

Psalm 19-23 – Chapter Study

Psalm 19

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

- 1 The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament [expanse = space] shows His handiwork.
- 2 Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge.
- 3 *There is* no speech nor language *Where* their voice is not heard.

This is a majestic song of praise to God as the Almighty Creator.

As a young shepherd, David spent many nights out on the fields & hills near Bethlehem, gazing up into the night sky.

He'd seen the sun rise dozens of times then watched it set at the end of that same day.

He realized Creation is a **powerful witness** to the glory & power of God for those who will take the time to tune their ear to Creation's message.

If David found reason to praise God by considering the heavens, we have even MORE reason to praise Him because of what we know about the universe David didn't.

When David looked up into that sky, he could pick out a few thousand stars.

With the observatories & orbiting telescopes like Hubble we now have, we've know our Milky Way galaxy has billions of stars.

We've also found thousands of galaxies, each with its own billions of stars.

The distances between the stars is so vast, the size of the universe so great – scientists have to speak of it in turns of light years – how far light travels in a year.

Light travels at 186,000 miles each second. SO a light year is 5.8 trillion miles.

If you counted all the stars in our galaxy, 1 per second, it would take you 2500 years.

The Milky Way is 100,000 LY across.

If the Milk Way were the size of the United States, our solar system would be the size of a quarter.

If we had to fund the energy production of the sun, it would take the GNP of the USA for 7 million years to run the sun for 1 sec.

David stared up into that night sky & was blown away, moved to worship, with what his eye could see.

What do you think he might have done had he been able to see this? [show pics]

- 4 Their line [Creation's message] has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun,
- 5 Which *is* like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, *And* rejoices like a strong man to run its race.
- 6 Its rising *is* from one end of heaven, And its circuit to the other end; And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

The fact of creation is a powerful, sure evidence of the existence of an all-powerful Creator.

And this is an undeniable message to all – no one can duck it.

Then David turns from the evidence of Creation to the power of God's Word -

- 7 The law of the Lord *is* perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord *is* sure, making wise the simple;
- 8 The statutes of the Lord *are* right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord *is* pure, enlightening the eyes;
- 9 The fear of the Lord *is* clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord *are* true *and* righteous altogether.

God has revealed Himself through 2 primary means; Creation & His Word.

Creation tells us that God IS, that He's eternal & all powerful & incredibly wise, but it doesn't tell us much more than that.

That's where His word takes over and learn He is holy, pure, and full of love & truth.

Creation tells us there **is** a God, His word tells us **how we can have a relationship** with Him.

- 10 More to be desired *are they* than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

God's Word is a treasure & delight that far surpasses the things of this world.

11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, *And* in keeping them *there is* great reward.
Now David turns to a personal application of what he's just said.

12 Who can understand *his* errors? Cleanse me from secret *faults*.

13 Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression.

David invites the Holy Spirit to use God's Word on him.

He knows the tendency we all have to be self-deceived, so He asks God to use the word to pierce through the lies his flesh has told him and show his inner person as God sees him.

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.

There's a connection between our words & our hearts.

Jesus said it's out of the abundance of our hearts that our mouth speaks. [Luke 6:45]

The Proverbs says that as a person thinks in his/her heart, so he/she are. [23:7]

What David asks is that this God who's created all that beauty & majesty out there will do a deep, powerful work in here, making something of David's life that **GOD** will find beautiful.

Psalm 20

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

The occasion of this song is a time of challenge for the King. He has some kind of battle to fight.

In vs. 1-5, the people pray for the King.

In vs. 6-9 are the king's confident expression of trust in the Lord.

David goes to the altar for the Lord to make offerings prior to going out to battle.

The people gather round and say -

1 May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble; May the name of the God of Jacob defend you;

2 May He send you help from the sanctuary, And strengthen you out of Zion;

3 May He remember all your offerings, And accept your burnt sacrifice. Selah

Selah means – pause to think about it.

What needs to be pondered here is how the people recognized that David had a long history of regular service to the Lord.

He didn't turn to God with special offerings only when there was a jam to get out of.

David brought many offerings & sacrifices to the tabernacle when things were going great.

It's sad so many only turn to God when things are rough.

They forget about God when life is going well.

But as soon as things go south, they turn to God with desperate pleas for help.

If God is worth turning to when life is hard, He's worth serving & worshipping when things are good.

4 May He grant you according to your heart's *desire*, And fulfill all your purpose.

5 We will rejoice in your salvation, [when the Lord causes you to prevail] And in the name of our God we will set up *our* banners! May the Lord fulfill all your petitions.

Now the king speaks.

6 Now I know that the Lord saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven With the saving strength of His right hand.

7 Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the Lord our God.

David knows that in this challenge he's facing he's on the right side, God's side, while his enemy isn't.

The enemy thinks he'll prevail because he's got more people who are better equipped.

But David isn't trusting in numbers or technology.

None of that matters if you're on God's side.

Hey – no one knew that better than David because he'd gone up against a giant killing machine named Goliath!

My mother had a friend, an older lady, who'd lived in England during WWII.

She was a believer who'd been part of some prayer groups who met during the war to pray & intercede over the various battles & campaigns.

I loved just sitting and listening to her tell stories about those days.

She said that the rocket attacks were terrifying because they never knew when or where they'd come.

The Nazi's starting send in what were called **buzz-bombs**.

They made a loud noise that caused panic which is why the Nazi's used them.

This woman said that there were many times when her prayer group would be praying for the allied troops when a buzz-bomb attack would come.

So they'd turn their prayer **against** the bomb.

They'd look up and see it flying over England, then all of a sudden as they prayed, it would turn around and fly back the way it had come.

She said she doubted they had the fuel to fly all the way back to their launch sites, but probably landed in the English Channel.

8 They have bowed down and fallen; But we have risen and stand upright.

9 Save, Lord! May the King answer us when we call.

While the people looked to David as king, he looked to God as the **his** King.

Psalm 21

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

This psalm is the flip side of the previous.

Psalm 20 was a prayer for victory before the challenge, this is a Psalm of thanksgiving for victory obtained.

1 The king shall have joy in Your strength, O Lord; And in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!

2 You have given him his heart's desire, And have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah

3 For You meet him with the blessings of goodness; You set a crown of pure gold upon his head.

David's right to rule have been solidly reaffirmed.

4 He asked life from You, *and* You gave *it* to him— Length of days forever and ever.

5 His glory *is* great in Your salvation; Honor and majesty You have placed upon him.

The victory won wasn't minimal; it's wasn't a squeaker. It was clear & obvious.

6 For You have made him most blessed forever; You have made him exceedingly glad with Your presence.

Whatever this victory was it was a turning point in David's reign; one that would not be challenged in the future.

7 For the king trusts in the Lord, And through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved.

8 Your hand will find all Your enemies; Your right hand will find those who hate You.

9 You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger; The Lord shall swallow them up in His wrath, And the fire shall devour them.

10 Their offspring You shall destroy from the earth, And their descendants from among the sons of men.

11 For they intended evil against You; They devised a plot *which* they are not able *to perform*.

12 Therefore You will make them turn their back; You will make ready *Your arrows* on Your string toward their faces.

David knows his success is the result of God's intervention in going to battle on his behalf.

Listen – as the previous Psalm made clear, David had a battle to engage in, there was a struggle he had to personally step in to.

But he didn't trust in his own strength as he battled; he trusted in the Lord to empower & guide him.

The same is true for us as Paul makes clear in Ephesian 6.

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that YOU may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that YOU may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

[Apply it]

So David thanks God for empowering him & giving him the victory.

Then, he asks God to keep on, **on His own**.

13 Be exalted, O Lord, in Your own strength! [Keep going God!]

We will sing and praise Your power.

Psalms 22

To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Deer of the Dawn." a Psalm of David.

This Psalm is a mournful lament in which David feels forsaken by God & mocked by his enemies.

As David describes the torment he's feeling, it's easy to see how this Psalm is prophetic of Jesus' suffering on the cross.

In fact, Jesus intended us to understand the Psalm as a portrait of the cross. Look -

1 My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?

Jesus quoted these words – knowing they would recall this Psalm to the minds of every Jew who heard them.

And as they did, they would realize that David had painted a word picture of what they were now seeing in Jesus as He hung there.

1 My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? *Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning?*

Because as Jesus was made the sin of the world, the fellowship & communion that had existed between Father & Son from eternity past was severed.

It was the anticipation of this moment, when that fellowship would be broken that had caused Jesus to sweat drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before.

2 O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent.

It was daytime when Jesus was crucified, but the sun was obscured & it was dark for a couple hours during the center of His agony.

3 But You *are* holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel.

4 Our fathers trusted in You; They trusted, and You delivered them.

5 They cried to You, and were delivered; They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.

6 But I *am* a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people.

The Romans used crucifixion as a way to heap the ultimate of shame on a person.

7 All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*,

8 "He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!"

Which are the exact words of the religious leaders who came to watch Him die.

9 But You *are* He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust *while* on My mother's breasts.

10 I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother's womb You *have been* My God.

11 Be not far from Me, For trouble *is* near; For *there is* none to help.

12 Many bulls have surrounded Me; Strong *bulls* of Bashan have encircled Me.

13 They gape at Me *with* their mouths, *Like* a raging and roaring lion.

14 I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me.

This is an apt description of the kind of physiological trauma that death by cross causes.

Bleeding is profuse.

The nails cause the joints to dislocate.

And the heart pumps so hard that the muscle begins to shred.

15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death.

With the loss of blood, dehydration is quick. This is why they offered drink to them by sponge on a pole.

Jesus refused the drugged wine they offered Him so that He could drain the last particle of God's wrath & judgment on sin. Once that was done, He did accept a small taste of the wine so that His mouth & tongue would be able to form the final words everyone needed to hear – "It is finished!"

16 For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet;

See – it's obvious now that this Psalm is meant to be understood as primarily prophetic of the Cross.

David wrote this a thousand years before Jesus.

There's nothing in his time that would explain what he means by this dual piercing.

This was an unmistakable pointer to the Cross.

17 I can count all My bones.

In other words – they are intact – none of them are broken.

Which is another clear prophetic pointed to Christ.

When the Roman crucifixion detail went to break the legs of the crucified to hurry their death, they smashed the shins of the 2 thieves, but not Jesus because He was already dead.

They look *and* stare at Me.

There's an **audience** watching this death – again, the cross!

18 They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.

One of the benefits of being assigned to the death squad was being able to keep whatever property the condemned had on them.

Jesus had no jewelry or anything special except for his garment which had been a gift.

It was a seamless tunic that could be cleaned & sold for a sesterces or 2.

So instead of ripping it up into equal parts as they might with a less valuable garment, they cast lots for it to see who would get it.

19 But You, O Lord, do not be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me!

20 Deliver Me from the sword, My precious *life* from the power of the dog.

21 Save Me from the lion's mouth And from the horns of the wild oxen! You have answered Me.

While the religious leaders conspired to get rid of Christ & used the Romans to do the deed, in the end, God turned it all to good and made it the means of salvation.

The devil had to be delighted as he watched Jesus beaten, then driven along the route to Calvary.

He surely rubbed his hands in glee as they drove the nails through his hands & feet and hoisted the cross into place.

I'm sure he howled with pleasure to hear the words Jesus spoke, thinking they would be His last.

But when Jesus cried out victoriously, "It is finished! = Tetelestai! =- Paid in full!" you now the devil said, "Huh?"

And instantly realized Jesus was no victim at all; He was VICTOR!

Savior – Redeemer.

22 I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.

Which Jesus did 3 days later when He rose from the dead & met the disciples.

23 You who fear the Lord, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!

24 For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Nor has He hidden His face from Him; But when He cried to Him, He heard.

Though fellowship between Father & Son was broken for a few hours as Jesus was made sin, once sin was atoned for, communion was restored and the Father heard the Son's Words.

With v. 25 the Psalm takes a turn from the agonies of the cross to the salvation it's accomplished.

The look now is toward the time when the Messiah reigns and everything has been made right.

25 My praise *shall be* of You in the great assembly; I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.

26 The poor shall eat and be satisfied; Those who seek Him will praise the Lord. Let your heart live forever!

27 All the ends of the world Shall remember and turn to the Lord, And all the families of the nations Shall worship before You.

28 For the kingdom *is* the Lord's, And He rules over the nations.

29 All the prosperous of the earth Shall eat and worship; All those who go down to the dust Shall bow before Him, Even he who cannot keep himself alive. [resurrection]

30 A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the *next* generation,

Literally – one generation after another will serve him.

³¹ They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, That He has done *this*. This last verse projects the meaning of the words to a future generation – meaning of course the generation that would witness the cross. That's why Jesus quoted the opening words – to let the people standing round the cross know they were the ones to who it had been written.

Quite frankly, every Jew who heard Jesus say those words ought to have realized who He was & what he was doing and ended up coming to faith in Him right then & there.

Psalm 23

A Psalm of David.

David was imminently qualified to write this psalm seeing as to how he'd been a shepherd for several years as a young man – and an excellent shepherd at that.

David had taken his task as the keeper of his father's flock seriously.

He'd labored to make sure they were the best led. Fed and protected flock at Bethlehem.

He'd even killed to predators who'd come to harass the flock – a lion & a bear.

It was this courageous attention to his task as a shepherd that enabled him to envision God as the Shepherd of Israel and himself as one of God's sheep.

¹ The Lord *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.

Sheep are *high maintenance* charges - they tend to be foolish creatures that get into trouble.

So the task of a shepherd is an difficult one. His attention to the flock is ***unceasing***.

Phillip Keller raised sheep for a living & wrote a wonderful book called, *A Shepherd Looks At Psalm 23*.

He says, "The lot in life of any particular sheep depends on the ***type*** of man who owns it."

If he cares for his flock, the sheep will do well. But if he's selfish or lazy, they'll suffer.

David says, "Yahweh is my Shepherd." So "I shall not want."

He took comfort knowing his Shepherd was taking good care of him.

Jesus applied the picture of the Good Shepherd to Himself in John 10:14}

"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own."

With even ***greater*** conviction than David, we can say, "***Jesus*** is my Shepherd, I shall not want."

² He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.

Sheep are skittish creatures; easily spooked, and once frightened it can be hard to calm them. In order for them to lie down 4 conditions have to be met.

1st - They have to be free of all fear

Sheep are so timid they're panicked by the slightest thing - anything ***unfamiliar*** will cause them to bolt - and one frightened sheep will disturb dozens more without the others knowing the cause.

But nothing so calms the flock than to ***see the shepherd*** standing among them.

They know that ***he*** will protect them, they know it's his duty to defend them.

As they keep their eyes on him, their fears are stilled.

So it is with us. The remedy to fear is to keep our eyes on Jesus.

2nd - If sheep are to rest, there can be no friction between them.

Sheep have a pecking order.

One will assert its dominance by butting others with its head.

When there's rivalry, tension upsets the entire flock.

But as soon as the shepherd walks among the sheep, the rivalry ends because all honor the shepherd's mastery.

Strife only exists in the Church when we get our eyes off Jesus.

3rd - Sheep are subject to all kinds of pests and parasites, but they will only rest if they aren't bugged.

The shepherd knows if pests are bothering his sheep and what remedies to apply.

Who of us doesn't know what it means to be "bugged" by pesky little troubles?

Not major trials; just a lot of little things that pester us, like gnats.

Jesus knows of these things - and just as a sheep cannot rest when pestered, Jesus knows we need relief if we're to rest.

So He applies His Spirit to calm & smooth the irritations of living in a fallen world.

4th - Sheep won't rest if they're hungry.

We feast on God's rich, nutritious Word

He leads me beside the still waters.

Sheep are spooked by running streams – they'll only drink from still water.

This means the shepherd has to keep careful watch over the flock because sheep will often drink from any old puddle, no matter how dirty or polluted.

Besides our **physical** thirst, men and women have thirsty **souls**.

Just like sheep, people will try to slake their thirst at the polluted mud-holes of this world.

But Jesus leads **His** people to the refreshing wells of truth and life.

In John 10 Jesus said, "I have come that you may have life, and that you may have it more abundantly."

³ He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.

Even the most saintly saint knows seasons of **discouragement**.

It is this spiritual challenge that provides the Good Shepherd to prove how good he is – by restoring the discouraged soul.

In Psalm 42 David cried,

Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God. {11}

He uses an illustration understood by those who lived among sheep.

A "cast" sheep is one whose coat has become so heavy, that when it lies down, it rolls over too far and ends up on its back with its little feet in the air, pawing away frantically but in futility.

It'll stay that way till someone rolls it back over onto its feet.

Left that way too long, the gases in its rumen will expand, cutting off circulation & pressing the other organs. It'll die.

This is why a shepherd is forever **counting** his sheep - if he comes up short, his first thought is that there is a cast sheep somewhere - and he sets out to find it.

When he does, he sets it back on its feet.

Because its legs are numb, he'll straddle it & rub the legs to get the circulation going again.

All the time he is doing that, he's speaking softly to the sheep to calm it from its panic.

The Shepherd's voice is the single most calming thing in a sheep's life.

All of this is conveyed in the phrase, "**He restores my soul.**"

Many people think when they fall or are frustrated & discouraged God becomes disgusted, fed-up & angry with them.

They assume God is only happy with the joyous, are on top of the world, & who never blow it. Not so!

Remember the parable Jesus told of the **lost** sheep!

He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.

Sheep are terrible creatures of habit.

If not well led, they'll cover the same ground, on the same trails, until they've turned rich green fields into barren wastes.

It's no coincidence in Scripture, people are likened to sheep.

Left to ourselves, we'll sit in one place until we're fat & sassy, & have turned our home into a barren spiritual wasteland.

The Good Shepherd won't let us get fat & sassy.

He moves us on, taking us deeper in the things of the Spirit; constantly facing us with new challenges.

⁴ Yea, 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.

As the shepherd would take the flock from pasture to pasture, there would be some territory they would pass through that was more dangerous than others.

More predators, cliffs & holes .

The sheep's safety lay in staying **close** to the shepherd.

This is a dangerous world, full of predators & traps.

Our safety is proportional to how close we are to Jesus.

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

The rod speaks of **protection**, the staff of **guidance**

For the believer, the rod and staff of the Lord are His Word.

In verses 5 & 6, David shifts the picture from God as Shepherd to Generous Host

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.

It was the responsibility of a monarch to provide for the members of his court & guests.

The royal banquet was a sumptuous affair - a lavish display of wealth.

David sees himself as a member of God's court so privileged to live in His palace & eat at His table.

When he says,

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

It's parallel to what we read in v. 2 - that he lies down in green pastures.

David's peace in God is so great, even if he finds himself in the midst of mortal enemies, he can sit down & eat a good meal without concern.

You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.

When a guest would enter a home, the host would take a flask of perfumed oil, unstop it, and pour a liberal dose onto the guest's head.

This was their way of refreshing one another.

The idea here parallels the Lord **restoring our soul** - He pours the sweet oil of joy onto the stinky problems & smelly attitudes we can develop by living daily in a fallen world.

My cup runs over.

Being the generous host He is, God **heaps** His blessings on those who come to Him.

At His table, He doesn't measure out His wine with an eye dropper.

He gushes buckets of the stuff.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.