

P230

GRACE NOTES RADIO PROGRAM

SERIES: Psalm 23

TITLE: Thy Rod and Thy staff Thy comfort me

SONGS: I LIFT MY HANDS

PEACE IN THE VALLEY

INTRO: The psalmist David spent most of his days in the middle of danger. Perhaps he was thinking about the attempts made on his life by King Saul and others when he wrote, "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil *for Thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*" Before he became king, he was constantly dodging Saul's murderous pursuits. As king, he warred with the surrounding nations, and toward the end of his reign, his own family members tried to overthrow him. But because he had been a good shepherd himself, he understood and counted on the protection from God, the greatest Shepherd of all. Today, on Grace Notes, Barbara Sandbek will talk about how the shepherd protects his sheep.

It wasn't at all uncommon in Palestine for a shepherd and his sheep to have to travel through deep, dark ravines with sharp cliffs. Danger was imminent, either from the cliffs themselves, or from animals in wait for their prey.

Sheep were helpless creatures, easy targets for predators, so the shepherd stayed close to them throughout the day, watching carefully and sheltering them from the slightest harm. At night, he'd lead them safely to the fold and sleep across the gateway to protect them, often at the risk of his own life.

A good shepherd protects his flock, no matter what. Ever wonder what a good shepherd would be like today? Here's a true story about one. A Christian man and his two children were mountain hiking when a sudden storm came up, battering them with hurricane force winds and thick wet sheets of snow. A blinding whiteout made it impossible to see or even move. The father dug a trench and placed his children inside. He tried to cover the opening with a tarp but the wind blew it away, so he laid over top of the tarp to hold it down. Two days passed before the searchers reached them. They found the two children alive, but the stiff body of their dad lay against the 'cold spot'. He had used his own back to make a wall.

Jesus did even more than that for us. The father had protected his OWN children, but Romans 5:8 says, God commended his love toward us in that

while we were yet sinners, before we were His children – or even cared for him, Christ died for us. He took the stripes upon his own back, from the beating we deserved, and paid the penalty for our sin. He became the Mediator between God and man, and built a wall between eternal death and us. Jesus said of Himself in John 10:11-15...

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know My sheep and My sheep know Me--just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father--and I lay down My life for the sheep.

The shepherd guarded his sheep well, though not one of them was aware of how well it was watched. Aren't we just like those sheep? We're so unaware of the eyes of God that are ever on us.

***** **WRITER: Sandi Patty**

***** I LIFT MY HANDS *** LENGTH:**

***My Father in heaven
Who reigns in power and glory
Your kingdom eternal
Thy Word is everlasting
Almighty Creator
Who rules a vast dominion
Enduring forever
Through countless generations***

***Praise the Lord from the highest of mountains
Praise the Lord from the lowest of valleys
For as long as I live I will give Your praise***

***Chorus:
I lift my hands to You
In the heavens where You reign
I lift my hands to You
And the glory of Your name
To the wonder of Your love I lift my hands***

*My watchman, my keeper
Whose eyes are ever on me
I wander, You find me
And rescue me from danger
My blessed Redeemer
Spared not Your Son to save me
You cleanse me and crown me
With great love and compassion*

*Let the words of my mouth be as praying
And may the prayers be as incense before You
As for as long as I live I will give You praise*

Repeat Chorus

*No other God before Thee
You are my Lord, will always be*

*Praise the Lord from the highest of mountains
Praise the Lord from the lowest of valleys
And for as long as I live I will give You praise*

Repeat Chorus

And to the wonder of Your love I lift my hands

The shepherd was well equipped for his job. He had a rod, and staff to rule and guide the flock to green pastures, and to defend them.

The rod was a branch, or heavy club, about 2-3 feet long, attached to the shepherd's belt for quick access in protecting the sheep.

The staff was about eight feet long with a crook at one end. With it the shepherd could reach across the small chest of the sheep to retrieve it from a ledge it had meandered onto.

It was also used for disciplinary purposes, but never to beat or kill. The shepherd would give a gentle reproof to steer the sheep in the right direction, or a severe rebuke when they were disobedient.

The discipline was rooted in love, though, and inflicted so that the sheep would not follow a path of destruction. I don't know about you, but as I look back on my life, I see so many times when God, through His reproof and rebuke, prevented me from entering into situations that would permanently alter the good path He had for me. Though I didn't appreciate it at the time, I am forever grateful.

The Psalmist said that the rod and staff comforted him. It reassured him of God's love and protection. You, too, can trust God love to protect you from everything He does not desire for your life, as you rest in Him.

Psalm 91 is one of my favorite reassuring psalms...

**He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of
The Almighty.**

I will say of the LORD,

"He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

**Surely He will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly
pestilence.**

**He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find
refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.**

**You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that
destroys at midday.**

**A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked.**

**If you make the Most High your dwelling-- even the LORD, who is my
refuge, then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your
tent.**

**For He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your
ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike
your foot against a stone.**

**You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion
and the serpent.**

**"Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect
him, for he acknowledges my name.**

**He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honor him.**

With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation."

Are you are going through difficult circumstances? God has not abandoned you. He's not a hired hand as it were—He's the faithful Shepherd (John 10:14). He only permits what in His wisdom is ultimately good for you and will never allow permanent separation to come between you and Him.

As Believers, when our journey is over and our race is run, our Great Shepherd will lead us safely to our peaceful heavenly fold.

***** **WRITER: Thomas A. Dorsey**

***** PEACE IN THE VALLEY *** LENGTH: 3:12**

VERSE 1:

***I am tired and weary but I must toil on
Till the Lord come to call me away
Where the morning is bright and the Lamb is the light
And the night is fair as the day***

CHORUS:

***There'll be peace in the valley for me some day
There'll be peace in the valley for me
I pray no more sorrow and sadness or trouble will be
There'll be peace in the valley for me***

VERSE 2:

***There the bear will be gentle, the wolf will be tame
And the lion will lay down by the lamb
The host from the wild will be led by a Child
I'll be changed from the creature I am***

Repeat chorus

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Until then, let your grace notes be a song of praise!