

PSALM 23

With comments and personal testimony by Verna Kwiatkowski

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
 he leads me beside the still waters.
He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
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.

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 will follow me all the days of my life,
 and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

This Psalm can be – and has been! – looked at from so many vantage points. I recently noticed that David could have subtitled his psalm “God will take care of you.” He used a powerful method to convey his message: his personal testimony. I am SURE he was thinking of the kinds of things he did for his sheep as he wrote about the way the Lord took care of him. I wonder if he was also thinking about how his mother tended him when he was a child? You will see as you read my comments that I have my mom in mind along with the early years of my five children, as I see myself under God's care, for like David I can truly say:

The Lord is MY shepherd; I shall not want. In my childhood home, occasionally my parents would hug each other while standing over the grating that covered our coal furnace (the warmest spot in the house). My brother Harold and I looked on with pleasure; not so our toddler brother, Bobby. He would squeeze between Mom and Dad, wrap his arms around Mom's legs and say, “She's MY mommy!” In families, as with God, we learn that love is not diminished when it's shared!

He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul. I am a great believer in the restorative power of sleep and rest. My mom would send me to bed at the first sign of illness. Often a good nap was just what I needed. If my brother and I were misbehaving, Mom would tell us to go sit in a chair until we calmed down. When my own children would become irritable, I would say, “Obviously, you are tired. Lie down on your beds for half an hour.” Often they fell asleep and awoke refreshed. My shepherd knows when and where to make ME lie down, too!

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 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. To me, this whole section speaks of protection, and the comfort and confidence you have when you trust your protector. My mother was terribly afraid of thunderstorms, since one of her uncles had been killed by lightning that entered a house. When a storm came during the night, she would wake up the rest of us,

including Dad, and make us go sit on the sofa, away from windows and electrical outlets, until the storm ended. None of us would be harmed if Mom could help it!

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. My mother devoted a large portion of her life to preparing food for her family, much of which had been grown in my father's garden. She was doing her duty, as she understood it, and how we appreciated her efforts! Called to dinner in various ways, the children in our neighborhood scattered from being with each other in the evenings to being with our families. I carried on the tradition of family meals with my husband and children. That's one way to counteract the "enemies" that would like to tear us apart.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. My mom also believed in using oils in taking care of me. She had a small bottle of camphorated oil that she would pour out and warm before rubbing it onto my chest and back. She had a larger bottle of cod liver oil that she fed to me in daily doses. And I used many bottles of baby oil to keep the bodies of my babies in good condition. Using oil on another is a "hands on" activity. I can well imagine that it's the cup of JOY that overflows with the relaxation and comfort that comes from massage!

SURELY goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Now that I am in the last part of my life on earth, I can look back and say that goodness and mercy HAVE followed me every step of the way. I can look forward and say that I WILL dwell in the house of the Lord forever. God WILL take care of me – and YOU! Amen.

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Verna Kwiatkowski

www.vernakwiatkowski.com