

## Psalm 23:2

### The Good Shepherd provides for His sheep's physical needs.

In Psalm 23:2 David affirmed that God always met his needs, when he followed His path. After 40 years of serving God as Israel's king, David had become a refugee (2 Sam 15:13-14). Fleeing the coup, Israel's shepherd affirmed the LORD as his faithful Shepherd.

#### I. He guides them to green pastures (2a).

##### A. He guided David.

##### 1. Green pastures

- a. They are lush meadows of fresh grass (2 Sam 23:1).
- b. Green pastures are few and far between in Israel.
  - i. "Palestine, where David ... kept his father's flocks, especially near Bethlehem, is a dry, brown, sun-burned wasteland."<sup>1</sup>
  - ii. "These 'green pastures' were a seasonal phenomenon. The fields—even parts of the desert—would turn green during the winter and spring; but in summer and fall the sheep would be led to many places in search of food. God's care is not seasonal but constant and abundant."<sup>2</sup>
- c. "... green pastures are essential to success with sheep. When lambs are maturing and the ewes need green, succulent feed for a heavy milk flow, there is no substitute for good pasturage."<sup>3</sup>

##### 2. He makes me lie down

- a. Sheep are defenseless animals.
  - "That's why sheep sleep standing up most of the time. They want to get as much of a head start as possible when danger comes. If a sheep is going to lie down, he needs to feel absolutely secure. He also needs a full stomach, or else he'll be constantly on the move, looking for food."<sup>4</sup>
- b. To lie down lit. means to be "at rest" (Isa 65:10).
  - i. "He takes me to lush pastures" (Ps 23:2, NET).
  - ii. To rest can also refer to the safe and shady location in the sheep pen.
  - iii. "Some, instead of translating the word נֶאֱוֹת, *neoth*, which we have rendered *pastures*, render it *shepherds' cots* or *lodges*. If this translation is considered preferable, the meaning of the Psalmist will be, that sheep-cots were prepared in rich pasture grounds, under which he might be protected from the heat of the sun. If even in cold countries the immoderate heat which sometimes occurs is troublesome to a flock of sheep, how could they bear the heat of the summer in Judea, a warm region, without sheepfolds? The verb רָבַץ, *rabats*, to

---

<sup>1</sup> Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 45.

<sup>2</sup> Willem A. Van Gemeren, "Psalms," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 253–254.

<sup>3</sup> Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 45-46.

<sup>4</sup> Matt Dirks, <https://harborhonolulu.org/2011/11/10/what-it-means-to-lie-down-in-green-pastures>, accessed September 29, 2022.

*lie down, or repose, seems to have a reference to the same thing.”*<sup>5</sup>

- B. He guides born-again Christians (John 10:11).
  - 1. Jesus was called the LORD (*Yahewh*) in the OT.
    - a. In the past, He provided His sheep refreshment (Ps 37:25; Jer 6:16).
    - b. After His Second Coming, He will provide their nourishment (Ezek 34:14).
  - 2. Jesus is called the “Good Shepherd” in the New Testament.
    - a. His path leads to His sheep finding that their physical needs are provided for (John 10:9, 11; Matt 6:31-33; Phil 4:18; Heb 13:5).
    - b. His provisions lead to His sheep’s rest (Matt 11:29; Heb 4:9).

## **II. He leads them to drink from quiet waters (2b).**

- A. He led David near still waters.
  - 1. “He leads me” and “He makes me lie down” are both imperfect verbs.
    - a. “The imperfects are not to be regarded as futures, or indeed as referring to the past, but denote actions continuing and repeated in the present.”<sup>6</sup>
    - b. David knew these services were ongoing for him.
  - 2. “Waters” are a necessary physical need, since sheep can get dehydrated.
  - 3. A good shepherd leads his sheep to “quiet” waters (Gen 29:2).
    - a. “Sheep will not usually drink fast-flowing water. They know the peril of drowning if they were to fall in and their heavy coats become waterlogged. They also know the danger of developing pneumonia if water gets into their lungs. Sheep have been known to die from thirst alongside abundant rushing water.”<sup>7</sup>
    - b. “The ‘quiet waters’ are the wells and springs where the sheep can drink without being rushed (cf. Isa 32:18). The combination of ‘green pastures’ and ‘quiet waters’ portrays God’s refreshing care for his own.”<sup>8</sup>
- B. He leads His believers to refreshing waters.
  - 1. As His sheep, He knows what we can handle (1 Cor 10:13, NET).
  - 2. He guides us to refreshment (John 6:35).

## **III. Application for us today: Believe and follow the good shepherd!**

- A. Trust your Savior (John 10:9).
- B. Track your Shepherd: (John 10:29).

---

<sup>5</sup> John Calvin and James Anderson, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 392–393.

<sup>6</sup> John Peter Lange, Philip Schaff, et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Psalms* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 181.

<sup>7</sup> Ronald B. Allen, *Lord of Song: The Messiah Revealed in the Psalms* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1985), 77.

<sup>8</sup> Willem A. Van Gemeren, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 253–254.