

**YOU CAN LIVE CONFIDENTLY
PSALM 23**

NEED: TRUST IN THE LORD

**PROPOSITION: BY PLACING OUR LIVES UNDER THE CARE OF
THE LORD AND IN THE COMMUNION OF THE
THE LORD WE CAN LIVE A CONFIDENT LIFE.**

**OBJECTIVE: TO LEAD PERSONS TO TRUST IN THE LORD FOR
SALVATION AND SUSENTANEOUS IN LIFE.**

INTRODUCTION:

The word “confidence” is a combination from the Latin root. Con means “thorough, altogether;” fidere means “faith” or “trust.” Confidence is altogether faith. Complete trust.

We use the word confidence in our day most commonly in the context of self-confidence.

We recognize that human beings in order to function effectively need confidence so, we give general consent to a statement like that of Ralph Waldo Emerson: “Do you wish for self-confidence - - get it from within. Nobody can give it to you. It is one of the greatest assets of life. Self-confidence comes to you every time you are knocked down and you get up. A little boy was asked how he learned to skate. “Oh, by getting up every time I fall down,” he replied.

“Opportunity is where you are. Weak men wait for opportunities; strong men make them. Self-trust is the first secret of success.”

However, when we come to scripture we find a different emphasis. The Bible does not encourage self-trust but God-trust. One of the most beautiful expressions of confidence I know of in all of the scripture is found in the beloved 23rd Psalm. David expresses his confidence in words like these, “I shall not want.” As he looks toward the future he is confident that he will have whatever he needs for life when he needs it. Then he adds the words; “I will fear no evil.” Are those not words of confidence? He is declaring that he will be able to walk through whatever experience life may bring him without being a victim of fear. Then you add, “Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Are those not words of confidence. He is declaring an expectation that the goodness and the mercy of God will surround his life. Not only in this life but also in the life to come.

The question that needs to be raised is “What is the secret to this kind of confidence?” It is obviously not a confidence built upon self-awareness but confidence built upon God-awareness. In these memorable words that came from the pen of the shepherd king, you find the secret of living a life of confidence in an uncertain world. I find two basic ideas in the Psalm that is embodied in the two divisions of the Psalm. In the first verses of the Psalm the Lord is the shepherd. In the second division of the Psalm the Lord is the heavenly host. Whenever you have a proper relationship with the Lord as shepherd and host, then you have basis for a life of confidence. Let us explore this in more detail.

I. YOU CAN LIVE CONFIDENTLY BY LIVING UNDER THE LORD’S CARE.

The opening declaration of the Psalm introduces the Lord, the Lord of the Covenant, as the shepherd of life. “The Lord is my shepherd.” The intimate relationship between a Shepherd and his sheep is well known. Reference is made to it often in scripture. In order for your life to be one of confidence you must come to that relationship with the Shepherd of life in which you can say, “The Lord is my shepherd.” The key word there is “my.” It is when He is my Shepherd that I can be confident. That means that my life is under His shepherding care day by day. If my life is under his shepherding care, what can I expect for him to do for me?

1. He will provide.

The Psalmist uses language that reflects his intimate knowledge of sheep and their needs. If sheep are to survive they need to be fed and watered. They will not be able to find either on their own so they need a shepherd to make sure that they have adequate sustenance for their lives.

“He makes me lie down in green pastures.” If you have ever visited in that part of the world in which David did his shepherding, you will be aware of how difficult it is to find green pastures. In order for sheep to be able to lie down in green pastures it means they are living in the midst of plenty. In order for sheep to lie down they have to be fully fed. They have to have an inner physical contentment. This is what David is declaring about a life lived under God’s shepherding love --- God will make sure that the needs of your life are met. You can turn over that part of your life to His care.

Then he adds the words; “He leads me beside quiet waters.” Water is so critical for the well being of the sheep. Those who have studied sheep indicate that they will not drink

from fast rushing waters. If they are going to drink, there must be for them a quiet pool and this is what the Lord God does when our lives are under his shepherding care. He provides for us that which is uniquely suited to meet our own physical, emotional, and spiritual need.

So you can affirm if life is being lived under His shepherding care you can be confident concerning the provisions for life. He will not fail.

3. He will restore.

“He restores my soul.” With these words we are introduced to another unique need in the life of sheep. This means that when the sheep are down, he will help them get back on their feet and move them into life again.

Phillip Keller in his popular book on the 23rd Psalm indicates that this statement is referring to the “cast” sheep. Sheep are so uniquely created physically that they do not have good balance. If a sheep happens to be turned on its side, its life is in danger. If in the struggle to get up when it is cast down, it happens to get on its back – the life of that sheep is surely in danger. Such a sheep is called a “cast” sheep. Lying on its back will create a chemical reaction in its body that endangers the life of that sheep in a very short time. So, when a shepherd finds a “cast” sheep, he very carefully gets that sheep back upon its feet. He will usually then very carefully massage the limbs of the sheep to stimulate it. He will watch over that sheep very carefully until the chemical imbalance in its body has been restored. He will literally be responsible for saving the life of that

sheep. If the shepherd doesn't get there in a timely manner when a sheep is "cast" that sheep will be gone.

Isn't this a beautiful picture of the restoring work of our shepherd? He watches over us and when we get knocked down in life, He very carefully comes and ministers to us until we are back on our feet. He is that kind of attentive and careful shepherd over his sheep. Not one of His sheep ever falls without Him feeling the pain and noting the place of the fall. He moves to that fallen sheep to restore it as quickly as possible. This is the basis for confidence in life.

If my confidence is based upon my ability to keep myself, then I am in trouble. If my confidence is based upon the shepherding care of my heavenly shepherd than I have reason for confidence. He will not fail.

4. He will guide.

"He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name sake." You know that one of the basic responsibilities of a shepherd is to guide the sheep. The sheep have no capacity to guide themselves. This sets them apart from a good bit of the animal world. You can lose a dog, and give it time and it will find its way back home. You can lose the family cat, and it may be gone for days, but it will find its way back home. Sheep have no sense of direction and no capacity to find their own way. They are always in need of guidance. We human beings, though we are reluctant to admit it, are like sheep at this point. If we insist on finding our own path, we will predictably choose the wrong path. None of us

are smart enough or wise enough to give direction to our own lives. But when we realize that under His shepherding care He will guide us then we have a basis for genuine confidence. He will always guide and He will always guide to the right path. He will never misguide his own.

5. He will protect.

“Even 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.” These unforgettable words are a reminder of what happens in the course of life for sheep. Even when they are being directed by the shepherd, there will still be deep and dark valleys to go through. These dark valleys can be a source of great anxiety for sheep. But sheep soon discover that as long as the shepherd is with them they are safe. The shepherd carries in his hand the “rod and staff” for the protection of the sheep.

The shepherd will use the rod to drive away any enemy that may approach. The shepherd will use the staff for the protection of the sheep. If the sheep slips off in the ditch, the shepherd will use the crook of the staff to pull it back upon the path. The shepherd is with the sheep for every step of the way in order to assure safety.

Is this not a wonderful insight to this blessed relationship with the Shepherd of our souls?

He is always with us. He never leaves nor forsakes His own. He never leads us into some circumstance in which He will not be adequate to take us through. If you find yourself today in a dark valley, be confident my friend, the Shepherd is with you. The

Shepherd has his rod and staff for your protection. Just affirm with David that your life is under His shepherding care. Say it from your heart. “The Lord is my shepherd.” Now it is a given that if you and I are to enjoy the shepherding care, we must be willing to follow Him. We must be ready to stay close to Him. In order for us to be under His shepherding care, we must submit our wills to His will and walk in His way day by day.

II. YOU CAN LIVE CONFIDENTLY BY LIVING IN HIS COMMUNION.

Scholars have struggled with the last two verses of this favorite Psalm. Some have tried to see the image of the shepherd in all of the verses. They do no violence to the Psalm in the process of doing this, but I think they take an unnecessary step. When the Psalmist had talked about the Lord being with us in all of life’s valleys, it suggested another truth that becomes one of great comfort and the basis for confidence. This truth is embodied in the image of the Lord being a host and we are His guests. In this imagery He suggests to us the depth and the meaningfulness of being in communion with God. It is when we are in fellowship with God, that we have the inner confidence that is needed to live life joyfully and successfully. Let’s look at this image in some more details.

1. He will provide a feast at His table.

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” The imagery is that of the desert sheik who lives in his tents. The guest has been welcomed into the tent and is enjoying communion with the owner of the tent. The sheik has brought out a table and filled it with foods of all kinds. He invites his guest to sit at the table with him and they partake of these wonderful and tasty provisions. But while they are sitting at the table

there is an enemy lurking outside staring in. That enemy outside is powerless to do anything unless he is able to overwhelm the sheik that has made you his guest. Since it is the Lord God Himself that has made us the guest in His house there is no enemy that can overwhelm or overthrow our blessed host. Is it not a source of great encouragement that the Lord relates to us as a friend and not as an enemy. He is the friend hosting the feast—not the enemy staring at you from the outside. Why worry about your enemies if you have the Lord as your host and friend?

The deep spiritual truth here is that God has provided for us the feast of communion. Even while there is all around us all kinds of spiritual foes. Our spiritual foes cannot keep us from knowing communion with God. It is out of that communion with God, seated at His table of plenty that you are able to say with the Psalmist, “Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life.”

2. He bestows honor.

“You anoint my head with oil.” The anointing with oil would be mixed with special perfumes was reserved for special guests that were to be honored under the tent of the sheik. It was a way that the host had of saying to that guest, “You are special in my house. I will treat you and regard you as an honored guest.”

Is it not a wonderful thought? Sovereign God, the Lord of the Covenant, takes us into His own dwelling and regards us as an honored guest. He anoints us with the oil of welcome. This takes on special significance when you remember that “the anointed one”

in the house of the Lord is Jesus, the Christ. The word Christ means, “anointed one.” Through our relationship with the Lord Jesus we receive the same recognition and honor in the father's house that goes to the living Christ Himself. Oh, the blessedness of communion with our great heavenly host! We are anointed with the same Holy Spirit that the Father pours out on the Son!

3. He bestows His plenty.

“My cup runneth over.” When the host received a guest into his tent, he put into his hand a cup and in to that cup he would pour from his bottles of wine. This host turns up the bottle and continues to pour the wine until the cup is full and running over. He is not miserly in sharing that which is His when you come into His house as His guest. You are welcomed with an abundance of His plenty.

David meant for us to understand this, not in physical terms, but in spiritual terms. He is remembering those times when the heavenly Father bestowed upon him blessings that his little life could not contain. The heavenly Father dealt with him in such generosity that his cup literally ran over.

When you know this communion with the Father, then you will have within that inner confidence that you need for the facing of life. This is so much better than spending your time getting to know yourself. The more I have come to know about myself across these years, the less confidence I have in myself. I choose to be listed among these “poor in spirit.” But the more I have come to know of my Lord, the more confidence I have

within. My confidence is rooted in the reality that He is more than able to meet the needs of my life and that my life is under his shepherding care and is in daily communion with Him. Surely it is – His goodness and mercy will never forsake me.

The Lord wants you to know and to live a confident life. He wants your life to overflow with that element that the world puts so much value upon. Such a life is available to you if you choose for yourself the proper relationship with Him. That relationship is one of putting your life under His shepherding care. It is available to you if you choose to live in His tents and to make communion with Him the priority of your life. He will not force you to eat the feast from his table. He will not force you to have your head anointed. He will not force you to allow him to fill your cup. You must choose these things. You choose them when you choose to give Him proper place in your life. This is the day for us to make that kind of choice and to say with David, “The Lord is my shepherd.”