

Psalm 23 (1-6) – This is How to Avoid Burnout

In any poll you see on the subject, many people say they're under a great deal of stress and most report feeling exhausted sometimes. No one is immune, regardless of age, gender or job. People feel like there's no recognition that you're working hard, and nobody's got your back. We can even get to the point where Christians question God's love for us. We start to think what it was we did wrong to get God so mad at us, or wonder if there is some curse on us, or imagine that we will never get to the place where we can have any sense of real peace in this life. We get around other people who are also stressed out. You shift to the ongoing, pervasive negative. You begin to detach from others, and dislike your job. You become cynical, critical, and hostile. You blame other people. Rather than do your very best, you try to get by with the bare minimum. You feel exhausted and inadequate. You feel helpless and hopeless; you are burned out.

What we need is prophetic insight, to be able to see God at work, to know His providence, His presence, His power, and His promise for our lives. Through this Psalm, we can see with God's eyes, and we will begin to learn the value of God, not simply as someone who gives us the treasure of forgiveness and a future, but as the very treasure itself. The Lord is ours and that is why we lack nothing, because He has power over everything and gives His life to us forever.

David was a busy and a burdened man, with many responsibilities and many troubles. He had to deal with a lion, a bear, and a giant. Saul had chased him, Saul's sons had chased him, and his own son Absalom was chasing him, David never had time to slow down, yet he wrote this.

This Psalm is not teaching that David feels no remorse for his sins, or that he can lay the blame at God's feet for failing to lead a godly life. David isn't simply teaching himself to have a positive mental attitude and he isn't saying that what he does doesn't matter. He isn't deceiving himself into thinking that his actions have no consequences, but he isn't beating himself up over things he struggles with; he just knows he has to keep struggling. This passage isn't about being passive; it is about being active, striving to be holy and counting on God who is holy, not lying by saying God is in control and living out of control.

Even a casual understanding of David's life reveals that he could have easily asked himself why go on, what is the purpose for all this. Yet if we peer further into his life and ministry we see a man who seems to be blessed with an extraordinary grace. But is it so extraordinary? Or can we also live with the same passion, power, and purpose like David did? What was the secret to keeping his flame lit, what was his focal point when he needed to be re-ignited? There are several things interwoven in this Psalm that are reasons why David could carry on and why we can carry on.

God Guides You (vs.1-3) – He is Before you / We see His Providence / He is Involved

He is my shepherd (singular) personally, "The Lord is the one who shepherds me."

He provides our needs. In an ultimate sense, all we need is Him. We lack nothing eternal.

He leads us beside the “waters of rest.” Rest is the key to being restored. He makes us lie down. He gives us rest. It is intentional. He causes us to stop and sit in his presence. The order is rest before activity, rather than the reverse.

He restores our soul. We are continually assaulted from without by this world and within by our own sinful natures, but He builds you back up.

He guides us in the paths of righteousness. This is more than morality. He is leading us in the paths that we need to go, the right paths. He does this for His own glory. His name is at stake.

He rests us and then He tests us, and how we see the test is an indication of if we are living in His rest. God is shepherding you today. It is good to plan, but you don't have to know what you'll be doing in 5 years in order to have passion and purpose.

God Guards You (vs.4) – He is Beside you / We see His Presence / He is Interested

In vs.4 He is still guiding us, but now we see that He is also guarding us.

Even if we walk in the “desert of deep darkness”, which death is the most fearful darkness of all, He guides our paths. It may or may not be that sin has brought us there. Sometimes, it is just the right path for us. We don't plan for these times, or put them on our agenda. But our Shepherd sometimes brings us there, and it is the right path. He leads us to battle to show us His victory.

David knew war, and we must also realize that we are soldiers in a spiritual war. We should expect some degree of success. However, your path may not lead where you think it does yet it is still part of the Triumphant Procession. Note that he does not say “I will suffer no evil.” He says “I will fear no evil.” What removes the fear is the conscious awareness that the Lord is with us.

Rod and staff imply guidance, control, and defense. The rod is for defense from threats without, to guard us. The staff is for defense from threats within, to guide and control us from destroying ourselves. We are comforted, because God is not simply *with* you but *for* you.

2 Kings 6:8-23 – God is on guard, He is at work, and the enemy of your soul will not win

- Vs.8-10 – Syria was making raids on Israel but Israel keeps getting advance info
- Vs.11-13 – their king asks who is doing this, they tell him and he says go get Elisha
- Vs.14-23 (17) – Elisha delivers the enemy to Israel, and they stop attacking
- When the enemy arises the Lord is there (Psalm 34:7 / Isaiah 59:19 / 1 John 4:4)

God Gifts You (vs.5) – We see His Power / He is Invested

In vs.5 we see that while He is guiding us and guarding us, He is also gifting us.

Sometimes I find my food where my enemies are. This is a battle not just a banquet. We are lead into a war zone, but our cup is filled to the brink with fresh oil, full energy for the fight. Don't think in terms of what gifts you have but that God has given us Himself, filling us with joy.

God Goes After You (vs.6) – He is Behind you / We see His Promise / He is Invincible

God is pursuing you. Verse 6 tells us that God gives us love for a lifetime, and for eternity.

God in His goodness and mercy is coming to get you, slow down and let Him catch up.

Now we see that God guides us, guard us, gifts us, and goes after us. You might now ask what this really has to do with avoiding burnout. Look at the big picture here and see the secret to avoiding burnout: **David avoided burning out by exalting the One who gave him his holy fire.**

This is the key to knowing He is before, beside, and behind you, to knowing His providence, His presence, His power, and His promise. God is involved with you, interested in you, invested in you, and invincible for you. He guides you, guards you, gifts you, and goes after you. He is not just *with* you, He is ultimately and eternally *for* you. God has got your back, and is on your side. You are loved, you belong, and you are worth something, because you believe.

Even through life draining things that seem like death, His presence and power are with us. Even if and when we DO die, it isn't the end of our resource for restoration, we always have more fuel to burn and we do not have to burn out. We have every reason to glorify God.

We know this in theory but we need to grow into experience. The truth is that like David, you will understand more and more about how you matter to God when God matters more and more to you. It is not that you will matter more and more to Him; God is already fully invested in you, we are talking about the fact that you will see this guiding, guarding, and gifting the more it matters to you. You matter to God, does He matter to you?

David acknowledges his situation but sees God's hand in it all the way. He knows God is there to lead him and love him and to help him learn to trust Him and know His presence no matter what the situation is. Praise God despite your apparent situation because there is more than meets the eye, we can have sight beyond sight. God is still and always at work in the lives of His precious flock.

You matter to God, and it is the lie of the devil to make you feel as if you don't, that somehow He cares less for you than He should or less than He does for someone else. That isn't true. It may look like the devil is winning but he can't, all he can do to the child of God is to make it look like he is ahead for awhile. But his defeat is sure and your victory is secure because that victory is found in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Great Shepherd.

Think about Jesus, who obviously had more legitimate reasons to give up and go away than anyone else in history, but when He went away it was to pray. That is how He got reenergized. Think about the Apostle Paul, who had every earthly right to burn out, but who was empowered on the inside by the power of heaven (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

We can exalt Him in thought, in word, and in deed. That is how we beat the blues; that is how we overcome obstacles. Exalt Him and He will energize you. That is how to avoid burnout.