

Our Shepherd Restores and Guides

Psalm 23:3

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Turn with me to Psalm 23, Psalm 23, one of the most loved passages in all of Scripture, often used almost exclusively for times of death, one of the most common Psalms that is used at funerals, and yet, this Psalm, while it's a comfort in the midst of death, is really a Psalm about life. It's about our Shepherd shepherding us through all of the issues of this life. Let's read it together, Psalm 23, and again, as I always urge you to do, try if you can to imagine that you'd never read these words before, you'd never heard them, and imagine the meaning they would bring if they were new.

A Psalm of David.

The LORD is my shepherd,

I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside quiet waters.

He restores my soul;

He guides me in the paths of righteousness

For His name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I 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 have anointed my head with oil;

My cup overflows.

Surely goodness and steadfast love will follow me all the days of my life,

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

What a magnificent poem and such richness in so few number of lines.

Now, once you see the title of Psalm 23 and you learn that David wrote it, it makes perfect sense why he uses the metaphor of a shepherd. As you know, he spent his early years alone, caring for his father's sheep outside of Bethlehem, so it's understandable why to him no image captures the goodness and the grace of God in the lives of all who belong to Him, like the image of a shepherd. David doesn't make a single request of God in this Psalm because it's a Psalm of his trust, his confidence in God, and who God is, and what God will do. We can reduce the message of this Psalm to this, because Yahweh is our Shepherd King, He will always care for us and we will lack nothing that we truly need.

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David builds the entire Psalm really, on a single metaphor, that of a shepherd king. That's, by the way, what draws it together. Verses 4 and 5, I'm sorry, verse 5, doesn't, on the surface, look like it fits with the shepherd motif, but once you understand that he's really referring to our king as a shepherd, which was very common in ancient times, David himself is referred to as a shepherd, the shepherd of his people, then you understand how it all comes together. One metaphor, the metaphor of a Shepherd King who cares for His people, and like a shepherd, meets all of their needs.

First, David identifies the nature of our relationship with God. That's in the first line of this Psalm and then in the rest of the Psalm he explains the practical benefits that come from that unique relationship that we have with God. Now, just to remind you where we have been so far, we have looked at verse 1, the first part of verse 1, and we've done so under this heading: How to Think About God, One Powerful Illustration of Our Relationship with Him. That's what David is saying to us. He's saying, here's how I think of God, and under inspiration he's telling us this is how God wants us to think of Him.

"The Lord IS my shepherd." When we looked at this first verse we broke it down very simply, but I think the emphasis is right. First of all, we looked at who exactly is our shepherd, Yahweh, the One who is self-existent, who needs nothing and nobody, who is greater than all, who made all things, who sustain all things, He IS my shepherd. The covenant keeping God of Israel, the Lord, IS my shepherd. While the Hebrew doesn't contain the being verb, the construction itself implies this state of being, that's the implication. The Lord IS, as a state of being, my shepherd. This is always true. It never changes. Once I came to know Him, He is and always will be my Shepherd.

"The Lord is MY shepherd." That's really where the emphasis falls here the way David constructs it. Because, you see, Israel was used to thinking of God being the shepherd of the nation, but David personalizes it, to an individual, to himself, to me, to you, to those of us who know God through His Son. "The Lord is MY shepherd," a very intimate and personal basis.

"The Lord is my SHEPHERD." That beautiful metaphor of a shepherd king, one who knows the needs of his flock and who cares for them, and meets those needs, and leads them where He ought to lead them, and cares for them and protects them. "The Lord is my SHEPHERD."

Of course, the New Testament, as we noted, tells us that our Shepherd King came into the world. John 10:11, "I am the good shepherd," Jesus said. Hebrews 13:20 refers to Jesus Christ as the, "great Shepherd of the sheep, even Jesus our Lord." Just like a shepherd does for his physical flock, Christ chose us, He bought us, and He cares for us individually. He knows each of us by name. He knows us individually. He has made us His own. He delights in caring for us. This is our Lord Jesus Christ. So in a very real sense, as we discovered, Psalm 23 is the divine job description of Jesus our Shepherd King. He is our Shepherd. So when we say, "The Lord is my

shepherd,” in New Testament terms we are saying, “Jesus is my shepherd.” He is the one mediator between God and man, always has been, always will be.

Now, secondly, we had begun to consider the second part of this Psalm. Once we established that illustration of our relationship, we looked secondly at: What to expect from God, Six Practical Benefits of Our Relationship with Him. The second line of verse 1 gives us a summary of the benefits that are ours in Him and versus 2 through 6 give us specific benefits that are ours. So, “The Lord is my shepherd,” notice verse 1, therefore, “I shall not want.” That second line is really the keynote of this Psalm and the relationship between the first line of verse 1 and the second line of verse 1 is one of cause and effect. Because Yahweh is my Shepherd King, I will not lack the care that I need. So what is it, though, that I won't lack? That I will not be short of? Well, in the rest of the Psalm David identifies six practical benefits that we will never lack because Jesus is our shepherd.

Last time we studied this Psalm together we considered just the first great benefit of our relationship to Him as our Shepherd and that is provision. Look at verse 2, there are two snapshots from the life of sheep that picture God's provision for our needs. The first one is, “He makes me lie down in green pastures,” and we talked about the fact that, first of all, green pastures are hard to find throughout the year in Israel, so it's the exercise of great care for the sheep that's illustrated here, but the lying down illustrates that there's more than enough, there's an abundance, sheep are well fed and they lie down to rest. The second snapshot, “He leads me beside quiet waters,” beside waters of rest. It may mean that the waters themselves are not running swiftly because sheep are easily frightened, or it may mean, just like the first line, that there's so much water to drink in the place where this shepherd waters his sheep that they can drink, lie down to rest, and get up again and there's still more water, so it may have the same idea of an abundance.

What we learn from these two snapshots is that God's provision for our needs is comprehensive. It's both for our physical needs and our spiritual needs and we looked at why that's true and how we can argue that from this Psalm. Also, His provision for our needs is consistent. He always cares for us throughout this life into eternity. His provisions are abundant, more than we need, we can eat and lie down and rest. We can drink and lie down and rest and have more than we need. They are appropriate for our situation and, thank God, they are eternal, because verse 6 says that care for us will extend into eternity future. I like the way Paul puts it in Ephesians 2:7 when he says that part of the reason God saved us is “so that in the ages to come He might show us His kindness in Christ Jesus,” His constant care. So that's provision.

There's a second practical benefit that we can expect because God is our Shepherd and this is where we pick up from where we left off last time, and that is restoration. Restoration. Look at verse 3, “He restores my soul.” Now we need to look at this carefully because there are a couple of potential meanings here. First of all, consider the word restores. The Hebrew word means to

cause to turn back, to cause to turn back or to return. Keep that in mind, then look at the word soul. The Hebrew word for soul is the word nephesh. It's a word that has a wide range of meaning. At times it is used specifically for the immaterial part of man's being, what we mean in English when we say soul. At other times, this same Hebrew word is used of one's life, or even of the entire person.

So, in light of those different senses of those two words, there are a variety of ways that this expression in verse 3 could be translated. It could be translated, "He causes my soul to turn back." "He causes my life to return." "He causes my entire person to be restored." You get the idea. There are a number of different ways it could be translated. So what does David mean? Well, remember the context, David is comparing what God does for us with what a shepherd does for his sheep. So in what sense does a shepherd restore his sheep? I think, in context, David is probably emphasizing three activities of our Shepherd.

First of all, He causes us to return when we stray from Him into sin. This is a quality of sheep that is universal. No animal more thoroughly lacks an internal GPS than sheep. Maybe you know someone, I know someone, who is directionally challenged. Sheep are far worse. They find it easy to get lost even in familiar surroundings. In addition to that, they are prone to intentionally wander away in their pursuit of greener pastures, in their pursuit of food. In light of this, one of the major responsibilities of a shepherd is to actively go in search for sheep who have wandered away from the path while he's moving them from one grazing field to another. Instead of staying in line with the other sheep and following him from one field to another they wander off and the shepherd has to go find them.

This is a constant temptation for God's sheep as well. Psalm 119:176 puts it this way, the Psalmist says, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep;" and he meant from God's paths laid out in God's word, "seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments." The Psalmist is essentially praying that God would restore his soul, that God would seek him out. This is a very common issue for all of us. The best of saints is prone to stray from his God. There's a hymn we sing, you remember the verse, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love; here's my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above."

Left to ourselves, I want you to let this sink in for a moment, left to ourselves we would stray from our God into sin and we would never find our way back. We must rely on our Shepherd. We must cry out for our Shepherd to seek us and bring us back, and the clear implication of this text is that is exactly what He does. One of the primary uses of this verb restores in the Old Testament is for turning back to God in repentance and I think that's implied here in this particular activity of God restoring us.

Now think about this for a moment, David experienced this on a very personal level. He had strayed from His shepherd into gross sin, the sin of adultery, the sin of murder, and based on the timeline when you put it together, David had remained in unrepentant sin for at least the nine

months of Bathsheba's pregnancy, and he would have stayed there except for his Shepherd, but his Shepherd sought him out, and you remember how, he sent the prophet Nathan, told him the story that pricked his conscience and said "You are the man," and David repented. He came back. He didn't come back on his own. He was brought back through the work of his Shepherd.

This is what Jesus our Shepherd does for each of us as well. Consider what He said to Peter, you remember, on the night of the betrayal, Luke 22:31-32, He said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat." Now, in this occasion, Jesus does not guard Peter from falling into sin. He allows him to see his own heart. He allows his pride to run its course and his fear of man, and in the end he betrays his Lord, but Jesus wasn't going to allow him to stray forever, He says, "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail," you're not going to stray off and never come back, "and when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

Christ does the same thing for us, as our great high priest, He prays for our return, for our repentance, and the Father answers His prayers. In addition to that, Jesus describes Himself as being on a personal mission to rescue every lamb of His that strays. Turn to Matthew, Matthew 18. This is a remarkable chapter. It's really the first teaching on the church. The church has not yet been founded, of course, until the day of Pentecost. Jesus has talked about the reality of it coming in chapter 16, but He begins to teach about this coming entity called the church in this chapter. He mentions in the section on church discipline about telling it to the church, but I want you to see what else He describes here. He describes Himself. Look at verse 12, Matthew 18:12,

What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? If it turns out he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones [*and he's already defined that in this context, He's talking about believers, that not one of these believers*] perish.

Here you find the heart of Christ for the one who strays, the one who strays off the path, who strays out of God's commands and into sin. Christ says, I'm going to go find him, I have to go find him and I'll bring him back. Why? Because it's the will of the Father that not one of them perish and the idea here behind perish is I don't think be eternally damned. That's impossible. He means perish in the sense of be utterly devastated so that the faith is wrecked. Jesus says I'll seek them out, if one strays I'll find him.

Now, how does Jesus do that? How does Jesus seek us out today when we stray? Well, right here in the context you find one way and that is through the process of confrontation and church discipline. He seeks out His sheep. In 2 Corinthians 7, He says He seeks us out through His

word by bringing conviction to our hearts as He did through Paul's words to the Corinthians. In Hebrews 12 He seeks us out by disciplining us, but notice, again, back in Psalm 23, I love this, that even though He may use circumstances, He may use other believers, it is He who restores. "He restores my soul."

So He causes us to return when we stray into sin, but I think there's a second nuance behind this expression, "He restores my soul," and that is He recovers us from both physical and spiritual sickness. He restores our whole being, our vitality. You see one of the shepherd's responsibilities was to care for the well being of his sheep and Jesus does this for us. He does so in both senses. First of all, He does so physically. Just as a sheep can do nothing to restore itself to physical health, sheep are utterly helpless, no steps that we take to maintain our physical health will prove successful apart from the direct intervention of our Shepherd. He is the one who cares for us, even in this way, and this is the message of Scripture throughout. I don't need to belabor this, Exodus 15:26, "If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes," this was His promise to the Israelites, "I will put none of the diseases on you, which I have put on the Egyptians;" but here is a comprehensive statement about the character of God, "for I, the LORD, am your healer." That's always true. Deuteronomy 32:39, "See now that I, I am He, there is no god besides Me; it is I who put to death, and I give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal." Psalm 103:3 speaks of God as the one "who heals all your diseases."

Now, I'm all for using means. God uses means. He does so in sanctification. He does so often in our healing, although He can certainly do it directly without intervention, but I think it is an affront to the goodness of God when we attribute our physical healing ultimately to anything but Him. Why do I think that? This text in 2 Chronicles 16:12 gives that clear message, one of Israel's kings, "Asa became diseased in his feet. His disease was severe, yet even in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but the physicians." This doesn't mean it's wrong to seek physicians. It means it's wrong to put your confidence in humans, rather than throwing yourself on God. Asa was living in rebellion against God and even in his illness he refused to seek God, and it was an affront to God because God is the One, who for us who are His sheep, who cares for us, even physically as a shepherd does for the physical health of his sheep.

I think also, spiritually, He recovers us. Our Shepherd is the one who rescued us from the spiritual disease of sin and made us His own. Isaiah 53:6, "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him." But once we belong to Him, once we are one of His sheep, He is still the one who restores from the spiritual disease of indwelling sin and when sin comes into our lives.

Look at Psalm 51. This is another, obviously, Psalm of David. Psalm 51, notice verse 10. Sin had so distorted David's soul that he says, what I need, in Psalm 51:10, is I need you to recreate my heart, I need You, God, to do an amazing work of change in me, "Create in me a clean heart,

O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” Verse 12, You, God, “restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit.” David says, God, in light of my sin you’re going have to be the one who recovers me from what I have done, from what I have, the disease I have brought into my soul.

How does God restore the spiritual vitality of those who are His? He does it through His word. Psalm 19:7, “The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul. It’s through His word that He brings that restoration and healing to our souls.

I think there’s a third nuance behind this expression, “He restores my soul,” and that is, He causes us to return when we stray from Him into sin. He recovers us from both physical and spiritual sickness, but thirdly, He revives the spirit of the weary, and the exhausted. He brings back the vigor and vitality of life. There are a number of examples of this in Scripture, let me just cite two of them. I love the example of Elijah. Elijah was, as we all know, an incredible man of faith, one of the great heroes of the faith, and right after that amazing display on Mount Carmel, when God sends down fire, Elijah finds his soul extremely discouraged.

In fact, turn back to 1 Kings, 1 Kings 19. Remember now, Elijah has just seen God send down fire on Mount Carmel to destroy the sacrifice; He has killed the prophets of Baal. He thinks Israel is now turned back to God, verse 1 of chapter 19,

Now Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me and even more, if I don’t make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.” [Verse 3,] He was afraid and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, [*this was a long journey from where he was in Jezreel,*] and he left his servant there and he went another day’s journey into the wilderness, and he came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, “It is enough; now, O LORD, take my life for I’m not better than my fathers.”

I think you could say, here is a man who is spiritually weary and exhausted. So what does God do? I love this story, the tenderness of God, I wish I had time to walk you through it. God, first of all, cares for him physically. Sometimes that’s the better order. God put him to bed, gave him sleep, God brought food, fed him, and then God says I’m going to take you to Horeb, and there you’re going to get a fresh revelation of who I am. He revives the spirit of the weary and the exhausted.

One other text on this front, turn to Isaiah 40. Isaiah 40, look at verse 27. These are the exiles of Israel, been carried off captive, and Isaiah says to them, “Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, ‘My way is hidden from the LORD,’” God doesn’t see, He doesn’t know, ““and the Justice due me escapes the notice of my God’?” You ever feel like you’re in desperate circumstances

and nobody knows, and even God Himself doesn't appear to care? Isaiah says, "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, Yahweh, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable." He's not affected by your circumstances and in fact He will get you through those circumstances, He will bring fresh strength, verse 29, "He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power." They didn't feel like they could continue to survive in exile. They felt like they had had too much, Lord there's more than I can bear, and God says,

I give strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might I increase power.  
Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly,  
*[though the people you expect to have the most endurance can't endure]* yet those  
who wait for the LORD *[that is, those who believe God, and wait for Him to act, wait for Him to keep His promise]* will gain new strength; *[Literally the Hebrew text says will exchange their strength, His strength for mine.]* they will mount up  
with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not  
become weary.

Listen, I don't know what circumstance you find yourself in tonight; I don't know how desperately you feel that this is more than I can bear. Don't ever forget that your Shepherd is the one who can restore your soul, who can revive the spirit of the weary and the exhausted. Spurgeon writes, "When the soul grows sorrowful, He revives it. When it is sinful, He sanctifies it. When it is weak, He strengthens it. Are any of us low in grace? Do we feel that our spirituality is at its lowest ebb. Pray to Him then, 'Restore me, Shepherd of my soul.'"

So what's the application of our Shepherd's restoration? Let me must just give you a couple of things to consider. First of all, a true Christian will not remain in unrepentant sin because our Lord never leaves His sheep lost and wandering. Matthew Henry, the great Puritan commentator, puts it this way, "The best saints are sensible of their proneness to go astray like lost sheep; they miss their way. They turn aside into bypaths, but when God shows them their error, gives them repentance, and brings them back to their duty again, He restores the soul, and if He did not do so they would wander endlessly and be undone." But he goes on to say, "That could never happen, not our Shepherd, not one of His sheep," and so he says this, "Though God may suffer His people to fall into sin, He will not suffer them to lie still in it." So don't be afraid. If you're in Christ, He will never abandon you to the sin you struggle with. He will always care for your whole person, body and soul, because that's the kind of shepherd He is.

Secondly, as Spurgeon urged, pray for restoration. Pray for restoration. Don't only pray, "Lord, don't lead me into temptation. Don't get me into a place where I'm going to be tempted." And don't only pray, "Lord, if you let me be in a place where I'm tempted, don't let me sin," but add to that something I pray often, I pray those two prayers and then I add this, "Lord if in your providence you allow me to sin, to show me my own heart, don't let me stay there, let me run to



you and be restored.” And then on the physical side, let me just say this, use doctors and medicine. They’re an expression of God’s common grace in the world, but don’t ever put your confidence in them. There’s only one healer and He doesn’t wear a white lab coat.

So, what benefits can we expect from our shepherd? Provision, restoration, and briefly, thirdly, direction, look at verse 3, “He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” Literally, He guides me in the ruts of righteousness, in the wagon tracks of righteousness. Just as a shepherd walks before his sheep, guiding them in the right path, our Shepherd guides or directs us in the right paths as well. Now what does this mean? I think there are two implications here.

First of all, He guides us by His providence in our circumstances. This is what theologians call God’s sovereign will. This is what God has determined, in all of the details of life, will be done and God works that out. Proverbs 16:1, “The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord;” 16:9, “The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.” This is God’s sovereign purpose being enacted in a life. Proverbs 19:21, “Many plans are in a man’s heart, but the counsel of the LORD, it will stand.” Proverbs 20:24, “Man’s steps are ordained by the LORD, how then can man understand his way?”

This introduces us to the paradox of the fact that we actually make our own decisions and we alone are responsible for our decisions, but at the same time God is superintending that so that He directs our steps. This is the paradox of human action and divine sovereignty. Jeremiah 10:23, “I know, O LORD, that a man’s way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.” One of my favorite examples of that, let’s turn back there, turn back to Genesis 24. Here’s how God can sovereignly, in His providence, direct in your life. Genesis 24 and look at verse 27. This, of course, is the story of the selection of Rebecca, and notice, “He said, ‘Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His steadfast love and His truth toward my master; as for me, Yahweh has guided me in the way to the house of my master’s brothers.’” Here you have the story of God sovereignly gaining a wife for Isaac. Look at verse 48, here the servant is reporting of what has happened and he says, “I bowed low and worshiped the Lord, and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had guided me in the right way to take the daughter of my master’s kinsman for his son.” Now, I wish we had time to walk through this story because it is a remarkable display of providence. You remember, he shows up at the watering hole and ends up in this house of Abraham’s relatives and God has selected a wife for Isaac.

Listen, God works the same way in our lives. He works this way in your life. He guides us by His providence, in and through our circumstances. But, secondly, not only does He guide and direct us by His providence in our circumstances, He guides us by His word and Spirit into the right patterns of thinking and living. Theologians call this aspect of God’s will, His moral will. Our Shepherd doesn’t leave us to our own devices. He leads us in the right paths, the ones in which He wants us to walk. He gives us a knowledge of His moral will. In fact, look with me at

Psalm 25. You see the Psalmist crying out for God to teach him the right paths. Psalm 25:4, “Make me know your ways, O LORD; teach me Your,” predictable patterns of behavior, “Your paths.”

He’s not talking here about show me what color car to buy, he’s talking about the way to walk in life, in a way that pleases God, and he says You, God, are the one who will teach me that. Verse 5, “Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; for You I wait all the day.” Look at verse 8,

Good and upright is the LORD; therefore He instructs sinners in the way.  
[*Through His word.*] He leads the humble in justice, He teaches the humble His way. All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and truth to those who keep His covenant and His testimonies.

God teaches us His word. Psalm 143:8, “Let me hear Your steadfast love in the morning; for I trust in You; teach me, O God, the way in which I should walk.”

In His word He teaches us how to walk, the paths on which to walk, but He also not only teaches us His will, He works in us obedience to His will. Think about this for a moment. A shepherd not only shows his sheep the paths they ought to walk on, but he leads them and compels them to walk on that path. In the same way, our Shepherd makes sure that we walk in the right paths. I wish I had time to take you to Ezekiel 36 and to the new covenant where this is the promise, “I will cause them to walk in My ways.” So He not only teaches us His ways, He writes His law on our hearts, and He compels us, He accomplishes this in us.

This is the message of Philippians. Turn to Philippians 2. Philippians 2:12, of course, tells us to “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling,” to pursue our sanctification. Why? Verse 13, “for,” because, here’s why you should work out your own salvation, because, “it is God who is at work in you,” and what’s God doing in you? “He is at work in you, both to will,” to produce the desire to obey, “and to work,” to actually work obedience in your life, and He does this “for His good pleasure.”

The way the Psalm puts it in Psalm 23 is, “He leads us in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” In other words, it’s all grace, He doesn’t do this because of our goodness, but rather for the manifestation of His own goodness and His own glory. That is, after all, the chief priority in everything God does. And the paths that we walk on either bring shame to our Shepherd, or they bring glory to His name, and so it’s in His interest to ensure that we know the right paths, and He compels us to walk on those paths. This is the Spirit producing sanctification in the life of a believer, and where that doesn’t happen sometimes He takes extreme measures as He did with the believers in Corinth who, because of their rebellion some had died, but He will make sure that His sheep walk in His paths for His name’s sake.

Now, very briefly, what is the application of our Shepherd's direction to us? Let me give you three thoughts. First of all, pray for wisdom to make wise decisions, but don't feel the pressure to discern God's sovereign will beforehand. You know, some people spend their whole lives, I've got to find God's will, and what they mean by that isn't the will of God as it's revealed in this book, they mean, I've got to find out what color car to buy, or what house I ought to buy and God's going to tell me that. God's not going to tell you that. You just pray for wisdom to make wise decisions and then trust God's sovereign purpose to be worked out in your life. As you seek to follow the Shepherd, He will direct your steps. You make your plans, but He is the One who will direct your steps.

Secondly, be in God's word faithfully seeking to know His revealed moral will. That's how He teaches us to walk in His ways. It's by learning His book. The paths are laid out here. Walk in these paths. And thirdly, pray to understand God's revealed will in Scripture just like the Psalmist did so often, teach me God, teach me, I want to understand, and pray for God to produce obedience to His will within you. Lord, don't only teach me the way I ought to walk, but work in my heart to give me the desire and the doing. This is what our Shepherd does. Look again at Psalm 23:3, "He restores my soul; He guides me in the path of righteousness for His name's sake." What a Shepherd we have.

Let's pray together. Our Father, we have not done justice to this amazing text, and to the richness of Your care for us, but we bless You, O God, that You are the restorer of our souls. You are the One who guides and directs our lives both in Your sovereign providence and through Your revealed will in Scripture. Lord, we are so grateful that You have become our shepherd, not because we deserve it, but because You are gracious. You chose us and You bought us at the cost of the life of Your son. We thank You. We pray that You would help us to follow You in the person of Your son, our Shepherd, our Shepherd King. May we humble ourselves before Him and walk in His paths and follow Him every day of our lives. We pray in Jesus's name, amen