

The process of Psalm 23

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

I was reciting Psalm 23 and I suddenly realised that there is a distinct process - a series of actions or steps that must be taken in order to achieve a particular end. And that is, to abide in God's presence continually....
"And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for always."

1. **CONFESSION** *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want"* (I shall not lack a thing). The psalmist starts with a positive **confession**, acknowledging that the Good Shepherd is his source. Note, the Lord is the One who supplies every need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19). And here, the confession is simply, *"I shall lack nothing."* You too must regularly confess your faith in the Good Shepherd. You must not confess lack, because the Lord has given you everything you need. You lack nothing! You must not confess defeat, as God has made you more than a conqueror. You are to speak only the things that the Word declares to be truth.
 - The psalmist confessed the TRUTH. He said, *"The Lord is my guardian (shepherd), I have all that I need!"* Your circumstances are subject to change, and the one thing that will cause them to change is a confession of God's Word over your particular situation. In Psalm 23, the visually descriptive words of the psalmist reveal a deep understanding of hardship, suffering and lack. Therefore, we can assume that he was going through some testing times. Yet, he knew exactly how to deal with them. He starts by confessing what he believed to be **true** - *"the Lord is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing."*
1. **REST & PEACE** *"He makes me to lie down in green pastures."* The moment you confess that the Lord is your source, and as a result all your needs are met, He then 'makes you' to "lie down". The Lord causes you to rest. Rest is one of the ruling promises of God. In Exodus 33:14, God said to Moses, *"My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."*
 - Time away from your labours will help you to regain your perspective and realign your priorities. Rest also reminds you of who you really are. You are not merely the sum of what you accomplish. Yes, your work has value, but it's not your work that gives you value. Your value is inherent within you. A workaholic is someone who is addicted to work, not because he enjoys it, but because it's the only thing that gives him any sense of worth. However, that's a pathology, a sickness. It's not the truth. You have great worth, regardless of how much or how little you accomplish. You have value because you belong to the Good Shepherd.
 - **Rest** often precedes peace... *"He leads me besides STILL waters."* Peace of mind is something that we all want. We all want to be able to rest, to not have to worry, to feel free to enjoy life, family, friends, work, church, hobbies, etc. We want to be able to enjoy ourselves and not be burdened down with worries that rob us of our vigour and purpose. Do you know something?

The Lord also wants this for you. That is why He purposefully leads you beside the still waters - a tranquil and peaceful place.

2. RESTORATION *"He restores my soul."* Positive confession invites the Lord into your circumstances, He will then make sure that you take a break and get yourself refreshed. Once this has happened, He restores your soul. This means, He 'repairs' that damage that has been done to you - mentally, emotionally and physically. But observe, restoration also involves your spiritual state... *"He leads me in the paths of righteousness."* And why does the Lord do this? *"For His name sake!"* The greatest testimony you can have to those around you is PEACE in the midst of life's storms. Both rest and restoration establish peace, and peace is the atmosphere that will cause your faith to flourish.
3. FAITH *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."* Suddenly you have a different attitude; you now approach everything from a position of faith. No matter what you are going through you *"fear no evil."* In a flash, the terror of those dark places has left you. You have total confidence in the faithfulness of God. Why? Because you know that He is with you - *"for You are with me."* And the rest and restoration He has brought about is confirmation of this fact. What's more, faith says, *"I don't care how God is going to do it, I just know that it's all going to work together for my good."* Faith never focuses on the dark places (the negative), it gazes at the light (the positive), the Lord of glory.
 - *"Your rod and your staff they comfort me."* Faith understands this principle. **Faith** expects God to use His mighty 'rod' against the evil forces that are trying to steal, kill and destroy. However, faith is also comfortable with discipline and rebuke. Without both, victory cannot be established. Therefore, you need to be "comforted" by the fact that God's power is at work protecting you, but also that His rebuke is at work preserving you. Remember, you cannot remain "in faith" if you have strayed from God's plan and purpose for your life.
4. VICTORY & PROSPERITY Now that faith has done its work, the Lord can establish the victory. *"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies."* God seizes the opportunity to show off! A meal is usually a celebration of conquest. Here the imagery is one of the Lord boldly displaying the love He has for you, and the extreme value He places on you - reminding the enemy that you are His. If this wasn't enough, He goes one step further; He anoints your head with oil.
 - Anointing usually has ceremonial significance and that idea appears frequently throughout Scripture. When God selected a new king for the nation of Israel, one of His spokesmen (a Prophet) would go find the candidate. Then he'd state his purpose, and pour some anointing oil on the newly designated king. It simultaneously symbolised the recognition by an important person of the work and worth of someone who now has a new significant endorsement and assignment. How could anyone so "special" ever doubt their self-worth? If you are loved, valued greatly by Him, chosen, ordained and sent forth to extend His kingdom; be rest assured that you have immeasurable worth.
 - *"My cup runs over"* (**prosperity**). God's blessings are always in superabundance. When the *"Lord is my shepherd," "my cup runs over"* - in superabundance. We do not have to wait until we get to heaven to experience God's banquet house. His overflowing grace is something we experience in this life. Jesus said, *"I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly"* (John 10:10). That is a cup running over with God's grace. He does not just give us the gift of eternal life, He gives us an "abundance." In the Greek this word means, "to have a surplus," "superabundance," "till it overflows, and keeps overflowing."
5. DWELLING PLACE *"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."* Notice, the psalmist acknowledges that it's all due to God's grace (goodness and mercy in action). Looking back at his life he can see goodness and mercy at work. This is what has brought him to this place - this dwelling place. *"And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."* Have you ever given much thought to what God's house is like? It is...
 - A Picture of Heaven - In the Old Testament, a house is a picture of Heaven (Hebrews 9:19-24).
 - A Place of Peace - (Psalm 122). (a) Peace with God - (Romans 5:1). (b) The peace of God - (Philippians 4:7).
 - A Place of Abiding Covenant - Eternal covenant (2 Kings 23:1,2) Christ is the mediator of a better covenant (Hebrews 8:1-6).
 - A Place of Flourishing - (Psalm 92:12-15) not diminishing.
 - A Place of Beauty and Safety - (Psalm 27:4-14).

All the actions and steps mentioned in Psalm 23 are intended to get us here. Everything leads to the Secret Place. A place where God Himself dwells. A place permeated with God's presence! A place where the Good Shepherd rules and reigns and King!

We are now going to implement what this wonderful Psalm has taught us. If you have come burdened with anything, or if you are suffering hardship and stress. You are going to see and experience the mighty power of God. He will deliver you from all your cares.

1. Confess that the Lord is your shepherd and no lack nothing.
2. Allow Him to lead you to a place of rest and peace.
3. Let Him restore all the damage that has been done.
4. Exercise your faith as you walk through those dark places.
 - Celebrate the **victory** with Him, in the presence of your enemies,
 - let Him **anoint** you with fresh oil, and
 - receive the **superabundance** that He has promised you.

Now **enter** the Secret Place of the Host High God. His beautiful dwelling place.