**THE 23rd PSALM**

***WRITTEN BY: TOMMY ROMANS DECEMBER 2015***

 This beautiful 23rd Psalm tells a most loving story about a Shepherd and His fold. It shows an intimate relationship between a caring Shepherd and each of His Sheep. It was penned by David 3,030 years ago. He was a Shepherd by trade before he ever became king on a throne ruling over God’s people. How many sheep and lambs he had in his fold, we will never know. But somewhere out in a field on a starry night looking over his fold, or on a mountain side watching them graze or maybe down by a crystal gentle flowing stream, the Holy Spirit of the Lord gave David this Psalm. David loved his sheep. He cared about their welfare day and night. I really believe the Lord spoke to David as He got in the spirit, and said – “David, you love those sheep don’t you? You care about them to supply their needs and protect them from danger. Son, I want you to know this is how I feel about you and all my children. David, get you a pen and write this Psalm that will be a blessing to every generation to come the world over and tell them that I Am the Good Shepherd! Tell them how much I care about them.”

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 This blessed Psalm is just as rich and inspiring today as the day he penned it. It has comforted every class of people both rich and poor. It has poured balm and consolation into the heart of the sick, gave courage to the suffering, to the captives in dungeons, to the widows in their grief, to orphans in their loneliness. Dying soldiers were comforted as it was read to them. Hospital rooms have been illuminated by it. It has visited poor repentant prisoners behind their bars of confinement, broken misery’s chains and given them hope. In this Blessed Psalm we find rest for the soul, refreshment, restoring mercies, guidance, peace in death, triumph and overflowing blessings, future confidence, everlasting security in life and in death, in the physical and the spiritual, in prosperity and adversity for all time and eternity!!

**MY SHEPHERD**

David starts the Psalm off: The Lord is **MY** Shepherd; I shall not want. This thing is personal. Can you say the Lord is your Shepherd? If you can, then

this is who He is to you: > He is the Lord of Glory, He is: (JEHOVAH ROI – The Lord is My Shepherd) He’s (ELOHIM – The Great Creator and All Powerful One), He’s the (El ROI – The God who Sees Me), (EL SHADDAI – The All Sufficient One who is More than Enough), (JEHOVAH – The great I AM who Never Changes and Never Fails), (JEHOVAH JIREH – The Lord will Provide)! What a Mighty Caring God who is Faithful and keeps His promises. You can put your Trust in Him.

 No doubt David looked up into the starry sky in the middle of the night while his sheep were lying bedded down in a field fed and content and said, “Lord, you are my Shepherd, I shall not want. You will never leave me to defend for myself and to make it on my own. You are always with me as my loving caretaker and guide.”

**THE GREEN PASTURES**

For this Newsletter I have done much study, research and Prayer on the 23rd Psalm. God has laid it heavy on my heart the last few weeks and I knew He wanted to speak to His Church and each of His Children for the time we are living in. God calls Himself a Shepherd in the Old Testament. “For He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.  **Ps.95:7.)** He’ll not let you starve! He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom. **Isaiah 40:11)** O what a tender, loving and caring Shepherd our Heavenly Father is!

 A lot of my information for this writing was taken from Phillip Kellers book entitled: “A Shepherd looks at Psalm 23.” This man was a dedicated Shepherd by trade with many years of experience in tending and taking care of Sheep. Keller was also a dedicated Christian who loved the Lord. This man loved his flock and cared for his sheep and lambs. The Lord dealt with his heart to share with people all the characteristics of sheep, their needs and all that goes into taking care of them, which exactly parallels this Psalm David wrote. We can view this Psalm from a shepherd’s point of view and also place our self in a sheep and lambs perspective.

 Let’s look now at Verse 2. He maketh me to lie down in Green Pastures. It is something to consider that God would classify us, His children as Sheep. Do you know why? Sheep do not and cannot take care of themselves. They require endless attention and more special care than any other class of livestock. They cannot guide themselves and are totally defenseless. They cannot get along just anywhere. They need more detailed direction and guidance and special handling in order to survive. There are 4 Things that are required before Sheep will ever lie down.

**FREEDOM FROM FEAR**

 ( **#1** ) In order for Sheep to lie down in peace and contentment, they must be free from Fear! Listen, our Good Shepherd Jesus does not want you to be afraid and fearful. **Ps. 4:8** – It was David himself that said, “I will both lay me down in Peace and sleep; For thou Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.” It’s a proven fact that a flock of Sheep that is Restless, discontented and always agitated will never do well! Keller said he’s had a rabbit to suddenly jump up and run and cause his whole flock to stampede. When one of my sheep runs in fear, a dozen others will bolt with it in blind fear, not even waiting to see or analyze the situation.

Did you know by human nature we are apt to run? We are not settled and we get in trouble. This is the reason you must stay together and stay where God has put you! Don’t ever leave the presence of the Shepherd. There is security of being in the Fold. That is where the Lord is! Wouldn’t you rather be with the Flock than be alone in a dark valley or isolated somewhere on a mountain among many dangers? Child of God, there is no time to run or leave. Our chief enemy – the devil is typified by a lion, wolf and bear. If he cannot lure you from the fold by temptation and draw you out into his deadly snare he will try his tactics of agitation and fear to scatter the flock. He wants you isolated so he can destroy you.

The Adversary blows things out of proportion and causes them to look far worse than what they really are. He wants you to run from imaginary things. You must know that God knows every situation. He sees you and cares about you individually. This is the devils mind games. He wants you to leave the Fold.

**FEARING SHADOWS**

 One woman tells on herself about something that happened to her on her job. Her business owner hired contract workers to come in and do some remodeling. They replaced the lighting throughout the building. They added One new light in a place where the stairs met the hallway. She wasn’t used to it. She said – “Every time I came to the steps to turn the corner, the light cast my own shadow on the wall. I would jump in fear thinking it was someone else going to do me harm!” She said, “It took me quite a few times to realize that it wasn’t somebody else after all going to harm me, it was just my own shadow!”

 Listen to me close, many people have been hurt by others, they’ve been hurt in relationships and been let down and they now easily run and scatter in fear at the least sign of trouble. They fear being hurt again. But you must realize, the Shepherd will take care of every situation. He cares about the security of His Sheep and little Lambs. He doesn’t want you afraid, doesn’t want you leaving the Fold. The Shepherd will bring peace.

**OFF A CLIFF**

 The USA Today newspaper ran a story on July 8th 2005 - “450 Sheep jump to their death in Turkey.” First, One Sheep jumped to its death, then Turkish shepherds who had left the herd to graze by themselves while they went and had breakfast, watched as nearly 1500 others followed, each sheep leaping off the same cliff. In the end, 450 dead animals lay on top of one another in a billowy white pile of wool, the Aksam newspaper said. Those who jumped later, were saved as the pile got higher to cushion the others. There’s nothing we can do, they’re all wasted said Nevzat Bayhan, a member of 26 families whose sheep were all grazing together in the herd. The estimated loss tops 100,000 dollars. Now only a few families have sheep left! It’s going to be hard on us. He said, “The first sheep jumped for reasons unknown and the rest followed.” The shepherds had left the sheep and look what happened! But our God will never leave or forsake us. So the question is – why did the first sheep jump? Was it enticed? Did it see something that wasn’t really there? Did it run in fear over something or because of one of the others? Just look what one sheep caused – all the suffering and the loss!

We live in an age where people are afraid of just about everything – fears of the past and fears of the present. Honestly, they are afraid of themselves, afraid of others and afraid of tomorrow. This is what fear will cause: It will do one of two things to you. It will nail your feet to the ground that you cannot move or it will put wings on your heels that you will want to run, run, run away! Do not allow the enemy to nail your feet to the ground through fear that you cannot move out for God and do what He’s called you to do. He will use many things. The fear of man bringeth a snare is just one of them.

 It was John the Beloved that wrote in I John 4:18 – There is no fear in Love; but perfect Love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in Love. But we love Him (the Good Shepherd) because He first Loved us. God is Love and he that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God and God in him. God wants you to know that fear is a spirit! O to be free from fear! Fear will cripple you, fear will paralyze you. But the Sweet Holy Ghost said in **II Tim. 1:7** – For God hath not given us the spirit of Fear; but of Power, and of Love and of a Sound Mind.

 So why did God see it important to have David write this 23rd Psalm? It lets us see just how timid, frail and misjudging we sometimes are in our lives and just how much we need God to lead, guide and keep us! Did you know that sheep by nature are creatures of habit? They just do what they see others do if the shepherd is not close by!

 One farmer said it this way: “If you have a bunch of sheep in a barn and you let them out, but stretch a rope across the door way, the first few sheep will jump over it. But if you cut the rope, the remaining sheep will still jump at that point because it’s what the rest of the flock did. There is always a reason why gullible people are referred to as sheep. God knows our nature. We are easily influenced by what we see others do and we follow people and go astray and it gets us into trouble.

**FREE FROM FRICTION**

 (**# 2)** Secondly, the only way sheep will lie down to rest in contentment, they must be free from Friction with one another! Keller was a biologist and scientist who studied the great outdoors and animal behavior. In all classes of animals there is an established order of dominance or status within the group. By nature they will claim their territory, and not want others to come near to share. Sheep will maintain their position within the flock by butting and driving others away from the best grazing and favorite bedding grounds. Because of this rivalry, tension and competition for status and self - assertion, there is friction within the flock. (In human nature, competition brings conflict). The sheep cannot lie down and rest in contentment. Always they must stand up and defend their rights and contest others.

 Keller said that jealousy and conflict within the flock can be a most detrimental thing. The sheep become edgy, tense and restless. There’s no peace. They even lose weight and become irritable. It also affects their physical health. He went on to say – “But whenever I came into their view and walked in their midst, my presence attracted their attention and the sheep quickly forgot their foolish rivalry and stopped their fighting!” The shepherds presence made all the difference in the world and brought a change in their behavior. “When I walked in their midst, my presence soothed them!” O the importance and need of the Great Shepherd of the Flock!! (His Loving Presence!)

 O the gentle loving nature of Christ! O when He walks in the midst of His people, He brings peace! There is nothing like the presence of God! This is the condition of our world today. It is a graphic picture of the struggle for status in human society. There is constant competition. You find it in the business world, in any office, any family, community, in human organizations and even in the Church world be it large or small. It’s who has the most or who can do or look the best. The struggle for self - recognition goes on. People strive to get to the top. Like sheep, they butt, quarrel and compete and in the process people get hurt and they scatter. This is where petty peeves grow into hate. O the jealousy and strife in our world! This is the reason that Isaiah said, all we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way. This is why we need a loving caring shepherd!

 O Children, listen to the Good Book. **Philippians 2:1** ¶ If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

 2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

 3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

 4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

 5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

 This dear Children, is what builds a Church and makes it strong. It strengthens families and keeps them together. God Loves each and every one of His Children, both the Sheep and Lambs of the Fold. Jesus our Good Shepherd endeavors to never let a one stray. Only He brings peace and unity. He will feed His fold and keep them secure. His Love endures forever. It is so strong that He laid down His life for the Sheep and today is the Door to the Sheepfold. O what a good Shepherd and a good pasture! I am one of His!!

