



Mighty in the Word

of the
Lord
Jesus Christ

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness;
But unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1.18).

Edifying the Body of Christ (Eph. 4.10-16)

The Wise Still Seek Him

Vol. XVIII.03

The Valley of the Shadow of Death

Psa 23:1 <A Psalm of David.> The LORD [is] my shepherd; I shall not want.

Psa 23:2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.

Psa 23:3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Psa 23:4 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.

Psa 23:5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Psa 23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

The volume XVII.03 *Message* had in it the comment that "Many read depending upon their personal vocabulary and personal definitions for understanding of all things that come before them." As we go to Psalm 23.4, I believe that there are words that cause us to go to a specific scenario regardless of the context of the usage of the word, specifically *death*.

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.

Many reading the above passage see before them death, death in the sense of the world's understanding – "life is over, breathing is stopped."

Years ago, I was invited to read Psalm 23 at a funeral. It was for a man who was black, and he and his family's pastor was a black pastor. I say this to give emphasis in this pastor's understanding of the Word of the Lord, and the fact that we were Christ's Holy Church, coming together to worship the Lord Jesus Christ. What a joy to know that this pastor, my brother in Christ Jesus, was about the Word, not who he thought he was or who he thought I was. He was focused upon the Lord Jesus Christ and our coming together, as one in the Lord.

As I was reading the passage, I stopped and re-read verse four emphasizing "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death," emphasizing shadow. I hesitated to give time for the congregation to take in "shadow – of death."

When I finished reading the Psalm, the pastor said to me, "I believe you have the message for this service."

And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon [him], and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from [his] hands.

And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and [from] all the expectation of the people of the Jews (Acts 12.7-11).

Where are you

As you walk

through the Valley of the Shadow of Death?

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Come apart and rest (Mark 6.31).

This caused me to give much thought to how we read, how we hear, how we understand, the Word of the Lord. There are different words for *valley* in the language in the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament,. There is not space to list them and the definitions, but we will look at the word in this passage. The meaning is a narrow gorge. I am reminded of the scripture in the Gospels of the narrow way that leads to eternity with the Lord Jesus Christ. Interesting that the word *valley* is also narrow.

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death," may carry with it several thoughts. Walking through the valley of the shadow of death is a walk that we make alone with the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe it brings us to a time of contemplating and praying for the brethren who are walking through this valley, as a member of the persecuted church. It, indeed, is a narrow gorge, a walk one makes alone.

There is a song I heard many years ago with the words about the Lord Jesus Christ, "No one can walk it for him; He had to walk it by himself."

The Persecuted cChurch, each one, has to walk it by himself. "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."

The Hebrew tells us that it is a narrow gorge; this reminds me of the scripture in the New Testament Gospel of Matthew.

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *[is]* the gate, and broad *[is]* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:
Because strait *[is]* the gate, and narrow *[is]* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Mt 7.13, 14).

Verse 14 makes it clear because the way which leads to life is narrow, few there be that find it. It is not like the broad way on which massive numbers travel.

When the way is narrow, a narrow gorge, I only want to walk with the Lord as I do not need any distractions in that valley of the shadow of death, nor do I want any distractions to cause me to take one look off the that narrow way, that I might falter. The Lord Jesus Christ calls us to walk with Him all the way, looking neither to the left nor to the right (Isa 30.21).

Satan distracts us so easily to take our eyes off Jesus Christ. He is cunning and, perhaps, may tell you to look at his map of life so you know where you are going as you walk on the narrow gorge, the valley of the shadow of death, so you will know what lies before you that you might not falter.

But, hear this. While it may sound good in our human, worldly thinking, to have a map before us, know there is no map for life. It is a walk with the Lord Jesus Christ, being led by the Holy Spirit. It is a walk trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths (Pro 3.5, 6).

The Lord will guide us and hold us in His hand if we are following His ways, and endeavoring to walk with Him through this journey of life, now and when He calls us home. It is a walk of trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ at all times, as we endeavor to serve Him – and all for His glory.

The steps of a *[good]* man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.
Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth *[him with]* his hand (Ps 37.23, 24).

The valley is (steep valley, a narrow gorge) the shadow of death (deep shadow, distress, extreme danger, darkness – as well as a place of the dead).

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.

Here we must take time to give thanks and glory and honor unto Him, the Lord God Almighty in Christ Jesus, Who loves us so much that He chose to give His life a ransom for us, being crucified on the Cross of Calvary, that we might have a Savior Who walks with us and comforts us, through the darkness of this world. The Lord Jesus Christ calls us to follow Him, walk with Him, though Satan comes in to discourage us, to endeavor to cause us to fear - as the darkness of this world may *seem* to surround us.

We must keep our eyes upon Jesus as we walk in this world - that we will see the Light of Life, Jesus Christ, and follow Him - knowing He will bring us through it all.

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life (Jn 8.12).

This gives to us the encouragement, and the knowledge, to cause us to trust in the Lord with all our hearts, knowing that as we walk on the narrow gorge, in the midst of persecution, hardship, distress . . . we will not falter on that gorge when we follow Jesus Christ - as He is the Light of this world and in Him is no darkness. When we are walking with Him in a life of holiness, of righteousness, there will be no darkness in the midst of Satan's attacks. The Lord will strengthen us, and bring us through – if, if we will trust Him and keep our eyes upon Him - He Who is our Light.

I am reminded of Joshua, Chapter One, and many other passages that remind us "Fear not, for I am with thee . . ." Dt 3.22; 20.33; 31.6, 8; Jos 8.1; 10.25; Jdg 6.13, 14; II K 6.16; I Jn 4.4. There are many, many verses in the Bible, all through the Bible, that teaches us not to fear – if we are walking with the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am reminded of Peter, and many others all through history who were in prison. I cannot imagine the following. We have life easy when it comes to how the brethren have been imprisoned, beaten, killed.

And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison (Act 12:6).

Sit with the above passage for a moment, then go to the following verse. Read and re-read these verses, seeking the Lord Jesus to come and strengthen you – and me!