

*Trusting Jesus
My Shepherd*



Ron Jones

Trusting Jesus My Shepherd

12 Daily Readings
in Psalm 23

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TIPN # 103

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Preface

Psalm 23 is a psalm of praise to the Lord for who he is and what he has done for David, which reflects the praise of every believer in every age, every place, and in every circumstance. The psalm has two major divisions as David refers to the shepherd's care for his sheep (v. 1-4) and the shepherd's care for his guests (v. 5-6). The main theme of this psalm is the great care and concern of the Lord for his people.

In this psalm, David answers some important questions that we can ask ourselves when we are suffering, "Does the Lord really care about me? Is he really concerned about my needs? Will he help me escape this trouble or endure it if I trust him?"

David answers these questions with a strong "yes, as the shepherd cares for his sheep and his guests so the Lord cares for us." Both the analogies of us as sheep and guests reflect our earthly lives as settlers and travelers on this planet and the Lord as the one who cares for us in the midst of it all.

This book of daily readings in Psalm 23 is written to encourage you when you are facing difficult circumstances by helping you understand what this psalm and other Scriptures reveal regarding God and how he works in the midst of the troubles and trials that come into our lives.

Ron Jones

Day 1 The Psalm of Your Shepherd

He sat on the sofa a broken man, at the end of his rope. Although he had tried to honor and serve the Lord throughout his life, he had not expected the pain that would come with the trouble that he was now facing. Nor had he anticipated that it would go on this long. The days had become weeks and the weeks had become months. The months had now reached more than two years.

Throughout the pain and struggle he tried to trust and obey the Lord. He tried to avoid anger and rage. Many times he had asked, "Why? Why Lord has all this happened?" But more recently he had been asking, "Will it ever end, Lord?"

He sat there that night in the living room of a friend's house. Both were Christians. Both were close friends. Finally in desperation, he blurted out, "I'm done. I'm done with the Lord." He was emotionally, physically, and spiritually exhausted. He felt like the Lord had given up on him. He knew in the depth of his heart that he didn't really mean it, but it is what he had been feeling for some time.

There was silence. Then his brother in Christ, his close friend, got up and quietly walked over to the calendar and marked a large "X" on that day's date. The distraught Christian man turned to him and asked, "Why did you do that?" His friend said, "I did it, so that, when the Lord works in your life and you turn to him again, you will remember this date and what a foolish statement that you made." That one act snapped him out of the spiritual fog he was in and made him realize that he needed to keep on trusting the Lord no matter what happened or how long it took.

Over the days and weeks that followed, the Lord did work in his life. The Lord didn't bring quick solutions to solve all his problems, but the Lord gave him the strength to trust and endure and the wisdom to rebuild his life. The Lord again and again proved to him that he was a Lord that cares for his people.

Are you in need of encouragement? Are you going through circumstances that are burdening you? Do you want to have greater faith that the Lord is working in your life, right now?

In the Scriptures, there is a psalm written by a man who knew what it was to be in need of encouragement and greater trust in the Lord. People often think of David only as a king living in a luxurious palace. However, he also spent a large part of his life running from danger, hiding in the wilderness, barely escaping death, being betrayed by his own son, and many other trials and tribulations.

Yes, David knew much about suffering, but he also knew much about the Lord. Through all of his trials and tribulations, he always relied on the truth that the Lord was his shepherd and would take care of him in whatever circumstances he found himself. This is what caused him to write his most famous psalm. Psalm 23, "The Lord is My Shepherd" stands as a beacon of light for those who need hope. David wrote,

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.
He restores my soul.*

*He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.*

*Even 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.*

*You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.*

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.*

The Lord God of the universe is deeply concerned about what happens to those whom he loves and who love him. This book describes and explains this powerful Psalm of our shepherd's love and care for you and me who have embraced Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

DAY 2

The Lord is My Shepherd

v. 1 The Lord is my shepherd.

David begins his psalm by immediately focusing on God. He says in v.1, "The Lord is my shepherd." The Lord is the supreme being of the universe and the center of all existence. That is what the title "Lord" means. David acknowledges the sovereign rule of God over all life and in particular, his life. Every blessing that David receives comes from the hand of the Lord Jehovah himself.

The "shepherd" was well-known in Israel as well as in the rest of the ancient world. People not only understood what a shepherd was, but most knew something of the life of a shepherd and his sheep. It was a common sight for those who lived at that time.

The Bible describes many shepherds. David certainly knew all about them, for he had been a shepherd when he was young. He had experienced all the joys and all the difficulties of a shepherd's life. He had also come to understand what it meant to be a good shepherd who was genuinely committed to the safety and welfare of his sheep. When he called the Lord his shepherd, he was speaking of the relationship he had with the Lord. He had come under his watchful caring eye.

The most important word for all believers is the word "my" as David proclaimed, "The Lord is my shepherd." With that David tells us that he has a personal relationship with the Lord of the universe. This personal relationship is one of salvation in which David received the gift of eternal life when he turned from his sin and trusted the Lord.

The Lord is the supreme being of the universe full of infinite love, grace, and mercy. Yet, if we didn't have a relationship with him, it wouldn't matter how wonderful he is. It was because David was under the Lord's care and the Lord was David's shepherd that he could rejoice in the midst of all his difficult circumstances. It is the same for you.

If you are a Christian, then the Lord Jesus Christ is your shepherd and you are his sheep. In John 10, Jesus shared that he had a special relationship with all his disciples. He said,

"I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. (v.14-15)... I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." (v.28-29)

He knew every one of them by name and they listened and followed him. He held them in his hand and no one could ever take them away from him. What a comforting thought! The Lord Jesus himself cares about you and me and all of his flock. That is what this psalm of praise is all about. Sometimes that is so hard for us to believe, but it is true. As your shepherd, the Lord is deeply concerned about you.

David recognizes his utter dependence on the Lord to take care of him. Sheep are absolutely dependent on the shepherd. Sheep are weak, helpless, timid, defenseless, and in desperate need

of a shepherd's care. Danger from the forces of nature and other more powerful animals create a world for them that require help beyond their own abilities to prosper.

We are exactly like this. We live in bodies that are growing older and affected by disease and illness. We have to face a world that is full of selfishness and strife. We have within ourselves fleshly desires that cause all kinds of problems in our lives when we give into them. We need to realize that we need to depend on our shepherd to help us live wisely and to help us in every situation we face.

The more dependent we are on the Lord the more he will work in our lives. In 1 Peter 5, Peter says,

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time casting all your cares upon him for he cares for you. (v.6-7)

If we humble ourselves before the Lord and cast all our cares upon him, he will raise us up at the proper time because he genuinely cares about us. Isn't that incredible? The supreme being of the universe has chosen to care about you and me. If we humble ourselves before him and bring all our concerns to him, he will take care of us as he promised. Do you believe this? Do you know that if you are a Christian, the Lord Jesus is your shepherd? Do you trust that your loving shepherd is watching over you? He is. Will you place all of your cares into his loving hands? He is waiting for you to give your cares to him.

Day 3 The Provision of Your Shepherd

v. 1 I shall not want.

David now proclaims what the Lord has done in his life as his shepherd. He says, "I shall not want." In other words, "I will not have need." David says that he will have no need in his life that will not be met by his shepherd. This is what the shepherd does; he provides for the needs of his flock. If they are thirsty, he leads them to water. If they are hungry, he leads them to food. If they need safe shelter, he leads them to secure pastures.

A shepherd who neglects to provide for the needs of his sheep is not a good shepherd at all. As our good shepherd, Jesus is watching over us to make sure that our needs are met. In Philippians 4, Paul shares this same truth when he says,

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.(v.19)

God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ has taken upon himself responsibility for our needs. We don't have to beg him to fulfill our needs. He has already chosen to do it. Jesus himself tells us how God the Father meets our daily physical needs so that we can focus on his kingdom and righteousness. He says in Matthew 6,

"Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." (v.31-34)

We do not need to focus all our attention on meeting our own physical needs of food, drink, and clothing. Yes, we need to work to make the money for those provisions, but we should not make that the number one priority in our lives. God knows we have these needs and will take care of them. He desires that we focus our attention on the kingdom of God and on living righteously before him as our first priority. We should not worry about what will happen tomorrow, but be concerned only for the present day. We should live one day at a time and seek God's kingdom by trusting and obeying the Lord for that day.

Jesus will also meet our spiritual needs. We have many spiritual needs. If you think about it, they are all met as we live by the Spirit. Galatians 5:21-22 tells us that love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control can fill our hearts and minds even in the midst of difficulty. The Holy Spirit can and will produce his fruit in our lives as we trust and submit to the Lord. We can depend on it. All our needs are under his care. We should still pray for our needs, but we do not pray as if we are asking someone who has no love or concern for us, but as one who deeply cares for us.

Several years ago, I found myself out of work, with no job and no prospects. Being in this situation was fearful. I had little money in the bank and a wife and two kids to house and feed. I

imagined myself standing before this great abyss, which I now had to cross, much like Moses. When Moses reached the Red Sea, there was no human help available and a giant obstacle in his way. Over a million people were depending on him. There was only him and the Lord his God.

The Lord told Moses not to fear, but to trust the Lord and he would see the glory of the Lord displayed before him. That is what Moses did. The Lord fulfilled his promise and performed one of the greatest miracles in the history of the world, the parting of the Red Sea.

During this time, the Lord provided for my needs and the needs of my family. The Lord provided me a job as a substitute teacher during the day and a part-time job during the night. He provided my wife a part-time job as well. We had just enough money to survive if we were very careful with our finances. That wasn't all. He provided funds through various people who loved us. It was two years before I was in a full-time position again. Throughout that time, I often felt nervous and anxious as pending bills came due and I would have to place my trust in my shepherd again and again. The Lord always came through for us and he will for you.

I look back on that time, which I thought would be so devastating to us financially, and realize that our Good Shepherd gently led us down a path to greater faith. He met our every financial need during that time and blessed us beyond our needs in the days and months ahead.

However, that does not mean that the Lord did everything the way I wanted. I had to learn to accept what he gave me. When David proclaimed, "I shall not want," he was also demonstrating that he was content with the provision the Lord was giving him. He was not always looking for more or different provisions. He was not always thinking about what he didn't have and complaining about his circumstances. The Lord has promised to meet our needs, but we must trust him and accept his provision.

Sometimes it may seem like we are in such great need and the Lord is not doing anything. In those times, we should focus on what he has already provided and we will be able to see that he has met our needs at that moment.

Are you trusting the Lord to provide for your needs? Are you accepting his provision as he gives it? If you hold fast to him, he will never disappoint you. In the end you will look back and see how he has met your every need.

Day 4 The Peace of Your Shepherd

v.2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

There are three things that sheep crave which are food to eat, water to drink, and rest. David says the Lord provides all three for them. In v.2 he writes, “He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.” Land with an abundance of tender, green grass where sheep can lie down and rest peacefully beside clear waters is a great blessing. This is David’s emphasis here, the peace and rest the shepherd brings to his flock.

As the shepherd leads his sheep to such a wonderful physical place, the Lord leads us to a place of spiritual rest. This spiritual rest is the peace of Christ filling our minds and hearts. Jesus talked of this peace when he said, “My peace I leave you; my peace I give you.” When we experience the Lord’s peace, it is wonderful!

When I was a young pastor, there was a Christian woman in my congregation who was in her eighties. She had gone into the hospital to have heart surgery so I went and visited her before heart surgery. When I arrived at her bedside and began to speak to her, I could see right away that she was filled with the peace of Christ. She shared with me how the Lord was with her and she knew she was in his hands. Her faith was strong in the Lord. She gave to me that day a testimony of what the Lord Jesus can do in a person’s life. That was over thirty years ago and I still remember it. The Lord has used her testimony many times to encourage me in difficulty. I myself have experienced that very peace she did when I faced surgery.

If we are to experience his peace, we must trust our shepherd. We must realize that we will face circumstances in this fallen world that are so great that we cannot overcome them by our own power. We will face situations that are so difficult that we cannot endure them by our own strength. We need to turn to the Lord and trust him to give us the strength to endure and overcome obstacles by his infinite power.

Solomon, in Proverbs 3, shares the wisdom of placing our faith in the Lord. He says,

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (v.5-6)

He says we are to acknowledge his authority over us and he will direct us. When we trust the Lord no matter what the circumstances and follow his ways no matter what the troubles, the Lord will direct our paths. He will guide us and lead us in all situations.

We must realize that our shepherd has everything under control. There is no circumstance that we face that is too big for God to handle. Our Lord Jesus may not always act in the way we desire, but he is always at work in our lives as his sheep. This is why Paul says in Philippians 4 that we are to be anxious for nothing when he writes,

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (v.6-7)

The Lord does not want us to be anxious about the trials and troubles in our lives. He desires that we bring them to him in prayer and request him to work on our behalf. However, we need to bring them with a thankful heart. We should be thankful for all the blessings we have received from the hand of the Lord in the past and the blessings we are receiving right now in this difficulty. Look for his blessings and remember his blessings and then ask him for more of his blessings. This thankfulness will stimulate your faith as you consider what the Lord has already done for you.

Trusting the Lord with a thankful heart is what being a Christian is all about. Depending on the Lord and enduring through trials and troubles is what it means to be a Christian. We need to realize that the Lord will work in our lives in the midst of what we are suffering.

Paul knew what this meant in his life. Paul had many wonderful revelations from God in his life, yet his life was not perfect. He also had trouble as we all do. He had developed some kind of physical illness, probably some kind of eye disease. In 2 Corinthians 12, he writes that he asked the Lord to remove it, but the Lord wanted him to experience his grace through it. He writes,

So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (v.7-9)

The Lord did not choose to answer his prayer by healing him. Instead the Lord answered his prayer in giving Paul the opportunity to experience the Lord's power in his weakness. God does not always answer our prayers as we desire, but he always answers our prayers by displaying his power in our lives even in the midst of our weakness.

Have you brought your concerns and troubles before the Lord your shepherd and sought his strength rather than depending on your own? You can't face your problems without his power and strength. As a human being, you do not have the ability to overcome every trial and trouble you will face. But the Lord does!

Day 5 The Restoration of Your Shepherd

v. 3 He restores my soul.

The Lord also leads us to spiritual restoration. In v.3 David writes, "He restores my soul." The word "soul" is one's inner being, made up of the mind, will, and emotions. "Restore" means "bring back vigor, strength, encouragement, and motivation."

Sheep often become tired from the physical exertion of a long journey or troubled and anxious from all the obstacles encountered on the way. They face heat, insects, and many other discomforts, which make their lives so difficult. The sheep can become weary, exhausted, worn down, and unable to move any longer. In those situations, the shepherd comes alongside of his sheep and gives them the nourishment of fresh food and water and brings them to rest. After a time, the sheep are restored and ready to make another journey.

People go through the same thing. Life in a fallen world is not easy. Pressures and stress from work, family, finances, and physical illness that arise in our lives can cause us to become weary and exhausted with a strong desire to give up. Added to those challenges are the spiritual realities of the temptations of the flesh, the world, and Satan and you can be assured that we all need spiritual restoration on a regular basis.

That restoration comes from hope, the hope that spiritually re-energizes us to keep on trusting the Lord. Hope is faith that the Lord will bless us in the future. That kind of hope causes us to be encouraged and motivated in the Lord. It encourages us not to give up even when today is a very difficult day.

What is our hope? Our hope is that the Lord will work all things that we are experiencing in our trials and troubles to our spiritual good. That he will bring blessing out of it. God does not always stop suffering, but he always turns it into an instrument of blessing for us, his children. This is why we need to hold onto Romans 8:28 so tightly which says,

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.

Through these times, God works for our spiritual good, which is to conform us into the image of his Son so that we might become more loving, more peaceful, and more joyful people as we depend on him in deeper ways. In what you are experiencing, the Lord's purpose is not to make you happy, but to make you a godly person, one who reflects his character. A godly person experiences the love, peace, and joy of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Sometimes the Lord will allow things to happen in your life that are difficult to understand. Our tendency is to ask, "Why, Lord, have you done this to me?" Sometimes troubles come upon us that just don't make sense. The timing is bad and happy circumstances quickly become troubled ones. We want God to instantly rescue us and make everything better. But that is not always how God works. We need to realize that God ways are not our ways. God does not always do what makes sense to us. In Isaiah 55 God says,

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (v.8-9)

The first thing that we need to understand is that God does not think like we do; God does not act like we do; God’s methods and plans are not like ours. God is an infinite being far above us in intellect, wisdom and knowledge. Psalm 147:5 simply states it this way, “his understanding is beyond measure.” God knows everything about the universe, about human beings, about his plan for the universe and human beings, about how one thing affects another. God knows everything about our lives, the most intimate details. He knows everything about the ones we love and everyone else on this planet. He knows what he wants to accomplish in our lives and the lives of everyone else. God is able to figure it all out and devise the wisest plan to accomplish his will and still allow man to exercise free will.

We need to remember that God's plan for us originates out of the mind of a being that is so far above us in understanding, knowledge and wisdom that if he were to explain all the details of his plan to us, we wouldn't be able to understand them anyway. God's plan for our lives is incredibly complex. We will not always understand why God seems to allow trials to pile up on us all at one time, why God allows one person to go through one kind of trial and another person another kind, why God keeps us from harm in one circumstance and not in another.

This is so important to remember when we are suffering, because this means that we will never fully understand why God does what he does. We desperately want to know why. “Why did God do this?” “Why did God allow this?” We think that the solution for coping is in the explanation, but it is not. It is trusting God without explanation. Rather than search for the answer to the “why”, God asks us to take another path, the path of humility and casting our cares upon him. As we have already seen in 1 Peter 5, Peter says,

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.” (v. 6-7)

To humble ourselves before him means to give him the “why.” It means not to demand an explanation from God as if he owes us one for doing this to us. It means to acknowledge that God's will is best and that God's mighty hand can meet our every need in the midst of this trial and when he is ready, he will lift us up. It means that we hold on tightly to Romans 8:28 that God will work all these things for our good.

In Psalm 42:5-6, David exhorts himself saying, “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.” Will you encourage your own heart to trust God for the future and hope in him?

Day 6 The Righteousness of Your Shepherd

v. 3 He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

In Psalm 23 David moves from the Lord leading us into restoration to the Lord leading us into righteousness. He says in v.3, "He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake." One of the responsibilities of a shepherd is to lead his flock down paths that are safe and secure. Only a foolish and unconcerned shepherd would lead his flock down dangerous paths where they could fall off cliffs or be the easy prey of wild animals.

The spiritually, mentally, and emotionally safe "path" for believers is the life of righteousness. The "paths of righteousness" refers to the "morally right way of life." God desires that we live in a way that reflects his righteousness, his way of living. God has a moral standard and every being that belongs to him must follow Jesus Christ in fulfilling that standard. That standard reflects his character and nature.

One of the things that I always do when I begin facing some difficulty that has come into my life is examine my life. I want to see if I have any unconfessed sin. If I do, I confess it and commit myself to living righteously during this time. If I don't, I still continue to focus on living righteously. If I want to see the Lord work in my life through this trial, I need to hold fast to the Lord by faith. I can't do that if I am turning away from him by holding onto my sin. This is why I make a fresh commitment to live righteously during this time.

This does not mean that I am not going to sin or that I am going to live perfectly before him. Rather it means that I am going to genuinely try to honor him through this time in every area of my life. When I do sin, I confess and turn from it immediately.

Deep or severe or long-lasting trials and troubles bring us to a crossroads in life. "Will we persevere and trust the Lord and follow him?" or "Will we give up our faith and forsake the Lord in anger or despair?" No one can sympathize with the pain that is involved in our lives when we come to this crossroads unless they have experienced a deep or severe or long-lasting trial. It is a very lonely place to be. But you can know that if you are at that point, Jesus was also. It is easy to forget that Jesus faced his death of bearing the sins of the world not only as the Son of God, but also as a man. His human nature had to face that coming judgement against sin in the Garden of Gethsemane. Matthew 26:36- records that event,

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go and pray over there." And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee and began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." And he went a little farther and fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "What, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." He went away again for the second time and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."

On that night, Jesus brought his closest disciples, Peter, James and John with him. He told them his deepest feelings in the statement, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death." He was saying that he was so sad that if his sorrow increased any more, he would have died. Jesus only spoke the truth. He was at the point of the greatest sorrow that a human being can bear. He was at that crossroads where the sorrow is so great, it tempts us to turn away from the Lord and what we know we need to do, persevere. Jesus took that sorrow and did what all Christians should do, ask his heavenly father to take the trial away. "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." Even as Jesus asked this, he still chose to submit his will to his Father. He wanted to do the will of God, but at the same time in his humanness, he didn't want to face such a deeply sorrowful trial.

But there was no other way to accomplish God's will so he submitted when he said, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." Jesus faced that crossroads and chose trust and righteousness by perseverance. Jesus knew what it was like to face whatever you are facing. He knew the sorrow and sadness that comes from the fall and what man has done to himself which has brought on evil and disease and disasters that plague us. But he chose God's way of doing things and God blessed him for it. The Lord knows that these situations are terrible. So, as our good shepherd, he leads us to obey and gently convicts us to turn away from sin. When the Lord's people live righteous lives then they will be loving, joyful, and peaceful people even in the midst of the most difficult circumstances.

Are you at a crossroads, do you need to strengthen your trust in the Lord and your commitment to persevering in righteousness? Take a good long look at Jesus and follow him. He will never disappoint you although you face the most difficult problems of life. He will give you peace and hope in the midst of it.

Day 7

The Presence of Your Shepherd

v.4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.

Before sheep can lie down to rest and experience peace, they need to be free from fear. As long as there is even the slightest suspicion of danger from dogs, coyotes, cougars, bears, robbers or other enemies the sheep stand ready to flee for their lives. They have little or no means of defense. This was especially true when they had to travel through valleys where they are very vulnerable to attack by enemies hiding in the hills. It would be a frightening situation. They would have to face the possibility of death.

There is no way to eliminate these dangers that sheep will be facing, for they are a fact of life. What they need is protection. It is the protection of their shepherd that brings them peace and comfort. When David writes, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for you are with me" he is speaking of the presence of the shepherd who protects his sheep. His presence reassures them, as nothing else does. The Lord our shepherd is there with us and will protect us.

As human beings, our hearts are often filled with fear, anxiety, and worry. But David says, "I fear no evil for you are with me." David encountered many dangerous situations in his life. First, he faced the wrath of King Saul who was jealous of him. Then his very own son, Absalom, pursued him. They both had one desire, to murder him. David had to face the possibility of death, yet David did not fear because the Lord was with him. Notice, it is not because the danger has disappeared or been eliminated, but rather because of the presence of his Lord in his life.

If we want to overcome fear in our minds, we do not need to eliminate the cause of the fear, but our fearful reaction to it. Trusting in the power, presence, and protection of our good shepherd is the way we overcome our fear. We can be assured that wherever we are and whatever is happening to us, the Lord is with us.

This is so important to remember when we are struggling, that God is always with us in the midst of suffering no matter how we feel. Sudden traumatic circumstances can make us feel abandoned by God. All of our feelings about the closeness of God may be suddenly gone. We may think, "What happened?" or "Where is the Lord?" One thing we must always remember is that our feelings do not always reflect reality. God is a Spirit and we cannot see him. We must trust his Word about how he acts toward us who believe in him, not our feelings. After Jesus resurrected from the dead, he met with his disciples and gave them the Great Commission. Along with that commission in Matthew 28, he gave them a promise. Jesus said,

"I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Wherever you are, whatever you are doing, in whatever circumstances you find yourself, the Lord is there. You may be lying in the hospital struggling with a physical illness or sitting at home wondering how you are going to pay your bills or stressed out at work. The Lord is there with you. You need to trust these words. You need to hold fast to this promise of the Lord's presence

with you. It doesn't matter whether you feel like he is there or not; if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, he is there with you right now. And he is there because he loves you.

Paul tells us just how just all-encompassing the nature of God the Father's love for us. In Romans 8 he writes,

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Everything that exists including ourselves is in this list. We as believers cannot be separated from God's love. Sometimes our feelings make it seem that God has stopped loving us. We feel that God has left us. After all, if God loves us, how could God let us hurt so badly? Those feelings should not be trusted. Feelings must be anchored in the Scriptures. They must not be allowed to change our perception of God. God has not and cannot change.

You must hold to this truth with all your heart. The God who has loved you and worked in your life when times were peaceful is the same God that is loving you and working in your life in the midst of these difficult circumstances. You must embrace this truth by faith and then your mind will guide your feelings into embracing it. This will help you to turn toward God for help rather than away from God because you may feel he doesn't care. Psalm 100 says,

For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

When the Lord loves, he loves forever; when the Lord is faithful, he is faithful forever. By faith, recognize that he is there with you right now. Talk to him. Tell him how you are feeling and ask him for his help in your situation and trust him to answer your prayers because of his love for you.

Day 8 The Protection of Your Shepherd

v.4 Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

When David says earlier in v.4 "you are with me." He is not implying that the Lord is just standing around doing nothing when he is with us. He is, in fact, actively working on our behalf. David's lack of fear comes not only from the presence of the Lord, but also from the Lord's strength to deal with every attack of danger.

David writes in v. 4, "Your rod and your staff, they comfort me." David mentions the rod and staff of the shepherd that would give the sheep comfort. The rod was an instrument of protection both for himself and his sheep when they were in danger.

The skilled shepherd used his rod to drive off predators like coyotes, wolves, cougars or stray dogs. Often it was used to beat the brush discouraging snakes and other creatures from disturbing the flock. The staff was a long stick, up to six feet in length which had a crook or hook on one end. It was used to aid the shepherd in climbing and hiking. The rod and staff were the symbols of the strength and power of the shepherd to protect his sheep from danger. In the same way, the Lord is able to protect us from danger by his infinite power and strength. In Job 42, Job declares,

I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. (v.2)

God is more powerful than all creation and has the power to do anything he decides to do. There is no purpose he has that can be stopped by anyone, not man, not angels, not Satan himself. God's power is supreme over all creation and everything he chooses to do is done. He has no obstacles in his way.

This is a great comfort to us as the Lord's sheep. When we are struggling, it is easy to feel that somehow the Lord's purposes for us have been thwarted. Everything seemed fine and we felt the Lord was graciously working in our lives, then in a moment all that seemed to vanish. We may now be in a different location than we are used to; everything familiar may be gone. Is the Lord still working in our lives? Yes. The Lord's power is still working on our behalf. There is no obstacle that we face that is too big for him.

The Lord's protection does not mean that nothing bad or hurtful will happen to us, but rather that nothing will happen to us that he has not allowed. Nothing will happen to us that he will not work through to bring spiritual good in our lives. Because the Lord himself has cursed mankind in judgment of our sin all human beings must feel the effects of sin in the world. That includes Christians. But he protects us so that only what he allows can get to us.

Every Christian can recount close calls they had with death. I remember a Christian in one of my congregations who was sailing a boat of food supplies from a Christian relief organization. He was off the coast of Africa and had unknowingly sailed through a coral reef, which could easily have ripped his boat apart. He didn't even know he had successfully navigated it until he had reached shore. When he arrived on land, he was told about this amazing circumstance. It made a deep impression on him that the Lord had protected him. He would joyfully tell that story over

and over again. How many near misses have you had? I have had a few and I thank God for protecting me.

I believe that when we get to heaven, we are going to be amazed about how many times the Lord protected us when we didn't even know it and how many times the Lord healed us from an illness that could have turned into something far worse. You may be going through an illness and wondering if the Lord will heal you. That is up to him and his will for your life, but be assured that he is in control and is protecting you in ways you cannot see. He is your shepherd and is using the rod and staff of his power to allow only what he chooses to happen to you. With whatever he allows, he always surrounds it with his blessings.

In Psalm 33:18-22, the psalmist speaks of the watchful eye of our Lord and Shepherd over him and the joy it brings to his life. It says,

Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine. Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name. Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you.

Are you trusting him to be with you through your troubles? Do you really believe that the Lord has the power to protect you and accomplish his purposes through what you are going through? Pray and ask the Lord to help you trust him. He will. He has not forgotten you. He could never do that!

Day 9 The Present Blessings of Your Shepherd/Host

v.5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

David has shared some wonderful truths in this Psalm about our relationship with our Lord. But in saying all of this, David realized that the richness of the Lord's gracious blessings toward us couldn't be told in just comparing a shepherd and his sheep. David now chooses to picture the Lord as a shepherd turned gracious host. In the ancient world, every shepherd was not only required to take care of his sheep, but also to act as a gracious and concerned host when he had guests. David reveals that the Lord does more than just care for our needs, he also treats us with honor and respect graciously giving to us more blessing than we deserve even in the midst of distressing circumstances.

In v.5 David says, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." A traveler has come to the shepherd's tent possibly fleeing from enemies who are pursuing him. He is in need of the shepherd's sanctuary and help, his food and shelter. The shepherd would consider it a great honor to host a guest who has come on such a journey. "To prepare a table before me" is an expression that was used of a host preparing and presenting a meal to a guest. A shepherd, of course, would not have a table and chairs, but rather a rug and pillows.

He would provide for him a banquet of all kinds of food and drink. In v.1, David says the Lord meets our needs, both physical and spiritual. Here, he says that the Lord gives to us more than what we need, more than the minimum. He shares with us out of his abundant blessings. This is why David writes further in v. 5, "You anoint my head with oil, my cup runs over."

To show honor and respect for a guest, the host would anoint the head of the guest with perfumed oils. This is a picture of the honor that the Lord bestows upon us as his children. John the apostle describes this in 1 John 3 where he marvels at the great love God the Father has given to us his children. He writes,

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. (v.1)

When we accept Jesus as our Savior, we become children of God. This brings many spiritual privileges and blessings. David has already shared some of these in this psalm, but he also wants to share that these blessings of God do not trickle out in our lives; they pour out. David declares, "my cup runs over."

This is the guest's drinking cup at the banquet. The word "runs over" or "overflows" means just that, to flow over the top. The cup represents the life of the believer. The liquid represents the blessings in the life of the believer. David proclaims that God's blessings in his life have overflowed. They have been abundant!

He is telling us that no matter what we are facing our lives are overflowing with God's blessings. How is this so? First and foremost, we have the blessings of salvation. The Lord has given us forgiveness of all our sins, the Holy Spirit living in us and working through us, the Lord

watching over us, and the promise of an eternal inheritance. The value of these blessings cannot be measured. Whatever we have sacrificed and suffered in this life pales in comparison to the eternal blessings of life with God in heaven.

We also have the blessings of experiencing the Lord's work in our lives as he displays his power and sovereignty and fulfills his purposes for us. This is how Joseph felt when he saw the Lord bring his brothers back into his life so he could save his family from certain death in the famine.

Joseph must have been devastated to realize he had been sold into slavery by his own brothers. Yet the Lord was leading and guiding him as his good shepherd. God led him to become the steward of Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh. The Lord blessed him by making him successful under Potiphar. Even when he was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and thrown into prison, the Lord was still guiding him by bringing him into contact with the King's cupbearer. The Lord put a disturbing dream into Pharaoh's mind. Then he brought the opportunity and ability to interpret the dream to Joseph. Until finally Joseph was where the Lord wanted him, second in command to the Pharaoh of Egypt.

Through difficult circumstances and a long period of years, Joseph finally saw his brothers standing before him in Egypt humbled and in great need of his help. How did Joseph react? Was he bitter and angry with them and the Lord? In Genesis 45 Joseph tells his brothers that God had used all that he had experienced to bring him to his high position in the land of Egypt so that he might save them from the famine that was ravaging their lands. He said,

So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. (v.4-8)

Joseph saw the tremendous blessing of being guided by the Lord to the right time and right place so that the Lord would work through him to preserve his family and their descendants, the people of Israel, from the famine. Joseph saw all his suffering and sacrifices for years in this light. The joy of being used by God in such a way over-shadowed anything that he had suffered at the hands of his brothers.

It is easy to think that other believers have more of God's blessings available to them than you do. It is easy to think that other believers have an easier life, but all believers have highs and lows, trials and troubles just like Joseph and David. God uses suffering in our lives to take us places we would never have gone and to reach people we would never have met, to accomplish his purposes in our lives and the lives of others around us.

However, the Lord also blesses us in the non-spiritual realm. There is so many ways that the Lord does this. Each believer has stories to tell of the Lord's provision in his or her life when the Lord more than abundantly supplied his needs.

Think about what the Lord has done in your life. What stories do you have to tell of his provision and blessing? What about right now? Look around for his blessings. They are there.

They are always there. We often are so focused on our problems or what we think is wrong with our lives that we miss what is right, what the Lord is doing in the midst of our situation.

Day 10 The Goodness of Your Shepherd/Host

v. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life

David now ends his psalms of praise by answering the question, “How long will I experience God’s blessings?” Have you ever gone somewhere or been with someone and had such a wonderful time that you never wanted it to end? My wife and I took our nephew and niece to an amusement park when they were five years old. We were there the whole day. It was getting late and the kids were obviously tired. I finally said that it was time to go. My nephew heard that, looked at me with his drooping eyes and blurted out, “one more minute, just one more minute.”

We don't have to say “One more minute of blessings Lord, please. Don't withdraw your blessings from us.” God’s blessings are not withdrawn, they “follow” us. This means God's goodness and kindness will pursue us. The goodness and kindness that we experience in life as believers is one that will continue our whole lives and reach into eternity. The goodness and kindness of the Lord will pursue us wherever we go and whatever we do for the rest of our lives into eternity.

How can this wonderful truth be true? It is because God is the sovereign ruler of all creation and is in control of all creation. In 1 Chronicles 29 David declares a great truth. He says,

“Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.” (v.11-12)

Everything and everyone in heaven and earth belongs to the Lord. God owns everything and everyone which includes, human beings, good angels, evil angels (Satan and demons), animals, the physical universe, the spiritual realm, everything. There is nothing that God does not own. God owns them because he has created them. There are no more magnificent words in all the Scriptures than the words of Genesis 1,

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (v.1)

In Colossians 1, Paul reveals that the Father created both the physical and spiritual realms through his Son, Jesus Christ. He writes,

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (v.16-17)

As creator, he is owner and as owner they are under his control. God rules all. This means that everything that happens in the universe and in our lives and the lives of our loved ones is under his control. He either does it or allows it. This truth cannot be overemphasized.

When a trial comes into our lives no matter what its source, it is within the will of God. That doesn't mean God wants someone to sin against us or hurt us, but it does mean that God has allowed that within his sovereign will. God has allowed human beings to sin against each other and has allowed Satan to tempt us and has allowed earthquakes as part of his penalty for the fall, but as we have seen God has chosen to use all of these things for our good.

Nothing that happens to us or to someone we love has happened outside the rule of God. This is important to remember because we tend to feel that as long as everything is going smoothly in our lives, we feel good about God being in control of our lives. But when our employer calls us into his office to let us know that we are being laid off, it is hard for us not to feel that our circumstances have suddenly spun out of control. If the doctor tells us that we have an incurable disease, we can feel that somehow God has lost control of our lives. We can feel that somehow God is not as powerful as we thought. In reality, nothing has changed in regards to God. God is still in control and is using this circumstance in our lives for his purposes. Truth, not our feelings, is our guide in these times.

To cope with difficulty and suffering God's way you must trust that God is in control. He has never lost control even when you are in distress. You can rest in the knowledge that the God who sent His Son to die for you because of his love is still in control of your life. He will work all things together for your good!

Day 11 The Future Hope of Your Shepherd/Host

v. 6 and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

“Dwelling in the house of the Lord,” means that we shall be with the Lord as a part of his household forever. Even the honor and blessing of the shepherd/host and guest analogy isn't enough to describe the blessings that are ours in Christ. So great does the Lord love us he has made provision for us to experience his goodness and kindness in his very presence forever in his family.

Who can measure the greatness of our future life with Jesus Christ forever? Sometimes we wonder how God can stand to watch his children suffer. He does not desire that any of us suffer, but when we do, he sees it in relation to eternity. He knows that when we are in eternity, our joy and happiness and gratefulness will be so great, that we will wonder why we suffered so little in comparison to what we have received.

What an incredible experience heaven will be. It will be a life without pain or suffering, only joy and happiness. In the presence of Christ, we will leave all the difficulties, trials, and hardships of this physical existence. The book of Revelation reveals to us that God is bringing an incredible pain-free existence to us that will last forever. Revelation 21 unveils this to us. It says,

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” (v.4)

David himself held tightly to this hope of a joyful and happy future with God in eternity. He describes it in Psalm 16 when he says,

in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (v.11)

This is God's perspective and will be ours one day. We will finally be with him enjoying a life that far surpasses the most extreme moments of happiness that we can experience in our earthly physical existence. Everything that we have endured for Christ in this life will be overshadowed by the blessings we will be experiencing.

It is so important to remember this especially if you or someone you love has been afflicted with some sudden life-threatening circumstance. This physical life is full of physical weakness in our bodies no matter how much we try to keep them healthy. It is part of our fallen world. Physical disease and death are a reality and they are never pleasant, but harsh and painful. It is during these times, that we must hold tightly to our hope for a joyful and glorious life with Jesus when we get to heaven. Sometimes we want to grasp our physical existence so tightly as if no heavenly future existed, but we don't have to. Our future hope is what it means to be a Christian.

Just before he was to die, in John 14, Jesus told his disciples,

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I

go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” (v.1-3)

Jesus calls heaven “his Father’s house” to show us that heaven will be our new home where all of God’s family will dwell. It will be a place of warmth and love and peace and harmony. Jesus himself will bring us into the Father's presence and we shall be with them forever! He sacrificed himself on the cross to bring us into his sheepfold and be our shepherd, and to bring us into his tent to be our host is the basis of our lives as Christians and finally to bring us into his home in heaven with God our Father. You need only one response. Trust him with all of your heart! He will work to bring you into a bright and glorious future!

Day 12

An Invitation from Your Shepherd

Maybe you have been reading this book and have been encouraged by the words of God given in Psalm 23, but there is a doubt in your mind whether you truly are a Christian, a child of God. You want to experience all of the blessings that the Lord offers, but you are not sure that you are experiencing them. Maybe you have even gone to church your whole life, but never made a personal commitment to Jesus or you are not sure you have. I invite you to read this chapter and make sure of your salvation by turning to Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

Maybe you know that you are not a Christian and have thought about Jesus, but have never really done anything about it. You have never made a personal commitment to him. In this chapter, I would like to share with you what the Gospels say about how you can come to know the Good Shepherd, Jesus, and become a child of God.

Jesus came to give people the opportunity to enter into a personal relationship with him. Jesus said that he was the good shepherd who cared deeply about his sheep, so much so that he was willing to lay down his life for them. When Jesus laid down his life at the cross to pay the penalty for the sins of people, he gave them the opportunity to come to him and receive forgiveness and become a part of his spiritual flock. Jesus said,

"I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep...For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. (John 10:14-15, 17)

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:27-28)

Jesus invited people to come to him for salvation

Jesus knew that the trials and tribulations of life bring spiritual weariness and burden to the hearts of people. He invited people to come to him for spiritual rest and peace. Jesus said,

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

To come to Jesus involves trusting in Jesus

Jesus said that people "come" to him by believing in him, that is, by trusting that he is the Son of God who died on the cross for the sins of people, and that he will give them eternal life if they trust in Him. Jesus said,

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not

condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (John 3:16-18)

To come to Jesus involves turning away from sin

Jesus was very specific about the issue of sin in people's lives. Sin is turning away from following God's moral standards. Jesus offered forgiveness for sins if people would turn to him and accept his payment on the cross. Jesus preached a simple message of "repentance," which means "turn away from sin and turn to God."

"From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17)

Jesus said that if people did not turn to him and believe in him, they would die in their sins. Dying in their sins meant divine judgment. Divine judgment meant punishment forever away from the presence of God. Jesus said,

"For unless you believe that I am he [the Son of God], you will die in your sins." (John 8:24)

And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. (John 12:44-49)

Trusting in God is not enough, you must trust in Jesus

Many people assume that it doesn't matter what they believe about Jesus. As long as they "believe in God and love him" they will go to heaven. But Jesus did not teach that belief. Jesus taught that God the Father desired that he, God the Son, also be honored and glorified. Anyone that does not honor the Son cannot honor the Father who sent him. Jesus said,

"For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." (John 5:22-24)

Jesus clearly said that he was the only way to salvation and receiving eternal life. There are no other ways to heaven or living with God forever.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

To come to Jesus involves asking him to save you

The Gospels record that the people that came to Jesus all did the same thing. They believed that he was who he claimed to be; they turned from their sins; they trusted him to save them; and they asked him to save them.

An example of this is the last person Jesus saved before he died. He was a criminal on a cross hanging next to Jesus. He had sinned against God and man and had received the just penalty of his crimes. Yet God in his mercy gave him the opportunity while facing death to hang on a cross next to God's own Son. This man realized who Jesus was and humbled himself before the Son of God. He turned from his sin, trusted Jesus, and asked Jesus to save him. Jesus responded to the man's faith as he always did, promising him that he would receive eternal life with the Son of God forever. This is what Luke records,

Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. (Luke 23:32-33)

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:39-43)

Will you come to Jesus and receive eternal life?

The words of Jesus that you have just read are not only for those who lived at the time of Jesus, but also for you. Jesus is speaking these words to you and inviting you to come to him for salvation and to receive from him eternal life. He desires that you come into his kingdom.

How do you do it? By coming to him in prayer and asking him to save you. You must turn from your sin and acknowledge to God that you are a sinner and no longer want to live according to your own will but you want to follow Jesus' will. You must believe that Jesus is exactly who he claimed to be, the Son of God, God become a man, and that he died on the cross for your sins.

Ask the Lord Jesus to save you from the penalty of your sin and accept his payment for your sins on the cross. Ask him to be your Savior. Trust him to save you; trust that he will save you if you turn from your sin and ask him. If you are not sure what words to use to speak to Jesus, below is a prayer that you could use. It is not the words; it is the desire of your heart.

"Lord Jesus, I admit to you that I am a sinner and have sinned against you. I turn from my sinful way of life. Please be my Savior. I accept your payment on the cross for my sins. I trust that you are the Son of God and will save me now that I am asking you. Thank you, Lord. Amen."

If you are not sure that in the past you have asked Jesus to be your Savior, you can ask him today. In fact, you may have gone to church most of your life, and yet have never turned to Jesus

and asked him to save you, you can make that commitment right now. Turn from your sin and ask him. Once you have asked him, trust that Jesus has fulfilled his word and is now your Savior.

You may not “feel” like a change has taken place in your life, but it has. You must believe by faith that Jesus is now your shepherd and you have eternal life in him. May the Lord bless you as you enjoy a personal relationship with Jesus Christ!