

EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

In 1993, John MacArthur wrote a book entitled *God: Coming Face to Face with His Majesty*. In his introduction, he wrote a compelling statement: “Believing the wrong thing about God is a serious matter because it is idolatry.” He noted the fallacy of idolatry with Ps. 50:21b, “You thought that I was just like you.” While many people consider idolatry to be an ancient practice of bowing down to an image or idol, MacArthur responds, “It is thinking anything about God that isn’t true.” He likens false views of God through a fable about several blind men who were asked to describe an elephant by their touch. One man rubbed the elephant’s side and stated, “He is like a wall”; while another felt his leg and said, “He is like a tree.” Clearly, to touch only one part of the elephant does not give the full picture of what this animal is. So knowing God, we cannot perceive him by experience; rather it must be through his Word. So search the Scriptures, and come face-to-face with God’s glory!



VBTS Faculty & Staff

The 27th fall semester is underway, and we rejoice in God’s good hand upon us. Thank you for your prayers on behalf of our dedicated and godly faculty and staff!

- Dr. Mark Hassler – Professor of Old Testament
- Dr. Brent Belford – Sr. Pastor of CBC, Faculty Associate in NT
- Dr. Eric Lehner – Academic Dean, Professor of Theology
- Mrs. Gloria Schrader – Administrative Assistant
- Mrs. Susann DePriest – Assistant to the Librarian
- Dr. Daniel Davey – President, Professor of Bible Exposition
- Dr. Thomas Dailey – Professor of New Testament
- Dr. Michael Windsor – Professor of Church History, Librarian
- Capt. Tony Brazas (USN ret.) – Chief Financial Officer
- Mr. Scott Rosen – Director of Admissions, Registrar

Not Pictured

- Dr. Roger DePriest – Faculty Associate in Biblical Counseling
- Dr. Dan Seely – Faculty Associate in Missiology
- Mr. Joel Dailey – Assistant Business Manager

A Meditation of Psalm 23 “Experiencing Heaven on Earth”

Dr. Daniel Davey | President and Professor of Biblical Exposition

Our world today seems to be filled with darkness, turmoil, and volatile voices of hate. In times like these, the unchanging message of calm and rest in Psalm 23 is a welcomed respite. About 150 years ago, Charles Spurgeon called this hymn, “David’s heavenly pastoral,” and he observed, “[if] we enter into the spirit of the Psalm . . . then we shall experience the days of heaven upon the earth.” Let’s review a few insights from this song and enter together into David’s experience of internal peace in the midst of external chaos.

Verse 1: The Psalm begins and ends (v. 6b) with “Yahweh” who is the theme of David’s words. Yahweh functions as a shepherd who provides for his sheep so there will be “no lack.” David is probably recalling Moses’ words in Deut. 2:7: “These 40 years Yahweh your God has been with you. You have lacked nothing.” Wherever Yahweh leads, he provides—He can be trusted.

Verse 2: Yahweh’s provision for his sheep is “fresh grass” and “waters of rest.” Again, David is referring to Moses’ words, and this time in Num. 10:33 where the Ark of Yahweh went ahead of the children of Israel “to seek out a resting place for them.” Just as Yahweh sought a placid place in the wilderness for his people, so he seeks the same for David. This verse suggests the sheep rest comfortably because of the Shepherd’s care and provision for them.

Verse 3: The shepherd “brings back my life” and “leads me down right paths.” Life can be difficult and exhausting, and Robert Alter suggests this poetic image is of “someone who has almost stopped breathing.” Yet God revives and directs his steps (Prov. 3:6) “for his name’s sake.” This is the climactic point of vv. 2–3—God acts according to his purpose on behalf of his sheep.

Verses 4–5: David switches to the second person when referring to Yahweh: “You are with me.” Even in the “valley of deadly shadows” God’s presence (“rod and staff”) protects us. In fact, he prepares “a feast of thanksgiving” though foes are all around us. His sheep not only enjoy a banquet in the midst of hostility, but divine refreshment— “You moisten my head with oil,” and “my cup overflows.” The “cup” relates to the experiences of life, just as Jesus said to the two brothers, “You will drink my cup” (Matt. 20:23). The point is that Yahweh’s presence enriches our lives for good.

Verse 6: David concludes with two joyous thoughts. First, in all of David’s experiences, he recognizes that he is pursued by Yahweh’s “goodness and love.” Second, David’s greatest desire is to dwell in Yahweh’s house “for many long days.” This statement represents David’s wish in life: to enjoy the intimate presence of Yahweh as did Moses in “the tent of meeting” (Ex. 33:7f).

It is one thing to read about Yahweh’s presence in Psalm 23, but it is quite another to experience it. Such enjoyment boils down to one personal question: *Can I trust God?* Jerry Bridges declares this question is double-sided. On one hand, your *view of God* determines if he is worthy of your trust. David made it clear in this psalm that God is indeed worthy of his confidence.

On the other hand, your *view of yourself* determines if you are willing to allow God to shepherd you through life’s circumstances, both the good and the difficult times. From David’s perspective, God is worthy, so he willingly submitted to God’s direction. In the end, David found his life experiences to be filled with “fresh grass” and “waters of rest”—a bit of heaven on earth. I pray we will submit to the Shepherd of our souls, and in so doing, find David’s experience to be our own.