

Who Cares? Jesus Cares!

Psalm 23

for you and me

“The LORD is My Shepherd Too”

Twenty-Four Absolute Power Promises

The Book of Psalms may be the best known, best loved Book in the Bible - especially the 23rd Psalm. Its timeless, priceless absolute-power promises show all people the loving, caring heart of the One and Only LORD God of the Bible. It was penned by the shepherd-king David - meant to minister God's blessings to all who trust His Savior-Son - Messiah Jesus.

So - open your Bible with me to Psalm 23. The Bible is God's Book - the one and only Book with God's own “triple-A” - All Absolute Answers - the loving, living, eternal life giving - power-filled, peace-giving, promise-keeping, problem-solving, people-saving Word of God.

My Two-fold Promise to You

One - we will not at all be able plumb the depths of the bounty and blessings in this brief, beautiful Psalm 23. But we will try. Two - Psalm 23 gives God's personal absolute-power promises to all who love Jesus Christ - the Great, Good, Chief Shepherd.

Psalm 23 is a Messianic Psalm. That means, its focus is on Messiah Jesus. All Old Testament Scriptures foretold God's promised Messiah-Savior-King. All are fulfilled in the New Testament appearance of Christ Jesus.

Fear freezes hearts and minds - on battlefields near and far - for centuries warriors have prayed and recited two powerful Bible passages - “*The Lord's Prayer*” and “*The 23rd Psalm.*” Both bring comfort, raise courage, calm fears, give real soul-rest in place of fear and stress. You and I will see it in Psalm 23 - for it says to all who love Jesus: “*The LORD is my Shepherd too.*”

Now, in Psalm 23, see twenty-four of God's absolute-power promises to all who believe and belong to the good, great, gracious, living, loving Shepherd Savior-Son of God - Jesus.

1- *“The LORD is*
2- *my*
3- *Shepherd,*
4- *I shall not want,*
5- *He makes me lie down in green pastures,*
6- *He leads me beside the still waters,*
7- *He restores my soul.*
8- *He leads me in paths of righteousness*
9- *for His name's sake.*
10- *Yea, tho' I walk through the valley*
 of the shadow of death,
11- *I will fear no evil,*
12- *for You are with me.*
13- *Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*
14- *You prepare a table before me*
15- *in the presence of my enemies.*
16- *You anoint my head with oil,*
17- *My cup runs over.*
18- *Surely*
19- *goodness*
20- *and mercy shall follow me*
21- *all the days of my life,*
22- *And I will*
23- *dwell in the house of the LORD*
24- *forever.”*

God's Absolute Power Promise

One

“The LORD is . . . Psalm 23:1

*“The **LORD** is my Shepherd . . . God promises all people on the plant - “I AM!” We all need the LORD God Himself, don’t we. Without Him - this Psalm, and all of life, is pointless, holds no promise - at all.*

So - who is the LORD? Why trust Him? Why worship, love, live for Him? What does He do? For us? What is His plan for man, for you, for me? We'll see it in Psalm 23 - the answer to this all-important question: Who is *“the LORD?”*

*“The **LORD** . . . The Bible opens: “In the beginning **God** created the heavens and the earth.” The name - “God” - in Hebrew - is “Elohim” - seen 34 times in Genesis 1:1 to 2:3. Then Genesis 2:4 - begins to couple the tetragrammaton (four-letter name) - “YHVH” - with “Elohim” - “The LORD-God.” God’s name is- “Jehovah-Elohim!”*

So the Genesis record reads - *“The LORD God made the earth and the heavens.”* And - Genesis 2:7 - *“The LORD God formed man from the dust of the earth, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.”*

Remember the burning bush on Mount Sinai in Exodus 3? God called Himself - *“I AM” - Self-Existent One.* Psalm 100 says: *“Know that - The LORD - He is God!”*

Isaiah 45 *“I AM the LORD your God.”*

I - even I - AM the LORD! Beside Me there is no Savior!

Thus says the LORD who created the Heavens . . .

God Himself. . . who formed the earth . . . created it . . .

I am The LORD - there is no other God beside Me . . .

A righteous God and Savior - there is none beside Me.

Look to Me and be saved - all the ends of the earth!

For I am God, and none else.

“The LORD - is . . . Self-existing - eternal - First Cause - Creator of all - in Heaven and Earth.

He has no beginning - no ending - He is timeless - eternal. He is all-sufficient. His existence depends on nothing and no one - in all Heaven and earth - or all in and beyond His whole creation. He *is* life - *personified*. Jesus is God the Eternal Son - as He said to God the Father -

*“This is life eternal:
that they may know Thee, the Only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3).*

“The LORD - is . . . Psalm 14 and Psalm 53 say this - “The fool says in his heart: No God!”

So-called “atheists”, and others who call themselves “agnostics” are in a hopeless state. Dr. H. A. Ironside said - “The same person who in Greek is called an ‘agnostic’, in Latin is called an ‘ignoramus.’” God calls them both “fools!”

So-called truth-seeking “scientists” peer thru telescope or microscope at God’s well-ordered, micro-managed Creation - and still say they see no evidence that the Lord God *IS* - they are either stone-blind, or full-blown, self-deceived liars.

“The Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His finger-work” (Psalm 19).

The One and Only true LORD God of the Bible says - no one can go to His Heaven - without faith in Him - Hebrews 11:6

“Without faith it is impossible to please Him. For he who comes to God must believe that He is - and that He is the Rewarder of all who diligently seek Him.”

Think about it, weak, ignorant little man calls his moon walks and Mars rocks - space probes. Silly! We aren’t even to the front door of God’s measureless Creation - in and far beyond our stark, dark little universe, with its billions of galaxies, stars, planetary solar systems. It is beyond man’s comprehension.

To God it is as the dust in His hand. He could blow on it - and “poof” - all gone. Earth’s nearest star is 26 trillion miles away. At 100,000 miles per hour it’s a 30,000 year trip. Get real! God’s own high, holy, happy “*Heaven of Heavens*” no one on earth can grasp - at all. It’s why He never bothers to try describing it to us. He simply says - to all who know Him:

*“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
nor have entered the heart of man,
the things God has prepared for those who love Him.”
(I Corinthians 2:9)*

Man’s technical knowledge is increasing exponentially, at a super-phenomenal rate daily. But, folks, with all our super-duper-nano-second information-super-highways - we ain’t seen nothin’ yet! The “God who is there” has far more to see and know than we will ever be able comprehend - forever.

We are as dim-witted about the LORD God and His plans - as those “too-smart-for-God” rebels in Babel 4000 years ago (Genesis 11:1-9). God told them to scatter, and inhabit the whole earth. But they all rebelled against God, and said -

“Let us build ourselves a city (Babylon), and a tower to the heavens . . . so that we will not be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

As God judged rebel Adam and Eve, as He judged the rebel world in Noah’s day - so God judged all the rebel at Babylon. He confused their one language into many - so they scattered by language groups over all the planet. We still see the results of confused linguistics. But, friends, God always wins. His plan to populate the earth - happened - even tho’ the hard way.

Psalm 23 - reveals that the LORD - *IS*. He spoke into being all time, space, matter, all life-forms, plant, animal, human, angel. He created and named all His stars, yet sees the tiny sparrow fall, numbers the hairs on every head. He sees, loves, cares about you and me, for,. “*The LORD is my Shepherd too.*”

"The LORD is . . . Jesus is - the One, Only Redeemer-King - Messiah-Savior - Eternal Son of God. Jesus saves all us sinners who come in faith to Him

*The LORD - of Psalm 23 - is in fact
Jehovah-Jesus Himself!*

Far up India's Godavari River, a 60-foot Gospel-Medical launch stops at jungle villages. People gather for treatment by Christian doctors and nurses. I saw it. An evangelist preached the Gospel - God's Good News - to those dear people - in their language. Later, I ask him what he said. He said, I told them -

"You worship false gods - trees, river, birds, animals, sun, moon, stars. Believing in false gods is sin." I told them,

"The One and Only true God created all these things. And He loves you. He calls you to believe in His Son Jesus Christ, who came to earth to die on the Cross for your sins, who rose from the dead. He lives forever, and loves you.

"Trust Jesus. He will forgive your sins, take away your guilt, give you eternal life, make you God's child, save you for His Heaven - so you won't go to Hell!"

Folks, mark this indelibly in your memory: All of us - from a poor illiterate mud-hut jungle savage - to a rich, sophisticated, educated penthouse billionaire - and all in between - are lost sinners. The high, holy LORD God Almighty accepts no one into His Heaven - without Jesus Christ. We are all lost to God, dead in sins, dead to God, we all must face Judge Jesus - unless - we trust in the Savior-Shepherd Jehovah-Jesus. He said it -

"I Am the Way, the Truth, the Life - no one comes to the Father (in Heaven) but by Me!" (John 14:6).

Peter said it too - God's so great Salvation is all in the -

"Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth . . . crucified . . . raised from the dead. Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:10-12).

God the Father spoke from Heaven - witnessed by God the Holy Spirit - to God the Savior-Son - Jesus Christ Himself -
"You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased"

Again, Peter, James, John heard God speak of Jesus Christ -
*"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,
You hear Him!" (Matthew 3:16,17; 17:5).*

And - that's the way it is, friends. The LORD and Shepherd of Psalm 23 is the Lord and Savior - *Jehovah-Jesus Himself!*

Jesus loves all people on Planet Earth - and calls to all - in every century - country - culture - color - class - creed -
*"Come to Me all who labor . . . heavy laden
(under sin's heavy guilt-load)
- I will rest you."
(Matthew 11:28-30)*

So - do it - Come to Jesus now. Simply say to Him -
"Lord Jesus, I trust in You."

God's Absolute Power Promise

Two

“My Shepherd . . . Psalm 23:1

“The LORD is - my Shepherd . . . Psalm 23 is very personal.
Seventeen times here -
King David says - *“my . . . I . . . me.”* You see it, don't you -
Jesus sees, deals with people on a personal level - One to one.

Question: Do you love Jesus? Can you truly say Jesus Christ your Savior-Shepherd too? Be sure about it. This stubborn, super-confused rebel world is full of counterfeit “christ” - and myriads of false-god religions. Jesus is the One and Only LORD God and Good Shepherd. He said it - John 10:25-30:

*“I AM the good Shepherd,
the good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.
I AM the good Shepherd, and I know My sheep,
and am know by My own.
My sheep hear My voice, I know them, they follow Me.
And I give them eternal life,
and they shall never perish.”*

Are you absolutely sure you belong to God? Test yourself -

Jesus said: *“I know My sheep.”*

Ask yourself: Does Jesus know me? Am I His?

Jesus said: *“I am known of Mine.”*

Ask yourself: Do I know Jesus? Personally? Really?

Jesus said: *“My sheep hear My voice.”*

Ask yourself: Do I listen to Him - His Word - the Bible?

Jesus said: *“I know them.”* - the ultimate repeat -

Ask yourself: Does Jesus know me? Why should He?

Jesus said: *“My sheep follow Me”*

Ask yourself: Do I follow the Savior-Shepherd Jesus?

To all who can answer Yes - Jesus gives His power promise:

*“I give to them eternal life,
and they shall never perish (never Go to Hell)!”*

Now, I know what you're thinking - being a sheep isn't cool. But, in fact, we are all like sheep - helpless, hapless, mindless - and far too often - simply stupid. We forget the Creator-LORD God - we forget that we owe Him everything that's good - that we are utterly dependent on Him. Most people live day to day as if they don't need Him at all. But Psalm 100 says:

“Know - that the LORD - He is God! It is He who has made us - not we ourselves. We are His people, the sheep of His pasture” (v 3).

All you and I ever are, or have, or do - that's good - we owe to Jesus Christ. Yes we do. Believe it. It's true. Every heartbeat - life-breath - muscle-movement - good-mind-tho't - we ever enjoy, every day - is a grace-gift from **Jesus** to us all with **love!**

Get this picture clearly. If Jesus doesn't give - we don't get. God never calls us lions, or tigers, or bears - oh my. He calls us “sheep” - and gives life to all His creatures. You and me too. Life, health, wealth - in whatever measure - is from Jesus - for
*The LORD is **my** Shepherd.”*

God's Absolute Power Promise

Three

“My Shepherd . . . Psalm 23:1

“My Shepherd . . . The old hymn few sing anymore says it -
“The King of love my Shepherd is.”

When my grandson, Donny III, was age 9, he was into zoology. He researched for me - God's creatures - amazing life-forms. From the tiny tessellated-johnny-darter-fish, to giant sea-monster blue whales, to gigantic brachiosaurus - “super-ultra-saurus dinosaurs.” God created, controls - and has His own plan for all His creatures. He cares about their existence, and their extinction. So - don't worry about endangered or extinct species. The LORD God who created them all will do it again - next time forever. He will do it when He is ready. Yes He will.

Isaiah's words to Israel - fit all people on the planet -

Hear, O heavens, give ear, O earth: the LORD has spoken, “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner, the donkey his master's corn crib. But Israel does not know, My people do not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people loaded with iniquity (breaking God's Laws), a seed of evildoers, children who are corrupters. They have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger, they have gone away backward (Isaiah 1:1-4).

What God said to rebel Israel, He says to all people on the planet. Man thinks himself intelligent, forward-looking. God calls him “backward.” God's creatures know Him who feeds, cares, controls them, proving they are smarter than man.

Rebel men and women who all owe Him - do not know Him. God created, cares for all human life too. But we are too ignorant to know it. So, God gave us His Word - the Bible - so we can know that - He created us in His own image - even if -

in our sins we act like lawless animals. We prove it every day - we live like weak and wayward sheep. The Bible says -

“All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the LORD laid on Him (on the Cross) the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6).

Jesus calls us lost sheep - needing Him - the Good Shepherd.

“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one, does not leave the ninety-nine . . . and go after the lost one until he finds it. And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing . . . comes home . . . calls his friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost’” (Luke 15:4-10).

The prophet Isaiah describes God as the loving Shepherd -

“Behold your God! Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and His arm will rule for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a Shepherd, He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young” (Isaiah 40:9-11).

“Who has measured the waters (in all creation) in the hollow of His hand, and marked off heaven by the span, and calculated the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in a balance, and the hills in scales?

“Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as His counselor informed Him? With whom did He consult, and who instructed Him, and taught Him the path of justice, and taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding?

“Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, counted as a speck of dust on the scales. Behold, He lifts up the isles as fine dust. Before Him all nations are as nothing, counted by Him as less than nothing, and vanity (empty)” (Isaiah 40).

Jesus said He came *“to seek and save the lost . . . there will be joy in Heaven over one sinner who repents, joy in the presence of God’s angels over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:7,10).*

Today - He seeks you too. Come to Shepherd-Savior Jesus.

“Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD,

*Tho’ your sins are a scarlet they shall be as white as snow,
Tho’ they are crimson red, they shall be as wool.*

“Seek the LORD while He may be found,

Call on Him while He is near.

Let the wicked forsake his way,

And the unrighteous man his thoughts,

Let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him,

And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

(Isaiah 1:18; 55:6-9)

Our Lord confronted His disciples. They were on an ego trip - debating who was greatest in God’s Kingdom. People do it today too, don’t they. Politicians seek votes, power, money. Show biz “stars” seek the oscars, emmies, grammies, gimmies, and money. So-called “sports heroes” play for money and fame. Business people do the same. Some preachers do it too.

But - Jesus set a little child in their midst, said to them all -

“Unless you are converted, and become as little children, you will no way enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever humbles himself, as this little child, is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Think about it. No way - into God's Heaven Kingdom - except thru humble, honest, childlike trust in Jesus Christ Himself.

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, thru His blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well-pleasing in His sight, thru Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

God's Absolute Power Promise

Four

"I shall not want . . . Psalm 23:1

"I shall not want . . . When British Princess Diana died - her funeral held little comfort? But God's precious Bible promises were read. Bible hymns were sung - giving comfort. One hymn was from Psalm 23:

"The King of love my Shepherd is,
His goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack - for I am His - and He is mine - forever."

That, folks, is the Shepherd's Psalm 23 -
"I nothing lack . . . I shall not want."

In life and in death - Jesus is all-sufficient. In life - in death - His Word offers the only real comfort - here or hereafter. The loving Shepherd-Savior Son of God is there for all who trust and love and follow Him - *"I shall not want . . . for whether we live, we live to the Lord, and whether we die, we die to the Lord; whether we live or die - we are the Lord's."*

"I shall not want . . . What does this wonderful Shepherd do for His sheep? He gives them life.

Jesus - gave His life on the Cross - to save His lost sheep -

"I AM the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep. I AM the good Shepherd, and I know My sheep, and am known by My own . . . I lay down My life for the sheep" (John 10:11-15).

"I shall not want . . . Question: How are you today? Have you food, clothing, shelter, some money? Are you breathing, heart beating, muscles moving, mind working? All these and more - are Good Shepherd grace-gifts - from **Jesus to you and me with love.**

God's Absolute Power Promise

Five

“He makes me lie down in green pastures . . . Psalm 23:2

“He makes me . . . The LORD God who made all of life and growth - made you and me too. For our own good He sometimes makes us do things we would not ordinarily do. Like, slow down, stop, rest awhile.

“He makes me lie down . . . He who made us - *“makes”* us lie down. Sometimes by force. We all know folk whose life-action suddenly stops - forced to a “time out.” Sometimes it’s we ourselves who must stop.

We all tend to try to keep going - to achieve, accomplish good, or to satisfy some wish or whim. Too busy for God. We ignore Him, His Word, His will, His way - and we go stray. We do our own thing - “Not Thy will - but mine be done.”

So, in His grace and love He may make us stop, look, listen - to Him. He may even make us *“lie down”* awhile - to think, ruminate, take stock, assess our real daily plans, purposes - are they pursuing Him - His will - or in trivial self-pursuit?

He makes me lie down - so we must look upUP - to Jesus. Maybe we cannot even walk - but we can walk with Him. We lie silent - cannot talk - don’t know what to say - but we can talk to Him. And - when we do - He has the answers.

Jesus is trying to teach us that His highest purpose for us all - in this fast-passing lifespan - is all about knowing Him.

He makes us *“lie down”* - so we pause to praise Him, pray to Him, seek His face. When life is frantic, our heart fearful, mind troubled, soul stressed - the Good Shepherd may make us *“Lie down . . . rest in the Lord . . . wait patiently for Him.”*

Our Shepherd-Lord Jesus calls all to come to Him - to find His real soul-rest. He said it - Matthew 11:28-30 -

“Come to Me all who labor . . . heavy-laden . . . I will rest you. Take My yoke on you . . . learn from Me . . . for I AM meek and lowly in heart. And you will find soul-rest. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”

We too easily get on some ego-trip - into trivial self-pursuit. We ignore Jesus - feel too smart to learn from Him. Then life’s load gets heavy, puts us into hard labor. Really. So Jesus says - *“Come to Me - I will rest you. Yoke to Me. Learn from Me - you will find soul-rest.”* Yes you will.

Do it now. Come to Jesus, Yoke to Jesus, Learn from Jesus. He is meek and humble in heart. Yes He is. Are you and I glad He is. Why else would He stoop to save us proud, rebel sinners? If we come to Him - He help us move off our proud ego-trip - and to rest in Him, mimic Him.

“In green pastures . . . It’s His bonus blessing. Sheep grazing in barren, desolate places feed on what seldom satisfies. But the good Shepherd leads us to lush green pastures - so we can feed to the full on the finest.

This sad world is - dry, bleak, barren, pain-filled, with much suffering, sorrow, soul-stress. Sin brings real heart-trouble, soul-pollution, fear, anxiety, depression, disease, death, and rebels choosing to go to Hell.

Jesus offers us all His own sweet, loving relief - the good Shepherd - calls all who will to follow Him. When we do - He *“makes us lie down in green pastures.”*

“In green pastures . . . Many groups clamor for control of the “Green Earth” - trying hard to make “green peace.” They demand laws limiting free access to God-given bounty and beauty. But - trying to save “mother

earth” by human efforts that exclude the Creator LORD God of all Heaven and Earth - is empty, futile effort.

Only Creator Jesus can restore this sin-cursed, man-soiled, spoiled earth to its Edenic condition. And He will. See Isaiah chs 11 and 35 - and Revelation 21:1-7. Many forget - *“the Earth is the LORD’S - and all its fulness!”*

Psalms 23 is about feeding in spiritual green pastures. Other Psalms say it too -

“The LORD is the great God . . . in His hand are deep places of Earth, the hills’ strength is His, the sea is His, He made it, His hands formed the dry land. O come, worship, bow down, kneel before the LORD our Maker, our God, we are people of His pasture, sheep of His hand” (Psalm 95).

“Make a joyful sound to the LORD, all you lands. Serve the LORD with gladness, come before Him with singing. Know that - the LORD - He is God. He has made us, not we ourselves. We are His people, sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving, His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, bless His name, for the LORD is good, His mercy is everlasting, His truth to all generations” (Psalm 100).

We escape the briar patch of self-effort - to rest with Jesus - growing in knowing that

“Our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, thru the blood of His everlasting covenant (the Cross), is making us complete in every good work to do His will, working in us what is well-pleasing in His sight - thru Jesus Christ - to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen!” (Hebrews 13:19-21).

It’s why Jesus makes us - *“lie down in His green pastures”* - so we can learn to know, trust, love Him - the Good Shepherd.

God's Absolute Power Promise

Six

"He leads me beside the still waters . . . Psalm 23:2

"He leads me . . . See three vital words here:

- 1) *"He"* the Shepherd!
Question: Is Jesus your Shepherd?
- 2) *"leads"* the Shepherding!
Question: Is Jesus leading you His way?
Or are you astray? Isaiah 53:6
- 3) *"me"* the sheep! It's personal - you too.
Question: Are you His sheep?

Jesus said it: *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they **follow** Me."* Jesus says to all people - *"Follow Me."*

Question: Is Jesus leading you? Are you following Jesus? I don't mean some days, some ways - I mean - are you fully following Him. Are you? Matthew 4 shows us the way -

*Jesus, by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon Peter and Andrew, casting nets into the sea, for they were fishermen. He said to them, "**Follow Me**, I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. He saw James and John, called them, and immediately they left their boat, and their father, and **followed Him**.*

*Jesus went about all Galilee teaching, preaching the Gospel, healing sickness, diseases, torments, demonized, paralytics, and great crowds **followed Him**. He saw a tax collector named Levi (Matthew) at the tax office. He said, "**Follow Me**." And (Levi) left all and **followed Him** (Luke 5:27,28). Jesus found Philip, and said to him, "**Follow Me**." (John 1:43-45). Philip brought Nathanael to Jesus.*

Jesus calls all men, women, girls, boys to follow Him. He said:

"Whoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross (daily), and follow Me. Whoever will save his life

(for himself) will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the Gospel's will save it. What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:34-37; Luke 9:23).

Jesus does not call all people to leave family, home, business, to follow Him in ministry, as He did the apostles. But He does call all people on the planet - whatever their century, country, culture, color, class, creed - "**Follow Me!**" So, the question right now is: Will you follow Jesus?

"He leads me beside the still waters . . . Sometimes the Shepherd leads us thru swift torrents, raging floods. We sometimes face turmoil, troubled waters - impassable trials along impossible trails - where we cannot get thru alone. Psalm 23 tells you and me - thru it all - whatever we face: "Follow Jesus!" He says it -

When you pass thru the waters I will be with you; and thru the rivers, they will not overflow you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

"Still waters . . . As a teen, hunting with my Dad in the mountains, in the heat of the day I often knelt at some small stream, found a place where the water's rapid flow was stilled - to drink in cool, clear, clean, thirst-quenching, sweet waters - to drink deeply, fully at rest.

Still waters satisfy a parched, panting soul. David said it -

"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, yes, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalm 42:1).

Again, David wrote Psalm 63 -

"O God, You are my God, early I will seek You. My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry, thirsty land, where no water is. Your lovingkindness is better than life."

Dr. Haddon Robinson's book - Psalm Twenty-Three - says this Hebrew line can be read - "*beside the **stilled** waters.*" Our great, good Shepherd may dam the river, stop its fast flow awhile, still the stream, so His weak and timid sheep can drink - unafraid, to their fill. He does that for us too.

God led Noah - thru worldwide flood-waters - to a place of peace and new beginning. God led Moses, and all Israel, thru the Red Sea's high water walls - on dry ground - to the victory side. God led Joshua thru rushing, overflowing Jordan River waters on dry ground - into the Promised Land. Jesus Christ - the One and Only Creator-LORD-God - spoke two words, and calmed the stormy Galilee Sea - instantly. Yes He did! Jesus did it - because He is God the eternal Son - in flesh. He is as dynamic now to calm our life-storms too.

Daily - mostly unknown to us - Jesus stops disasters, takes us thru danger-zones - and we - or those we love - pass thru unharmed. Auto crashes we miss, disasters we escape, diseases we avoid - Jesus guards, governs, guides us safely thru perils we may not see, or know, or acknowledge, or thank Him for.

When deep, dark waters overwhelm you - look up to Jesus. When your soul is dry and barren - look up to Jesus. He will lead you, refresh, restore, rest you. Yes He will. Believe it.

Don't fear the dry times. God has plans for you, as He does all His creation. The Bible says it - when Jesus returns from Heaven to Earth - He will restore and revitalize this planet.

"Waters will burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. And the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose . . . it shall blossom abundantly" (Isaiah 35).

It's fascinating that people most vocal about water-pollution - care least about sin-pollution on this guilt-glutted globe. But all who thirst most for God - seek the Shepherd-Savior Jesus.

God's Absolute Power Promise

Seven

"He restores my soul . . . Psalm 23:3

"He restores . . . John the aged Apostle writes of Jesus at Jacob's well by the city of Sychar -
"Jesus, being wearied from His journey, sat by the well."

We too get weary, don't we, from toil, travel, trials. Physical fatigue, mental stress, emotional drain tires us. Some call it "chronic fatigue syndrome" and medicate it as a disorder. But in fact, sooner or later, we all simply get tired.

Our great, gracious, good Shepherd knows all about ultimate, extreme weariness, by His personal experience. Read His awful, anguished agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. No one will ever know the deep, dark despair, the overwhelming grief, soul-pain, mental anguish, physical agony Jesus suffered there. Before He ever got to the Cross He almost died from grief.

Read His Words - they are no exaggeration - but very literal:

He was in distress of mind, dark depression. He said, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of dying from sorrow."

He fell on the ground on His face and prayed that the hour might pass from Him, "My Father, if possible, let this cup pass from Me. Yet, not My will but Your will be done." And He began to be full of sorrow, very heavy, troubled.

Dr. Luke the physician adds this very telling line:

An angel appeared from Heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was as great drops of blood falling to the ground.

Friends, no one will ever come close at all - to knowing and experiencing agony like His awesome, anguished agony - in the Garden - and on the Cross. He knew the fullest meaning of spirit, soul, body weariness - far beyond any we ever can.

So, with David, and Psalm 23, when the Shepherd Savior sees my soul-weariness and yours - He sees, knows, feels, cares about us. And He *“restores my (our) soul too.”* Yes He does.

“My soul . . . He gets up close and personal with you and me. He is no far-off, out-of-touch, out-of-reach Shepherd. No way. He is no “corporate” Shepherd - dealing with the masses. He sees you in person, me in person - our soul-stress, tired mind, body all achin’ and wracked with pain - and He is able to *“Restore my (our) soul.”*

“My soul . . . God created us as tri-part beings - spirit and soul and body. Our soul is our inner-man (inner-woman). It is non-physical. DNA cannot trace it at all. But Jesus can. Our soul holds our personality traits - (1) our intellect (ability to know, reason) - (2) our emotion (feelings) - (3) our volition (will, choice).

Our soul - not our brain - thinks, feels, chooses. Our soul holds our conscience. We are created in God’s likeness. We can think and reason, as He does, love Him, others, love as He loves, hate what He hates, care as He cares, choose the right, good, true, godly. Or we can rebel - **unlike** God - think and feel wrong, choose bad things, do evil in His sight.

Today depression, anxiety, fear are called “mental illness.” They are really spiritual heart-trouble. Sinning - ours or others’ - brings soul-stress. It happens when we won’t repent and come to Jesus for pardon from sin, and His soul-cleansing, to be set free from sin-guilt - *“our soul - restored by the Lord.”*

People in sin, who ignore and avoid the Lord, suppress and deny a sin-guilty conscience. Guilt becomes a heavy load. We try to cast it off - but we cannot. We try to blame-shift. Yet, our sin-guilt is always there - deep inside - it deadens, darkens our soul - brings shame - soul-stress. And it causes body-stress too - depression, disease, even death.

Jesus Christ came from Heaven to Earth to die for our sins - took on Himself the just judgment we all have coming. And - because Jesus is God - He arose from the dead to free us - lift from us - the load of sin and guilt

Now Jesus - the Good Shepherd "*restores my soul.*" Millions of people on this sick, sad, sin-plagued, soul-pained planet know nothing of this wonderful Shepherd Jesus - who offers His blessings of sins forgiven, guilt gone forever.

Again the 23rd Psalm, sung at Princess Diana's funeral, says it -
"Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
but yet in love He sought me,
And on His shoulder gently laid,
and Home rejoicing brought me."

Some say, "Jesus loves me just the way I am." Wrong! If so, why would He ever want to change us? In fact - Jesus loves us "in spite of the way we are" - self-loving, rebel sinners, straying sheep. He loves and purposes to change us, conform us to His own likeness. He begins the change when we come to Him. He forgives our sins, cleans our heart, clears our conscience - all this and more too - when He "*restores our soul.*"

But - the tragic truth is - millions never find soul-rest. Why? Because only the Shepherd of Psalm 23 - the LORD - Jehovah-Jesus Himself - can revive, restore any lost, heavy-laden, sin-weary soul. Multi-millions of people follow false gods, or no god at all. Big Mistake! They ignore, neglect, deny, defy, reject - the One and Only Savior-Shepherd Lord Jesus Christ.

But - millions do come to Savior-Shepherd Jesus, and with David all say - "*He restores my soul.*" You need not pop a pill or see a shrink - for real soul-rest Jesus said it to you too -

*"Come to Me all who labor - heavy-laden -
I will rest you!"*

God's Absolute Power Promise

Eight

"He leads me in paths of righteousness . . . Psalm 23:3

"He leads me . . . Again - Jesus does the leading. Jesus makes us lie down in green pastures. He leads us beside still waters, He restores our soul. And - Good Shepherd Jesus will track, bring us back, to His righteous paths.

You see, only in His righteous paths - does He bless, build, benefit us - here - now - and in all eternity ahead. That's forever, folks.

"In paths of righteousness . . . Righteous leaders are scarce, premium, very highly prized.

Unrighteous leaders - men and women - are a dime a dozen. They pretend, presume to lead, but often are simply slaves to public opinion polls. They follow the crowds. They do not follow what is right in God's sight - nor lead others after Him.

They are caught in the "I-me-my-mine - I-want-more-for-me" syndrome - motivated by "what's-in-it-for-me?" They ignore God's righteous Word. It's true in politics, business, education, social issues, and, in many so-called spiritual leaders too.

But our Savior-Shepherd Jesus is the ultimate, absolute righteous Leader. He leads all who will follow Him in *"paths of His righteousness!"* He is the Leader all need to follow.

"Righteous paths . . . John Bunyan's classic Pilgrim's Progress, shows Pilgrim "Christian" toiling up a steep, rocky road, headed to the "Celestial City." Then, alongside this hard, harsh road, appears an inviting path, with soft green grass - no stones, no thorns, not steep. "Pilgrim" steps onto that path - all easy walking, effortless, happy, carefree travel, for awhile. But then, subtly, surreptitiously, the path led away from the right road. It was a bad path - steep,

stony, briars, thorns and worst of all - it led away from God. No righteous path to the Celestial City - Christian was on the wide, hard, broad way to Hell.

“Pilgrim” rightly returned to the *“path of righteousness.”*

“Enter in at the straight gate - for wide is the gate and broad the way that leads to destruction, and many go in thereat. Because straight is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life, and few there are who find it” (Matthew 7:13, 14).

Major cities have "Broadway" boulevards. Few have streets called “Straight” or “Narrow.” To some today - “Straight” refers to people too narrow-minded about right and wrong.

Years ago my wife Alice was soloist in a large church in uptown New York City. Without a thought, Alice took our baby girl Jan on the subway under Manhattan streets, thru Time Square, up world-famous - “Broadway.” Back then it was safer. Now many people follow broad way evils that lead them into down, down away from God - into Hell.

Left to ourselves, all we like sheep go away, far astray. So, our Good Shepherd loves us, seeks us, leads us back - into His perfect *“paths of righteousness.”* Yes He does.

Notice - it’s plural - *“paths.”* Every day we begin a new path - our own wrong way - or our Shepherd’s *“right paths.”*

Jesus gave us His great love-warning - Matthew 7:13-15 -

“Enter in at the straight gate - because strait the gate, narrow the way that leads to life. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inside are ravening wolves. By their fruits you will know them.”

Jesus gave His love-invitation to all people on the planet -

“I AM the Door - by Me if anyone enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture” (John 10:9).

God's Absolute Power Promise

Nine

“For His name's sake . . . Psalm 23:3

“For His name's sake . . . Why walk His righteous paths?

Why live as His - Jesus-witness?

First - Do it - because He said to. We do right in His sight -
to live - give ourselves -- *“for His name's sake.”*

Second - Do it - because it is good for us. Look at the sick,
sad sins of people who shame the name of Jesus.

Third - Do it - because - in His *“paths of righteousness”* - we
show other lost sheep how to follow Jesus too. He said it -

*“Other sheep I have who are not of this fold; them also
I must bring, and they will hear My voice, and there will be one
flock, and one Shepherd” (John 10:16).*

When Jesus spoke of *“other sheep”* He did not mean - others
who are in false-god religions. Not at all. Jesus Himself is the
One and Only Savior-Lord-God. He knows every person on the
planet, He knows who will trust Him too - as you and I do -
when they hear His Good News.

So - Jesus leads His sheep in His *“paths of righteousness - for
His name's sake”* - so *“other sheep”* - will hear of Him -
believe in Him too - and be saved.

Now, let's be honest, we sheep all stray from the Shepherd.

“All we like sheep have gone astray,

we have turned, every one, to his own way.

And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

(Isaiah 53:6)

You and I know it's true too. God said it! That settles it!

“I was a wondering sheep,

I did not love the fold;

I did not love my Shepherd's voice,

I would not be controlled.”

Far too often we leave His “*righteous paths*” - to follow some self-loving self-indulgence - for that moment we live for our own sake - not “*for His name’s sake.*” David wrote Psalm 23. He knew about straying, didn’t he. He said, when we sin - shame His name - our loyal, loving Shepherd, in His mercy and grace, will track, bring back His sheep - to “*His paths of righteousness . . . for His name’s sake.*”

When our children were small we rented horses for a mountain vacation. Now, my father was a real cowboy. We still have his spurs, Winchester, Colt six-shooter. But I am not a cowboy. One night our horses got loose, strayed away. I tracked them one by one, for miles, to bring them back.

It was a tiny taste of what our Shepherd does for His straying sheep. Patiently He will track - bring us back again. Why? Well, to be honest, I did not love those stubborn, straying horses - at all - they put me to a lot of trouble. But our great, good, gracious Savior-Shepherd seeks us - just because He loves us. Children sing this amazing grace truth

“Why did Jesus come to earth,
Son of God - by virgin birth?
Jesus came down long ago - just because He loves us so.
Why did Jesus die on the Tree,
Give His life for you and me?
Jesus died once long ago - just because He loves us so.”
Jesus rose up from the dead
Back to life - just as He said;
Jesus calls us - this I know - just because He loves us so.”

The tragic truth is - people all over this sad, mad, bad news planet - do not the Christmas glory-angel spoke of Jesus -
“*Fear not! Behold, I bring you Good News of great joy to all people - the Savior - Christ the Lord*” (Luke 2:10,11).

As we speak - millions worldwide are not His sheep - Jesus is not their Shepherd - they ignore Him. Question: Do you?

God's Absolute Power Promise

Ten

*“Yea, tho I walk thru the valley of the shadow of death . . .
Psalm 23:4*

“Yea . . . It's a word not so popular anymore. But in Psalm 23 - the “Yea” is an emphatic, dogmatic “YES!” Absolutely! David said: *Yes!* He leads me! *Yes!* He will track, lead me back! *Yes!* I'll walk thru death's dark valley! *Yes!* I will fear no evil! All are positive power answers, Why, David? Why no fears? We'll see it together - read on.

“Yea . . . Paul preached God's Gospel to people in the spiritually dead, morally evil, socially corrupt city of Corinth - a most negative place and people. God's Good News is power-positive absolute truth. Paul said it:

“God is true! Our word to you was not ‘yea and nay’ (not ‘yes and no’ - vacillating, unsure). For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, preached among you by us, was not ‘yea and nay’ (not flip-flopping), but in Him was - ‘yea.’

“For all the promises of God in Him are, ‘yea’ and in Him ‘Amen’ - to the glory of God.

“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us - is God - who has also sealed us, and given the guarantee of the Spirit in our hearts” (II Corinthians 1:18-22).

We get his message, don't we. God is positive - He is for us. God only wants and works for our good. It is we rebel, stiff-necked sinners who are negative. Yes we are. We do stupid, negative, sinful stuff - that brings grief, shame, pain to us - or others. We are self-absorbed, self-loving, selfish.

Ah, but there is our great, good Shepherd Savior Jesus - ready, willing, able to help us - out of our sin-guilt and shame, into His happy, holy blessings. Jesus turns us negative nerds into His positive power people. Yes He does. Psalm 23 - makes us say - all in Jesus are “*Yea and Amen!*”

“Tho’ I walk . . . The Bible calls our daily living a “walk” - one foot, one step, one day at a time. Only God knows where our earthly walk will lead - when and how it will end. He gives us each a lifespan, brief or broad, to come in true trust - to His Shepherd-Savior-Son.

“Thru the valley . . . Always note prepositions. He leads us - *“thru the valley.”* That’s vital, believe it! Jesus will never leave His sheep in the deep, dark valley. Never! He will lead us thru it - up, out, over the top. Always!

“Valley of the shadow of death . . . When we walk with our great Good Shepherd, no terror traps us in the death valley. No one can harm or halt us when we walk with Jesus. He takes us **thru** - beyond - any death valley - to the other side. Yes He does.

My boyhood was poor. Dad hunted deer for our winter meat. I was too young to carry a gun, My job was to play dog, go thru the brush, drive out a deer so dad got a shot. He only needed one. The best place to trap a deer was a box canyon.

Now, hear me. You may ignore Jesus Christ, and think you hide from Him. Wrong! You can run, but you cannot hide. If you refuse Savior Jesus, you die in your sins, walk the *“valley of the shadow of death”* - alone - to face Judge Jesus. For you, death valley is a dead-end box-canyon called Hell.

But, all who follow Shepherd Jesus, He leads safely thru the *“death valley”*, it is simply a shaded path **thru** a brief dark day into the brilliant, beautiful glory-light of God's Heaven.

David faced Goliath in a *“death valley.”* David fled thru Kidron Valley, his son tried to kill him in that *“death valley”* - 20,000 died that day, Absalom too. A thousand years later, at that Kidron Valley, our blessed Savior Jesus agonized in Gethsemane Garden - on His way to the Cross. Calvary was a

hill - but it was also the ultimate “*death valley*” - where Jesus died under God’s wrath for our sins - mine, yours too.

Think about it. You and I often walk in - *death valleys* - often unknown to us, where, but for God's grace, we would meet disaster, even death. Satan and his evil demons hate us all. If God allowed - they'd kill us, our loved ones, anyone - any day of the week. Read Job, chs 1 and 2. God let Satan take Job’s wealth, health, family. Satan would have killed Job too - but God said - “*No!*” He can touch us only as God allows.

Paul wrote of our devil warfare - Ephesians 6:10-12 -

“Be strengthened in the Lord, in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be dynamic to stand against the methods of the devil. For we agonize not against blood and flesh, but against princes, and powers, and world-rulers of darkness, and wicked spirits in the heavenlies.”

Peter too, wrote of warring against the devil - I Peter 5:8,9 -

“Be sober, be vigilant, your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom to devour, whom resist - steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brothers in the world. And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered awhile, will Himself perfect, establish, strengthen you. To Him dominion and glory forever and ever. Amen.”

God's Absolute Power Promise

Eleven

"I will fear no evil . . . Psalm 23:4

"I will fear no evil . . . It's literal, friends. Jesus loves us, protects us from hate-filled enemies - if we follow Him. Jesus said it to rebels in Jerusalem who refused His love -

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets (God's preachers), and stones those (messengers) sent to you - how often I would have gathered your children as a hen gathers her brood under her wings. And you were not willing! Behold, your house is left to you desolate. Amen! I say to you, you will not see Me, until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord'" (Luke 13:34,35).

Just as Jesus said, Judea and Jerusalem paid a terrible price. Only 4 decades later, Titus the Roman conquered Jerusalem, leveled the temple, killed a million Jews, took 100,000 more into slavery, scattered them all over the Roman Empire.

In America our children and teens are troubled. Adults too. Why? We are a God-blessed nation, yet we ignore His Savior-Shepherd Jesus. By bad example we lead our children and teens to ignore Him - then wonder why our troubles keep on increasing, and fears multiply. Well, Du-u-uh.

It's amazing! People "mooch" God's daily love-gifts - every heartbeat, life-breath, muscle-movement, good mind ability that He gives us - yet we ignore Him and His Savior-Son Jesus.

We take the daily bread He enables us to earn, and all the beauty, bounty, blessings He gives us, we accept each year in the lifespan He gives us, yet profane His name, use it in vain, blaspheme Him, call Him to "damn" this or that. Then we blame Him for our crisis times. How stupid can it get? We are a nation living in fear, we ignore, deny, defy the Lord God who offers us His peace - then wonder why we fear. Hello-o!

Fears stalks our walk, our streets, schoolyards, work places. Terror tracks us down daily. Our children and teens need medication drugs to calm and quiet their fearful hearts and minds. They go to school in fear. We ride planes, trains, buses, even our cars, in fear of some road-rage nut. Why? Because we ignore the God of peace - shown, known in Jesus Christ Himself - the *“Prince of Peace.”*

Evil invades our land and our lives on every hand, every day. Television, radio, the internet, books, magazines, etc., spew out a constant stream of vile, vicious, violent pollution in body, soul, spirit - day and night.

But God offers to all people on the planet His loving solution. My friend, when you follow Jesus - the Shepherd-Savior - then even in *“death valley”* you too *“will fear no evil.”*

Remember the Christmas Story. When Jesus Christ came from Heaven to earth by virgin birth - four times - the angel said it - *“Fear not! Fear not! Fear not! Fear not!”*

Remember the Christmas Glory-Angel - his message is still true - for you and me too. He focused all the world - on Jesus.

*“Fear not! Behold, I bring you Good News . . .
of Great Joy . . . open, offered . . . to All People . . .
the Savior . . . Christ the Lord!”*

After Jesus arose from the dead - again His loving message was *“Fear not . . . peace to you!”* It's still true today too. All who trust in Jesus say it - with King David in Psalm 23 -

“I will fear no evil!”

Jesus Himself - is God's Good News of great joy to all people on this fearful, sad, mad, bad news planet. Yes He is.

God's Absolute Power Promise

Twelve

“For You are with me . . . Psalm 23:4

This little line is the most vital in this so important Psalm 23.

*“Yea, tho I walk thru the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil - for **You** are with me.”*

See the change? It is vital. Up until this line - David is speaking - **about** the LORD - *“**He** makes me . . . **He** leads me . . . **He** restores my soul.”* But now, in verse 4, David changes - he speaks - **to** the LORD - *“**You** are with me . . . **Your** rod . . . **Your** staff comfort me . . . **You** prepare a table . . .”*

*“**You** are with me . . .* David goes from praise - to praying - speaking **to** the LORD - in Person.

In times of trouble, testing, terror - we can be free from fear - by talking - not only about our Lord - but in talking **to** our Lord. Just as David did it, *“I will fear no evil, for **You** are with me.”*

Practical Example. Deacon Stephen was first in the Church to die for His Jesus-witness. He walked thru the *“valley of the shadow of death.”* Men who hated Jesus brutally stoned Stephen to death for Jesus - *“for His name's sake.”* As he was dying he saw the glorified Jesus. Stephen shouted out - *“Behold! I see the Heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at God's right hand!”* (Acts 7:56). Then, as he entered *“the valley of the shadow of death”* Stephen spoke **to** the Savior - *“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit . . . Lord, lay not this sin to their charge”* (Acts 7:59,60). Stephen spoke - **to** Jesus - up close and personal - and he - *“feared no evil.”*

Personal Example. In the Korean War - under enemy attack I saw men I worked with die, others were wounded. I recall vividly - running to my battle station - enemy fire exploding near me - killing, maiming many.

But - listen to me carefully now - I felt no fear. I felt only His peace - knowing then, there, that Jesus was with me - knowing clearly, certainly - where I'm going when I die.

Paul said it a little differently - but far more powerfully -

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day" (II Timothy 1:12).

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword? As it is written, for Your sake we are killed all day long, accounted as sheep for slaughter.

"But, in all these things we are hyper-conquerors thru Him who loved us.

"For I am persuaded that - not death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created person, place, or thing - will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8).

When we are sure, persuaded, that our Savior-Shepherd Jesus Himself is with us - always - we know we *"fear no evil."*

Both David and Stephen knew that peace - both walked thru - *"the valley of the shadow of valley"* - knowing they were going with the Shepherd. Thru the centuries multiplied millions of God's people have died. Many others still die daily - and *"fear no evil."* Why no fear? Because they trust, love, belong to the Lord Jesus Himself. They speak to Him - and *"fear no evil"* - not even in the *"death valley!"*

Aboard ship I knew a man, one you could count on in battle. He showed little interest in the Lord. But one day, as we headed into battle, he began quoting to me - Psalm 91. I asked him how he knew it. He said, "My mother taught me."

"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High will abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the

LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in Him I will trust. Under His wings you will take refuge; His truth will be your shield and buckler. You will not be afraid of terror (or terrorist) by night, nor the arrow (plane) that flies by day. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you, because you have made the LORD, the Most High, your dwelling place.”

Friends, that is God’s promise - coverage you can count on!
“He has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So that we may boldly say, ‘The Lord is my Helper, I will not fear! What can man do to me!’” (Hebrews 13:5,6).

It is the LORD God’s promise to us too: *“Thou art with me!”*
And again - know this - when the Shepherd-Savior-Lord Jesus is with you - whatever the *“death valley”* - you will not fear.

The late great Bible preacher and pioneer in nationwide radio Bible teaching, Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, said it this way - for sweet, sure soul-rest at night speak to the Lord in prayer -
*“Let others count sheep jumping over a wall -
I will speak to the Shepherd.”*

God's Absolute Power Promise

Thirteen

“Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me . . . Psalm 23:4

Security is hot stuff these days. We all want to be sure, safe. We “*treasure up treasures on earth*” - trying to be secure. But - how secure are we? Without warning - disease strikes, cancer, heart failure, a killer car-crash, freak accident. Trouble strikes - and security we sought - is not secure at all.

Others inherit “treasure” we may leave behind. But it does not secure them either - even millionaires and billionaires - their wealth cannot secure them from disease, danger, death.

So, where is security? King David lived and died a rich and famous and powerful man - but he died. Psalm 23 shows he knew where his security lay. David makes clear his “declaration of dependence” on his Shepherd-Savior-LORD.

Our beloved America cut loose from England with a “Declaration of Independence.” But - our founding fathers never meant for our God-blessed America to declare independence from Him from whom all blessings flow. They did not intend us to deny, defy our “dependence” on the Lord God Almighty. Yet, our beloved nation, more than ever before - needs a clear, certain, changeless “**Declaration of Dependence**” - on the Savior!

Political leaders boast of giving full religious liberty to all who come to our “Land of the Free.” And many religions exercise free speech here, express their beliefs, even when they oppose Christians’ freedom of speech and worship.

Often our leaders claim to be Christians - but fail to express openly their faith in Jesus Christ, in fear of offending others. Shame on them. We need to vote in bold leaders who speak out - no hesitation, no reservation, no apology - state our full
“Declaration of Dependence”
on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our leaders need to say - of course - in America all citizens may believe, worship, speak freely. Including Christians. Our Christian President, and Christian leaders are free to boldly say "The LORD is my Shepherd too. Jesus Christ is my Savior - the One and Only Lord God Almighty - who gives this nation, or any nation, all its rich blessings."

"Your rod . . . The Shepherd's rod was a stout stick - used to fight a predator - lion, bear, wolf, man.

It was a rod of power. Teddy Roosevelt said - "Walk softly and carry a big stick." God does that. Think about it. Puny, pitiful, powerless nations and peoples - defy the LORD God Almighty. He laughs - ridicules all rebels. Psalm 2 says it -

"Why do the nations rage, and the peoples plot a vain thing? The kings of earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together - against the LORD - and against His Anointed (Messiah), saying, 'Let us break Their bonds in pieces, and cast away Their cords from us.'"

Rebel men and nations deny, defy the LORD God - and His Anointed One - Messiah Jesus. Psalm 2:4-6 - tells us God's response. God does not bite His nails, wring His hands, pace the halls of Heavens over little man's empty ego-rage.

"He who sits in the Heavens shall laugh, the LORD will hold them in derision (ridicule). Then He will speak to them in His wrath, and torment (distress) them in His deep displeasure, saying, 'Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion!'"

Psalm 2 is God's "Reality" revelation - His grace-warning to all rebels against Messiah Jesus - God's - "*King of kings.*" Like it or not - God says it loud and clear - for all to hear - "*I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion!*"

Handel's oratorio, "Messiah" was performed before the king of England. As the "Hallelujah Chorus" began - the King stood to his feet, paying homage to Messiah Jesus - "*King of kings and Lord of lords - He shall reign - forever and ever!*"

Millions bow daily - to honor, praise, love, worship Jesus. One day - maybe soon - all people in Heaven and Earth - and even in Hell - will confess that *"Jesus Christ is Lord!"*

Psalm 2 says - Messiah Jesus - God the Son - lets puny rebel man do his thing, have his fling, be his own king - for a little lifespan - and nations have their way, say, day - for now. But - Jesus will return! He will call a halt to all sin - and all the sorrow our sins cause. Believe it.

Psalm 2 records God the Father's Word to His Messiah Son

*"I will give You the nations,
And the ends of the Earth for Your possession.
You will break them with a rod of iron,
You will dash them to pieces - like a potter's vessel.*

Then God the Spirit speaks to all people - especially leaders.

*"Be wise now, O you Kings!
Be instructed, you judges of Earth!
Worship the LORD with fear, rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son,
Lest He be angry, and you perish (Go to Hell)
when His wrath is kindled a little while.
Blessed are all who put their trust in Him!"*

Do you see it - the great Shepherd-King carries a **"rod."** One day He will - *"Break rebel nations with His rod of iron - smash them to pieces like a potters clay pot"* to stop all sin - and set up His righteous Kingdom on Earth as in Heaven.

But - right now - Messiah Jesus carries His *"shepherd's rod."* And all who know Him, all who truly trust and love Him - speak to Him these sweet words - *"Your rod...comforts me."*

"Your staff. . . The shepherd's staff was a stout stick too - longer, with a crook on the end. The shepherd used his staff to help the sheep - pull them to safety, out of trouble, to open up brush, free trapped sheep, reach them

in hard places, and to keep the sheep in line. The shepherd's staff could strike or sooth. It gave discipline, direction, protection, rescue, comfort. Jesus does all that for His own sheep too. If you belong to Jesus - fear not!

“Comfort me . . . We often use the term *“comfort”* in a placid way, meaning - *“I hope things work out.”* Such comfort is powerless. But *“Jesus-comfort”* means power-action. Our Good Shepherd gives us caring, reassuring comfort. He is for us always, fights for us, stands off all foes, suffers pain, hardship, even death, to save us.

Remember when Saul of Tarsus was breathing out threats, murders, prison - to stamp out Christians? The Lord Jesus waylaid Saul on the road to Damascus - blinded, knocked him down - made him say, *“Who are You - Lord?”* The Lord said - *“I AM Jesus who you are persecuting!”* When Jesus-people suffer Jesus suffers too. Believe it. Daily He goes *“thru the valley of the shadow of death”* with one of His own - and comes out on the other side - into the brilliant beauty of Heaven's glory. He comforts all His people who suffer. Paul learned his lesson well - he wrote it - for us too -

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our trouble, so we can comfort those who are in trouble with the comfort with which we are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our comfort also abounds in Christ.” (II Corinthians 1:3-5).

Dr. Haddon Robinson says, “God offers more than a pocket handkerchief to dry our tears, calm our fears.” Yes He does. All who know Jesus say, *“Your rod, Your staff comfort me.”*

God's Absolute Power Promise

Fourteen

“You prepare a table before me . . . Psalm 23:4

“You prepare . . . Every good thing you and I receive - is a gift of God’s love-in-action. He gives food to all creatures - great and small. To you and me too. God created this lush green, well-watered earth, with healthy, tasty foods. And He called it all *“very good.”*

But man's sin spoiled this Edenic planet. So now we fight weeds, thorns, pests, poisons, disease, death. Yet, God keeps giving us seasons to plant, grow, harvest, gives us sun, rain, soil, seed. Even to folk who ignore Him. Jesus said it - *“He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, sends His rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45)*. Children sing it

- *“Oh, the Lord is good to me,
and so I thank the Lord, for giving me the things I need,
the sun and soil and rain and the apple seed -
Oh, the Lord is good to me.”*

Do you feel that way? Is that your heart’s song too? Do you thank the great Creator-Lord Jesus Christ for His daily mercies, His loving grace-gifts to you, to those you love?

Here’s a sad fact. Human suffering is most severe on this planet - where Jesus is rejected. His best blessings are missed. Nations who follow false gods strive the hardest to survive. They cannot say - *“I shall not want?”* Why is that?

Well, it's really a no-brainer, isn't it. God gives to pagan nations His blessings - the same rain, sun, soil, living seed - that He gives America. Yet, when their crops are good, their food and income plentiful - do they thank and worship the One and Only loving, living, giving God of the Bible? No! They worship and serve their own false-gods, that can never help them - for they do not exist. They expose rebel hearts.

So, God withholds His best blessings, so the people can see, compare His blessings with the poverty of their false gods. His purpose is loving and clear to all who will see -
“The goodness of God leads to repentance.”

God calls all people on the planet - by His loving mercy and grace - to change their minds (repent) - and turn in personal trust to Jesus - turn from their false-god religion.

Paul commended the believers in Jesus in Thessalonica -
“You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come” (I Thessalonians 1:9,10).

Sadly, many God-blessed Americans these days deny, defy, ignore, forget Jesus too, as pagan peoples do. A bumper-sticker says it: “When you sit down to eat - thank a farmer.” Of course, thank a farmer. But you, and the farmer too - need to thank God above for all His blessings.

False god religions can never save anyone from sin, or death, or Hell. Only Jesus can - the One and Only Savior-Son of God - died for the sins of the world, arose from the dead, all who trust Him - He saves. All who don't He won't.

God sees every heart. To all who truly want to know God - He sends His Gospel - of Jesus Christ. Dr. Luke recorded it - the Christmas glory-angel said it (Luke 2:10,11) -
“Fear not! Behold! I bring you Good News of great joy to all people . . . the Savior . . . Christ the Lord!”

Jesus is the One and Only Savior - and Hope of the world!

So - how about it? Do you thank and worship the Savior for all good things He gives to you and yours? David did - it was praise when He said - *“You prepare a table before me.”*

“*A table before me . . .* David is talkin' a king's banquet table here, folks. He knew about fine-bread, big-spread banquet tables. He was a rich king. He provided from the king's table for all who looked to him. He knew it all came from - *God's prepared table of plenty.*”

Think about the wonderful spiritual food Shepherd Jesus gives. He who with a miracle Word fed 5000 men plus, women and children, now offers Himself to us - “*I AM the Bread of Life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, he who believes in Me shall never thirst*” (John 6).

King David also wrote Psalm 34 -

“*I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard, and saved him out of all his troubles.*”

“*O taste and see - the LORD is good. Blessed is the one who trusts in Him. O fear the LORD, you His saints, for there is no lack to those who fear Him.*”

One who fears the Lord Jesus - need never fear anyone else.

“*Before me . . .* It's personal, isn't it. All good things you ever get are God's gifts set before you too. God loves you, and cares, and takes care of you, and yours.”

Ah, I hear a rebel say, “I earn it all, I owe God nothing!” Question: Can you make your heart beat, lungs breath, muscles move, brain-waves work? One tiny virus - a single cancer cell, one tragedy can stop you in your tracks. Every obituary says it again - we have no power to keep life going.

Only Jesus Christ gives and sustains life and health - with or without doctors, medicines, machines. And when He stops giving - stops “*preparing a table*” for you and me - we stop living. Thank Him, worship and serve Shepherd Jesus.

God's Absolute Power Promise

Fifteen

"In the presence of my enemies . . . Psalm 23:4

"In the presence of my enemies . . . David's enemies hated, haunted, hunted him - tried to kill him. From Goliath, to Saul, to Philistines, to his own sons - many enemies tried to kill him. All failed. Why? God took care of him. God takes care of all His own.

God calls Satan our *"enemy - our adversary the devil."* God calls our arch foe *"the great, fiery red dragon, the serpent of old, the devil, the destroyer, murderer and the father of lies - and Satan - the accuser."* Satan hates all people (not just God's people). He seeks to see all people *"Go to Hell."* Satan leads all who follow him in ignoring, rejecting Jesus - into what Jesus called *"Outer darkness . . . the everlasting lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels . . . called Hell"* (Matthew 25:30,41,46; Revelation 20:15).

Satan misleads millions - thru false-god religions or rebel ignorance of the Bible - to believe that Judge Jesus won't judge - won't let anyone *"Go to Hell."* But Jesus said -

"Unless you repent you will all perish (Go to Hell)! Fear not those killing the body, who cannot kill the soul. But rather - fear Him who is dynamic to destroy both soul and body in Hell" (Luke 13:3,5; Matthew 10:28).

Satan plots, plans, plies his lies - draws rebel dupes into thinking Hell isn't real - and that God won't judge those who blaspheme, profane, use in vain - the high, holy name of Jesus Christ. Satan is our ultra-evil arch-enemy. Peter warned all who know Jesus -

"Be sober, be vigilant, because our adversary the devil as a roaring lion walks around seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, steadfast in the faith" (belief in the Word of God).

Peter wrote a warning - and call - to all who choose to refuse Jesus Christ - who are lost - who choose to “Go to Hell” -

“The Lord is not slack about His promise (to return - and judge rebels), but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that anyone perish (Go to Hell), but that all come to repentance.

“But the (Judgment) Day of the Lord will come - as a thief in the night (swift, sudden, maybe soon) - the skies will pass away with a great noise, the elements will melt with super-heat, the earth also and its works will be burned up.

Think about it. Why are the words - “damn” and “hell” and “Go to Hell” so extremely overused in modern speech? Especially in a Bible-based country? Why? Well, It is Satan’s “not-so-subtle-snow-job” on rebel dupes who don’t, won’t think in rational reality. To them the sure and solemn warnings of “Hell’s damnation” are so over-spoken they seem unreal. So, million of people worldwide convince themselves there is no righteous judgment, and no Hell. They choose rather to celebrate John Lennon’s sad lie -

“Imagine there’s no Heaven, it’s easy of you try,
No Hell below us, above us only sky.”

Mark it out clearly - remember it always - Satan is a loser!

Jesus beat the devil in His desert testing. Yes He did! On the Cross - Jesus beat the devil - when He died for our sins and “*crushed the serpent's head!*” (Gen 3:15). Jesus beat the devil when He rose up from the dead. Jesus beats the devil daily - saving lost sinners who trust in Him. Jesus will beat the devil forever - when He judges that old evil serpent-dragon - to Go to Hell!

All who deny, defy, ignore Jesus Christ - side with Satan. Death is their destiny! They all choose to - “Go to Hell!” But today - Jesus Christ still loves, still calls all lost sinners -

*Come to Me all who labor, heavy laden, I will rest you.
Take My yoke on you, learn from Me, you will find soul-rest.”*

God's Absolute Power Promise

Sixteen

“You anoint my head with oil . . . Psalm 23:5

The shepherd used oil to protect the sheep, from pests, gnats, flies that annoy, infest, infect the eyes, ears, nose, mouth. The shepherd anoints the sheep, rubs oil from head to toe, even dips the sheep in it. The oil cleanses, heals, soothes, protects the sheep. In some places shepherds also use oil to ward off deadly field-vipers. Anointing with oil is vital.

Oil fueled the lamps in God’s Temple - lighting the glory of the golden lampstand - that portrayed Messiah Jesus. He still says: *“I AM the Light of the world. He who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of Life.”*

Oil was also used in sweet perfumed incense, burnt at the golden altar of prayer. It portrayed the beauty and fragrance of the earthly walk of Jesus - in the power of the Holy Spirit - and of His life and sacrifice to God for our sins - called a *“sweet-smelling fragrance - well-pleasing to God.”*

Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me - He has anointed Me - to preach Good News to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, set free sin-slaves, restore sight to the blind, set free the sin-crushed, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18,19).

Oil in Scripture pictures the Holy Spirit. All who trust in Jesus - He anoints with the Spirit - who is called *“the Comforter.”*

The instant we come to Jesus, God the Holy Spirit gives us eternal life, powers us to know, love, serve, live for Jesus and His Kingdom, and to be His Jesus-witnesses - to give His Good News to a sad, mad, bad news world. And - at the same instant - Jesus Himself anoints our heads with the Oil of the Holy Spirit - so we think and act right in God’s sight.

God's Absolute Power Promise

Seventeen

“My cup runs over . . . Psalm 23:5

David says here, that the LORD fills his (and our) cup to overflowing. Keep in mind, we're talking about the shepherd and his sheep. Jesus and His flock.

Sheep get thirsty. In dry seasons, when “*green pastures and still waters*” were scarce, the shepherd supplied his sheep with water from a well. He dropped a leather bucket on a rope into the well, drew up the cool, refreshing, thirst-quenching, life-giving water, filled a container - full and overflowing - so each sheep could drink in all it needed. The sheep of Jesus too, can drink to our fill - and says too “*my cup runs over.*”

David says, “I've been there, folks, needed God's supply.” David knew God's refreshing love, grace, mercy, power - that they never run out - always run over. Always.

Why? David's Shepherd is the LORD Jesus Himself. Jesus pours out to me - fills up my cup too - with His life-giving, refreshing, restoring “*water of life.*” Far beyond what we can ever exhaust. “*My cup runs over.*”

Jesus told a sinner-woman at Jacob's well -

“Whoever drinks this water will thirst again. But whoever drinks the water I give - shall never thirst. But the water that I give will be in him a - well of water - springing up into everlasting life.”

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me, and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, Out of his inner being shall flow rivers of living water - the Holy Spirit.”

Today - are you weary of this silly world's empty pursuits, dry, barren? Are you? Jesus gives an overflow cup of life.

God's Absolute Power Promise

Eighteen

“Surely . . . Psalm 23:5

“Surely . . . I call all these twenty-three truths in Psalm 23 - God's absolute-power-promises. The world we live in gives no *“sure”* guarantees. Not at all. The world can only promise us darkness, dread, disease, death. Question: Where will you look for security and certainty - right now - and in eternity - beyond death's door? Where?

Jesus said - all people without Him - will “Go to Hell.” No assurance there. None at all. Only terror torments of Hell.

Jesus also said - all who love Him have His clear, certain, changeless promises - sure and secure - now and forever!

God's Absolute Power Promise

Nineteen

“Goodness . . . Psalm 23:5

“Goodness . . . will follow me . . . When good comes many people say, “I’m lucky. Fate is with me”, when they should say - “God blessed me.” Daily living is never “lucky”, good or bad. Events in this brief lifespan of years - are no dice roll or turn of cards. Proverbs 16 says it loud and clear for all to hear -

*“A man’s heart plans his way,
but the LORD directs his steps (v 9).
The lot is cast into the lap,
but its every decision is from the LORD (v 33).”*

All good that comes to you and me - is from the LORD God.
“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variation or shadow of turning” (James 1:17). Surely!

Proud rebel hearts hate to owe God. They prefer to credit “luck” - thank their “lucky stars.” But no thanks to the loving God above, from whom all blessings flow. Our natural sinner-bent is to self-glory, self-praise. Self - period.

Charles Darwin wrote a book called - The Descent of Man - his silly, senseless theory that men and monkeys have a common family descent. Big mistake. Darwin was dead-wrong - but his title was right-on - The Descent of Man.

You see, God says, man's sin in Eden began the true, tragic “descent of man” - down away from God - descent into decay, disease, disaster, death, Hell. A six-step “real descent of man.”
“When they knew God, (1) they glorified Him not as God, (2) nor were thankful, but (3) became empty in their reasoning, (4) their ignorant hearts were darkened, (5) Professing themselves wise, they became fools (Greek: ‘morons’), and (6)

exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like man, birds, four-footed beasts, creeping things” (Romans 1:21-23).

The “Real Descent of Man - down away from God” has led the world into the “Raw Depravity of Man - without God.”

“Therefore, God gave them up - to uncleanness, lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies. God gave them up - to vile passions . . . women changed the natural for that against nature. Also, men, leaving women, burned in lust, men with men, doing what is shameful . . . receiving the penalty due for their evil error. And as they disliked retaining God in their knowledge - God gave them up - to a debased mind . . . filled with all unrighteousness, porno-sex-sins . . .” Ad nauseam.

Romans chapter 1 - verses - 18-32 - is man’s sordid sin-list. God exposes a straight-talking dirty-laundry-list of the real descent of man down away from God - into raw depravity of man without God. God lays bare every foul, filthy, vile, vicious evil and error in all human history.

God creates, originates, initiates. God makes good out of nothing. By stark contrast - we are not gods. We can’t create. Only imitate. God created the eye, man imitates with a camera. God created life. Man clones (cloning is not creating life - but manipulating life cells God created). Man is created in God’s image - but man is - no Creator.

Of puny man, Dr. J. Vernon McGee quotes Sherman Nagel:

“You cannot put one little star in motion;
 You cannot shape one single forest leaf,
Nor fling a mountain up, nor sink an ocean,
 Presumptuous pigmy, large with unbelief!
You cannot bring one dawn of regal splendor,
 Nor bid the day to shadowy twilight fall,
Nor send the pale moon forth with radiance tender,
 And - dare you doubt the One who does it all?”

Rebels swallow Darwin's evolution lie and worship "mother earth." Silly people race to rescue trees, brush, bugs - their slogan is - "earth first." But a savvy logger said it best -
"Earth first! . . . We'll log the other planets later!"

Said the monkey who swung by his tail,
to his fellow-monks, female and male,
"In a few million years,
From our offspring, my dears,
May come professors in Harvard and Princeton and Yale."
Said the bird on the branch way up high,
"Why do humans all worry and cry?"
Another bird said, sadly shaking its head,
"They've no Heavenly Father as do you and I."

God's Absolute Power Promise

Twenty

“And mercy will follow me . . . Psalm 23:5

“Mercy will follow me . . . Judge Jesus shows “Mercy.”

“Depth of Mercy...

Can there be Mercy still reserved for Me?

Can my God His wrath forbear,

Me, a chief of sinners, spare?

“Long have I withstood His grace,

Long provoked Him to His face,

Would not hear His loving calls,

Grieved Him by ten thousand falls.

But - there for me my Savior stands,

Holding forth His wounded hands;

God is love, I know, I feel,

Jesus weeps - but loves me still.”

“Seek the LORD while He may be found,

Call on Him while He is near.

Let the wicked forsake his way, the unrighteous his thoughts,

And let him return to the LORD,

For He will have mercy on him,

And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

“Mercy will follow me . . . Judge Jesus is still Savior Jesus

- the God of all mercy.

He hates to judge sinners. The Prophet Micah said it -

“Who is a God like You -

pardoning iniquity . . . delighting in mercy.”

The Mercies of God

“The LORD is good, His mercy is everlasting, His truth endures to all generations. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in mercy. As high as the Heavens are above Earth, so great is His mercy toward those

who fear Him. The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him” (Psalms 100; 103; 136).

Paul wrote to pagan idol-worshippers who had come to Jesus

“You were dead in trespasses and sins . . . in lusts of the flesh and mind, by nature children of wrath, as others.

But God, rich in mercy, for His great love, wherein He loved us even when we were dead in sins, has made us alive in Christ - for by His grace are you saved” (Ephesians 2:1-9).

God's Absolute Power Promise

Twenty-One

“All the days of my life . . . Psalm 23:6

“All the days . . . How many days have you lived? Do you see God’s goodness and mercy?

How many days will you live? Only Jesus knows. However long or short our lifespan, all who trust Shepherd-Savior Jesus know this fact: Always, all days. Jesus sees you and me - in triumph, trial, tragedy, in power, pleasure, or pain. He loves, cares, is there, for all who love Him. So, do it, call on Jesus: *“Come to Me . . . follow Me.”* If you do, His *“goodness and mercy will follow you too - all the days.”*

Moses lived long, learned to pray this way - Psalm 90 -

“Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were, or You formed earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

“A thousand years in Your sight are as yesterday. The days of our years are threescore years and ten, and if by strength, fourscore years, yet their strength is in labor and sorrow, soon cut off, and we fly away.

Moses called it, didn’t he. People live 70 or 80 years. Moses lived 120 years. Many people today live past 90. As I write this, my own mother is in her 99th year. *“All the days of our lives”* are God’s great amazing grace-gifts to all

King David said again in Psalm 145 -

“I will extol You, my God, O King! I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day - I will bless You, I will praise Your name forever and ever. Great is the LORD, greatly to be praised, His greatness is unsearchable. The LORD is gracious, full of compassion, slow to anger, of great mercy.

“The LORD is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works. The LORD upholds all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down.

“The LORD preserves all who love Him. But all the wicked He will destroy. My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD! Let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever.”

You get the picture, don't you. Shepherd-Savior Jesus is always in absolute-power control. And He is for all who love Him. His *“goodness and mercy follow . . . all the days.”*

Shepherd Jesus also sees, knows by name, every rebel on the planet who rejects Him, and He has a plan for them too.

Job said it: *“Don't you know - that since man was put on earth, the triumph of the wicked is brief - the hypocrite's joy is but a moment?”*

“For what do the wicked live, become old, mighty in power? They spend their days in wealth - and - in a moment - go down to the grave. They say to God, ‘Depart from us, we choose not to know Your ways. Who is the Almighty, that we serve Him? What profit will we have if we pray to Him?’”

Every day we dark dangers dog our tracks, more than we ever know. But God's loving goodness and mercy follow us, *“all the days of our life.”* Why? Because Shepherd Jesus walks with us, guards, governs, guides us. Yes He does.

Before Jesus left this planet, headed back to Heaven, He said to all who trust and love Him - *“Behold, I AM with you - all the days - even to the end of the Age.”*

“Of my life . . . Remember - Jesus gives everyone on earth a lifespan - long or short - *to come to Him.*

Our length or strength of days is all in the loving hand of our great and gracious Shepherd and Savior-Lord Jesus Christ.

Question: Is the Lord Jesus your Shepherd too? Trust Him.

God's Absolute Power Promise

Twenty-Two

“And I will dwell . . . Psalm 23:6

“And . . . *“And”* is a connective conjunction. Here, it says to all who love Jesus: *“There’s more!”*

“And” tells you and me that *“all the days of my life”* are not the end, friend. In God’s plan - there is far more than we can ever explore - eternally, infinitely more!

Even if *“all the days of my life”* are 70 or 90 or 120 years - they are a fast-passing, rapid-fire, quick-vanishing scene. James and Peter both wrote it for us all - to read and heed.

“What is your life? It is a vapor that appears for a little time, then - poof - vanishes away. All flesh is as grass, all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, it's flower falls. But - the Word of the Lord endures forever, and this is the Word which by the Gospel (Good News in Jesus) is preached to you” (see James 1:9-11; 4:14-17; 1 Peter 1:24).

The infinity of eternity stretches out forever ahead of us all. You too. In Heaven or in Hell. You too. In our years here and now - we've only just begun to live.

God gives us all a fast-passing lifespan - to trust in His Shepherd-Savior-Son Jesus. All who do - go to God's high, holy, happy Heaven - forever.

All who won't, don't trust in Jesus, will forever Go to Hell! Jesus said it. That settles it. Believe it. There they will forever and ever - recall, regret, never forget - that Jesus called them too - to come to Him. But they never did!

God's Absolute Power Promise

Twenty-Three

“And I will dwell in the house of the Lord . . . Psalm 23:6

“I will dwell . . . Salvation - from sin, death, Hell - is the absolute power promise of the Savior-Shepherd Jesus - to all who truly trust in Him. King David has no doubt at all - that what God promises He will perform. So David declares as full, final forever fact - *“I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”*

You see, if we worked to win our eternal salvation we'd all go to Hell, for no one is ever worthy to go to Heaven by his or her own “good works.” God says, *“There is none righteous, no not one, none who seeks after God, none that des good. No, not one”* (see Romans 3:9-23; cp Psalms 14 and 53).

Salvation is never **self-gained** - always **Savior-given**. Only Jesus could die for our sins. Only Jesus could rise from the dead. Only Jesus can save us - out of Hell - for His Heaven.

Without Jesus Christ all are lost sinners, dead in sins, dead to God, shut out from Him, with no right, no entre' into His high, holy, happy Heaven. Not now, not forever.

But - when anyone comes in simple faith to the One and Only Savior LORD God - Jesus Christ - He forgives our sins - gives us His eternal life - we are born again - born of God - into His forever family - and welcome yonder into His Heaven-Home - forever! All only by His loving goodness, tender mercy, great amazing grace. Only in the name of the Savior-Shepherd Jesus Christ can anyone ever say - with King David -

“I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

“I will dwell . . . Just before Jesus died, arose, left the planet headed back to Heaven - He said this -

“In My Father's house are many dwelling places. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2).

Life on planet earth ain't the end, friend. Not at all. Heaven is waiting - for all who believe (trust) in Jesus. He said it -

“I AM the Way, the Truth, the Life; no one comes to the Father (in Heaven) except thru Me” (John 14:6).

*“In the **House** of the LORD”* In Heaven the Savior-Lord Jesus is preparing dwelling places in the Father's House for all who love Him. He said it:

“You believe in God. Believe in Me too (Why? Because Jesus is God - One with the Father). In My Father's House are many mansions (literally: dwelling places, living spaces). I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you to Myself, so that where I Am, there you may be too” (John 14:1-3).

As a Pastor, I have ministered often to grieving families at funerals. Some loved ones died lost - they never came to Savior Jesus in the lifespan He gave. The family had no hope of ever seeing that loved one again - forever.

But many had come to trust in Jesus in their God-given lifespan of years. To them it was my great joy to quote His great, precious, absolute-power promise -

“Since I go to prepare a place for you - I will come again - and receive you to Myself - so that where I AM - there (in My Father's House) you may be too.”

They too say: *“I will dwell in the house of the LORD - forever.”*

Where is God's House?

Is the *“Father's House”* fiction or fact? It's all absolute fact! As real as our tiny earth “dwelling place”, our solar system, galaxy, universe - so God's House in Heaven is just as real

Will Jesus literally return to take His people there? Well, of course He will, don't be ridiculous! Jesus promised. Believe it!

To find the "*Father's House*" - first see the Old Testament record of Heaven. King Solomon built a great, glorious temple to the LORD - Jehovah God. Read Solomon's great dedication statement (II Chronicles 2:6; 6:18; cp I Kings 8:27) -

"Who is able to build Him a temple? Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens (above all Heavens), cannot contain Him! Will God indeed dwell with men on earth? Behold, Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain You."

In his dedication prayer - Solomon said to the LORD - 8 times -

*"When we pray . . . Hear from Heaven . . .
Your **dwelling** place."*

Isaiah the prophet calls Heaven God's "*Dwelling Place*."

"The LORD is in His holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in Heaven: His eyes behold the children of men" (Psalm 11:4).

"The Most High dwells not in temples made with hands. Thus says the LORD, 'Heaven is My throne, earth is My footstool. What house will you build Me? Has not My hand made all these things!'" (Isaiah 14; 66:1,2).

The Bible reveals - three heavens. God created all three.

Heaven One - the blue-sky, atmosphere-envelope God created to protect our lovely little planet Earth.

Heaven Two - the dark, starry universe God created with its billions of galaxies in vast space, defying puny man's plans to measure or map it.

Heaven Three - the boundless, bountiful, brilliant, beautiful Heaven of Heavens - God's Home - God's throne-room - far beyond all we can see or know - until He takes us there.

Think about it. The crucified, risen, ascended Savior Lord Jesus - is there. Daily He takes up there many of

His people - *“thru the valley of the shadow of death . . . absent from the body . . . at Home with the Lord . . . to be with Christ . . . which is far better.”* The Father’s House.

*“The House of **the LORD**”* is God’s *“Heaven of Heavens.”*
Jesus is there. King David is there too - 3000 years and counting. Multi-millions more are there. All people, in all human history, who died believing in Messiah Jesus the Son of God - are up there too. People who trust and love Him - from every century, continent, country, culture, color, class - young and old - men, women, children - Jesus has taken to His *“Father’s House.”* He does it daily.

The last Book of the Bible, the *“Revelation of Jesus Christ”*, gives a preview of God’s Heaven. John wrote it - for us too -
“I looked, and behold, a door standing open - in Heaven - and the Voice, saying, ‘Come up here!’ And behold, a throne, and One sat on the throne” (Revelation 4:1,2).

That preview scene is in the Heaven of Heavens - a real place.

Think how amazing it is, that people are eager to spend billions on moon walks, Mars rocks, tiny space probes - but reject, neglect, never inspect the Bible’s Word of - God’s Heavens.

So, they stay ignorant of His measureless creation - from here on earth, to way out past our dark, stark, starry little universe. All creation centers on His high, holy Heaven throne. And David says it loud and clear - all Jesus-people on this beautiful tiny dust-speck planet - *“Will dwell in the house of the LORD.”*

One thief on the cross next to Jesus - trusted, called on Him -
“Lord, remember me, when You come to Your kingdom.”

Then and there, our dying Savior gave him His power-promise:
*“Amen! I say to you,
today you will be with Me in Paradise.”*

Jesus died that day. The thief died too. Their bodies were buried. But their spirits went into Paradise. And all who believe in Messiah Jesus - from Adam to Abraham to David to that thief - were in Paradise - the place of peace, joy, comfort - waiting those three days - till Jesus arose from the dead.

Then - on that great Resurrection Glory-Day - Jesus Christ arose from the dead - came out of that tomb. Spirit, soul, body - He arose in triumph - proving -1- that He is God in flesh - with power over life and death, and -2- that His death paid for all the sins of the world - mine and yours too, and -3- that He is ready, willing, able to save all people who trust Him - save from sin, death, Hell - save for His high, holy, happy Heaven - forever.

Forty days later Jesus lifted off of planet earth back to Heaven. He promised to return. *"I will come again."* And when Jesus ascended to Heaven, He took with Him all the dead - from Adam to the thief - all who called - *"Lord, remember me."*

It was not the goodness or self-worth of Adam or David or the thief that got them into Heaven - they were all lost sinners. Your worth or mine will never get us into Heaven - not at all. Only the Savior-Lord's goodness and mercy takes to Heaven anyone who trusts in Him. David looked past death - to his forever future - *"I will dwell in the house of the LORD."*

Question: What makes Heaven what Heaven is? Well, it is a place of indescribable wonder - glorious, boundless, brilliant beauty - endless blessings - all to own, explore, enjoy - in God's measureless Creation - forever. No tears there, no death, sorrow, crying, pain, no evil, no error, no terror, no night - all His life, light, love. And all these are Heaven's side-benefits.

What makes Heaven - Heavenly - mark it clearly - is the Savior-Lord Jesus Himself, King of kings, Lord of lords!

Psalm 23 opens and closes with “*The LORD.*” In Him is the Life - from eternity past, and right now, and eternity future - forever and ever. All of Heaven’s joys are in Jesus. Believe it. Our highest Heaven delight will be seeing, being with Jesus.

Psalm 27 - David says it:

“One thing I have desired of the LORD, that I will seek after - that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life - to behold the beauty of the LORD - to enquire in His temple. I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.”

Jesus in Heaven - makes it Heaven! And think about this sober fact - as the old spiritual song said - “Heaven, Heaven, everybody talkin’ ‘bout it ain’ta goin’ there - to Heaven.”

Question: If you die today, do you know you’ll go to Heaven?

Question: When you face God - if He asks you, “Why should I let you into My Heaven?”, what will you answer Him?

There is only one real right answer that God accepts,
it is when we say to Him:

“On earth - in the lifespan of years You gave me,
I believed (trusted) in Your Savior-Son
the Savior-Lord Jesus Christ.”

*“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved,
and your household.”*

God's Absolute Power Promise

Twenty-Four

"Forever!" Psalm 23:6

"Forever!" The final word in Psalm 23 is about eternity. Do you think at all about your future - and the future of those you love - out into the vast eternity ahead?

"Forever" - calls you and me - to look ahead to all that God calls *"eternal life - everlasting life."* So, what about you - what about your loved ones - *"forever?"*

The famous Beatles musician, John Lennon, wrote a song still sung by many. It is a strange, sad, silly song - very famous - but all wrong!

*"Imagine there's no Heaven, it's easy if you try,
No Hell below us, above us only sky."*

John Lennon misled millions. I do not know if he ever trusted in Jesus before a madman's bullet broke off his brief lifespan. But I do know this: If John Lennon could write again - he'd say it loud and clear - for all on earth to hear - his song was wrong.

And right now, as we speak, whether he is in Heaven or Hades waiting to go to Hell (only God knows), right now he is *bowing his knee to that name above all names - Jesus - and his tongue is confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord.* He will do it forever - but forever too late to save him. And, if he could, he'd tell all the world (like his own son) to bow to Jesus too. Yes he would.

Imagining there's "No Heaven" cannot negate Heaven - any more than imagining "No God" can negate God.. King David wrote God's Words - Psalms 14 and 53: *"The fool has said in his heart - 'No God!'"*

God says Heaven and Hell are real - and we all *"dwell forever"* - in one or the other! Choose Jesus. Call on Jesus. Do it now.

“Forever!” It’s forever! The Greek defines eternal like this:
“Into the ages of the ages” . . . time’s infinity.
God love you, wants you to live forever in His Heaven-House.

He cannot, will not let into His Heaven rebel sinners who reject His Savior-Son Jesus. If God let us into His perfect, beautiful, joyous Heaven - as we are - full of sin and proud of it - too proud to come to Jesus - again - if God let us into His Heaven as we are - we’d wreck the place - just as we are this beautiful little planet He put us on.

Think about it. Why should God open His Heaven, with its forever blessings, to people who ignore, deny, defy, neglect, despise, reject His own beloved only begotten Savior-Son, who in His so great love, died the brutal, bloody, ultimate death on the Cross to pay the infinite penalty - for their sins? Why should He? He doesn’t!

God allows into His Heaven only those lost sinners who humble themselves “as a little child” - and come to Jesus.

Question: Have you come to Jesus? Will you come to Jesus?

Pilate asked a “forever” question: *“What shall I do with Jesus?”*
According to history, Pilate answered wrong - ended a suicide.

A lost sinner jailer asked too: *“What must I do to be saved?”*
It’s a choice we all must make - *“What will I do with Jesus?”*

Jesus said it - *“I AM the Door,*
thru Me, if anyone enter in, He will be saved.”
“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved,
and your household” (Acts 16:31).

Simply say to Him - “Lord Jesus - I trust You to save me.”

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