

One of a series of devotions based on Psalm 23

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, HE LEADS ME THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

Psalm 23:4 "The LORD is my shepherd. . . Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil;"

Here in verse 4, David has in mind his future. The Hebrew word he used to begin this verse is most often translated "even though," but it can also be translated "even when." Perhaps because David was a warrior and a king, he was more keenly aware how tenuous his life was. It was fairly certain there would be dark days ahead.

Professor Timothy Seleska, author of the Concordia Commentary on Psalms 1-50, questions, "what experiences does David want you to think about when you read these words." (verse 4) Seleska's immediate answer to his question is, "bad stuff." Walking in the valley of the "shadow" has in mind darkness, absence of light, the unknown. In the OT, Saleska says, darkness is used to describe situations of hopelessness, defeat, grief, unbelief, sickness, and trouble. Saleska concludes, "I think about the dark valleys of my own life, those in my past and those I must yet face." Knowing Jesus is his good Shepherd, even though Saleska does not say this, can't you imagine one last thought, "I do not fear evil," and "I shall not want."

Now, put your name in the place of Saleska's. You know that in your life you have already experienced good and bad "stuff." Many of you have felt like your life had you in a deep valley with sides so steep you were unable to peer over the rim to see what was coming next. Which of Saleska's list of "bad stuff" can you most closely identify? (hopelessness, defeat, grief, unbelief, sickness, trouble) I'm sure you can add to his list, can't you?

Thanks be to God, like for Saleska, Jesus is your good Shepherd. No matter, how dark the darkness in your life is, you know that Micah is correct, ". . . He (Jesus) will bring me out to the light. . ." (Micah 7:9) As the Messiah Jesus was sent by His heavenly Father to "give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke 1:79) Therefore, as you walk through the valley of the shadow of death you have no need to be fearful of "bad stuff" in your life. (Psalm 23:4) Christ Jesus has earned for you your victory over it. (Romans 8:31-39)

Prayer: Dear Jesus, lead me victorious through the valley's and shadows, the bad stuff, that happens in my life. Give me faith to know and believe that with You being for me, nothing and no-one can be against me. In Your holy name. Amen.

The King of love my shepherd is, Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am His And He is mine forever.

Where streams of living water flow, My ransomed soul He leadeth
And where the verdant pastures grow, with food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed, But yet in love He sought me
And on His shoulder gently laid And home rejoicing brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill With Thee, dear LORD^c beside me,
(LSB 709)