THE GOOD LIFE

A STUDY OF THE 23RD PSALM

PART 13 – SURELY, GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME

REVIEW

So we have been studying the "Good Life" that God has made available for us to live, and we have learned some wonderful truths from the 23rd Psalm!

We spent the first couple of months of this series covering verses 1-4 that give us the analogy of a shepherd's relationship with his sheep. Then, we saw how there is a transition beginning in verse 5 from God being described as our Good Shepherd to Him being described as our "Hospitable Host."

So, these last two verses of the 23rd Psalm show us another part of God's nature: Not only is He that Good Shepherd who takes care of His sheep; He is that Honorable Host who crowns us with His lovingkindness and tender-mercies in His house. Yes, He prepares this table before us and makes all things good and ready! Upon entering, He honors us by anointing our head with oil! He fills our cup up to overflowing! Then our response is, "Surely, my host's goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life! And I will live in His house forever!" Amen! This is living the good life, my friends!

Now the last couple of weeks, we have seen what the epitome of hospitality Himself does for those whom He invites into His presence.

The first thing He does when we come to His great supper is "He anoints (our) head(s) with oil." We saw how this word "anoints" is not the common word used for the anointing of a king or a priest. It is for this reason that the Hebrew word David used here is only translated "anoints" this one time in the original King James version. And the reason why it is not translated this way any other time is because this word literally describes "to make fat, to thrive or to prosper," and we saw how it is used this way four times in the Book of Proverbs.

Therefore, based on this choice of words of David, we saw that this describes an anointing all right, but not an anointing for regal or priestly duties. Rather, he was referring to the anointing of a guest at some prestigious banquet with oils and perfumes as a way of honoring them. Yes, the allusion is to the custom of anointing the head on festive occasions, as an indication of prosperity and honor. Therefore, as a whole, it is indicative of the divine favor, of prosperity, and of joy.

So, this oil that our most gracious and honorable Host (the Lord of Hosts, that is) anoints our head with is poured out in a "full, thriving and prosperous" manner. In other words, He pours oil on our head *so abundantly* - thus the expression indicates an *abundance of oil*.

Then last week, we saw how this correlates with the phrase "My cup runs over" because both phrases, therefore, describe "abundance." They echo each other in describing the Lord pouring *more than enough*.

Essentially, what David was saying was, *"He pours out an abundance of oil on my head, and He pours out an abundance of wine in my cup!"*

So last week, we learned that this analogy of our cup running over describes that *abundant life* Christ came to make available for us. And we saw how this life "more abundantly" describes a life that is "over, above and more than is necessary." Strong's says that it means "beyond, super-abundant in quantity, superior in quality and by implication, excessive." The Amplified Bible gives a great definition to this phrase; it defines it as "to the full, till it overflows." In fact, this Hebrew word that is used for "runs over" is only used in one other place in the Scriptures, and that is found at the end of **Psalm 66:12** when he says, *"But you brought us out to rich fulfillment."* Other translations call this place of "rich fulfillment" a *"wealthy place."*

So, the picture we see painted here is of a cup that is not just filled full to the brim, but it describes a cup that is actually overflowing and spilling over – a rich, abundance of drink! Hallelujah! Therefore, **God's nature is to not only give us enough life, but to give us more than enough life!** This is always what He desires to do for us because He is an excessive God!

But over the past two parts in this series, what we have seen is how both the oil and wine are types of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. Therefore, the good life is the anointed life – the life anointed by the Holy Ghost! So, as the Psalmist said, *"Open your mouth wide and He will fill it"* (**Psalm 81:10**)! Amen and so be it!

JEHOVAH SURELY

So now let's move on to the final verse of **Psalm 23** – **verse 6**. In this verse, King David continues with this description of the LORD being our Honorable Host by saying, *"Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life …"*

Church, this statement is so powerful in that it reveals to us what we have to look forward to. Again, not just in the next life, but in what David describes as all of the days of our life here now! Amen!

Now notice the first word we see used in this verse – "Surely!" (And it is worth noting here that this isn't the only Scripture that gives us this assurance of what God will do for His saints: **Psalm 85:9** says, *"Surely, His salvation is near to those who fear Him…"* In **Psalm 91:3**, it says, *"Surely, He shall deliver you…"* **Psalm 112:6** says, "*Surely he* (the righteous) *will never be shaken…"*)

Some synonyms for the word "Surely" are as follows: *"assuredly, certainly, definitely; doubtless, easily, hands down; inarguably, indisputably; undeniably, undoubtedly, unquestionably, unarguably; clearly, plainly, truly really."* Therefore, when we see the word "Surely" attached to a statement in God's Word, this means we can take it to the bank! It is definitely, indisputably, and undoubtedly a done deal!

You know, we don't need a Greek or Hebrew scholar to explain all these words in the Bible to us before we start believing them! All you need is enough simplicity and faith to just start actually believing what His Word says and taking it at face value! So here, when the Bible says, "Surely!", it clearly and really just means "Surely!"

You know how the apostle Paul said that not many who are wise, noble, or mighty according to the flesh are called (See First Corinthians 1:26-29)? Why is this? Is it because God loves those who are educated and

wealthy any less? Heavens, no! The reason why this happens is because, as a general rule, those with all of these things going for them in the world have a tendency to trust in and be distracted by these things.

No, God is just looking for the person who is simple enough – whether they are dumb as a rock or they have an IQ that is through the roof – to read His Word and agree with everything He said. So, when they see a verse like this that says, "Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life …" they believe it, and it is so! Amen!

So, let's say it now – "Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life!," "Surely, He shall deliver me!," and we can take it a step further - "Surely, He shall heal me! Surely, He shall bless me! Surely, He shall save my children! Surely, He shall protect me! etc."

But do you know why we, under this new and better covenant, can particularly be so confident? It is because He already has delivered us! He already has healed us! He already has blessed us! Yes, He already has poured out His goodness and mercy on us through Christ Jesus! So, as far as God's concerned, it has already been done! Amen! SURELY, God's grace is in our account!

You know, the LORD gave Himself many names – Jehovah Jireh, Jehovah Nissi, Jehovah Shalom, etc. etc. etc. But if God were a woman, I bet He would have given Himself a different name – "Jehovah Shirley!" 😊 However, this reminds me of that comedy where one guy said, "Surely, you can't be serious!?!" and then the other guy replied with, "I am serious, and don't call me 'Shirley.'"

IN HOT PURSUIT

So, what is it that we can be confident of experiencing every day of our lives? David says that it is God's goodness and mercy is following us all the days of our life.

Regarding this, *"Charles Spurgeon used to call 'goodness and mercy' God's footmen - because in his day, when a wealthy man would travel, two footmen took their place behind him on his coach. Their task was to smooth the way for him. Where he went, they went. When his coach stopped, they jumped down to open the door for him. They would hurry into the inn to make sure his room was ready and his supper served. God's two footmen are goodness and mercy, and they follow us just like those footmen to smooth our journey home."* – **John Phillips in "Exploring Psalms"** Amen to that!

However, when this verse says that this goodness and mercy shall "follow" us all the days of our life, some have gotten the wrong impression. The picture that we could have regarding this is that God's goodness and mercy is maybe 50 or 100 yards behind us, picking up the rear, not to touch our lives in any way. But the Hebrew word that David used here is crucial to understand in this context. It is the Hebrew word *radaph* – which means "to pursue, to set off after someone in order to catch them." It also means "to chase, to run after, or to be in hot pursuit of."

In fact, this word is translated "persecute" more times in the original King James version than it was to just simply "follow." David oftentimes used this same word to describe his enemies' pursuing and persecution of him (See Psalm 7:1, 31:15, 35:3 etc.).

So, this paints a better picture of what David meant in Psalm 23:6: Just as David's enemies would intentionally and maliciously pursue David to do him harm because of their hatred for him, God's goodness

and mercy likewise intentionally pursue us – but not to do us harm because of their hatred; to do us good because He loves us! Amen!

So, no, God's goodness and mercy do not follow behind us at some distance, never catching up to us. No, they are pursuing us in order to catch us every day! For example, it is like you were speeding and now a police car is "following" you with its lights on. And that police officer is not "following" you from a distance; no, he or she is "pursuing" you in order to catch up to you, pull you over, and give you a ticket for speeding.

Church, that is what God's goodness and mercy is doing for each and every one of us every day: These virtues of the LORD are in "hot pursuit" of us! The difference is, when they catch you and I, they are not going to give you a ticket (i.e. punishment and judgment); God's goodness and His unfailing love will provide you with all manner of grace and mercy! Amen!

GOODNESS AND MERCY

Now let's, first of all, look at God's first footman called "goodness." The Hebrew word that is used here is used over 550 times, and guess what you will not find in these 550 instances where it is used …? Of all those times this word "goodness" is used, you never one time see any reference to things like cancer, paralysis, depression, tragedy, accidents, sickness, poverty, etc. Isn't that interesting? It is particularly interesting when you consider how so many Christians, and even ministers, today are equating these bad things with God's goodness.

For example, you can go to many funerals today of someone who died early of, say, cancer and hear the one officiating their funeral say, "Well, we don't know why these things happen, but this we can sure of – that God, in His permissive will, allowed so and so to have this cancer in order to teach them something or to protect them from something far worse down the road. We don't know why, but we do know that it was God's goodness that allowed them to have this 'gift' of cancer." What a bunch of bologna! That is some seriously damaging doctrine right there!

Did you know that this word "goodness" describes things that are "pleasant, becoming, beneficial and morally good"? In fact, this word for "goodness" is translated as "good, better and best." It is, therefore, a huge stretch for these who equate evil, destructive things like this to being agents of God's goodness. No, as we have been learning here @ HPC for years, if God is good, then He does good.

Let's look at this way: we are told numerous times in the Bible to "do good" ourselves, right? We are told to be imitators of God as dear children, correct (see Ephesians 5:1)? So, if we believe that God does these things to His children, then why don't we do likewise and go sprinkle flu germs on our kids pillows at night to make them get sick in order to teach them something? No, we don't do that because we love them, right? Not to mention, there is not a place on this planet that will not lock us up and throw away the key if we abused our children like this. And why? Because this is not "morally good." Amen?

But, no, this word that David used that is translated "goodness" is the same word that God used throughout Genesis chapter one in describing His creation. So, if you want to know what God considers "good," then look at His original design in creation, which is completely absent of these evil, harmful things. No, God's original creation is all life and constructive, not death and destructive!

Now let's look at the other footman of the Lord that is following close behind – translated "mercy."

This word comes from the Hebrew word *hesed,* which I believe is the closest Old Testament counterpart to our New Testament word describing God's love, *agape*. This word is defined by Strong's as "unfailing love, loyal love, devotion, kindness, often based on a prior relationship, especially a covenant relationship." It is for this reason that many like to define this word as "the unfailing, steadfast, covenant love of God."

So, not only is God's goodness in hot pursuit of us, but we also have God's unfailing, covenant love chasing us down as well! Aren't you thankful, church, that God's unfailing love never quits on us and never quits pursuing us? Yes, even when we are unlovable and do some pretty stupid things, God's love is still in hot pursuit of us!

Now this word for "mercy" is what was used in the very common statement of praise that was made throughout the Old Testament where God's chosen people said, "For the Lord is good and His mercy endures forever!" In fact, both His goodness and mercy, are referred to in this, the single most popular statement of praise we have in the entire Bible!

In studying this, you will find something very interesting: You will find that when they began to praise God with this "phrase of praise" that the glory of the Lord showed up, enemies were defeated, and God's people were blessed! (Compare **Second Chronicles 5:13-14**)

Now it is important to realize that just simply parroting this particular phrase is not necessarily going to get the same results. What needs to be understood here is that praising God out of the heart for His goodness and His mercy, that is what will yield God's miraculous provision in our lives. Might we say that as we praise the LORD for His goodness and mercy that are following us, that this is what leads to His goodness and mercy catching up to us? Let me say it this way: when we praise God all the days of your life for His goodness and His mercy (Psalm 34:1), His goodness and mercy will follow us all of the days of our life!

ALL OF THE DAYS OF OUR LIFE

Now, finally, that leads me to the last part of this phrase we are covering; notice that David's confidence was not in the fact that God's goodness and love pursuing us will happen sometimes or from time to time; no, David said, "Surely, (this will happen) *all the days of my life*." In other words, this was not something that he believed would happen occasionally or sporadically; this was not something he was confident would happen from time to time or even "as the Lord willed." No, David was "sure" that the Lord's goodness and mercy would be in hot pursuit of him *every day of his life*.

So, this is something that we should ask ourselves: Do we believe that we have good things and God's love pursuing us every day? Are we expecting that something good will happen to us today? This is apparently what David believed!

Now the truth is that most people (including Christians) are *pessimistic*, not *optimistic*. They will say things like, "Well, if it weren't for bad luck, I'd have no luck at all!" And the problem with this belief system is that it based on their experiences and not on God's Word. The Bible says, "Surely, goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life!" So, that is *only* what we should be saying!

As the late Oral Roberts was known for saying and even wrote a book on, *"Something good is going to happen to you today!"* Where did he get this from? From verses like Psalm 23:6!

So, this is what I want you to take away from this today – we need to change our expectations and begin to say out of our mouths *every day* that "Surely, something good is going to happen to me today!" – all because God has said that His goodness and His unfailing love is pursuing us every day of our lives!

As the Message Bible puts it in **Amos 9:13,** *"Yes indeed, it won't be long now." God's Decree. "Things are going to happen so fast your head will swim, one thing fast on the heels of the other. You won't be able to keep up. Everything will be happening at once—and everywhere you look, blessings! Blessings like wine pouring off the mountains and hills. I'll make everything right again for my people Israel!"* And to that, we can give a hearty "Amen!"

Why would the Lord even tell His people this? It was to get their expectations up! Now the general consensus is that we don't want to get people's hopes up. That's obviously because we don't want people to get disappointed, but listen – If you don't expect the things God has said He will do, then you WILL be disappointed! Yes, if you don't get your hopes up for God's promises, then you are sure to not walk in many of them. But if you do get your hopes up – expecting what He has said He will do – then you are opening up the possibility of the LORD's goodness and mercy catching you! I'd rather shoot for the stars and hit the moon sometimes than shoot at nothing and hit it every time.

So, in conclusion, we ought to be living a lifestyle of praising God for His goodness and love in our lives! Yes, as **Psalm 34:1** states, we are to bless the Lord at all times like this and let these praises be continually in our mouths! And then, as His goodness and mercy are on the forefront of our hearts, we should boldly declare these truths – expecting God's goodness and mercy to be manifested in our lives on a daily basis.

Surely, certainly, absolutely, we can take it to the bank, the Lord's goodness and His unfailing, steadfast love are in hot pursuit of us, God's children. And these are not seasonal blessings either; they are pursuing us every day of our lives! Amen, and so be it!