

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study of Psalm 23 – Part 5

I. Verse 6 – “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.”

A. As we approach this last verse of Psalm 23, David Gibson makes a great observation. He writes:

“We are in the final verse of Psalm 23, reading its closing lines. It is lovely to observe that (if we include the title) the third word of the psalm in Hebrew is ‘Lord’ (v. 1) and the third Last word is ‘Lord’ again (v. 6), the only two times the divine name is used in the psalm. This means that the covenant Lord literally encompasses this whole song even as it praises the covenant Lord for literally encompassing our whole life.... In verses 1–3 the shepherd is ahead of us, leading us; in verse 4 he is with us, escorting us through the wilderness and then hosting us in his presence (v. 5); and now in verse 6 he is behind us sending his goodness and love to catch us up from behind.”¹

B. “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life...”

1. The word “surely” means; “no doubt”² Because of David’s many experiences with God and his knowing of God’s character, he had a confidence in God. Tony Cooke writes;

“There is something beautiful about the word *surely*, especially when you are going through difficult times. There is no hesitation or uncertainty in David’s voice. He is fully persuaded of God’s enduring commitment to him. What is he saying about God’s goodness and mercy following him? He is declaring that definitely, certainly, absolutely, indisputably, undoubtedly, and unquestionably the blessings of God will always be his! David did not say maybe, perhaps, possibly, or even ‘I hope so.’”³

2. The word “goodness” means; “a good thing, benefit, welfare, prosperity, happiness”⁴

a. Goodness is one of the greatest attributes of God. In fact, the Bible suggests that it is a summation of His nature and character.

“And he said, ‘Please, show me Your glory.’ Then He said, ‘I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.’” – Exodus 33:18-19

b. Roger Ellsworth writes; “God’s goodness is that disposition which causes him actively to seek the wellbeing of his creature.”⁵

“I will satiate the soul of the priests with abundance, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the Lord.” - Jeremiah 31:14.

“And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me. Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good.” - Jeremiah 32:40-42.

“For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness.” - Psalm 107:9

“Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.”
Psalm 103:5.

3. The word “mercy” means; “loyal love, unfailing kindness, devotion, a love or affection that is steadfast based on a prior relationship;... favor”⁶ Wayne Grudem writes; “God’s *mercy* means God’s goodness toward those in misery and distress.”⁷ (e.g. Ephesians 2:1-7; See also Psalm 136 and II Chronicles 20:1-22). He further writes;

¹ David Gibson, *The Lord of Psalm 23: Jesus our Shepherd, Companion and Host* (Wheaton IL: Crossway Books, 2023), 126.

² Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 36.

³ Tony Cooke, *Because the Lord is my Shepherd: The Twelve Blessings of and Empowered Life* (Shippensburg, PA: Harrison House Publishers, 2020), 81-82.

⁴ Ibid., 375.

⁵ Roger Ellsworth, *Opening up Psalms*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 51.

⁶ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

⁷ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 200.

“Yet the characteristic of mercy is often emphasized where people are in misery or distress. David says, for example, ‘I am in great distress; let us fall into the hand of the LORD for his *mercy* is great . . .’ (2 Sam. 24:14). The two blind men who wish Jesus to see their plight and heal them cry, ‘Have *mercy* on us, Son of David’ (Matt. 9:27). When Paul speaks of the fact that God comforts us in affliction, he calls God the ‘Father of *mercies* and God of all comfort’ (2 Cor. 1:3). In time of need, we are to draw near to God’s throne so that we might receive both mercy and grace (Heb. 4:16; cf. 2:17; James 5:11). We are to imitate God’s mercy in our conduct toward others: ‘Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy’ (Matt. 5:7; cf. 2 Cor. 1:3–4).”⁸

“As a merciful God, He is full of pity, slow to punish and ready to pardon. It is because of His mercy that we come to know how He regards in pity the sinful and the suffering. How rich in mercy God is!”⁹

4. The word “**follow**” here means; **to pursue, chase,...to be pursued, be hounded**;¹⁰ As we follow the Shepherd, by following His Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can expect Him to pursue, to chase us with His goodness and mercy! Max Lucado writes;

“What a surprising way to describe a God who remains in one place. A God who sits enthroned in the heavens and rules and ordains. David, however, envisions a mobile and active God. Dare we do the same? Dare we envision a God who follows us? Who pursues us? Who chases us? Who tracks us down and wins us over? Who follows us with ‘goodness and mercy’ all the days of our lives?”¹¹

C. “...And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.”

1. The word “**dwell**” is difficult here because the Hebrew word means; “**return, come or go back**.”¹² Most expositors, however, state that the idea should be “**to live in**” and should, therefore be translated as “**dwell in**”. The idea still remains the same. David is stating that he will continue to seek God’s presence forever.

“David realized that the Lord’s good loyal love (*hesed*) would go with him everywhere through all his life. God’s blessings on His people remain with them no matter what their circumstance may be. (Cf. God’s goodness in 27:13; 31:19; 69:16; 86:17; 109:21; 116:12; 142:7; 145:7.) So he concluded I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. The house of the Lord referred to the sanctuary (tabernacle). For the rest of his life (lit., ‘length of days’) he would enjoy full communion with the Lord. In fact the Hebrew verb translated “I will dwell” conveys the idea of returning; the same verb is translated ‘He restores’ in 23:3. Perhaps the psalmist was in some way separated from the sanctuary and full enjoyment of its spiritual benefits. His meditation on the Lord’s leading and provisions prompted him to recall his communion with the Lord in His presence, in the sanctuary.”¹³

2. The “**house of the LORD**” is a reference to the tabernacle, probably the “**tabernacle of David**” (1 Chronicles 15; Amos 9:11). Tony Cooke, again points out;

“Dwelling in the house of the Lord’ does not begin when we die and go to heaven; it really starts when we enter into relationship with God. As wonderful as heaven will be, we can dwell with Him now! Psalm 90:1 declares, “*Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.*” The very next psalm states, “*You have made the LORD your dwelling place*” (Psalm 91:9, ESV). It is true that we will dwell with the Lord forever (throughout eternity), but it is equally true that we are dwelling with Him even now.”¹⁴

⁸ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 200.

⁹ Herbert Lockyer, *All the Doctrines of the Bible*, The All Series (Zondervan, 2013), 33.

¹⁰ William D. Mounce, *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1039.

¹¹ Max Lucado, *Safe in the Shepherd’s Arms: Hope and Encouragement from Psalm 23* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2009)

¹² Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, 997.

¹³ Allen P. Ross, “Psalms,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 812.

¹⁴ Tony Cooke, 88.