, “By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). How are you doing using this measuring bar?

Thursday, May 28 (Psalm 23:5-6)

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

The wonderful provisions of the shepherd cause David to exclaim on behalf of the sheep, “my cup overflows.” I hope you can say the same thing to your Good Shepherd (see John 10:11)! I agree with the songwriter who wrote, “I’m drinking from my saucer, ‘cause my cup has overflowed.” Jesus has provided all our needs and many of our wants. What more could we ask? Verse 6 introduces us to a personal responsibility. Experiencing goodness and love (mercy) from the Shepherd is wonderful, but now that same goodness and love must “**follow** me all the days of my life.” That means we must leave our personal “field” better than we found it. Make sure that the path behind you is paved with goodness and mercy and love. Those who follow you down that road will find the Good Shepherd.

Friday, May 29 (Psalm 23:6)

. . . and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. (Psalm 23:6b)

The psalmist is absolutely sure that the trail behind him will display goodness and mercy. He is also sure that the trail ahead of him leads to Heaven! Jesus said, “In my father’s **house**, there are many mansions” (John 14:2—KJV). None of the “living” benefits of trusting Christ can compare to this “death” benefit. You can know for certain that you are going to Heaven if you have asked Jesus to come into your heart. His Presence will be confirmed by the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. You will have an appetite for God’s Word as well as a desire to tell others about Him. This world we live in is under the control of Satan (see Luke 4:6). Therefore, the greatest assurance we can have is found in the following passages from Psalm 23: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want” (v. 1) and “I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (v. 6). Praise His glorious name!

Saturday, May 30 (Psalm 23)

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. (Psalm 23:3b)

Phillip Keller tells a sad story about one of the most beautiful sheep he ever raised. He called her “Mrs. Gad-about” because she always found a way to escape from his fields to go into the inferior field of his neighbor. He tried every way he knew to keep her at home, but every effort failed. Worse yet, the young lambs began to follow her lead. Finally, in an act of sad desperation, Phillip was forced to slaughter “Mrs. Gad-about” because she was corrupting the entire flock. His love for this beautiful sheep was equal to his love for all the others, but he could not allow one sheep to ruin the rest. God’s Word commands **us** to examine ourselves before we partake of communion (1 Corinthians 11:27-32). Our Lord loves us supremely, but He disciplines any “sheep” who willingly leads others astray!