

Part 4 – The Table, Anointing, Dwelling

In part 3 we learned that our ‘good’ Shepherd leads us in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake because He is jealous of His good name (reputation) for He alone is the only ‘good’ Shepherd and He won’t give His glory to the ‘false’ shepherd (Satan) who tries to govern His children for his own selfish sake because it destroys (physically and spiritually) His children, even their souls. And therefore, He leads us through all ‘dark valleys’ – hard times – in life and helps us to understand that this flesh life is temporary, and that our flesh death is only a ‘shadow’ of the true death that is to come, for those who refuse God’s only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as their Savior and King. We also learned that when we trust in Jesus Christ, we have nothing to fear for our ‘good’ Shepherd is always with us because He is *within us*. His ‘rod’ (the Word of God) and ‘staff’ (His Holy Spirit) are always with us to teach us the right path to go on and gives us the strength and understanding we need to stay on the ‘right path’, even when we are ‘cast down’ or get off the ‘right path’ momentarily. He will even use His ‘rod’ to chastise us, if need be, because *He loves us* - as any good shepherd does not let his sheep go astray. We now move on to see what else David teaches us, through the beautiful example of Jesus Christ being our ‘good’ Shepherd and we being His sheep...

Psalms 23

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

David now speaks of the ‘good’ Shepherd **preparing a ‘table’ before him**, even in the presence of his enemies. It’s important to remember that this Psalm is speaking from a shepherding point of view – and specifically from the *sheep’s point of view*. And the high mountain country of summer ranges that the shepherds seek out are known as alpland, or *tablelands*. And even in the US (and southern Europe), the high plateau of the sheep ranges are called ‘mesas’, which is a Spanish word for ‘tables’. And even in Africa, the word for table is ‘mesha’ (in Kishwahili), probably brought there by European explorers. In fact, the use of this word is not uncommon in referring to the high, flat-topped plateaux (plateau) of the continent. The classic example is the Table Mountain near Cape Town, which is world renowned. So, what David is referring to as a ‘table’ is actually the entire high summer range. And, as these ‘mesas’ are far away and hard to reach, any good shepherd will take the time, and trouble, to ready them for the arrival of his flock. For many times there are poisonous plants that have to be removed for the safety of the sheep. They also have to make sure salt and minerals distributed over the range at strategic spots, as well as finding places for the sheep to bed at night. And, of course, also seeking out the grassy places where to feed the sheep at, as well as clean water sources. All these (and more) are things the shepherd has to do to ‘prepare’ the ‘table’ for the sheep.

So, that’s the context of the ‘table’ from a shepherd’s point of view. But since this Psalm is written from the ‘sheep’s’ point of view, David was saying he knew how the ‘good’ Shepherd ‘prepared’ ‘a table’ for him. For, like sheep (especially lambs) we often feel we have to ‘try out’ everything that comes our way. We have to ‘taste’ this and that, sampling everything, just to see

what it's like. This is, in fact, as much of human nature as it is a sheep's nature. So, to forestall our getting into trouble, we need to remember that our 'good' Shepherd has 'been there' ahead of us, preparing the 'table' head of us, to see that we won't be harmed. A good example of this is when Jesus warned Peter that Satan desires to 'have' him (tempt him) and to 'sift him' like wheat. But Jesus told Peter He had prayed for him, so that his faith wouldn't fail during the difficulty he would soon encounter (Luke 22:31-32). In like manner does Paul tell us...

*26 Likewise **the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities** [weaknesses]: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but **the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.***

*27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, **because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.***

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

Rom 8:26-28

The foresight of our 'good' Shepherd, Jesus Christ, is much better than any shepherd's. So, we know that He indeed sees what is coming, and knows how to prepare the 'table' for us. He also knows how to prepare **us** for what's coming as well. And He knows how to pray for us so we won't succumb to sin in a way that would be deadly to our 'walk of faith' in Him. Another side to the 'table' can be found in the tabernacle that Moses set up in the wilderness (and also Solomon's Temple he built for God). There was a 'table of shewbread' in the sanctuary where bread was always to be on it [https://t.me/BibleStudyBooks_Exodus/173]. This is symbolic for our spiritual food, which is, of course, the Word of God. As Jesus told us in John 6:63: *It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.* The Word of God is our spiritual food [<https://t.me/BibleStudyDownload/463>] that gives us spiritual life. And our Heavenly Father indeed prepares our heart and mind to be able to 'feast' on His 'table' of truth, just as the shepherd goes out to prepare the 'tablelands' for his sheep to eat the best grass there is. And yet another aspect to this 'table' is the fact that we are to write God's Word on the 'tables' of our heart. Proverbs tells us...

*1 My son, keep my words, and **lay up my commandments with thee.***

2 Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye.

*3 Bind them upon thy fingers, **write them upon the table of thine heart.***

Prov 7:1-3

In Jer 31:33 God says the New Covenant that Jesus Christ would make with Israel would be based upon writing His Law in their 'inward parts' – which is our heart and mind. Paul speaks of this also in Heb 8:10 and 10:16 as well as 2 Cor 3:2-3. So, the analogy of God preparing a 'table' for us is *very* significant in God's Word. And, while we can see from the 'sheep's' perspective why David wrote this, it also applies to feeding our soul on God's Word and writing (programming) His Words into the very essence of who we are – in our heart and mind - so that we will *know how* to obey God and *want* to do it. As Moses said in Deut 30:14, the Word of God

should be so close to us (in our inward parts, our heart and mind) *so that we do it*. Paul explains this in Rom 10:5-11 as well.

Now, David also says that the ‘good’ Shepherd prepares a ‘table’ for him *in the presence of his enemies*. What does this mean? Well, while scouting out the ‘table’ a good shepherd will also keep an eye out for the kind of predators there are. He’ll look for signs and tracks of wolves, coyotes, cougars and bears or lions (depending where they are there are different predators). These predators need to be neutralized in some way; many times they can be hunted and trapped so the shepherd knows their flock will be safe. If not, then the shepherd at least knows the threat is there and can be on guard for them while their flock is grazing and, of course, at night. So, this again shows us that our ‘good’ Shepherd knows every wile, trick and deception of our enemy (Satan) and his followers. And in John 17:15, Jesus prayed to the Father for His sheep, asking God... *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest **keep them from the evil***. And in Luke 10:19, Jesus even told us that He has given us (through the Holy Spirit) *power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you*. While we have to learn to obey the Holy Spirit (and the Word of God) to claim this promise, it is there for us so we can be safe from all the power of Satan, and those who follow him. Remember, our ‘good’ Shepherd is *within us* when His Holy Spirit dwells in our soul. And this is indeed what keeps us from all evil, so long as we stay close to and remain willingly obedient to Him, as good sheep should. After all, it’s always the distant sheep – the roamers, wanderers – which are picked off by predators in an unsuspecting moment. This is why it’s important to study His Word each day and keep it in mind throughout the day. We should also stay in communication with God (through the Holy Spirit) by praying to Him in our mind. As Paul says in 1 Thess 5:17, we should ‘pray without ceasing’ and Jude 20 tells us this builds up our faith because we learn how to recognize God’s Holy Spirit and differentiate it from other spirits (evil ones) vying for our attention [<https://t.me/BibleStudyAudios/39>]. Paul calls this ‘walking in the Spirit’ in Gal 5 [<https://t.me/BibleStudyBooksEphesiansGalatian/14>]. After all, this is a part of putting on the Gospel armor, as Paul points out in Eph 6:18 when he says we should be *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints*.

Now, in this verse 5 (of Psalms 23) David also says that ‘*my cup runneth over*’. This too says so much when we consider this Psalm is written from the ‘sheep’s’ perspective. In fact, in this Psalm, David is recounting the prominent events of the full year in a sheep’s life. They are taken from the homestead (where every need is carefully supplied) out into the green pastures, along the still waters, up through the mountain valleys to the tablelands of the summer. And just as the sheep are on the high meadows – where the forage is fresh and tender, there are clear running springs and wonderful dew, and there is intimate contact with the shepherd – we’re told that we need to be ‘anointed’ with oil... *why?* Because, as most everyone knows, summer time also bring out many insects which are a pain to us humans, to our gardens and crops and our animals as well. And even though sheep are high in the mountains, they are not without the threat of insects. There are a host of them that can cause problems (depending on the area): warble flies, bot flies, heel flies, nose (nasal) flies, deer flies, black flies, ticks, mosquitoes, gnats and other minute,

winged parasites that proliferate at this time of year. Their attacks on animals can readily turn the golden summer months into a time of torture for sheep and drive them almost to destruction. Further to that, sheep are also susceptible to ‘scab’, which is an irritating (and highly contagious) disease common among sheep world over. It’s caused by a microscopic parasite that, of course, thrives in warm weather. And because sheep love to rub heads, in an affectionate and friendly manner, ‘scab’ is most commonly round the head.

So, what does a good shepherd do? At the very first sign of pests or disease among the flock he will apply an antidote *to their heads* - for the nose flies is particularly destructive for the sheep and the scab is almost always on the head. Old time shepherds usually used a homemade remedy such as linseed or olive oil, sulphur and tar which was smeared over the sheep’s nose and head as protection against pests and diseases. Some will even build something to dip the sheep’s *entire* body into, to soak the sheep with the antidote ‘oil’. Once the oil is applied, the aggravation, frenzy, irritability and restlessness that pests and diseases bring *are gone*. And the sheep can again feed quietly and then lie down in peaceful contentment. And what a beautiful analogy this is for our own life. From petty annoyances, to nagging distractions (that can become burning issues) can drive us ‘up the wall’ just as the pests and disease do to sheep. And diseases, such as the ‘scab’ are much like sin that sickens our soul. And, like with the ‘scab’, we too can get ‘sick in the head’ when we ‘rub heads’ with people who don’t have the mind of Christ. While we shouldn’t be afraid to speak to people, or to plant seeds of truth, we should be careful who we listen to, and keep company with, simply because of the timeless old saying ‘birds of a feather flock together’ – which means that *we become like the company we keep*. And this applies as much to news, movies, tv, music, education as it does with speaking to people face to face.

So, just as with the sheep, there must be continuous (renewed) application of the ‘oil’ to forestall the ‘pests’ in life. Only when our head (soul) is ‘anointed’ with the Holy Spirit, we are protected from all dangers of pests and diseases. As 2 Cor 1:21-22 says: *He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God. Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts*. And with this anointing, we indeed can live healthy and productive lives as we faithfully follow our ‘good’ Shepherd. And that’s because, only with the Word of God and His Holy Spirit in our heart and mind (which oil is symbolic of) can we be freed from these sorts of ‘pests’ and ‘diseases’ in our life. When people, circumstances, or events (beyond our control) tend to ‘bug’ us, it’s possible to be content and have peace of mind when these ‘outside’ forces are counteracted by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Rom 8:1-2 tells us that the law of the Spirit of life in Jesus Christ makes us free from the law of sin and death (the carnal mind that gets ‘bugged’). It’s thus the daily ‘anointing’ of God’s gracious Holy Spirit upon our heart (desires, emotions and intentions, motivations) and mind (thought process) that produces love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, and contentment in our soul during these trying times (Gal 5:22-23). So, whenever we are ‘bugged’ by the annoyances (and threats) that will come in life, we must remember to look to our ‘good’ Shepherd and ask for His anointing ‘oil’ to help us cope with our problems, *big or small*. So long as we’re asking in earnest (and not being hard hearted) He’ll *always* help us. And, regarding spiritual diseases that comes from being around other people who don’t have the mind of Christ, the best ‘antidote’ is again the ‘oil’ of the Word of

God and Holy Spirit. But we *must* do *our part* to obtain that oil by actually studying God's Word *daily*, for ourself, and ask that the Holy Spirit continue to be in us, to guide us throughout the day – helping us to *remember* His Words of wisdom and to help us deflect the ideas, and thoughts (desires, attitudes, etc.), that are not godly. So, we must strive keep God's Word in the *forefront* of our mind in order for the Holy Spirit to help us with this. It takes effort on our part to be conscious each day, hour and moment to what the Word of God teaches us and the guiding (oil) of the Holy Spirit. And it's wise to ask God (in Jesus' name) to keep the Holy Spirit upon you, to help your conscious, *and subconscious*, mind to monitor your thought-life, including your desires, emotions and even your intentions and motivations.

Now, there is yet another interesting use for oil among sheep and it comes at rutting time. Just like males of all animals, rams fight to gain favor of the sheep for reproductive rights. And this can be very damaging to them. So, many times a shepherd will remedy this simply by putting oil (or even grease) on their head so that when they collide, they simply glide off each other without doing harm. This helps them decide not to fight (at least, not as much) and calms them down as well. And this fact among rams is also applicable to people too. For we (male or female) often 'butt heads' with each other and for many reasons. And yet again, like sheep, the remedy for this is having the grace of the Holy Spirit in our soul to help us refrain from 'butting heads' to the point of harming ourselves, or others. And while this doesn't mean we should be a 'walking matt' for anyone, the Holy Spirit will help us to discern how to 'pick our battles' wisely and not put out futile effort when it's a waste of time (or can be damaging). This is especially important within the Body of Christ. In his letter to the Galatians, after Paul gets done explaining the 'works of the flesh' (things that the carnal mind produces) and the 'fruit of the Spirit' (things the Holy Spirit produces in us), he goes on to say...

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Gal 5:24-26

Many disputes amongst people come from the carnal mind, *because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be* (Rom 8:7). And with this mindset on (the carnal mind) we cannot be pleasing to God (Rom 8:8). But if we put on the 'mind of Christ' we'll learn to put off the carnal mind (the 'old man') and let His Holy Spirit lead us. And part of the way the Holy Spirit leads us is by recalling to our mind what we've learned from God's Word, in situations where we're so emotionally charged, we can't remember it ourselves (John 16:13). But, as Paul tells us in Rom 8:13, if we allow the Holy Spirit to help us 'mortify' (subdue and eventually kill) the 'deeds of the body' (our carnal mind) then we will 'live'. This means we'll learn how to live with peace of mind and avoid the entrapments that our carnal mind gets us into, as well as the traps that Satan and other 'workers of iniquity' work to ensnare us into.

Now, at the end of verse 5 (here in Psalms 23), David ends with a simple statement: ‘**my cup runneth over**’. A ‘cup’ in God’s word can mean several things. God even speaks of a ‘cup’ of wrath that will pour out on the wicked when He returns. And Jesus also had a ‘cup’ He had to endure [<https://t.me/BibleStudyTruth/1215> , <https://t.me/BibleStudyDownload/418>]. And so, many envision this ‘cup’ David speaks of as a cup of truth that God gives us. And this is true at one level for indeed, Ps 16:5 tells us that *the LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot*. And Ps 116:13 also says, *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD*. So, while it’s true that our ‘good’ Shepherd indeed will give us so much truth that it spills over and impacts other people, *for the good* - that’s not necessarily what David was speaking of here, because he was speaking from the ‘sheep’s’ perspective. So, what ‘cup’ is being referred to here? Well, after the sheep have been grazing on the ‘green pastures’ all summer, fall inevitably comes. And then it’s time to go back down the mountain so the sheep have a safe place (on the farm) to spend the winter. And at that point in time, the sheep have been very well feed and are healthy and strong. So, in one aspect it can indeed be said that their ‘cup runneth over’ for they are healthy and strong due to the good feeding from all summer. However, what can also happen as they move down the mountain is that storms (even blizzards) can pop up and cause great suffering for the sheep (and the shepherd) while they ‘weather the storm’ *together* (Rom 8:17). So, in life, there are also times we have to endure the ‘cup of suffering’. Jesus Christ endured this while hanging on the cross and He warned there would be times we too would suffer if we truly follow Him (Mth 5:10-12, 10:22-24, 13:9-13, Lk 21:12-18, Rev 12:13-17). But we’re promised that our ‘good’ Shepherd will always help us through these hard times. 2 Cor 1:7 tells us that, *as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation*. And yet more Scriptures console us...

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

1 Cor 10:13

9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

*10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, **in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.***

Heb 2:9-10

It’s through the ‘hard times’ (the valleys and storms of life) that God cleanses us, molds us and makes us stronger. Paul explains this in Rom 5:1-6 as does Peter in 1 Peter 4:1-2, among other Scriptures. And Peter advises us to take it patiently and keep our faith strong in our ‘good’ Shepherd because He’ll always see us through (1 Peter 4:13-14, 1 Peter 3:14-17, 1 Peter 4:16-5). And Paul tells us that if we suffer with our ‘good’ shepherd, we’ll also be glorified with Him (Rom 8:17) when He returns to earth at His Second Advent. Heb 11 gives a list of great men and women who have lived before us ,who ‘kept the faith’ in all kinds of troubles; and they are our

examples to follow after (1 Cor 10:11, Jaems 5:10), as is our ‘good’ Shepherd Himself (John 13:15, 1 Pt 2:21, Phil 2:5-8).

But, another aspect of the ‘cup’ that ‘runneth’ over, can be found in how a shepherd helps the sheep when they are bitterly cold during the storms that comes in the autumn as they are moving down the mountain. The shepherd keeps some sort of alcohol (brandy or wine, etc.) to give (a tiny bit) to the sheep, and even lambs who don’t have much wool, when they need it. This perks them up immensely, as it warms them *from the inside out* and gives them the vigor and warmth they need to make it through the storms. Is it any wonder then that the blood of Jesus Christ is symbolic of wine, shown through His commissioning us to take Communion until He returns (Lk 22:19-20)? For indeed, Lev 17:11 tells us *the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul*. Jesus did give His blood to atone for our sins and when we believe upon it, He graces us with His Holy Spirit that ‘warms up’ our soul, giving us the strength and vitality we need to continue on (and even flourish) despite whatever storms we are experiencing in life. And on a physical level, Paul even advises Timothy to take *a little* wine when he had stomach issues (1 Tim 5:23) because of its healing properties. This takes one’s mind to what Paul said in the book of Romans...

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Rom 8:35-39

Psalms 23

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Throughout this beautiful Psalm, David has continued to emphasize the extreme care exercised by the attentive Shepherd; stressing how essential diligent effort and labor, on the shepherd’s part, is to the welfare of the sheep. David beautifully (and very emphatically) points out that, all the benefits a flock enjoys are due specifically to the skilled, dedicated and loving management of the Sheperd. As such, this is all summed up in the phrase: ***Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life***. A sheep who is in the flock of the ‘good’ Sheperd knows (of a surety) that he (or she) is in very ‘good hands’. No matter what comes, the sheep knows they can be perfectly sure that goodness and mercy will be given by the ‘good’ Shepherd because they are under wonderfully wise, sympathetic and loving ownership. As such, this isn’t just a bold

statement, but it's almost a boast. But, it's not a sinful kind of boasting; it is the kind of boasting our Heavenly Father tells us we *should* boast about, as it is written...

But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

Jer 9:24

Paul quotes this in his first letter to the Corinthians...

30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

1 Cor 1:30-31

And again, in his second letter to the Corinthians he wrote: *But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord* (2 Cor 10:17). So, David's boasting (as a sheep) is not sinful nor unwise. It's how we *should* feel when we're under the 'good' Shepherd's care. We should be elated to understand and know our 'good' Shepherd. After all, He is the Creator of all things, *even us* (Gen 1:1; Isa 42:5, 45:12, 18-19; John 1:1-5, 14; Col 1:14-19; Rev 4:11). And this truly, is the 'test of faith' for all Christians. Can we, under all circumstances in life, continue to praise, worship, love and serve our 'good' Shepherd through 'the thick and the thin'? *Do we trust in Him that much?* Do we allow troubles in life (small or large) cause us to waver in faith that the 'good' Shepherd can (and will) take care of us through it all? One cannot help but grow in faith when studying this great Psalm, and we would be wise to keep it in mind each day. For there is no better 'shepherd' to trust in than our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Even when our flesh body ails, even when our job folds, even when friends and family let us down and even when we don't understand why 'hard times' have fallen on us – can we, like so many others before us – continue to walk the good 'walk of faith' without wavering? That's exactly what our 'good' Shepherd is looking for, beloved. For, as we've already learned in our studies in the Psalms, *the LORD trieth the righteous* (Ps 11:5), even our hearts (1 Thess 2:4) as gold and silver are tried in a fining pot with fire (Prov 17:3). This 'fire' (Gen 4:24, Jer 23:39, Heb 12:29) indeed cleans the 'slag' (sin) out of our heart and mind and refines our faith so that it is *pure* (Acts 15:9). As Peter also tells us...

12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

*13 **But rejoice**, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*

*14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, **happy are ye**; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.*

1 Peter 4:12-14

For, as Jesus told several people He healed, faith is what saves us (Luke 18:42), which is why Paul says the only way we can be accounted ‘righteous’ with God is *if we have faith in Him*, for *the just shall live by faith* (Rom 1:17). So, as long as we *follow* our ‘good’ Shepherd, and keep our faith in Him *strong*, ‘goodness and mercy’ will indeed follow us all the days of our life.

Now, let’s remember that this Psalm began with the proud and joyous statement that “The Lord is My Shepherd”. Now, David ends this beautiful Psalm (which is almost a poem) with an equally exuberant declaration: ***and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever***. This depicts a sheep that’s so utterly satisfied with its ‘lot’ (Ps 16:5) in life, so fully contented with the care it receives, so much ‘at home’ with the ‘good’ Shepherd, that *there is not a shred of desire for change*. This then is why Paul tells us that *godliness with contentment is great gain* (1 Tim 6:6). When we truly learn to follow our ‘good’ Shepherd, we will learn to be happy and content with whatever state we are in throughout our life, just as Paul did Phil 4:11-12 - for it is our ‘good’ Shepherd that helps us through it all (Phil 4:13). As such, we should have no desire to go back to the worldly ways of sin, for experience teaches us that life is much, *much* better under the care of the ‘good’ Shepherd, than under the ‘care’ of the ‘false’ shepherd, Satan (the Devil).

Now, the ‘house’ used here in the closing verse of this Psalm 23 can be (and is) used in the greatest variations of applications (#1004). As such, while most people think of the ‘house’ of the Lord as being the Sanctuary (or Church) or meeting place of God’s people (which is true), we must keep in mind that David is writing in this Psalm *from the ‘sheep’s’ perspective*, and has been reflecting on (and recounting) the full round of the year’s activities for the flock. David has taken us from the green pastures and still waters of the farm (or ranch), up through the mountain passes onto the high tablelands of the summer range. Fall has come with its storms, rain and snow that drives the sheep down the foothills and back to the farm for the long, quiet winter. So, in this verse *there is a sense of coming home* – returning to the fields and corrals, barns and shelters of the farm. And during all seasons of the year (with all the hazards, dangers, disturbances) it’s always the shepherd’s alertness, care and faithful management that brings the sheep safely through it all. Therefore, what is truly what David is referring to as the ‘house of the Lord’ is the family, or household (flock) of the ‘good’ Shepherd. This, therefore, symbolizes how our ‘good’ Shepherd carefully guides us through this flesh life back to our true ‘home’ in the heavenly dimension *where He is* (when we pass away, or when Jesus Christ returns). And, the sheep (David) is so deeply satisfied with the flock to which it belongs (the ownership of this particular Shepherd), that *he has no wish to change whatsoever*. It’s as if the sheep, which is finally back home, is now standing at the fence, bragging to its less fortunate neighbors on the other side of the fence who are still under the management of the ‘false’ shepherd (Satan). It boasts about the wonderful year it has had and its complete confidence, and satisfaction of its owner – the ‘good’ Shepherd. And while we, as Christians, are not to be boastful in a sinful way, we are indeed supposed to share the reasons we follow Jesus Christ with those who have not yet come under His management. As Paul says...

13 And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

1 Peter 3:13-16

5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

6 Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Col 4:5-6

So, while we are not to be proud and boastful of *ourselves*, it is a good thing to be proud (in a humble and grateful way) to belong to our 'good' Shepherd, and to always be ready to share with others who don't know Him, *why you love being a 'sheep' in His 'fold'*. We *should* be able to look back at our lives and recall all the amazing ways He has provided for our welfare. We *should* delight to explain the hard experiences through which He has brought us. ***We should have no trouble telling people why we have confidence in belonging to Jesus Christ.*** And the contentment and peace of mind in our spirit should even testify to others what a distinct advantage it is to be a member of Jesus' 'flock' (household). As Paul wrote in Heb 3:6: *But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.* Every day we will undoubtedly come in contact with people who are 'on the other side of the fence' – those who are separated from the 'good' Shepherd. Does our countenance, life and conversation lead them to Jesus Christ? Does it 'shine' light on their miserable existence without Him? As Jesus Christ said...

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Matt 5:14-16

We should be a 'light' when Christ Jesus' Holy Spirit dwells in us (1 thess 5:19) and this will 'shine' onto others we come in contact with. And those who have not utterly hardened their heart will see that Light and long to come to it. And there is no reason they too can't come under the skilled management of the 'good' Shepherd – none at all. It's up to us to gently plant the seeds of truth to *allow the Holy Spirit to guide them back 'home'*. And then they too can find the blessings that come with 'dwelling' in God's house, *forever*. For as Ps 16:11 told us, the 'good' Shepherd will indeed guide us in the 'path of life' and in His presence (with His Holy Spirit within us) **is the fullness of joy** and at His right hand (being a part of the Body of Christ) **are truly pleasures forevermore...**

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, **the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.**

4 And **God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.**

5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, **I make all things new.** And he said unto me, Write: for **these words are true and faithful.**

6 And he said unto me, It is done [Ps 22:31, John 19:30]. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. **I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.**

7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.
Rev 21:3-7

AMEN.