

Psalm 23
My Refuge in Times of Crisis

Introduction

Often times, there is a progression through which we go when faced with a serious crisis:

Stage #1 grief and/or shock - stunned, paralysis, bewilderment, hysteria

Stage #2 – disorganization - spiritually dry, physically weak, drained emotionally, state of unreality or surreal; Shakes one’s life apart and brings a sense of guilt, anger, fear, and hopelessness.

Stage #3 – reorganization for the new way of life; requires change to pursue after biblical objectives with biblical solutions

How are we to think about crisis? Let’s look at Psalm 23.

Take a look at David’s Focus in times of crisis:

The Lord – my Shepherd!

A. Focus of his mind was upon the Lord

The LORD is my shepherd.

1. What did David experientially know about God?

- a. **Elohim** – This name for God emphasized God’s power and control, might, greatness, sovereignty, and control.
- b. **Adonai** – This name for God meant master, lord, ruler, or king (supreme authority)

God is the **providential** king whose decrees are his eternal purpose by which He brings His holy will to pass according to His own pleasure (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:15-17).

2. What does the Bible tell you about the Lord?

- a. He governs and is in control over the entire universe and through His creatures (Deut. 8:18)
- b. He governs and is in control over this physical world (Psa. 104:14; Matt. 5:45)
- c. He governs and is in control over all creation and creatures (Psa. 104:21, 28; Matt. 6:26)
- d. He governs and is in control over accidents (Pro. 16:33; Matt. 10:30)

- e. He governs and is in control over man's birth and life
(Psa. 139:16; Gal. 1:15, 16)
- f. He governs and is in control over the affairs of nations
(Job 12:23; Acts 17:6)
- g. He governs and is in control over the wicked
(Psa. 2; 7:12, 13; 11:6)
 - (1) God is at work in and through control of sinful human acts
(Gen. 50:20; Ex. 14:17; Isa. 66:4; Rom. 2:4; 9:22; 2 Thess. 2:11)
 - (2) God is at work to restrain the sinful works of sinners
(Gen. 6:3; Job 1:12 cp. 2:6; Psa. 76:10; Isa. 10:15; Lk. 16; **Acts 2:23**; 4:28; 7:51; Rom. 9-11)
 - (3) God is at work to use evil ultimately to accomplish good acts and consequences according to His divine design! (Gen. 50:20; Judges 9:24; 1 Kgs 12:15; Psa. 76:10; Isa. 6:9-10 cp Deut. 29:4; Acts 3:13; Rev. 17:17)
 - (4) God is at work even in bringing about faith in the life of a person (Mic. 4:7; Isa 1:9; Acts 16:14; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 2:8-10)
- h. He governs and is in control over protecting the righteous
Psalm 4:8; 121:3; Rom. 8:28ff
- i. He governs and is in control over supplying the needs of His people
And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 4:19 ESV)
- j. He governs and is in control so as to answer prayer (Psa. 65:2; Matt. 7:7)

3. What else does David know about God?

- a. The true God is **Yahweh/ LORD**
This is God's exclusive covenant name (*I Am*)
See: Exodus 3:13-14.

This God is the self-existent complete One, the source of all life and resources. He is the totally independent One upon whom all else is dependent.

This is the word used here in this Psalm.

His name is used here without a verb. "Is" is supplied, but it reads "**The Lord - my shepherd!**"

Note about how this is in the ancient Hebrew language: When it structures a sentence without a verb like this, Hebrew mothers taught their little ones that this meant we have something that is axiomatic, a rule, a norm, a given, standard, truth!

This is an enduring truth: **The Lord! My Shepherd!**

- b. It is in the context of the use of God's name that we learn He is loving, gracious, and merciful!

- c. **In the New Testament** Jesus is Y'Shua is Y'Hova
Jesus is the I AM (see Jesus' seven "I am" statements in John)
Jesus is also the Great Shepherd (John 10)

B. The focus of his heart was in the Lord

1. *The Lord is MY Shepherd*

a. Is this LORD your personal Lord and Savior?

b. Psalm 23 is a covenantal creed. It is a fundamental confession of David; but also a confession of God's people that no others can genuinely claim! This one true God is the transcendent Lord who draws near to His people.

In life's crises what was the focus of David's heart?

2. *The Lord is my SHEPHERD*

a. One of many metaphors for God (rock, refuge, arms...)

- Picture of God primarily in relation to His covenant people. See:
 - Psalm 95:7 cp. 100:3
 - Isa. 40:11 cp. Ezek. 34:11-16

b. Shepherd – means provider, director, and protector.

- The metaphor of Shepherd has to do with provision to sustain life. It is the Lord's safe leading, and gentle care especially over small and weak. The shepherd is the primary picture the Scriptures give of God's character.
- It was first used by Jacob in Gen 48:15.

C. The focus of his peace was from the Lord

David understood the Promise from the Shepherd

"I Shall not want/lack:"

- Rest (23:2)
- Restoration (23:3)
- Road –Guidance (23:3b)
- Refuge –Protection (23:4)
- Resources in Abundance (23:5)
- Reservoir of Hope (23:6)

Now, take a look at David's Faith in times of crisis

A. His walk in faith

1. **Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil!**

even though is a declaration of David's ability to distinguish between the variables in life and the constancy of the Lord!!

As long as your eyes are on the constant, you are in good shape. But when your eyes are focus upon the constantly changing circumstances of life that surround you, then you are in deep trouble (experientially).

2. Passing through the dark canyons of the unknown (sums up your life, and your walk with God)
 - a. It is a progression of your life.
 - b. But it is not a panicked run. David walks through it.
3. *Walks through* what? The valley of the shadow of death.

Literally, the Hebrew says, *death-shadow* or *dark-shadow*.
The metaphor is about life's dark moments, which include death or the threat of death.

In the midst of this frightening walk, what is his attitude and reaction?

B. His heart of faith

1. His heart of faith feared no evil: *I will fear no evil*

Does NOT say he will NOT fear at all.

- a. Fear is an emotion that God has given to us.
 - (1) Rightly expressed, fear is a "safety valve"
That keeps us from danger (it's wise to flee danger)
That alerts us to dangers even in relationships
 - (2) Wrongly expressed, fear can be perverted (over anxiety and serious worry).
By fearing what God forbids
By failing to follow God's commands out of sinful fear
Fear of real and immediate danger is acceptable, so long as it doesn't become a fear that enslaves you.
- b. *fear no evil*
This is not talking about moral evil but anything that could injure or endanger him, his livelihood, or those over whom David is responsible!
- c. *fear no evil!*
 - This is not talking about a careless and irresponsible, reckless abandon.
 - This is controlled focus and determined courage
 - Faced the fear and go through it any way! We can face the fear and walk through it too.
- d. *I will fear no evil! Why?*
 - Because I am a fearless person?
 - Because I have everything under control?
 - Because I am so brave and courageous and wonderful?

NO!

2. His heart of faith feared God! He says, *for You are with me.*

- a. The only biblically acceptable and on-going fear is the reverent fear of God. This not talking about anxiety or phobias that are due to mental illnesses.

"Fear" in the Old Testament is synonymous with the true religion as distinguished from false religions. It is the characteristic expression in the Old Testament for believers is "God fearers" or "those who fear the Lord."

b. Such true religion is connected with God's laws and ways:

- (1) To fear God is to know Him
1 Kgs 8:43; 2 Chron. 6:33; Pro. 1:29; Isa. 11:2
- (2) To fear God is to be faithful to and believe in Him
Ex. 14:31; 2 Chron. 19:9; Pro. 16
- (3) To fear God is to love Him
Dt. 10:12; 13:3; 11:22; 19:9; 30:16,20
- (4) To fear God is to keep His commandments
Dt. 5:29; 6:2,24; 31:12; 28:58; Eccl. 12:13
- (5) To fear God is to obey His voice
1 Sam. 12:14; Hag. 1:12
- (6) To fear God is to walk after Him or walk in His ways
Dt. 10:12; 8:6; 2 Chron. 6:31
- (7) To fear God is to serve Him
Dt. 6:13; 10:20; Josh. 24:14
- (8) To fear God is to avoid or shun evil
Job 1:1, 8; 2:3; 28:28; Pro. 3:7; 8:13
- (9) To fear God is to live justly
2 Sam. 23:3; 2 Chron. 19:7
- (10) All the earth is called upon to revere-fear God
Psa. 22:3; 33:8; 119:161

God rebukes His own people for having no reverence or fear of Him as a holy God (Dt. 32:51).

God alone is worthy of terror, His people were not to fear anything or anyone since the Terror of the nations is with them. (Lev. 26:6; Jer. 30:10; 46:27; Ex. 34:28; 39:26; Mic. 4:4; Zeph. 3:13; Deut. 1:21; 20:3; 31:8; Josh. 8:1; 10:25; 2 Chron. 20:15, 17; 32:7)

The foundation of fearlessness is the fear of God.

**David's heart of faith feared no evil
His heart of faith feared God**

3. His heart of faith rested in God. God's what?

Your rod and staff, they comfort me!

a. Rested in God's presence

- (1) Up to this point David speaks about God; "He..."
Psalm 23:1-4a is talking about God.

Now, he changes to "You," which indicates he is addressing God.
Psalm 23:4a and following David is talking to God.

The shift and language tell you that from here on the Psalm is a decidedly personal and intimate reality with the covenant Lord!

(2) You see where he is?

He is in the very shadow of death BUT he rests in the reality of God's presence.

God is his environment; God is the center of his life and David is in the intimate presence of a living God.

(3) Notice, it is not the strength and presence of the sheep that alleviates this fear. Nothing else will either. Rather, it is a firm grasp of the presence of God that alleviates this kind of fear!

b. He rested in God's rod

rod = a club; Shepherd's rod was a club.

To make one, he would pull up a very young oak tree by its roots. The bulb on the root end would be trimmed to create a knob to the club. On the other end, the shepherd would bore a hole in it so as to loop leather or rope and attach it to his belt.

(1) A shepherd used his **rod** in different ways:

(a) To count the sheep

Lev. 27:32 - sheep pass under the rod, touching each one, showing close and careful relationship and accountability

(b) To prod sheep –

- when one strayed, the rod would be used to motivate him back onto the proper path.
- like God does (Heb. 12:7-13) where discipline of God's rod is life for the soul.
- The Word of God is spoken of at times as the Rod (Isaiah 41:4).

(c) To protect the sheep from wild animals

God's rod serves to protect you...

c. He also rested in God's staff

staff = long crooked stick.

(1) Used for support (Ex. 21:19)

- Isa 3:1 cp. 36:4-6
- also refers to God's Spirit

(2) Used for guidance.

(3) Used also for rescue.

The two aspects of this metaphor was to
Rescue from unrighteousness.
Rescue for righteousness (like Lot).

Conclusion

Jesus is our Lord and Shepherd

In times of crisis:

Don't focus on the crisis. Instead,
Focus your mind on the Lord.
Focus your heart in the Lord.
Focus your peace from the Lord.

Have faith during the crisis:

Faith in the LORD that fears no evil in the crisis

Because it is a faith that fears God who is your environment, your everything.

Faith that rests in God

Rests in His presence,

Rests in His rod,

Rests in His staff!