

## **Provision and Protection**

Welcome to Harvest Community Church

Series: Psalm 23

**Text: Psalm 23:1-2a (NKJV & NLT)**

- As the Good Shepherd, the Lord promises **supernatural** provision. The first of the ten promises found in the Twenty-Third Psalm is that God is our supernatural Provider. David declared, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not **want**”. In Christ we have all that we need.

Notice David didn’t say, “The Lord is their shepherd,” or “The Lord is our shepherd.” He personalized it and said, “The Lord is MY shepherd”. It would be good and wise for us to personalize this promise and begin declaring the same thing out of our mouths: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” This is a promise that we shall not be in **lack**.

**Psalm 23:1 (NIV)** The promise is that we shall lack **nothing**. That word is all encompassing. **Psalm 34:9-10, Psalm 37:25**

Those without the Good Shepherd spend their life consumed with thoughts about lack of provision. Jesus gives us such a promise that He tells us that we don’t even need to give **thought** about the things that we need. **Matthew 6:25-33** As our Father He knows what we need. Because we know that He is a loving Father, there is no need to **worry**.

Jesus made it clear that God — our heavenly Father — is going to provide all our physical needs, and we shouldn’t worry about any of them. These words from the lips of Christ agree with David’s declaration, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want”. The phrase “I shall not want” carries the idea of not lacking **anything**. God has clearly articulated it is His will to be our Ultimate Provider! **Matthew 7:9-11**

Moses made a similar declaration to the children of Israel as they were concluding their 40-year journey through the wilderness. **Deuteronomy 2:7** God has a **proven** track record of caring for His people. Even in the most extreme of circumstances. He provided manna for food and made streams to run in the desert.

Again and again, He reminds us of His willingness and ability to give us what we need, when we need it. **Psalm 84:11** Notice those four key words: **sun**, **shield**, **grace**, **glory**. This speaks of light, protection, **favor** and **honor**. This speaks to the **four** major areas of need in our life. Provision, protection, confirmation and acceptance from God and affirmation from people. Physical, mental, spiritual and emotional provision.

All of us go through hard times, and David was no exception. Yet out of a heart of gratefulness for all that God had done, David employed some healthy self-talk during seasons of trouble, reminding himself of the Lord’s goodness in his life. **Psalm 103:2-5**

As a born-again child of God, we have been given extraordinary **benefits** through Jesus Christ. He forgives all of our sins, and He heals all of our diseases. He has rescued us out of Satan’s slave market of abuse and poured out lovingkindness and mercy on our life.

He is ready, willing, and able to provide the material blessings you need to strengthen and empower you. He is your Ultimate Provider! **Philippians 4:19**

~ A great alternate version - **But my God will supply your needs so completely that He will eliminate all your deficiencies. He will meet all your physical and tangible needs until you are so full that you have no more capacity to hold anything else. He will supply all your needs until you are totally filled, packed full and overflowing to the point of bursting at the seams and spilling over!**

- The second promise God gives us in Psalm 23 is His supernatural **protection**. As we humbly submit to Jesus and allow Him to be our Good Shepherd, He will put an end to **fear**, enabling us to lie down and experience rest in our souls.

The metaphor of the Lord being our Shepherd is seen in many places in the Bible.

John called Jesus the **good** Shepherd. **John 10:11**

Peter referred to Him as the **chief** Shepherd. **1 Peter 5:4**

The writer of Hebrews called Christ the **great** Shepherd **Hebrews 13:20**

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures....” This verse is about God’s supernatural protection in our lives. In addition to providing all our needs, the Lord has also vowed to be our **guardian**; God who never sleeps or slumbers. **Psalm 121:5-6** We have nothing to fear day or night in the practical or in the spiritual.

In Old Testament times, God had raised up individuals among His chosen people to serve as shepherds over Israel. Although there were many who faithfully carried out their duties, during Ezekiel’s day, the majority of the shepherds of Israel had failed to fulfill their responsibilities, and God was quite upset about it. **Ezekiel 34:11-14** God told the shepherds of Israel, “If you’re not going to do the job that I called you to do, I Myself will step in and do it!” When all others fail in their responsibilities, God will not! He Himself will shepherd us, and His protection will enable us to “lie down in a good fold.”

God has very clear **expectations** for Shepherds.

As our Heavenly Father He has expectations for earthy **parents**.

As a Spiritual protector He has clear expectations for those who lead His **family** Spiritually. Some of God’s harshest words are reserved for people who hold the role of a Shepherd.

**Ezekiel 34:1-10**

True Shepherds bring protection on several fronts:

- They Make sure that the sheep are **fed** and are not starving naturally or spiritually. They don’t leave them to fend for and to figure out how to feed themselves. A true shepherd leads sheep to green fertile pastures.
- They take care of and **strengthen** the weak.

- They care for and tend to the sick.
- They heal and bind up the broken and wounded.
- They look for those who are lost or those who have wandered and don't realize they are lost.
- They are not harsh or cruel or impatient and mean.
- They protect them from wild animals and predators.

In order to fully appreciate the gift of being able to lie down, you need to understand something about sheep – they are easily frightened and thrown into a state of panic. They run from what frightens them and band together in large groups for protection. Sheep feel safe in great numbers because it's harder for a predator to attack and snag one of them out of a group than to go after a few strays. Staying together in a pack is the only protection they have from predators — unless they have a shepherd watching over them and protecting them from harm.

Sheep will only lie down when four conditions are met:

1. Sheep must be free from all fear.

Sheep are easily excited and frightened even by non-threatening activities happening around them. The only time sheep will lie down is when they are free from fear. They refuse to lie down when they're afraid.

2. Sheep must be free from panicky situations.

Sheep are so easily panicked that if a jackrabbit suddenly jumps out from behind a bush, it can cause a whole flock to stampede recklessly into danger. When one startled sheep runs in fright, a dozen others will bolt with it in blind fear, not even knowing what they're running from.

3. Sheep must be free from the torment of flies or parasites.

Sheep will not lie down when they are tormented by flies or parasites. If parasites are present or flies are buzzing around their heads and biting their necks and backs, they will not lie down. Only when sheep are free from the fear of annoying pests will they relax.

4. Sheep must be free from the fear of no food and hunger.

Sheep will only lie down when they are free from the fear of hunger. If they are afraid that they don't have enough food, they will anxiously roam about searching for sustenance to satisfy their appetite. For sheep to lie down, they must be free from the fear of hunger.

To lie down and rest, sheep must feel they are protected from every type and form of fear.

Believers Battle Fear Just Like Sheep! This is why the Bible deals with the issue of fear extensively. As believers, we all are just like sheep, which means we, too, are easily frightened. The Bible says fear has torment. It also says that in this world we will have trouble but to take heart and to have hope because God has overcome the world.

**John 16:33, 1 John 4:18** It is knowing that we are loved by the Good Shepherd that gives us hope. **Romans 5:5**

Just living in this present age, you probably know from firsthand experience what it feels like to be tormented by fearful thoughts and feelings from the enemy. Maybe you've been afraid of what might happen to you in the midst of this chaotic, unpredictable world that seems to be spinning out of control. Or you've been terrified of running out of money to pay your bills or running out of food to feed your family. Maybe you've been worried you would not be able to buy clothes or that you would get fired from your job due to downsizing. What are people going to say about me? What kind of rumors are they going to spread?

Whatever fear you may be facing, it has torment with it, and it is very hard to lie down and rest when your mind is buzzing with harassing thoughts of dread and terror. We need sleep and rest in order to live a fully productive joy-filled life. Part of God's protection is the ability to have emotional and mental rest. Part of protection is peace of mind.

**2 Timothy 1:7**

Although most fears are illogical, they can produce great insecurities and cause real inward panic that makes it impossible for us to rest. Most of the fear our enemy inflicts is a figment of our imagination. He uses fear as a weapon, as psychological warfare, to defeat us without any real resistance. The enemy hates our resistance because it comes with a promise.

**James 4:7** Fear makes you believe that resistance is futile.

The majority of the things we fear will never take place. Fear causes us to suffer without ever having gone through what we were afraid of. As a part of God's flock, He promises to supernaturally protect us from all harm. His presence gives us such a sense of security that we can lie down and rest and not be fearful of some potential disaster looming ahead.

**Isaiah 41:10, Joshua 1:9**

In addition to God's supernatural presence abiding with us, He has also given us — His Church — shepherds to help protect us and watch over our souls. **Acts 20:28-29** These under-shepherds are called pastors. Pastors today need to be responsible and actively watch over the people they have been entrusted by the Holy Spirit to shepherd. Nevertheless, even if your pastor neglects his protective care of you, God will not.

In John 10:11, Jesus said, "I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." What's interesting about this verse is that in the original Greek text, it quotes Jesus as saying, "I am the Shepherd, the good One..." This was the equivalent of Him saying, "I am the Shepherd of all shepherds."

When Jesus said, "...The good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep" the word "for" here is the Greek word *huper*, which means on behalf of. It carries the idea of **completeness**, signifying that Jesus gave, invested, or laid down His life on behalf of us, holding nothing back. The word "sheep" in Greek is the word *probaton*, and it describes a flock of sheep, which is what we are. Jesus was — and is — the supreme Shepherd who went so far as to give His own life for us, His sheep.

Interestingly, the word "life" is the Greek word *psuche*, which is the term for the mind, the will, and the emotions. It's where we get the words *psyche* and *psychology*. Normally, you would think that the word for "life" used here would have been the Greek word *bios*, which describes one's physical life, or the word *zoe*, signifying the abundant life that only God can give. Instead, the Holy Spirit prompted the use of the word *psuche*, which tells us that Jesus gave His mind, His will, and His emotions in His shepherding care for us! This is a picture of total **involvement**. Could this be why we are called to love Jesus with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. He gave us His total involvement and we are to give ours to Him.

Jesus ultimately gave His life for us. Of His own free will, He laid His life down and surrendered to the will of the Father. He paid the highest price to care for us — purchasing our freedom with His own life's blood! Still today, Jesus remains actively involved in watching over our lives. Ultimately, it is the reassuring presence and love of Jesus that puts an end to fear. **1 Peter 2:25**

Here again we see the Greek word *psuche*, translated here as "soul." It pinpoints the place where we battle fear — in the imaginations of our mind and the feelings of our emotions.

This verse lets us know that if we will humble ourselves and submit to Jesus, and allow Him to be the Shepherd of our souls, He will put an end to fear, enabling us to lie down and rest mentally, emotionally, and physically. The Lord is your Shepherd who makes you lie down in green pastures. You can rest in His **protective** care — free from all fear.