

Bible Reading Schedule The Golden Thread

July 17 – Psalm 23

Psalm 23 is one of the most beloved passages in the Bible, because it is a Psalm that beautifully expresses the care of God for His people. Sheep are some of the most helpless animals in all of creation. They are defenseless; they are slow, and they are dumb. If a sheep gets lost and separated from the rest of the flock it will lie down and give up. Sheep will not even move on to greener pastures on their own. If they are not led and cared for, sheep will stay in the same pasture until they have eaten it bare. By God's design, sheep must have a shepherd to survive, and the same is true for us. We were created by God to depend on God for our existence, but we are constantly trying to claim our independence from God and be our own masters. Is it any wonder that we are constantly finding ourselves in great peril? Because we are so desperately lost, we need a shepherd.

Luke 15:1-7 *Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." ³ Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴ "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵ And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶ and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' ⁷ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.*

Jesus not only compared himself to a shepherd, he also proclaimed that he is the good shepherd who cares for his sheep.

John 10:11-15 *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³ The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me-- ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father-- and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

As our good shepherd, Jesus satisfies all of our needs ("I shall not be in want").

Romans 8:31-32 *What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*

Jesus allows us to find our rest in him ("He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters").

Matthew 11:28-30 *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

In Christ we have the righteousness we lack on our own ("He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.")

Philippians 3:8-9 *What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.*

With Christ as our shepherd even death does not cause us to become afraid (Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.")

Romans 8:35-39 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

July 18 – Psalm 23

Yesterday we looked at the first half of Psalm 23 and today we turn our attention to the second half of the Psalm, specifically verses 5 and 6. In speaking of God's care for him, David says in verse 5 that God prepares a table for in the presence of his enemies. In the New Testament, there is a similar reference to God preparing a table for those who love him. This table is a banquet table. It is a banquet in honor of the Son of God as he takes the church (us) to be his bride.

Revelation 19:7-9 *Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. ⁸*

Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)⁹ Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

We can enjoy a taste of this table even today as we live in the midst of those who stand opposed to God. Through the Communion Table Jesus told us that we can get a picture of what is to come as we wait for that day when we will gather around the banquet table in heaven.

Matthew 26:26-29 *While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."²⁷ Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you."²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.²⁹ I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."*

Through the Communion Table we can truly taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8) and that His love endures forever (Psalm 136). Through the Communion Table we aren't just reminded of what Christ has done for us in the past, but we also are reminded of the glorious future we have with Christ for all of eternity.

Psalm 23:6 *Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

July 19 – Psalm 24

Psalm 24 is a Psalm of victory. It is a Psalm that paints a beautiful picture of our savior Jesus Christ. In verses 1 and 2 the Psalmist praises God for His works of creation, and we are reminded that Jesus was there at God's side as the universe was brought into being.

Colossians 1:15-17 *He {Jesus} is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.¹⁶ For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

In verses 3 through 6, the singers of the Psalm ask the question, "Who may ascend the hill of the Lord, and stand in his holy presence?" In other words, who may enter into the presence of God? The answer is given in verse 4, "He who has clean hands and a pure heart." But can any of us truly say that we meet that description?

Jesus is the only one who truly meets that description. He was made like us in every way, but is without sin. Our access to God comes through the righteousness of Christ that is imputed (credited) to us. Because of Jesus, we can enter the presence of God. This is why over and over again Jesus reminded us that when we pray we must pray in his name.

Hebrews 4:15 *For we do not have a high priest {Jesus} who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin.*

Finally, in verses 7 – 10, we see a beautiful picture of king being welcomed into the city as he returns from defeating his enemies. Who is this victorious king? It's Jesus. Jesus is the King of Glory. Jesus is mighty in battle. At the cross, he defeated all of our enemies and rose victorious from the grave. As Jesus ascended into heaven, the gates of heaven opened wide to receive this victorious king. May the gates of our hearts do the same.

July 20 – Psalm 27

In this Psalm David lays out three different prayer requests that should be part of what we pray for every day. Before we look at David's prayer requests, let's first look at just how bad things are for David as he prays this Psalm. Look at verse 10, "though my mother and father forsake me." Things are really bad when your own mother forsakes you. So, what does David do?

First, in verses 1 – 3, David prays with confidence that God will save him from his enemies. We too can have that same confidence. How? Jesus, our warrior king. At the cross and through his resurrection Jesus defeated all of the main enemies that besiege us. He defeated the power of sin, death, and Satan, through his death and resurrection. Just as David prays here, Jesus is our light and salvation—whom shall we fear?

Think about what Jesus said in:

Matthew 10: 28 – 33 do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.³¹ Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many

sparrows. ³² So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, ³³ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

There is no man that we should fear, because all man can do is destroy this earthly tent that we live in. Man cannot destroy our soul. Only God can do that, and because we have Jesus our soul and eternal being are absolutely secure.

Romans 8: 33 – 34 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Because Jesus, our warrior king is with us, there is no one to condemn, no one to even bring a charge against us. Why? Because at the cross Jesus took all of the condemnation for us, so complete eternal victory is assured.

Being assured of victory, David becomes free to focus his prayer on what is most important. It is found in verse 4—“That he may dwell in the house of the Lord all of the days of his life, to gaze upon the lord in His beauty.” David knows this is what he was made for—to live in the presence of God, and enjoy Him forever. It is there in the presence of God that David will find eternal security and eternal rest. How will this security and rest come to him? Look at verse 6. It is through the sacrifice, and that sacrifice is a picture of Jesus.

Look at verse 7. David knows he needs God’s mercy to survive this life, and escape his sin. He knows without God’s mercy that there is no way he can be in God’s presence, or have victory over his enemies. The sacrifices in the Temple remind David that God would make a way for salvation to come to his life, and he is determined to wait on the Lord for his salvation to come.

Now notice David’s final request in verse 11. While David waits for God’s salvation, he wants to live a life that is pleasing to God. “Teach me your way, O Lord, lead me in a straight path. It is a prayer for obedience. But, here is what is interesting in all of this. Think how we tend to think. We tend to think that we get into God’s presence through obedience. But David has already come to the realization that the only way he can dwell in the presence of God is

through a sacrifice being made. So why does David pray for obedience? Because in view of all that God has done for him, David wants to try to live a life that is pleasing to God. The same should be true for us. Our obedience should not be driven by a desire to get in good with God—we are already there because of Jesus. Our desire for obedience should be because of all that Jesus has done for us to already bring us into the presence of God.

July 21 – Psalm 29

As you read this Psalm take note of what is happening. Naturally speaking it is a calamity—chaos in nature. There is deafening thunder, trees are twisting and breaking, nations are shaking, lightening is flashing, the forests are being stripped bare, and yet what is the cry of all creation? Glory! Glory to the king who sits enthroned above it all. This is our God!

Now look how the Psalm ends in verse 11. “The Lord gives strength to his people, the Lord blesses his people with peace.” The people of God have strength not just to endure all the shaking and chaos, but strength that gives them peace in the midst of the chaos.

What is it that gives a Christian such confidence in the midst of all of the upheavals of life? It is our Jesus. Take a moment and compare the description of God in Psalm 29 with John’s description of Jesus in Revelation 1.

Revelation 1: 12 – 18 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵ his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. ¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last, ¹⁸ and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

The voice that thunders in the forests and strips the trees bare is the voice of Jesus (the roar of many waters). The reason why we can

glorify God and be blessed with peace in the midst of the chaos is Jesus our warrior king, who died but is now alive forevermore.

That phrase Jesus uses in verse 18 where he says he holds the keys to Death and Hades tells us that Jesus has complete control over the two biggest threats to our lives and well being—death and Hell. If our Jesus has control over those things then surely he has control over any other storm that comes into your life.

July 22 – Psalm 31

In Psalm 31, David once again is crying out to the Lord in great distress, but in the midst of terrors on every side (verse 13), David has confidence in the God he loves and the God who loves him. Look at verses 14 and 15. David is so confident in the Lord that he is trusting him completely with his life no matter how bad things may seem. Look at the descriptive language that David uses to describe his God in verse 2. The Lord is David's rock and refuge, his strong fortress. David knows that nothing can happen to him without God's permission.

Heidelberg Catechism Q1: What is your only comfort in life and in death?

A. That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven:

That was the confidence that David had as he faced numerous difficulties in his own life. When you know you belong to God and nothing can happen to you without His permission, you can begin to trust Him so much that you commit not just your physical life to him, but your spiritual life, as well. Look again at verse 5 of Psalm 31. These are words that Jesus quotes in Luke 23: 46 with his dying breath, as he hangs on the cross, "Into your hands I commit my spirit."

As Jesus uses these words from David's Psalm, Jesus shows that he trusted the Father with every aspect of his being both physically and

spiritually. Do we trust God in that same way? Do we trust God with our physical life, and with our spiritual life?

July 23 – Psalm 32

“Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.” Do we really realize what a blessing it is to have our sins completely forgiven through Christ? In verses 3 and 4, David expresses what it feels like to carry around a load of sin and guilt as we go through life. Look at David’s description of what sin does to us if we fail to acknowledge our sin and find forgiveness for it. In verse 3, David says that his unconfessed sin took a physical toll on his body (his bones wasted away), and it took all of his strength away from him (verse 4). Sin doesn’t just effect our spiritual well being, it also effects our physical well being. Carrying a load of guilt weighs us down and eventually will crush us under its weight—even taking our very lives from us.

Romans 6:20-23 *When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. ²¹ What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Paul says we are slaves to our sin. In other words, our unconfessed and undealt with sin begins to own us and take control over our lives. We do our best to cover it up and hide it, but it is there all of the time weighing us down and crushing us, becoming our master.

But look again at what David does in Psalm 32 verse 5. He confesses his sin—he stops covering it up and he takes ownership over it, but then what does he do with it? He gives it to God, and as he does that God forgives him. Suddenly the load is lifted, because the sin has been given to God. We spend so much time and effort denying we have a sin problem, in an effort to cover it up. How much better would our lives be if we were to confess our sin (take ownership of it) and then give it to Jesus to carry for us?

1 John 1:8-9 *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*