

## The LORD is my Shepherd: PSALM 23, Part 2

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

At this point the metaphor shifts from shepherd and sheep to a host and his guests. The host is a king and the guests are his enemies. For King David this would be the nations surrounding Judah, the Philistines, Amorites, Moabites, and Termites :)

“Prepare a table” means a banquet. You are sitting at a banquet table as servants bring you food and your enemies are in the banquet hall with handcuffs chained to a wall. Your enemies are watching you and salivating over your feast. You throw bones at their feet. They see God’s favor in your life. Hopefully they will repent of their evil against you.

Do you have a favorite friend? Do your parents have a favorite child? Have you ever been hurt by favoritism?

The prepared table in the presence of enemies demonstrates God’s FAVOR toward us who love and serve Him. What does favor mean in the Bible?

God’s favoritism isn’t based on any inherent quality of the person He favors (other than the person is made in God’s image). It’s sovereign grace. How does an atheist drug dealer repent and receive Christ as Savior? How does a Muslim terrorist repent and serve Jesus Christ? God’s favor toward sinners is sovereign grace.

After we repent and receive Christ, God’s favor remains upon us.

Psalm 90:17: *Let the **favor** of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!*

It’s the favor of God upon our lives that will attract others to know God.

Who are your enemies who will watch as God prepares a feast to bless you? Our main enemy as Christians is Satan. He roams around like a prowling lion looking for an easy meal. 1 Peter 5:8-9: <sup>8</sup> *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* <sup>9</sup> *Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.*

Psalm 5:12: *For you bless the righteous, O Lord; you cover him with **favor** as with a shield.* God’s favor is a shield of protection from Satan.

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

The Hebrew verb *dashen* means to "be fat," but can also mean to "anoint" in the sense of putting fat on someone's head. The literal meaning is "you fatten my head with oil." Fat animals were considered the healthiest and fat was regarded as the best part of the sacrifice (Psalm 20:3: *May the LORD be reminded by all your grain offerings and accept the fat of your burnt offerings.*)

I hate fat on meat. I always cut the fat off and throw it away. I would be disgusted to have animal fat poured on my head.

God pours out blessings on us, and Satan our enemy watches with envy and hatred as we are blessed by God's sovereign favoritism.

We are the "underdogs" in God's story. I like to watch movies when the "underdog" wins and the enemy of the "underdog," the "top dog," is defeated and put to shame. In the competition Satan and his allies are the "top dog." We, weak human beings, are the "underdogs" and cannot defeat our enemies. We are helpless "underdog sheep" who cannot defeat the wolves and lions. But the LORD Shepherd fights for us and gives us the victory. We celebrate with a feast and the defeated "top dogs" watch with envy.

**Literal/Expanded Translation:** You will put in order and arrange a meal spread out on the table in front of my face, boldly showing this in front of my enemy that is pressing in on me: you will anoint my head with perfumed olive oil, all of my investments (holdings) and possessions will abundantly overflow to fill my needs.

Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Most important Hebrew word is "lovingkindness" - *chesed* is God's covenant-making love. It is the attribute that keeps God faithful to His promises. It is also translated as "mercy" but it's more than just mercy. So, it's also translated "steadfast love." It is the most mentioned attribute of God in the Old Testament.

Exodus 34:5-7: <sup>5</sup> *The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with Moses as he called upon the name of the LORD.* <sup>6</sup> *Then the LORD passed by in front of Moses and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; <sup>7</sup> who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."* Notice: God's

lovingkindness does not leave the guilty unpunished, but it does punish an innocent person in the place of the guilty person. The innocent Son of God is punished in the place of the guilty person; that's the lovingkindness of God.

Hebrew word for *follow* literally means "to run or chase after." I drop my phone and someone picks it up and chases after me, "Hay, you dropped your phone!" It is also used for a hunter tracking an animal. We can imagine the Good Shepherd tracking down a lost sheep who has wandered away from his unfailing love.

This emphasizes God's eagerness to bless his children. It means the Good Shepherd is relentless in his care for his sheep. God is more willing to bless than we are to receive.

God in his love+kindness makes a New Covenant with us and the blessings of that covenant chase after us.

**Literal/Expanded Translation:** It is a sure thing that bountiful and beautiful things and kindness will chase after me all the days of my life: I will remain and settle down in the palace of Yahweh a very long number of days.

#### How does Jesus Christ fulfill Psalm 23?

Psalm 22 describes how the Good Shepherd laid down his life for the sheep. Jesus quoted Psalm 22 during his crucifixion.

Psalm 22:16: *For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet.* That's crucifixion.

Psalm 22:18: *They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.* Matthew 27:35: And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots.

Psalm 22:1: *"My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?"* Matthew 27:46:<sup>45</sup> Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. <sup>46</sup> About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"

Psalm 23 describes how the Good Shepherd cares for his flock of sheep.

JESUS is our Good Shepherd: John 10:1-18. We are his sheep. If you believe in Jesus Christ then you are his sheep.

Good Shepherd Jesus leads us to green pastures and waters of rest. John gave us a picture of this when Jesus fed over 10,000 with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. John 6:10: *Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number.* John adds an interesting observation: *Now there was much grass in the place.* The people rested or reclined in a place with abundant grass. This draws our attention to Psalm 23. The Good Shepherd leads his sheep to recline in green pastures by waters of rest.

Good Shepherd Jesus walks with us through the valley of the shadow of death. For us it is just a shadow. Jesus passed through his own valley of death, his crucifixion and 3-day descent into hell, and then he was raised from death by the power of God. John 10: <sup>11</sup> *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (Psalm 22).* <sup>12</sup> *He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.* <sup>13</sup> *He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.* <sup>14</sup> *I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,* <sup>15</sup> *just as the Father knows me and I know the Father (Psalm 23); and I lay down my life for the sheep (Psalm 22).* <sup>16</sup> *And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.* Jesus is not a hired hand who flees when the sheep are in danger passing through death valley. Jesus owns the sheep and sacrifices his life to save them. Does Jesus "own" you? Have you surrendered your life to his loving care?

Good Shepherd Jesus protects us with his rod and staff. Jesus' rod and staff is his power and authority at the right hand of God the Father. It is his authority to command angels to protect his sheep. Jesus also protects his sheep by being the door to the sheepfold. John 10:7-10: <sup>7</sup> *So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep (i.e. door into the sheepfold).* <sup>8</sup> *All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.* <sup>9</sup> *I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.* <sup>10</sup> *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*

"You anoint my head with oil from an overflowing cup." Good Shepherd Jesus anoints our heads with oil. Oil represents the Holy Spirit. Anointing is the application of the HS's power. Jesus at the right hand of the Father promised to send the HS; to pour out the HS on us. John 14:15-31: <sup>16</sup> *"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,* <sup>17</sup> *even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him.*

*You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. <sup>18</sup> "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you... <sup>26</sup> But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."*

*"We will dwell in the house of the LORD forever." Good Shepherd Jesus leads us safely into his eternal kingdom; into the house that he has prepared for us. John 14:1-3: *"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. <sup>2</sup> In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."**

Good Shepherd Jesus leads and we follow. "He leads me beside still waters. He leads me in paths of righteousness." Following the shepherd means hearing and recognizing his voice. Every sheep knows its shepherd's voice. John 10:3-5: *"The sheep hear the shepherd's voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he leads them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."* Are you attentive to the voice of the Good Shepherd Jesus?

Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd of Psalm 23. Trust in him.