

## Psalm 23:4-6

Ps 23:4-6 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. (5) You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. (6) Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.

### Questions On The Text

#### **If God is our shepherd, what should we not fear?**

Verse 4: Those who put their trust in God as their shepherd should not fear the “valley of the shadow of death.” This phrase can also be translated as “total darkness.” Though I walk through total darkness, I will not fear.

The child of God has no cause to fear while going through times of total darkness, even in the face of death itself. Compare this with what Hebrews 2:14-15 has to say about the fear of death. In fact, in Isaiah 45:3, God says that there are treasures in darkness and that He promises to give them to us. All we need do is put our trust in Him.

The reason for the confidence to be able to face times of darkness is that the Lord is with us. Jesus repeated this idea of the abiding presence of God at the end of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

#### **What does the sheep find comfort in?**

Verse 4: The sheep are comforted by the shepherd’s rod and staff. The rod is actually a club which was used by the shepherd to beat off wild animals. As our Shepherd, God uses His club to beat off the enemy. Next time you’re going through a tough time because of the enemy, just remember that He’s a big God, and He wields a big club!

The staff refers to the shepherd’s crook which is used to keep the sheep from straying from the path the shepherd has chosen. God uses His shepherd’s crook to bring us back into line. This symbolises God’s discipline in our lives. See Hebrews 12:1-11.

So together, the club and the crook symbolise protection over us and His discipline in us.

#### **What does God do in the presence of our enemies?**

Verse 5: God prepares a table for us. This is a picture of how God honours us as special guests at His banquet, even in the presence of our enemies. It is a symbol of the favour of God that we experience in our lives. When David was being pursued by his son Absalom, he experienced this favour and provision in a very practical way. See 2 Samuel 17:24-29.

#### **In what other ways does the Lord honour us?**

Verse 5: He anoints our heads with oil. The word “anoint” literally means to fatten. Fat animals were considered the healthiest, and the fat was the best part of a sacrifice. As a result, this word can be used metaphorically in the sense of to prosper or enrich.

More specifically, the anointing referred to here, alludes to the custom of anointing an honoured guest at a banquet with oil. Perfumes were added to the oil as an extra pleasure.

As God's special guest, our cup runs over. The cup running over indicates that God supplies our needs abundantly. Compare this with Philippians 4:19 and 2 Corinthians 9:6. Again, we see how God holds those in honour who put their trust in Him.

### **What was following David all of his life?**

Verse 6: As one of God's sheep, David was being followed by goodness and mercy. The word "follow" is actually a strong word which means to pursue. Thus the final picture is that of the sheep, the shepherd leading out in front, and goodness and mercy in hot pursuit for an entire lifetime.

### **Where is the final dwelling place of the believer?**

Believers will dwell in God's house forever. In the New Testament (1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 4:17), God's house is referred to as the church, but it also symbolises the place where God dwells.

### **Further Questions For Discussion:**

How does faith play a part in dealing with fear in our lives?

In what practical ways is the presence of God manifested in your life?

Have you ever experienced the Lord's intervention in beating off the enemy?

Have you ever experienced God's disciplinary action?

Do you ever feel like you are being honoured as God's special guest?

In what ways is God's provision evidenced in your life?

In what way are you aware of God's goodness and mercy pursuing you?