

“I Have No Needs” // Psalm 23 and Job // Goodness in the Middle # 1¹

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 - b. Special NACP offering
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Introduction

Many of you remember when author Rebecca McLaughlin visited the Summit last year. In her book *Confronting Christianity*, she uses an illustration I love. She describes a scene from the 6th Harry Potter book that might constitute the most confusing, bewildering moment I've ever encountered in modern literature.

And I know some of you are like, “Wait, are you about to give a spoiler?” Yes, but I feel like this is now part of our shared cultural knowledge... But, if you don't want to know what happens, close your ears for the next 90 seconds, and when it's safe to listen, I'll wave my hands at you.

Basically, at the end of book 6, Albus Dumbledore, who is the wise sage of the Harry Potter series--kind of like Gandalf, the Godfather, Santa Claus and Nicolas Cage all wrapped up into one amazing character--Dumbledore has been severely weakened through his

¹ Works Consulted: Rebecca McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*; Philip Keller, *A Shepherd's Look at Psalm 23*; Dallas Willard, *Life Without Lack*.

battle with the followers of Lord Voldemort, and as the battle ends he's barely standing. Severus Snape, a teacher at Hogwarts castle, is standing in front of him... Now, Snape has always been an enigmatic character: you're not sure what side he is really on, but you think he's on the good guys' side even though he's a genuinely unlikable guy. Well, here they are, and Albus Dumbledore, at his weakest moment, completely vulnerable, makes eye contact with Snape and says the words, “*Severus, please.*” But instead of helping him, Snape aims his wand at him and kills him. It seems like the ultimate act of betrayal, a moment when evil triumphs over good and all seems lost.

But. But. In the next book, you learn that Dumbledore had confided to Snape that he was dying of an irreversible disease, and that when he died he could grant to Harry a power that Harry couldn't otherwise have--a power by which he could defeat the evil Lord Voldemort. So, Dumbledore makes Snape promise that when the moment comes, Snape will let him die. And so, what Snape was doing there at the end of book 6 was actually not an act of betrayal, but an act of faithfulness.

And when you learn all this in book 7, suddenly the meaning of Dumbledore's plea, “*Severus, please,*” is reversed. Dumbledore's death was not a triumph of evil, it was a triumph of good, and it was all according to plan, a very good plan. But one you don't understand until book 7.²

² I owe this great little illustration to Rebecca McLaughlin, “4 Things Christians Much Reclaim,” May 31, 2019. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/podcasts/tgc-podcast/4-things-christians-must-reclaim/>

OK-- *wave hands* spoiler over. You can listen again, all of you with your ears plugged.

So why do I share that story? Because sometimes life feels like we're stuck in book 6. Lord Voldemort is in control. And it seems like if God were really there and he was really good, things would be different.

- Some of you have chronic pain that won't go away no matter how much you've asked God to take it away--you've gathered your small group and the elders to pray over you but you haven't been healed.
- I know a lot of parents waiting on the return of a prodigal child. It's breaking your heart--there's no pain like kid pain. Why won't God save your kid? Why won't he send the right influences into their lives?
- Some of you are walking through the pain of bereavement or a broken friendship or broken family.
- Maybe you're just disappointed in how life has worked out for you: your career has been really disappointing. You've watched as other people far less worthy than you have caught a break, but you haven't yet. Or you've never gotten married. Or your marriage is far more difficult than you'd ever dreamed, not nearly as good as your friends'.

A lot of Christians wonder, "How can I believe in God's goodness when life around me seems so *bad*?" I wanted to do a short-series--a few weeks--on **Psalm 23**, because that's what this Psalm is all about. **Go ahead and turn there.** I'm calling the series, "Goodness in the Middle." Admittedly, it's not the best title I've ever come up with, but I'm trying to capture the idea that **we Christians believe over here that God is good--in his essence.** And we believe over here (in eternity, in heaven) we'll experience that goodness--God is going to

wipe away all tears and we'll know the fullness of joy. We believe that. But what about now, in the middle? Where's the goodness of God *now*? It's like we know God is good *here*--in his essence; and he's good *there*--in the ultimate culmination of his plan. But it's here, in the middle, we struggle with our perception of his goodness.

Have you been there? How many of you have had this question? I'll tell you, this is all very personal to me--going through some periods that feel like a time of waiting, wondering why God isn't answering a certain prayer, or why I'm not experiencing this goodness and faithfulness that I have heard so much about.

This is what Psalm 23 is ALL ABOUT. Scholars say that David most likely wrote Psalm 23 when he was on the run, either from Saul before he became King, or his son Absalom who staged a coup in the latter years of his Kingship. David's life had started out so well: he was the boy pulled from the pasture and anointed King who then went out and killed Goliath! But now everything has unraveled.³ He's been forcibly separated from his family and is on the run. His wife has left him for someone else. He's the victim of a vicious smear campaign--even though he has heroically sacrificed himself for his nation again and again, that nation regards him as a traitor and a troublemaker.

I used to think David wrote this Psalm in his early years when he was a Shepherd boy, but, honestly, this Psalm is far too reflective for someone early in their walk with God. The writer of this Psalm has faced, worry, and fear, and disappointment, and frustration. (David might have learned the concepts of this Psalm when he was a young shepherd, but there's no way he could feel them like he does in Psalm 23 until the pain and frustration of life had taught them to him.)

³ *Life Without Lack, Dallas Willard, ch 2.*

So, for the next few weeks, we're going to explore what David says in this Psalm, and how we can experience them, and, along the way, I'll going to show you how other Bible characters experienced these truths.

For those of you who are Christians, I hope this is helpful. I want you to see that a lot of those emotions you experience in a time of waiting are *normal*. And for those of you who are not Christians, I think you'll find this series at least intriguing-this is, after all, the #1 objection people cite as why they lost faith in God: *If God is so good, why is the world so broken? If he's so powerful, why are there so many perfectly reasonable prayers that go unanswered?* (A couple of weeks ago at Easter I said that I have yet to hear a skeptic pose a question about the problem of evil in the world that is not already asked by a Bible writer. That's not an exaggeration. Every book of the Bible records someone struggling to understand why God isn't doing something they think he should be doing. And that's the context of Psalm 23.)

Psalm 23 has **3 main ideas** I want to get across in this series, and we'll focus on one of them each week:

- 1. The presence of the Shepherd⁴ is our life, our joy, our safety, and our fulfillment**
- 2. God is always good, but the arc of God's goodness is longer than we typically expect**
- 3. God uses our waiting to work good in us**

⁴ Can you believe it? In the 119 roles Nicolas Cage has played, not once has he played a shepherd. Nic, buddy ... what are you waiting for?

Today, let's explore that first one: how the presence of the Shepherd is our life, our joy, our safety, and our fulfillment. Deep breath, **here we go:**

Vs. **[1] The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.** (Important: "Want" here doesn't mean "desire." This is an old English way of "being in need," like "being in want." David is saying, "*The Lord is my Shepherd; therefore, therefore I don't lack anything*"--which is what some of your translations might say.

Let me just ask: Can you say that right now? Can you say, "*Right now, I don't lack ANYTHING.* There's nothing I need in my life to change in order for me to feel safe, secure, and satisfied. Of course, there are always things in my life I'd love to see change, but even so, I can still say right now, "I lack nothing right now. I am perfectly happy the way things are, *right now.*" **Can you say that?**

Honestly, when you first read this, you're probably tempted to think, *Is this guy living in the real world?* "I have no needs right now"--who can say that? We live in a world of problems and needs.

Keep in mind, David had all kinds of pains and problems. Life for him at this point was about as hard as life could get. Broken heart. Unfulfilled dreams. Unanswered prayers.

And yet, he says, "I lack nothing." **Why? This is the key to Psalm 23:** *Because the LORD is my Shepherd,* and he's close by. And just that, all by itself, means I have no wants. Some of you think, if you could just get the job, if you could just get married, if the kid would just come home, then I would have no needs. That's not where happiness or security lies.

Keep reading. It gets even more intense.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures,

Question: What do sheep normally do in green pastures? They EAT.
When a sheep lies down in a green pasture it can only mean one thing: he's full. So full that he has no more desire to eat and lies down.

David is so full that even in the presence of what others would call food, he doesn't feel compelled to eat. His soul is full. Well then, what is he feasting on? *The presence of the Shepherd.* God's presence is for David a satisfaction that no green pasture can ever supply.

This is a theme that appears multiple times in Scripture. Let me give you a few:

- ***In the wilderness wandering, God fed the children of Israel with manna, a small Ritz-cracker-like substance that magically appeared on the ground each morning.*** It was a weird substance. Literally in Hebrew, "manna" means "What even is it?" They didn't really know what it was. **It came with weird rules.** You were only allowed to gather enough for one day, because it went bad overnight--except--except on the Sabbath when you could gather enough for two days and on that day and that day only it would stay good for 48 hours. You couldn't keep any of it in freezer for later: you couldn't mix the leftovers into a casserole and call it *Manicotti* or keep some in the pantry to make a batch of *manana* bread later. It had weird rules.

And yet, through this strange bread God met all their nutritional needs while they were in the wilderness. Manna was not supposed to replace food for them for all time; it was just supposed to keep them alive and fed in the wilderness. Manna represented God's presence in a time of emptiness.

- **In John 6, when Jesus fed the 5000 with the 5 loaves and 2 fish, he explained that the manna the children of Israel ate in the wilderness was a picture--a foreshadowing--of his presence with**

people through the Spirit. He said, "My flesh is the bread that came down from heaven." And when we feast on him, we can be full, even in the wilderness, when our bellies feel empty.

- When Jesus himself wandered in the wilderness, after fasting for 40 days and nights, Satan appeared to him and tempted him to... what? To turn the stones into physical bread. And how did Jesus respond? He quoted a verse from the Exodus about manna: "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.*" He was saying, In a time of wilderness wandering, when you are in a place that lacks normal bread, we can feast on a better kind of bread--the satisfying bread of God's promises and presence.
- (BTW, this is what you are trying to teach yourself when you fast. You are depriving your belly of something, food, and in its place focusing on God's presence, so that you can learn that in any time of deprivation, God's Spirit and his closeness are enough to satisfy your soul--that we don't LIVE by bread alone, our real life comes from God's presence.)

David continues: **...he leads me beside still waters,**

Again, what do sheep normally do beside still waters? They drink. The fact that these sheep walk beside still waters means they are not thirsty. Why? Because the Spirit of God is a well of everlasting water springing up within them. "He who drinks of this water," Jesus said, pointing to a well, will be thirsty again. But the one who drinks of the water that I give him will never thirst." David, in the wilderness, is drinking at the well of God's Spirit and he's not thirsty anymore.

³ He restores my soul.

He gives me the ability to get up and keep going, even when I have a broken heart or a disappointed dream or an unmet yearning.

There's a great book I read years ago called *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*. It's written by a guy named Philip Keller, who was an actual shepherd who explains some of the imagery in Psalm 23 that us non-shepherds might miss. Any shepherds in here this morning? (You never know.) Keller explains that one of the biggest problems for sheep is that when they fall down, they can become cast--you know, when something lies on its back, feet up, unable to flip itself back over. Like a bug. Left by themselves, those sheep will stay that way until a predator comes along and eats them.

So the shepherd stands them back up, but here's the key: he has to first rub the legs of the sheep to restore circulation, otherwise they'll just fall down again. "That's what God's Spirit does with me," David says. He restores my soul when life has made me fall, so that I can walk again.

Interestingly, do you know when sheep are most likely to get cast? Philip Keller says it happens in 3 main conditions: **First, when they are in soft, comfy spots, they roll around and end up on their back. Secondly, when they have too much wool. And most of all, he says, #3, when they are too fat they just step on a rock wrong and tumble over.**

Y'all, we are so used to talking about a comfortable, fat life as the blessing of God. Often, it's not--it's the quickest way to lose contact with your shepherd. And when God takes some of life's fatness, some of your wool, away from you, it can be a blessing, because it forces you to lean back, in desperation, into the presence of the Shepherd. That's where real goodness lies.

Many of us have found that the closeness to God we experienced in a time of pain, or a time of great need, was far greater than what we experienced in times of blessing and ease. Anybody out there want to testify to that?

It's like Bill Gates says, "Success is a lousy teacher. You learn virtually nothing from success."

Philip Keller says that there's one thing shepherds sometimes do that outsiders cannot understand. When a sheep continues to wander... the shepherd breaks the legs of the sheep. Carries that sheep on his back for the next 3 months as he heals, and when he puts him down that sheep never wanders again. Why? Because that sheep has learned that all that needs for fulfillment and security is to be close to the Shepherd. Maybe that's what God is doing to you. Maybe that pain is not to punish you, but to teach you to learn more fully on him, so that your joy is unshakeable, because you know the greatest and most secure joy in the Universe--the joy of knowing that the Lord is your Shepherd and he is right beside you, knowing when even a hair of your head falls to the ground.

Vs. **3...He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.**

We'll come back to this in later weeks, but sheep are ferocious creatures of habit--they walk the same paths over and over until all the grass is gone, and, even worse, all the soil is contaminated with parasites that come from layers and layers of the sheep's waste being piled on the soil.

And so the Shepherd leads them into new paths, paths that are not as familiar, paths where the sheep have to learn to follow the Shepherd again. The path of righteousness is the path of dependence on him.

⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, (WHY?) for you are with me (why am I not afraid? One reason--you are with me); your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Notice how the pronouns in this verse shift from “he” to “you.” “The Lord is my Shepherd” and “He restores my soul” changes to “YOU are with me!” In the middle of this Psalm, at its lowest point, David stops talking to us and lifts his eyes and says to God, “In the WORST places, I am not afraid because... because I can see the silver lining in this cloud? Because I know happy days are right around the corner?” No... because YOU are with me, my Shepherd. And because of your presence, I fear nothing and I need nothing.

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

What do you do at a table? You eat, and you fellowship with people you love. David says, “In the middle of all that is going wrong, I sit down with you and I am full, satisfied, and at peace.”

Some of you may ask, “Well wait, if God really is David’s Shepherd, why does David even have enemies? Isn’t that the Shepherd’s job, to keep him away from enemies?” Those are good questions, but they are not what David is thinking about at the moment. He’s literally in the presence of his enemies--they are just a few feet away, and even there he sits down to a joyful and satisfying meal with his Shepherd. In the presence of his enemies he is at rest and joyful because he is sitting with his Shepherd.

Let me ask: What is your instinct in the presence of an enemy? It’s usually fight or hide. *Fight or flight, depending on your personality.* (I’m sort of a combo of both--I’m a ‘smack and run’ guy.) David says my *first* instinct is fellowship with my Shepherd. I’m at peace even in the presence of my enemies because you are with me.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup (...IS FULL? Is that what your translation says? No. It...) overflows.

Even in the midst of fear and worry I’ve got so much peace and joy that I have some to share with others. I mean, this is unbelievable: in a time of fear and trial David has joy and peace and comfort enough to share with others.

If you’ll let me be a little personal, I often heard people say this about my mom--in times when she was suffering people would often be amazed at how she was still ministering to people around her. That’s because for someone walking closely with Jesus, their cup overflows, even in a time of pain and emptiness.

By the way, throughout Scripture, oil represents the Spirit of God. David is talking about a fullness of soul that comes from fellowship with the Spirit.

⁶ Surely your goodness and mercy (in Hebrew, that’s the word ‘hesed’: it means unconditional, steadfast, never-turning-away love) will follow me all the days of my life,

David says, “I can’t get away from goodness and mercy. It’s always right behind me. It’s always following me, haunting me (that’s literally what the word means in Hebrew), creating beauty and blessing in the wake of my misery and mess. Why? Because my Shepherd follows me, and that’s just what he does.

That’s why you should always rejoice when somebody around you is being blessed. When somebody around you is being blessed, it means God is in the neighborhood.

We always talk about following Jesus, and we should--but according to Psalm 23, he also follows us, bringing beauty and blessing from our

tragedy and tears. And that brings me comfort, David says, just knowing that he's back there, following me, doing what he always does.

...and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

This is the main point of the whole Psalm: Whether in a green pasture or beside a still water or wandering in a desert or hiding in a cave from my enemies, I'm still with YOU, in your presence. The Lord is my Shepherd, thus I have no needs, I am not in want. That's the point of the Psalm. I have no needs because I am with you, and your presence and your presence alone is my joy, my security, and my fullness in any circumstance.

The Christian's joy is found in one simple thing: the presence of the Shepherd. If you think joy and peace is found in a change of circumstance, I can tell you on good authority that you won't find it. Lonely, insecure single people become lonely, insecure married people. Rich people are more often than not bitter and unhappy. It's like that great philosopher Jim Carrey said, "I wish everyone could get rich and famous so they'd see it is not the answer." The land of no needs is not found in any green pasture on earth; it's found in the gracious presence of Jesus.

Listen to me, all of you who are unhappy, or anxious, or afraid: Some of you think, "If I could just change this or that, life would be better." Some of you have given up on change, you've stopped praying, you've given up, and you've just grown bitter. I'm telling you that it is possible for you to live a life where you feel no lack, fear nothing and overflow with blessing. That life comes from learning to abide the presence of the Shepherd.

Y'all, Psalm 23 is one of those passages in the Bible that could not possibly have been made up by human ingenuity. Our minds do not naturally run at these kinds of heights. David is talking about an

experience he has had and that is beyond this world; and one that he says you can have, too.

This past January I read a book by Dallas Willard called *Life Without Lack*--it was his last book, written posthumously, based on a series of lectures Dr. Willard gave to some of his friends on Psalm 23 right before he died.

He compares the language of Psalm 23 with the experience of Job. And he explains that throughout his life, **Job had to learn 3 different kinds of faith**. This is brilliant. Listen to this:

The first he calls **1. "The faith of propriety."** Job did what was right and God blessed him for it. Job is described by the writer of Job as the most righteous man living at his time. He served God with all his heart--he rose early every morning to offer burnt offerings on behalf of himself and his sons and daughters--and God was pleased with Job's life and blessed him for it. God blesses the faith of propriety because he likes to bless people.

This is a perfectly valid kind of faith--it's taught in the book of Proverbs. *I obey the Bible--I seek God first in my marriage, my family, in my career and my studies and my finances--and God blesses me.* Many of us have experienced that.

But then God allowed everything to be stripped from Job. Job didn't change any of his behavior, but everything fell apart. It was bad. Job said, **"The thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me" (Job 3:25).** **What do you fear most? What would be the worst thing to happen to you?** Imagine whatever you fear most this morning happens to you this afternoon. For Job, his kids all died in a tragic house fire. His health deteriorated. And his family and close friends, rather than standing with him and encouraging him to stand strong in faith, turned on him and

encouraged him to give up on God. His wife said, “Just curse God and die!”

This forced Job to develop another kind of faith, a higher kind of faith: 2. “The faith of desperation.” Job expresses this faith in **Job 13:15**, “**Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.**” God, I know you’re good. And I can’t understand what you’re doing but I know you’re working a good plan. And so even though everything around me is falling apart, I’m still going to trust that you are good. “Even though you slay me, yet will I trust you.”

Many people never make it to this stage. They live on the faith of propriety. And it makes them judgmental. When something goes wrong in someone else’s life, they think, “*Well, I wonder what they did wrong?*” Their marriage isn’t going well, and you think, “*Well, they’re different behind closed doors than what we see of them.*” Or their finances are a mess and you think, “*Well, they must not be very good money managers*” or “*they must not be putting God first.*” One of their kids starts to wander and you think, “*I wonder what they did wrong in their parenting? Unlike me over here who is just killing it as a parent, which is why my kids are doing so well.*” You think that way because you only know the faith of propriety.

But then God sends you through a Job chapter. And some people fall away, sadly. But others go on to develop the faith of desperation. It strips you of your judgmentalism and you say, “*Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.*”

Is this where you are? Have you ever been forced to develop this kind of faith?

Dallas Willard says, “*Often God allows us to reach the point of desperation so we can learn how to trust. It is a hard lesson, but an essential one. The “life without lack” is known by those who have learned how to trust God in the moment of their need. In the moment*

of their need. Not before the moment of need, not after the moment of need when the storm has passed, but in the moment of need. For it is in that moment, when everything else is gone, that you know the reality of God.”⁵

Is that where you are?

Ah, but, believe it or not, there was still another level of faith for Job--it’s the faith of Psalm 23, and Dallas Willard calls it **3. “The faith of sufficiency.”**

I used to think that the faith of desperation was the ultimate expression of faith, but Dallas Willard showed me there was a 3rd kind of faith, an even higher type, and it appears right at the end of the book of Job. It’s the faith that rejoices, sits silently and calmly, in the presence of the Shepherd.

You see, throughout the book of Job, Job has been protesting his situation before God. “*God, I did it all right! I obeyed you! I put you first in my marriage, my parenting, my finances, and look what happened! When are you going to come through for me?*” Throughout the book of Job, Job keeps saying, “*I want to appear before God. I want to see God and talk to him face to face.*”

And so, at the end of the book of Job, God grants him that audience. Job sees God. He stands in his presence. And when that happens, Job says, “**Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer you?**” “Vile” here doesn’t mean what we think it means. It doesn’t mean “nasty” or “evil.” A better translation of the word “qalal” there would be “insignificant” or “unworthy.” Because I am so insignificant, “**I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further**” (Job 40:4–5). Job says, “*Seeing you, I see how utterly small-minded and unwise I am and how utterly sovereign and good you are.*”

⁵ Dallas Willard, *Life Without Lack*, Loc 2173

Job continues: “(Before this) I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear (IOW, I knew the doctrines about you--I knew how to answer the theological questions--you are powerful and good), but now my eye sees you (beholds you); therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes. Surely I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.” Job 42:5–6

Every teacher knows what it is like to have a student who can repeat the right answers but hasn’t internalized them. Job has always believed the right things about God *here* (HEAD), but has never felt them here (HEART), feasted on them here. **Job went from believing in the goodness of God HERE (mind--“though he slay me, yet will I trust him”)** to feeling it here, “I know you are good and I have nothing left to say.”

And at that point in the book, Job stopped pressing his case. He rested. He saw with his eyes the goodness of God and knew he could trust him in all things.

In fact, did you see where he said the word “repent”? “I repent in dust and ashes.” What was he repenting of? You see, the writer of the book of Job says repeatedly that throughout this whole ordeal Job had not sinned with his lips, so what is he repenting of? He’s repenting of not feasting upon and resting in the goodness of the Shepherd.

But now, you see--now--Job’s vision of God was so full and so satisfying that what happens to him from this point on doesn’t matter. He can trust in the goodness of God; content just to be in the presence of the Shepherd where goodness and mercy surround him and follow him and satisfy him all the days of his life. This is called the **faith of sufficiency**.⁶

⁶ Dallas Willard, *Life Without Lack*

A lot of us are where Job was. We’ve heard about all these things with the hearing of our ears, but our eyes have never seen them and our souls have yet to feel them. Some of you are Bible-scholar level in your perception of the doctrines of God, but kindergarten in terms of your experience of them.

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You say, “**Well, what exactly did Job see, and can I see it too?**” Ah, now you’re asking the right question. Job gives us a pretty important clue to **what he saw in chapter 19**: “I know my Redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand on the earth... and I will stand with him!” (Job 19:25) Job saw how committed God was to reconciling him and how secure his future was with God. He saw his Redeemer--alive, after being slain, and standing on the earth.

Where do you learn the faith of sufficiency? “*At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light, and the burden of my heart rolled away, it was there by faith I received my sight and now I am happy all the day.*” Not “happy” as in “I have no troubles,” but “happy” as in “filled to overflowing in the presence of my Shepherd.”

Looking at the cross, you see, is not only the way we’re saved from sin, it’s the way we’re sustained in suffering. When we see a God willing to go to the cross on our behalf--willing to go to the depths of suffering to redeem us--that casts a transformative light on our own sufferings. A God who would not forsake us then, at the cross, will not forsake us now, in our hour of trouble, and we know that someday he will keep his promise to turn it all for good and make everything sad come untrue. We’ll stand with him.

At the very end of the book of Job, in the final verses, God restored all that Job had lost, 7-fold in some cases--and God did that because God is good and he loves to pour out his goodness in the land of the living--but the point of Job is, and don’t miss this--Job’s joy came

before that restoration. Job's **faith of sufficiency** was founded on the fact that his Redeemer lives and stands with him. You stand by my side because you stood in my place!

*So... Why should I feel discouraged, Why should the shadows come,
Why should my heart be lonely, And long for heaven and home,
When Jesus is my portion, My constant Friend is he;
His eye is on the sparrow, And I know he watches me.*

*I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free
For his eye is on the sparrow, And I know he watches me*

Why do you say, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God"? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

So, let me ask you again: **What do you think you lack this morning?**

What do you fear? Do you fear marriage going south? Your kids wandering? Still being single this time next year? Your health deteriorating? The death of your spouse? Loss of your job? The collapse of your finances? Nuclear war with Russia? No matter what it is, you can live without that fear. You do not have to be afraid of anything. Because God is with you, you have no lack, and so you can live without fear.

Here's my dilemma: I can't teach you this. I couldn't even teach myself. I can tell you stuff that you can hear with your ears, like Job heard, but only the Holy Spirit can open the eyes of your heart.

Philip Keller says that there's one thing shepherds sometimes do that outsiders cannot understand. When a sheep continues to wander... the shepherd breaks the legs of the sheep. Carries that sheep on his back for the next 3 months as he heals, and when he puts him down that sheep never wanders again. Why? Because that sheep has learned that all that needs for fulfillment and security is to be close to the Shepherd. Maybe that's what God is doing to you. Maybe that pain is not to punish you, but to teach you to learn more fully on him, so that your joy is unshakeable, because you know the greatest and most secure joy in the Universe--the joy of knowing that the Lord is your Shepherd and he is right beside you, knowing when even a hair of your head falls to the ground.

Prone to wander, Lord I feel it! Prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it--seal it for thy courts above!

Prayer Time:

Do you want more of God? Opened eyes? Cry out.. Come forward!