

Guided By God For God's Glory

by James Jennings

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Scripture: Psalms 23:3, Matthew 5:16, John 10:27, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Colossians 3:17

Topics: "Following the Good Shepherd", "Seeking God's Glory"

Description

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Transcript

Well, let's turn in our Bibles to Psalm 23. This is going to be the fourth message that I've got from this glorious Psalm of David where we're trying to all the more remind ourselves and be acquainted with our Shepherd, the One who's leading us, guiding us, the One who is supplying all of our needs, the One who we rely on every day, every hour, every moment, the One to whom sustains us, the One who bought us, the One who we're following all the way to heaven's coast. And we need to constantly think about the Lord God Yahweh and the Lord Jesus Christ, our great God and Savior who gave Himself for us.

And so today, we're going to look at Psalm 23, verse 3, but the second half, right? My last message we focused on. He restores my soul. We thought about the Lord reviving us again in a personal way in our own hearts.

And we thought about how good and gracious our Lord is to revive us. But this morning, I want to look at what David says next. A statement he already made earlier, at least in part, he said, He leads me at the end of verse 2. But verse 3, He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for His namesake. Let's just read the whole psalm and then we'll focus in on that section right there. 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 still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His namesake.

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. Amen. Let's pray.

Lord, it is amazing this psalm just right there even as we read it, just seeing all these statements that David makes about You, about what You are doing in our lives. Lord, You're leading us. You're providing for us.

Lord, forgive us this morning of the areas that unbelief has crept into our hearts and our minds where we are too blind to recognize certain and specific ways that You are supplying and leading us right now. Lord, we can often be unaware and not see it as we should. Lord, I pray that You would help us to see things as they are.

And Lord, we do want to be led by You. Lord, whatever path we're on right now, Lord, we're wanting it to be a path that is leading, Lord, yes, to righteousness, but Lord, ultimately for Your glory, Your honor, Your praise, Lord, we want that as a church. We want that as individuals even in this week of prayer and fasting that we find ourselves in the midst of.

Lord, how many of us, Lord, we can say this is the cry of our heart, Lord, we're wanting You to be honored with this one single vapor of a life that You've given us. Lord, we can say what Moses teaches to number our days, that we might have a heart of wisdom. Lord, we want wisdom.

Lord, we want to rightly hear Your voice. We don't want to attribute what we hear to You maybe when it's not, or think that we're not hearing from You when we currently are hearing from You and are in Your will. Lord, we want to know up from down.

We want to know left from right. So Father, I pray You'd feed Your sheep. Lord, who You clearly love so much, even from this text, and ultimately from the cross and what Your Son, the Great Shepherd, has done for us, Father.

Lord, I appeal to that. Lord, for Your own namesake, would You feed these sheep and feed my own soul this morning, Lord, that we could press on and be encouraged. I ask for Your help.

In Jesus' precious, redeeming, altogether lovely name, Amen. So David testifies, as we have been looking at, he testifies to us that the Great Shepherd right here leads me in paths of righteousness. Another version renders Psalm 23.3. It says it this way, He leads me down the right path for the sake of His reputation.

And David, in a way, is speaking to us here regarding a worldview, a perspective that you and I have got to have. In the worldview, the perspective that you and I have got to have, as I've even looked at weeks earlier, is that God is really committed to Himself. He's doing everything that He's doing in you and my life

for His own namesake.

God guides us for God's glory. You could even say God's aim is fame for the sake of His name. And you don't want to take the word fame and just think of that as some carnal thing that the world pursues.

It's right that God guides us for His glory. It's right that God's aim is for fame for His name. And we get to be a part of this.

You think, why did the Lord split the Red Sea? What's one of the answers that the psalmist gives us? What does he say? He says in Psalm 106.8, He saved them for what? His namesake. And then he goes on, and he says, He saved them for His namesake that He might make known His mighty power. And you find verses like this again and again and again.

The Lord does something great. The Lord does something mighty and powerful. And you find directly connected to that the reason why He did it.

And what do you find? It's for Him. For His namesake. He delivers them and us because it pleases Him to do this.

He delivers us and them because it magnifies His greatness. It magnifies who He is. It magnifies Him being a God of patience and long-suffering and mercy.

He does it to please Him. Isn't that right? Does God really do something to have pleasure? 1 Samuel 12.22, For the Lord will not forsake His people for His great namesake, because it is pleased the Lord to make you a people for Himself. He says stuff like that to Israel.

God is taking pleasure in His guidance of you and me and His saving of us, His restoring of us, His leading us in a way that ultimately is going to bring Him honor. And you can look at the Bible as being chapter after chapter of the Lord making known to you His mighty power. Even this week, the kids and I, we read Genesis 1. You know what, when you read Genesis 1, you come away seeing God's powerful.

Just in creation, it has your mouth shut at the power of God and what He could speak and could make out of nothing. And one thing to think about this is you and I think about us living for the Lord's honor, for His reputation to be magnified. We don't want to wrongly look at that as if our conduct changes who the Lord is, because that is not at all the case.

Regardless of my conduct or yours, or if someone's a hypocrite, it doesn't change who God is. What it does change is what you're reflecting or what image you are portraying to that individual who hears that you call yourself a Christian. And when Christ returns, is my reflection of who Christ is from my life, is there going to be something similar to the Lord Jesus when He comes back? Or is there going to be such a gulf of a difference? And sadly, many today, they have a wrong view of who God is.

And when Christ comes back, they're going to see a Lord. They're going to see a wrath from a holy God that they never heard about from the pulpit. It's going to be an awful day for many.

So David says, his shepherd is the one leading him. Meaning, this is happening in your life whether you see it or not. If you're his sheep, I mean, David's looking at his life and he's saying, he's leading me.

He's leading me. The Lord is leading you right now, brother and sister. He really is.

And so this would kind of make us ask this question. Do I hear His voice? And am I following Him right now in my life? And we just looked at what a couple weeks ago? The Lord restoring us. Why would David make a statement about He restores me? That implies that at some point, the sheep wondered.

At some point, the sheep heard the voice and did not obey. The same thing happens in our lives. And ultimately, if we're really His sheep, we're going to keep coming back.

He's going to bring us all the way to the end. He loses none. John 10, verse 3, the sheep hear His voice.

He calls His own sheep by name and He leads them out. The Lord is a Lord who's looking to lead and to guide you. You know, if there's something in your life you're wanting leadership from, you're wanting God's guidance from, He's very willing to give you guidance.

He's not far off. He's right there. There's no long queue that you've got to sign up for.

You can go to Him. You might have to wait a long time for the Lord to give you clarity. There are some things in your lives and in my life that I've wanted clarity from God on, maybe even for years about something specific, and the Lord has not revealed that.

He's not given counsel or something from His Word to really encourage me to take that step forward, whatever that step be in whatever direction it might be. But one thing you should ask yourself is this, do you agree, do I agree, with these three things that this verse right here says? Look at verse three. First, do you agree with the idea that the Lord is leading you? I mean, is that what you want? Can you look at your life and say, absolutely.

I want not my own will, but I want the will of the Lord in my life. I want Him to lead me. I want to be submitted to His will.

He leads me. Can you say that? Secondly, paths of righteousness. In other words, righteousness, the perfect keeping of the standard, a holy life, if the Lord is leading us, that's evidenced by an increasing degree of holiness in our lives.

Hebrews 12 says, strive for the holiness, this progressive sanctification, without which we won't see the Lord. Do you desire holiness? Are you grieved, as David was, over his sin? And you just, Lord, cleanse me. I don't want to fall into something.

I don't want to need restoring. And then thirdly, do you even agree with this reality that everything the Lord does in your life, even if it looks like it's hard and it's immense suffering, can you agree with the reality that there is an opportunity and you're looking for that opportunity to honor Christ in whatever that situation is? Is that something on the forefront of your mind? Is the Lord's reputation and His name from this church, from my life as an individual Christian, that is a primary concern of my life? Because that is a primary concern of the Shepherd's leadership in my life is doing all these things and leading me that His name would be glorified, honored, and made much of. Are these three things true? Do you agree with those three things? That's something we should ask ourselves, right? Do I agree with them right now where I'm at in my life? Am I submitted to the Lord and thus pursuing righteousness? And is the motive behind all of this I'm wanting His name to be honored? You know, the unbeliever, they don't want these things.

I mean, when we were lost, it was rarely on our mind about Christ being honored. We couldn't say statements that Paul would make. I mean, that just wasn't the case.

So no matter the struggles you're having, Christian, maybe even with assurance, I mean, can you step back and do you look and say, you know what? There's something driving my life, and it's what David says here. I'm wanting to be led in a path of righteousness for the Lord's name. I'm really concerned about His name being honored.

And that's one of the main reasons I'm grieved over my sin. It's not primarily because how it affects my marriage or how it affects my relationships with people in the church, but it's the motive Joseph had. How can I sin against God? In Genesis 39.9. Is that the motive? That I've grieved the Lord.

I've misrepresented Him from whatever fall or failure I had. Can you say this morning, wherever you sit or where I'm standing and I'm asking this to my own self, can you say that the current end destination that you're on, that I'm on right now, is something that the Lord gave me? Am I on a path right now because the Lord put me there? Wherever you are, has the Lord led you to where you're at today? Can you look and you see His fingerprints upon everything that's happened in providence and counsel and the Word of God and even in a way His voice getting you to this point where you are today? Or has that not happened? Again, just because we're at church doesn't mean that we're hearing His voice. You might be hearing the Word of God, but true hearing of the voice of the Lord and His Word is going to cause some action in our life, right? We're going to do something with what we've heard and something else.

As you move onward on what you believe is the right path full of righteous conduct, can you look at it right now and say your motivation for His namesake is the big motivator. What's the opposite motivation? Say again. Yeah, your own.

And that's not some far-off thing that we can't relate to. It's not. You read the whole Bible, you know what you're going to find? You're going to find constantly situations where people, they look like they're living for the Lord's namesake, and they were not.

They were living for their own name, their own honor. This is a scary pit that we could fall into that we must be aware of. Remember what Paul said in Philippians 1.20? It's an incredible statement.

He said, it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not at all be ashamed, but now as always, Christ will be honored. Christ will be magnified in my body whether by life or by death. He wanted to have full courage for what reason? Christ to be honored.

Is that what you want? Is that what we want as a church? I trust it is. But some of us might be struggling right now with whatever our motivation is. And so there's a place for some analysis of that.

Just think of the war. This is a serious war maintaining a motive for the Lord's namesake. It's a serious war.

And we see that just from Scripture. And even when Craig gets further in Galatians 5, what do you find? You find the fruits of the Spirit and you find the deeds of the flesh. I mean, what are some of the deeds of the flesh? Jealousy.

Right? Envy. You find in Paul's article, selfish ambition. Selfish ambition, jealousy, and envy.

That's not a motive for the Lord's name. It can appear to be that. But there's a war.

Now thankfully, the Lord's given us all the equipment we need to mortify the deeds of the flesh that wage war against our bodies. So we have the equipment. We just have to use it.

But think of what Paul even says in Philippians 1.17. He's describing as he's in prison, these people out there who are evangelizing, it would seem, even doing some open air preaching. And he says they're actually doing this deed out of what? What's their motive? Selfish ambition. And then he says this statement, not sincerely, but thinking.

Here the motive is, the real motive is thinking to afflict Paul. So they have some twisted carnal reason of wanting the apostle to suffer in prison. And they're out there preaching the gospel.

And what was Paul's response to that? He rejoiced because at least the gospel was going forth. Even though these guys had wicked motives, he was thankful that the gospel was going forth. But those people to some, they probably looked and thought, hey, they're on paths of righteousness and they're honoring the Lord.

But they weren't, right? They were not. Their motive was not for the Lord's namesake. Paul describes it as selfish ambition.

And obviously, whatever selfish ambition looks like and people not being sincere, clearly in this case, it was evident enough where Paul could make a judgment about their motives, right? And we're in a world where people want to say you can't judge me. You don't know my heart. I mean, Paul's judging their motivations right here.

There's enough evidence there where he could make this assertion and it wasn't him being too critical of these individuals. And he does it multiple times. Even in 1 Corinthians 1, he mentions to the church at Corinth, there's jealousy and strife among you.

He says, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? And what were they saying? One was saying, well, I follow Paul. Another said, I follow Apollos. And he says, aren't you merely being human? Right? He's trying to be a means to restore them to be back on paths of righteousness for the Lord's namesake.

Right? They've gotten off of that. And Paul is a means through his rebuke to the church to bring them back to this point. Jealousy, strife, envy.

That causes you to veer off the path. It causes you to have wrong motives. I mean, have any of you felt that in your life? Have you looked at your life and you've looked back at certain seasons and you can honestly say, Lord, I look back and I realize my motives were messed up.

It was not for your honor. It was for me. I mean, why do you think Paul mentions what he does? What 1 Corinthians 4 about what's going to be disclosed on judgment day? What does he say? The motives of the heart.

And that's why he says he can't make a judgment even on himself. I mean, he believes he's acquitted that there's nothing against him, but ultimately he says, it's the Lord that's going to judge me. I mean, the Lord knows what's going on internally in my heart.

And so even Paul, the mighty apostle, or you could say the weak apostle relying on a mighty God, that apostle, he looks at that end day and he realizes there's going to be motives of his heart, whether he lived for the namesake of the Lord or his own name, that's going to be judged. It's a sobering reality. Again, I read Psalm 23.3 and I say, amen.

I'm wanting to be led by the Lord on paths of righteousness for His namesake. What I'm trying to show you is this is a war. And you could see that in the very life of David.

I mean, if you read all of David who wrote this Psalm, you read his life, you see the significance of the war that this man had. I mean, this is the man who numbered his men in order to get it recorded in the Chronicles and God judges and wipes out all number of these men. He had no reason to number the troops.

No battle in front of him by which to do that other than it seemed to be recorded in history and God dealt with them there. That was clearly an act not of righteousness, not of holiness, not for the Lord. Listen to George Mueller.

George Mueller was the well-known evangelist from Prussia who founded many orphanages. Listen to what he said. How many times did George Mueller read through his Bible every year near the end of his life? How many times did he read it a year? Yeah, four.

Four times every year. And we really see the mind of God as we're in the Word of God. And look what this sheep says as the shepherd is leading him.

They had just built the new orphan house. And he particularly requested that it might never be known as Mr. Mueller's orphan house. Why? Lest undue prominence is given to one who had merely been God's instrument in its erection.

He esteemed it a sin to appropriate even indirectly or allow others to attribute to him any part of the glory which belonged solely to him who had led in the work, given faith in the work and means for it and helped it from the first to the last. And you could say, oh, he's taking it too serious. You know, is our issue taking this issue of our motives too serious? No.

Often we're too flaky on it at times. But did you catch that? He wanted the prominence to be towards the one who had done what? Led in the work. Mueller, in other words, is saying he looked back at everything that had happened and he could literally attribute it to it was all the Lord.

The Lord led me. The Lord supplied. I was just a means.

But it was all of the Lord. If you see that correctly, it's going to be very hard to take any honor or glory for yourself if you see how the Lord had guided in all of this. And so, one person, they had asked Mueller of the secret of his service.

And he said this, he said, there was a day when I died. I utterly died. And as he spoke, he bent lower and lower until he almost touched the ground.

I've died to George Mueller. I've died to his opinions. I've died to his preferences.

Died to his taste and his will. I died to the world, its approval or rebuke. I died to the approval or blame even of my brethren and friends.

And since then, I've studied myself only to show myself approved unto God. I mean, do you feel that happening in your life? Right? I mean, maybe some of the paths of righteousness that I'm on, that you're on, is God's actually crushing us of some of this desire to be approved by men. Right? And all the more we're going to be free to just live for the Lord's glory.

We're not going to be trapped in some tug of our motives, self, my insecurities, or the Lord. We're just going to be free. I mean, you read George Mueller, this guy was like a free man walking by faith, trusting in the Good Shepherd.

So, my point of saying all this right here at the beginning is that though the text says, David is saying the Lord leads me in paths of righteousness, which is the Lord is actively doing that. Right? In your life right now, Christian, He's taking initiative. He's guiding and leading you.

I still think it's right, based on other Scripture, that we should make a self-assessment. And in doing so, we should be faced with the reality that this is indeed a fierce war. But in the midst of the fierce war, what I don't want you to do, and I don't want it to happen to myself, is I don't want us to lose heart.

Because all the equipment is there. And all the New Covenant promises are there. I mean, what New Covenant promise might come to your mind when you think about being led in paths of righteousness? What could be a promise that you could appeal to the Lord in prayer for His help? I mean, there's dozens of them.

But one that hits me always is Ezekiel 36, 27. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes. Righteousness.

And be careful to obey My rules. What's the repeating term there in Ezekiel 36? I will, I will, I will, I will, I will. So here you are.

I'm struggling, I'm struggling, I'm struggling. And you look at Ezekiel 36 like the Lord says, I will, I will. You go from I, I, I, me, me, me, to look, the Lord.

He's promised He's going to do this. I mean, the way the text says it is, He will cause you to walk. And it's been mentioned many times over the years, a New Testament parallel of that text is Philippians 2, 12-13, where it says that the Lord works in us to will, that is to desire.

To will, to desire and to work for His good pleasure. Can you hear that? His good pleasure. I already mentioned that.

He's guiding you for His namesake, for His pleasure, for His glory, for His honor, and He's even leading you on as a sheep and keeping you there to get glory out of your life. And right now, if you're a Christian, He's leading you. And you need to be able to see that.

And you need to be able to look at your life and realize right now there are opportunities in your life to honor Christ. To exalt His reputation. Even if your life feels very mundane.

Even if it looks like there are not great opportunities to do that. That's not true. There are.

You've got to have a right perspective with where you're at. And brethren, it's all going to be worth it. You live for His namesake.

Matthew 19, 29 says, everyone who's left houses, brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, or children, or lands, for My namesake, they will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. It's going to be worth it. There's eternal life coming to the servant who Christ has well done.

Good and faithful servant. Well done submitting to My leadership as I guided your life and caused you to obey Me, and I got glory out of your life. Well done.

So our aim as believers is to live for the Lord's reputation. I mean, I trust even in this week of prayer and fasting as you're searching your own heart and maybe you just want to be more honoring to the Lord, that's got to be a key motivation and thought in your mind as you wrestle through all of this is how can the Lord, His name, and who He is and His reputation be more magnified and exalted and reflected more clearly in my life? And I already said this weeks back, but another way to put it is this text teaches us that God is committed to God. The statement should not dishearten us that His passion is not primarily for you or for me, but is for Himself.

Because it's out of His passion for His own glory that we do intimately come into the picture. Right? It's a passion for Himself and His character that gives us security as Christians for His promise to lose none. Therefore, we can rest in the Shepherd's guidance over our lives.

I mean, it's about God's name being honored through what happens through us, so the Lord's going to make sure that's going to happen. He's going to make sure to deliver us from His enemies. I mean, it shouldn't surprise us that God is about His own glory.

Sadly, many people are surprised by this reality. Many people would not think about that last phrase in Psalm 23 3 that He's doing all of this for His namesake. Right? They think the whole Christian life, it's about them.

The Bible does not teach that. The Bible is not a humanistic book. It is not about man.

It is about God. Yet in the midst of that, there is the love of God displayed in Christ. And we have the great privilege to be a part of that.

And the Lord does have a true love for His people. It's not some far off fake thing. No, not at all.

His character and Him being about Himself guarantees the love is true for you and for me. Should not surprise us. So, what time do I got? Am I about halfway through? Okay.

So let's think here for a moment again about Christ. And I mentioned this, I think, in my first sermon on this series. But when you read Psalm 23 3, do not forget the reality that the Lamb who was led in paths of righteousness for the Father's glory is the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the supreme example and fulfillment of this text. And one way to think about it is Jesus is the Hebrew writer says is our older brother. I mean, you could just think about it like this.

Our older brother has paved the way of the path that we are to go down. Right? We're just trying to imitate Him. We're not gonna do it perfectly as He did it, but we're making this attempt.

Right? John 12 27. Christ said, my soul is troubled. What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? Question mark.

But for this purpose, I have come to this hour. Father, glorify Your name. You hear that? That's Christ saying, lead me for Your name's sake.

Then a voice came from heaven. I have glorified it and I will glorify it again. Right? Christ lived His life for the glory and the honor of the Father.

And the Father's love was totally true and genuine for the Son, just as you and I are trying to live for the honor and the glory of our Godhead, the Father, Son, and Spirit. And His love for us is totally genuine in the midst of this. I mean, we're co-heirs with Christ.

We're adopted sons. You want a good example of how to live? You want a good example of how to live submitted to the will of the Father? You look at the Lord Jesus Christ. Right? You want to reflect who God is? You've got the exact imprint of His nature in Christ.

Right? Look to Christ. I mean, the Christian life is a life of continually looking to Christ. Where you get to the point where you say, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2, I've determined to know nothing among you except for Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Alright, so, second half here. Let's transition. I guess first, I hope you see what David is saying here.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. And I hope you've considered even this thought of having a self-assessment of your own heart about that matter. But secondly, let me imagine a sheep with you.

Alright, let's think of a sheep. And this sheep is reading this text. When I say a sheep, I don't mean a literal sheep.

I mean a Christian, right? They're considering this text. And they're making observations about this text. Probably some observations that you and I would make.

And he's on his path to heaven. Right? And so, we're kind of like this sheep. So as I give these examples, I hope you'll look at it and think, how does that apply to myself? And you can ask yourself if you even say what the sheep is saying and observing.

Because you know what? There are things about the Great Shepherd that you and I don't observe right now. We haven't seen it yet. Some aspect of His glory.

So let's think of this. Father, I do pray You'd even help and give strength right now for these thoughts. In Christ's name, Amen.

Amen. So this sheep, upon being bought by His Shepherd and brought into the fold, what do you think was one of the first things that hit him when he read this text? I don't think it's something that hits us as it should. This sheep was staggered by something in this text.

It staggered him. He couldn't believe it was there. He was shocked by it.

I don't think we're shocked enough. He could barely believe that the text right there at the end, he leads me in paths of righteousness, for His name's sake, the text implies what? That the Lord wanted to glorify Himself through us. He could believe it.

I have this weighty privilege. Brethren, you have a weighty privilege of the Lord actually using your life to bring Him glory. Why? Do you hear that? That's an incredible privilege to be loved by the Lord and given that privilege.

I think that's something that we don't get staggered enough by. I don't see anyone staggering in their seats, so maybe you're not getting staggered by it right now. But as sheep, we need to be made all the more aware of the importance of the privilege that God has given us as we listen to His voice and guides us that we have the opportunity to bring Him honor.

I mean, if you think, your sins being forgiven and blotted out, wasn't that enough? Be fully forgiven and you're just put over here? Going to heaven. But the Lord doesn't do that. He blots out your sins.

And He enlists you to bring honor to His name and fame to His name throughout the earth. I mean, we've been given that weighty privilege. Isaiah 43, 25, I am He who blots out your transgressions.

For My own sake, I will not remember your sins. And here the Lord, He goes beyond that and He causes us to live for Him. So the first thing, when I look at this text, I wish and I hope that by the Spirit of God, I could be more staggered at the incredible, weighty privilege given to me, given to you all, that we have this privilege of bringing honor to the Lord through our lives, and that He's willing and delighting to use us to further His kingdom.

That is an incredible privilege I think we too often just take for granted. It's a weighty reality. Second thing here, right? The sheep, he looks at this text, and despite his good intentions, the sheep, he wondered.

He wondered, but what did we see last time? When the sheep wondered, what happens? The shepherd goes after the sheep in order to show loving care and restore that sheep. And that sheep, one day, he was reading the Word and he stumbled upon Hebrews 12. And he read these words.

He disciplines us for our good, that we might share His holiness. For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant. And then he saw a purpose.

But later, it yields peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. And as that sheep, as he read those words, he was reminded, yes, yes, I must be on paths of righteousness, sharing in His holiness for His honor. He's leading me back to that.

He's forgiven me. And it all the more rekindled the sheep to realize even the sin in his life that he fell into, you know what? It was an opportunity for God to discipline him to share in His holiness so that in the end, the Lord could get all the more honor for His name. It's amazing that even the great tragedy of sin can be overruled by the sovereignty of God to work in your life a greater purpose and get greater glory out of your life.

It doesn't mean the sin should have happened. But God is able to overrule and work those things even for good. A third thing.

Here this sheep is. He's on his way to heaven. He's seeking to submit to the Good Shepherd.

And you know what he found one day? He found out as he's trying to live on the paths of righteousness for the namesake of the Lord, he found out there are many out there who are teaching paths that are crooked. Crooked. Acts 13.8. He read that Elimas, the magician, was reproved by Paul.

Paul said to him, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness. The crooked path doesn't lead to righteousness. He said you're full of deceit and villainy.

Will you stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? And we're facing that. You go through this life, you face situations by which the path of the Lord is made crooked. There's many enemies who want to make the path crooked.

They want to deceive you. And this made this sheep, he inquired. All of a sudden, now that he realized that there were crooked paths, the sheep wondered, what if I'm on one of the crooked paths? How do I know I'm on the right path? How do I know I'm really being led by the Lord? And the sheep, in the midst of all the warning passages in the Bible, he started reading all of them.

And then he actually was on the right path, but he didn't think he was on the right path because he overanalyzed himself. And then he got to the point where in the midst of his overanalyzation and introspection, he ended up on the wrong path. Poor little sheep.

He fell into analysis paralysis through his introspection. He was on the right path, but he thought he wasn't. And he veered off as he was gazing at himself in an unhealthy matter.

And then suddenly, he felt a staff around his neck and he got pulled right back into the fold. And the Lord didn't let him go too far, but he had that one day there where he was just looking at himself in despair. And after that, the sheep, he stayed all the more in the Word of God.

He realized, you know, the more I see the straight paths in the Word of God, the more easily I'd be able to spot a crooked path. If I can see the straight and I can see what it is, then I'll be able to discern the crooked and I won't be able to be deceived as easily. And the sheep, he read in Proverbs 2, a warning, and he realized, man, this is really serious.

In Proverbs 2:18, it says of the adulterous woman, it says, her path seeks down to death and her path to the departed. None who go to her come back, nor do they regain the paths of life. And he thought, that's a strong warning.

I might be on a path of righteousness right now, but I got to stay near to my shepherd. I mean, look where I could end up. In verse 20, it reads, so you will walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous.

And this sheep, through this warning, now he was rightly warned in his heart. He didn't get overly introspective, but he realized, I've got to take sin seriously, not just three years in, not just seven years into being among my master's fold, the shepherd's fold, even 20 years down the line, all the way to the age of Uzziah. I've got to watch out, lest pride take me and I fall into something, or like David, the very one who wrote this psalm.

Then this sheep, he's wrestling with, what does it mean the Lord leads me in paths of righteousness for His namesake? And he read in Proverbs 4, I have taught you the way of wisdom. I have led you in the paths of uprightness. When you walk, your step will not be hampered.

If you run, you will not stumble. Keep hold of instruction. Don't let her go.

Guard her, for she is your life. Do not enter the path of the wicked. Do not walk in the way of the evil.

Avoid it. Do not go on it. Turn away from it and pass on.

And you know what? That sheep, he read that text, and it was about to be the new year, and he got real motivated to read his Bible more that year. And you know what? Finally, he made a commitment to read the Bible more, and he kept it. It worked.

He was determined to know God, to know the Word, because he all of a sudden got to a point in his walk where he saw, I have got to know the Word more. So here this sheep is, a fourth thing. The sheep was meditating more on this phrase.

And it hit him. Huh, the text says He leads me in paths of righteousness. Well, if the shepherd leads me, and his goal is for his name to be honored, then that means that wherever I'm at right now, unless there's some obvious sin in my life, I'm where I'm at right now because the shepherd has led me there.

And if the shepherd's led me there, and he gives the purpose for why he's led me there, what's the purpose? For his namesake. So that means wherever I am right now, whether a mother at home with a bunch of children, whether a single guy at work and unmarried, or whatever the case is, or a lost spouse, the Lord your shepherd has led you there. And He's led you there to get honor for His name.

And the sheep had dawned on him. Oh, I felt like my life was so ordinary that I needed something greater in order to bring honor to His name, where I wasn't actually bringing honor to His name, and the very things that I thought were mundane, that were actually a prime opportunity for the Lord to be honored. And if He says He leads me to get honor for His name, then right now there must be some way in my life for the Lord to get honor.

And that honor, even this morning as we were coming here, I was just thinking, the Lord gets honor by me, my wife and I getting the five children ready. Well, she primarily gets them ready. I'm studying.

By my wife getting the five children ready, and us getting in that car and getting here. You know what the Lord's reputation gets honor? When there's no sin that takes place in something that seems so mundane. Does the Lord get honor when I'm impatient with my children or I'm anxious? No, His name doesn't get honored.

The kids don't look at the reflection at that point and think, what a glorious God my dad serves. They don't. Wherever you're at, Christian, you gotta recognize there's a way for God to get glory right now.

Are you seeing that? And a classic example of this is Job. I mean, what was one of the reasons, the reason behind what the devil did with Job? I mean, God allowed it to happen, but Satan had said this in Job 2:5. He said he thought Job would curse the shepherd to the face, basically. That's what Satan wanted to happen.

Is that what happened? No, it's not. Job worshiped the shepherd who had led him into a path where all his children had died, his whole business had fallen apart, and Job worshiped. He worshiped the shepherd.

Job saw that the path I am on, does the text say he leads me in paths of comfort for His name? No, it doesn't. He leads me in paths of righteousness. So even the godly Job, the most blameless man on the earth in the midst of a severe trial, he saw that there was a way to honor and glorify the Lord in the midst of that trial.

And though he was not perfect in the midst of the trial, clearly, the Lord's reputation was magnified through his response. And you just see that even in Satan and his frustration at Job's response. I mean, do our responses, when the Lord allows us to be tested, do they frustrate the devil in a sense where he's going back and asking for more to get us to the point where we're going to curse the Lord and not magnify Him in the midst of our trial? I mean, sometimes when your trials increase in your life, it's actually because you've honored the Lord in the first phase of the trial, and now you're on to the second phase and the Lord's wanting to still get honor from that situation.

It doesn't mean something happened wrong. Trials might get more severe because something happened entirely right. But we don't do it that way.

But whatever path you're on, God's wanting His reputation to be magnified right now, right here, even today, and whatever's happening in your heart and in your thought life right now as you're hearing me preach, even that is an opportunity to magnify the name of the Lord Jesus, of our God, of Yahweh. Okay, a fifth thing, a fifth thing. Well, Psalm 25, back on the other point, the psalmist says, make me know your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths.

You know, that's something we should be crying out. We should be crying out that. But a fifth thing, as this sheep went on with the flock, there is a group of sheep whose pace quickened beside Him.

And here He is, He's kind of with His group. And this group, they come by, something's different in them. And He finds out those sheep, their names are the sons of Korah.

And here are these sons of Korah, they're just going by. I mean, they've got a mission as they're walking by this sheep. And then He opens up the Word and He reads about them.

And He sees, wow, I mean, these are the great-great-great-grandsons of a man who was consumed into the earth for rebelling against the Lord and leaving the paths of life. And yet, these relatives, they were forgiven. The sons were not killed.

And here the great-great-grandchildren are. And this is what they said in Psalm 44.18. They looked at that sheep. And they said, our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from Your paths.

That's pretty arrogant of them to say that. No, that's not arrogant of them. They knew where they were at.

They knew they were in the will of God. And they were declaring that reality in the midst of a song as they followed on after the Lord. It's like in Joel 2.7. It mentions people being like warriors, they charge like soldiers, they scale the wall.

They march each on his way. They do not swerve from their paths. Isn't that what you want? I want to be a sheep who doesn't swerve from the path.

And I find passages that actually give me hope of pleading that before the Lord and people making statements you could view as arrogant that are not arrogant. And so this little sheep, he sees this and he's encouraged to all the more sing the song, set my feet on higher ground, pressing on. He all the more wants that in his life.

The zeal this sheep had, it challenged his own zeal and he saw layers in his life to grow. The sixth thing, one day the sheep, he was talking to another sheep about Psalm 23 and the sheep quoted it to him. And

for a moment, he didn't even hear what the sheep said.

The sheep said, he leads me in paths of comfort for my sake. And the sheep thought, wait, what did you just say? And so it was. Many, they twist the truth.

They read the verse how it says, he leads me in paths of righteousness for his namesake, but then they teach it from the pulpit as he leads me in paths of comfort for my own sake. And this sheep, he was again reminded on this way to heaven, amidst all those with a crooked path, he was reminded that he needs to have a right view of the Lord. He's got to maintain a right view of the Lord all the way to the end.

What did Paul warn the church of Corinth with those famous words in 2 Corinthians 11-3? He looks at them and he says, I'm afraid for you. That as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, so will your thoughts get led astray from a pure and simple devotion to Jesus Christ. That's what we're up against.

But our Shepherd is here to restore us and guide us. We can rest. We can rest as He guides us.

We've got to be diligent, absolutely, but there's a sense of rest. You know what the Bible says? It doesn't say He leads me in paths of comfort. Luke 21-12 says, but before all this, they will lay their hands on you.

They will persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogue and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors. What's the reason? What's the reason that suffering is going to happen? For your namesake. I mean, do you see it? It's all over the Bible, right? The Lord, I'm going to lead you into a season of having cancer for my namesake and my reputation.

Some of you, you got led into a path where your spouse ended up being lost, they divorced you, and guess what? You're led into a path of righteousness for Christ's name to be honored and glorified among the nations. You know what happened to the sheep? Seventh thing, he eventually had some dark providences in his life, and he pondered the question, is there any place that I will go that he will not be with me? Is there any situation that my shepherd will lead me where he will not be there with me as I cling to him? He remembered Job and he knew, well, I see that with the Lord with Job. Clearly the Lord was there.

And then he read one more verse in the psalm, and he got his answer in verse four. Even. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His namesake.

And then the psalmist says, even though. Even in the valley of the shadow of death, why will I fear not evil? Because the Lord is even with me there. And the sheep was again reminded of the glorious reality that no matter where he was, no matter what trial he was going through, sickness and health, his shepherd was there guiding him, comforting him all the way that to the end, my Savior leads me.

I think an eighth thing here. I've got two more I think. The sheep ended up having health issues.

It was worse than a bad back. Pretty severe health problems. And he wondered about his health issues.

How can a perfect shepherd allow this to happen to me? Well, the text says he leads me in paths of righteousness. Righteousness primarily is an internal reality. Right? It's not a promise for perfect health.

Not at all. And the sheep, he took comfort in places like John 9 where the man was born blind and he heard Jesus answer and Jesus said, it's not that the man sinned. And he thought, okay, it's not that I've sinned, that I've got cancer, but it's that the works of God might be displayed.

And the sheep saw his physical suffering, even that, was an opportunity for the Lord's reputation to be made great among the nations. Number 9, as the sheep went on with the shepherd, he learned more and more about how to pray. And he even asked the great shepherd, teach me to pray.

And the shepherd said, pray like this, our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your name. He thought, wow, there it is again. Pray that the Lord's name would be honored as holy.

There it is again. He just saw it everywhere. He couldn't turn to a place in the Bible where it wasn't about God's name being honored.

And it almost made him sad to think of how often that was not on his mind as it should have been. And then he even saw places like John 14.14. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. There it is again.

My name. My namesake. I will do it.

And it made sense to him. I'm saved for His namesake. I ask in His namesake.

And he wants to answer my prayers in me glory to himself through doing such. And then he read about Moses. And what did Moses do? Moses at multiple points.

One in Exodus 32. He appealed to the Lord to not destroy Israel for the sake of the Lord's own namesake. Why should the Egyptians say, with evil intent did He bring them out to kill them in the mountains and consume them from the face of the earth? And here he says to the Lord, turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against Your people.

You see, Moses knew if this happens, it's not going to look good for the Lord's reputation, and he took that as an argument for the Lord in prayer in a way to appeal to the Lord and order an argument in prayer to spare Israel. And what did the Lord do? He heard them. He heard Moses.

It's incredible. So this sheep, he's learning how to pray. He's trusting the Lord.

And he keeps going on. He keeps going on. The tenth thing here, the longer the sheep followed the shepherd, he just found more and more this intense desire to be pleasing for God's approval.

He realized, I'm not even seeking to be more pleasing to the Lord. But the more I see who He is, the more that's stirred up in my heart to want to live for Him. There's this free pull and motivation through the Spirit of God in my heart to not sin, to decrease in Christ's increase, and may follow on to the Lord.

And he ran onto another sheep on the path. This sheep's name was Azahel Nettleton. The great revivalist from the 1800s.

And he saw Azahel Nettleton. And he said to him, why were you so much more successful in winning souls than other ministers? Nettleton gave this answer. And this answer's from his biography.

I'm not making this up. This is his answer to someone who asked him that question. He said, even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.

Why were you more successful? It seemed good in God's sight. What an answer. This man attributed none of the glory to himself, just like Mueller, nor did any of it even belong to him.

He realized that. For he was possessed, no power over the human heart to save. He was only an instrument by which God accomplished His purpose.

And Nettleton, he told the sheep of Maxim that had helped him, quote, do all the good you can in the world and make as little noise about it as possible. And at that moment, another sheep came up and they asked Nettleton the same question. And this is another response from Nettleton in his biography.

We have no time to talk about that. And his face turned pale, and he retired from company, and he prostrated himself before God on the ground as a great and unworthy sinner. Isn't that amazing? Mueller and Nettleton.

You read those biographies? It can absolutely rebuke your pride when you see these men and the humility they had and the recognition of these realities. Well, this sheep went through more than I can share in this hour, just as you and I are going through more aspects of this journey. He could have wrote a lot about what happened in the first verses that we already looked at about not wanting because his shepherd provides for him.

But this sheep, he read in Psalm 23, he leads me in paths of righteousness. And there he was, following the shepherd's voice. And you know what he noticed? He noticed verse 6. Look at verse 6. He's reading along and he says, I'm following the shepherd's voice.

And it says in verse 6, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And he looked behind him and it hit him. Through it all, there was this entire certainty that he was sandwiched between the shepherd leading him and as he follows the shepherd, guess who's following him? Goodness and mercy.

I mean, there you are, Christian. Wherever you're at right now, there your shepherd is following you. And you look behind you, you're going to look at every circumstance, everything that happened in your life.

And you should be able to say, goodness and mercy has followed me all the days of my life. I mean, you should see that's happening. That's happening whether you see it or not, because the text says it.

And you've got to trust in the Lord. Is there the reality that sin can come in and it can corrupt these realities and we can go astray? Yes, but the text says He restores us. So we should be trusting even in that.

And believer, for the Lord's own namesake, this shepherd will not cease to lead you. He will not fail to guide you. So go on with him diligently following His leadings, following His Word, knowing His Word, getting counsel from those who are godly.

He's going to make straight your path. Don't lean on your own understanding, but acknowledge the Lord in all your paths. And He's going to make it straight.

He's going to make it evident. In Psalm 79, it says, Help us, O God, of our salvation. For the glory of Your name, deliver us and atone for our sins for Your namesake.

And in Psalm 34 3, hear this verse. O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together. That's what we're trying to do as a church.

That's what I'm trying to do in my marriage. It's right above our bed. Someone gave us a plaque.

O magnify the Lord with me. That's what the shepherd's purpose is. It's for us together to follow Him on paths of righteousness for His name to be magnified, His reputation to be known here in the home, in the car ride to church, and all the way to the nations.

Let's pray. Father, I pray that, Lord, some of the sheep here right now, maybe where they've yet to learn, maybe something they've yet to see, is that the present path they're on, as mundane as it might seem, as little opportunity as they might think are there, yet, Lord, there's so much opportunity even there for You to get glory and honor for Your name. And Lord, You're guiding them for that purpose.

Lord, help that be a reality in our lives. Lord, that we would conduct ourselves in a holy, set-apart way that shows You to the world, to the church, to our children, to our family, of who You are. Lord, please help us.

And we're trusting You are already helping us because You're the shepherd. Lord, this is what You're actively doing. So help us to trust this, even if we can't see it.

And Lord, I pray You'd help us where we struggle in our motives and our hearts. Lord, that we'd all the more be set free to just live for Your glory alone. I pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

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