

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

PSALMS 23: (1.) The **LORD** is my shepherd; I shall not want. (2.) **He** makes me to lie down in green pastures; **He** leads me beside the still waters. (3.) **He** restores my soul; **He** leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. (4.) Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For **You** are with me; **Your** rod and **Your** staff, they comfort me. (5.) **You** prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; **You** anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. (6.) Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.

There is an interesting story about this psalm that illustrates what I want to say in this message. It seems that back in the early twenties some friends of a great actor/orator threw a grand party in his honor. Hundreds of guests came. During this party someone ask the great orator to give his rendition of the twenty-third psalm. As he completed the psalm there was an extended standing ovation. From the back of the great hall came an old gray-headed gentleman and ask if he also might quote the psalm. Having been given permission, he stood before the large audience and quoted the psalm. The reaction of the audience was entirely different, a hush came over the place, tears were on some cheeks and some wept audibly. Later on, the great actor/orator was ask about the old man and why there was such a different reaction in the crowd. The actor responded with, "Oh! He is my uncle and the difference was that I know the psalm but he knows the shepherd."

That is a tremendous difference. It is **this** difference that determines ones eternal destiny. Do we know the scriptures or do we know the shepherd. Do we just have some doctrine, some theology about God that we believe or do we **KNOW THE LORD**. I believe that there are multiplied thousands of people who are somewhat familiar with the Bible or the written word but have no relationship with the living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." (John 17:3) God says, "I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, '**Know the LORD,**' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." (Hebrews 8:10b-12)

The psalmist, David, had learned even in his early years that he needed a shepherd and had decided to allow the Lord to be his. He speaks of a **PERSON**, "the **Lord...He** makes me lie down, **He** leads me, **He** restores, **You** are with me, **You** prepare a table..." He is not talking about his religion, or his beliefs, his doctrine or his philosophy. He is speaking of a **living being** with whom he was having **fellowship**, someone that was a friend, someone he had learned to trust and to depend upon. He is speaking of the living Lord Jesus Christ, who led him through his life, who restored his soul when it needed reviving from discouraging circumstances. He is speaking of a supernatural being who was **with** him. Someone who comforted him when he needed comfort, gave him peace in the midst of his storms, was with him in a very special way even in the valley of the shadow of death. And someone who blessed him even in the presence of his enemies. Now, this is exactly what God our heavenly father desires for all of us. Anything less than this is void and empty.

I am so sick of people arguing over their religion, their doctrine, their church, their denomination, and their beliefs. I know that the Lord God is sick of it also because **I KNOW Him**. All of this religious junk does not bring one into fellowship with God at all. If it does anything it confuses people and causes them to turn against God. All the religion that I ever knew anything about brought others and me into bondage and had to be placed in the junk pile when I sincerely came to Jesus.

The apostle Paul is a perfect example of this. Before he became a Christian, he was dedicated to God, he prayed, he tithed, he kept the ten commandments, attended his church regularly and tried to please God with all his heart, yet when he MET CHRIST on the road to Damascus, he ask, "**who are you Lord?**" *He had been trying with all his heart to please a God that He didn't know.* All his dead service for God was due to his traditional beliefs and his pre-conceived religious ideas. Think of it, he was a zealot for God yet his God was not pleased with him. Paul, in his religious stupidity was actually going against God and fighting against Gods' purpose. When God responded to his question with, "**I am Jesus, who you are persecuting,**" he was in total shock.

Immediately all his religion went into the junk pile. Listen to his words, "though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, **these I have counted loss for Christ.** Yet **indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him** and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." (Philip.3:4-10)

Today, I still see all these people bound up by their religious beliefs. They are trying their best to please God or to appease His wrath or to some degree to be acceptable to him, yet they do not KNOW HIM. Many of the things that they do, just like Paul is in opposition to God He never desired these efforts and works of them. As the Bible says, "They **have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.** For they **being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness,** have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For **Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.**" (Rom. 10:2-4)

The word "**believes**" here does not mean to believe in God, that is, that He exists. Paul and all these other people had a belief in God and even tried to serve Him. The devils have this kind of belief, "the devils believe and tremble." (James 2:19) The word "**believe**" here and as used in many places in the Bible, means to "**trust**", "**to depend upon**," "**to rely upon**," "**to put one's full confidence in.**"

Jesus came to set men free. Free from their sin. Free from their religious bondage. Free from the kingdom and power of darkness. Free from all hang-ups. Jesus says, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." also "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:32,36) "He (the Lord Jesus), Himself likewise shared in the same (a physical body), that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and **release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.** (Heb.2: 14-15)

Jesus' message to all mankind and especially the religious workers and doers of the day is, "**Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, **and you will find rest for your souls.** For **My yoke is easy and My burden is light.**" (Matt.11:28-30) Will you come to HIM? Just simply come to Him and tell Him how you feel. Tell Him you need Him in your life. Ask Him to help you to make the correct decision. He will. Then when you have found Him, better yet, when He has found you and you realize it, do what Paul did and call Him Lord, worship Him and follow His directions for your life. Let the **LORD BE YOUR SHEPHERD.** He really does love you and is for you. He died for your sins and paid the cost so that you might enjoy His blessings. God bless you and help you to make the right decision. When you make your decision for Christ let someone know right away. Let us know also, so that we can rejoice with you. GOD SAYS of His Son, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" Again GOD SAYS in His Word, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Luke 9:35 and Acts 4:12).