

# A Study in Psalm 23

## Lesson 4: Shadows Can't Hurt Me!

### I. Introduction

- A. Let's look at a couple of other translations of this verse:
  - 1. "Yea, though I walk through a valley of death-shadowed..."
  - 2. "Even though I walk through a valley as dark as death..."
  - 3. "For though I walk amidst the shades of death"
- B. The term "shadow of death" shows up in other passages of scripture: Look at Job 12:22, Matt. 4:16
- C. For sheep: Even shadows can cause great fear to grip the flock.

### II. What is David really saying?

- A. The mental picture of valleys in the scripture.
  - 1. A place for decisions – Joel 3:14
  - 2. The opposite of mountain tops – Isa. 40:4 (full of discouragement, fears and frustrations)
- B. Consider the term shadow of "death"
  - 1. Where did death come from? Look at Rom. 5:12 (by sin, death entered the world)
  - 2. Death is universal – Ecc. 8:8, Ps. 49:10, Heb. 9:27
  - 3. Physically and spiritually, death separates and divides. Physically it separates us from loved ones and earth. Spiritually it separates us eternally from God.
- C. Even the shadow (impression, mere mention) of death frightens us!
  - 1. We don't like to think we're not immortal – Ps. 39:4, 90:5, 6, 10, 12
  - 2. We fear death because we don't understand it. Nobody has been there and come back to tell what it's like.
  - 3. "The fear of death is worse than death." Robert Burton "We spend our lives trying to take our minds off death." (Pascal)
  - 4. We ignore it, thinking it will go away. Look at Jer. 6:14

### **III. But look at God's promise...fear no evil, for thou art with me!**

- A. Fear that scattered sheep would dissipate at the sound of the shepherd's voice. Our fears (even of the shadows) flee in the presence of our Lord. Look at Isa. 43:1-2, Ps. 17:15
- B. Death is not victorious in the life of a Christian. Look at 1 Cor. 15:55, Prov. 14:32
- C. Jesus has gone on before us. He leads us to higher ground, like the shepherd leads the sheep. See John 14:1-3 and 1 Thes. 4:13-14

### **IV. The Rod**

For sheep, the rod was:

- A. The symbol of authority – look at the life of Moses – Ex. 4:2-5, 7:19, 8:16, 9:23. Look at the life of Aaron – Num. 17:2-10 – his rod buds.
- B. The means of discipline – Ps. 89:32, 125:3, Prov. 13:24, 22:15, 29:15
- C. The tool used to examine and to count – Lev. 27:32, Ezk. 20:37 – “passing under the rod.” Look at Ps. 139:23-24.
- D. An instrument of protection.

### **V. The Staff**

- A. The staff is used to draw sheep together into an intimate personal relationship.
  - 1. To gently lift newborn lambs and bring them to their mothers if they get separated – without the touching with his hands.
  - 2. To reach out and catch an individual sheep for intimate examination.
- B. The staff is used to guide the sheep. This loving relationship is based on the art of “touching.”
- C. The staff is used to release sheep caught in brambles and undergrowth.

### **VI. So what?**

- A. The application for our lives – the rod (God's Word)
  - 1. The sign of God's authority and convicting power in our lives: “Thus saith the Lord.” Look at Heb. 4:12, Jer. 23:29 (like a hammer that shatters a rock) and 5:14. The rod is emblematic of the Word of God – Rom 15:4
  - 2. The principle: Loving, fair and consistent discipline provide for security and serenity for the flock. Look at Ps. 119:9, 11, Jos. 23:6.
  - 3. We are to be “people of the Book.” Look at the folks in Acts 17:11 (examining the Scriptures daily).
- B. The application for our lives – the staff (the Holy Spirit)

1. The staff is emblematic of the Holy Spirit. In His loving relationship with each believer, the Holy Spirit provides the same kinds of gentle care.
2. Holy Spirit indwells all believers – Rom. 8:9, 1 Cor. 3:16
3. Holy Spirit is our teacher – 1 John 2:27, John 14:26
4. Holy Spirit indwells and gives us power – Acts 1:8
5. Holy Spirit bears witness to our spiritual adoption – Rom. 8:16
6. Holy Spirit is our comforter – John 14:26
7. Holy Spirit convicts us of sin – John 16:7-8