

HIS STRONG MINISTRY OF COMFORT

PART 6, THE SHEPHERD PSALM 2020

Psalm 23:4 Berean Study Bible **SLIDE**

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; **Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.***

We established last week that the valley of shadows is the world system through which the Shepherd is leading us and that we experience the darkness of this world, not because we walk away from the Shepherd, but because we are following Him and are progressing with Him. We also know that He is with us all the way, whether we feel Him there or not. He will never leave us.

BUT THE LORD DOESN'T JUST LEAVE IT THERE

He goes on to say, 'In this looming valley of darkness through which you are travelling, I am aware there are many things that will upset you ... unnerve you ... discourage you ...

'SO I HAVE PROVIDED YOU WITH A GREAT AND UNFAILING ANTIDOTE – a DIVINE ANALGESIC – against all your anxiety ... sorrow ... exhaustion ... discouragement etc

'THIS ANALGESIC IS MY COMFORT.

'IT IS AVAILABLE FOR YOU ALL THE WAY THROUGH ... 24 HOURS A DAY ... SEVEN DAYS A WEEK. ... CONSTANTLY & CONTINUALLY.'

BUT THIS ISN'T WHAT WE WERE TAUGHT

*For years I've heard how God **TAKES US OUT OF OUR 'COMFORT ZONE'** SO WE CAN SERVE HIM BETTER ... & BECOME MORE MATURE.*

One guy wrote, 'You're going to have to step outside of your comfort zone. Just like a ship was not designed for the confines of the safe harbour, neither are human beings. We are designed to sail the wide-open oceans, to push the boundaries of what we can achieve ... - Royston Guest

*ANOTHER GUY HAD A VIDEO ON YOUTUBE CALLED, **12 WAYS TO GET OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE** in which he said, 'EVERYTHING WE WANT THAT WE DON'T CURRENTLY HAVE IS OUTSIDE OF OUR COMFORT ZONE'*

NB: NOTHING ABOUT JESUS CHRIST OR WHAT HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED FOR US

The problem with this is ... People who believe this stuff are in danger of becoming cold and callous, ambitious achievers, propagating a cause devoid of any feeling for themselves or others.

Personally, as a young Christian and as a result of trying to live OUTSIDE MY COMFORT ZONE ... I struggled in darkness and wrestled with loneliness and much DISCOMFORT, thinking I was doing God's will ...

DOES GOD REALLY WANT YOU TO BE ALWAYS LIVING OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE ...
ALWAYS ON EDGE ... INTENSE & SERIOUS ... UNABLE TO REST & ENJOY ANYTHING ... IN CASE IT BRINGS YOU SOME COMFORT?

GOD FORBID IF WE DO FIND SOME COMFORT IN SOMETHING ... **WE'D CERTAINLY FEEL THE CONDEMNATION OF GUILT & THE SHAME OF FAILURE BECAUSE WE'D BACKSLIDEN INTO OUR COMFORT ZONE ...**

DOES GOD WANT YOU TO LIVE LIKE THAT, DEVOID OF ANY COMFORT AT ALL?
NO!!! GOD CARES ABOUT YOUR COMFORT BIG TIME.

LOOK AT WHAT JESUS SAID ...

John 14:18 KJV **SLIDE**

I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you.

And so we read in Psalm 23:4, He has provided His Rod & Staff to comfort us.

Psalm 23:4 Berean Study Bible **SLIDE**

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; **Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.***

So, despite what you may have heard implying that 'God doesn't care about your feelings or comfort' ... God actually does care. He has made divine provision for you to comfort you as you travel through this dark world!

WHAT IS THIS COMFORT?

This word COMFORT is '**NACHAM**' which means 'to give out sighs'
Today we would call it 'A SIGH OF RELIEF' – 'a sigh of release'

SLIDE Like opening the release valve on a pressure cooker and releasing the build-up of internal pressure, this is a letting go of tensions caused by negative circumstances ... maybe with tears. It's a sigh that sets us free from stress ... or distress ... IN THE MIDST OF THIS WORLDS NEGATIVE CIRCUMSTANCES ...

SLIDE

NB: THE LORD DOESN'T PROMISE TO CHANGE THE CIRCUMSTANCES FOR YOU, BUT TO ALWAYS COMFORT US IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

He tells us here this comfort comes about by His Rod and His Staff.

SO WHAT DO THE ROD & STAFF REPRESENT?

This is NOT as one dear lady suggested, 'Kind Pastor Rod and his staff from the local Baptist church'.

SLIDE LET'S LOOK AT THIS ROD

- THIS ROD WAS MORE LIKE A CLUB

ROD: **SHEBET** (phonetic spelling - *shay'-bet*) = a rod, club, sceptre
It became a symbol of protection, power, and authority (e.g. the rod of Moses)

Micah 7:14 (See Young's Literal Translation)

*Rule your people with **your rod**, the flock of your inheritance ...*

- THIS ROD WAS NOT USED ON THE SHEEP

Despite what some intense Christians have taught ...

This is NOT a club used to discipline the sheep and try to keep them inline ...

- THIS ROD WAS USED AS A WEAPON AGAINST THE ENEMIES OF THE SHEEP ...

However ... unlike all Adamic shepherds ...

- THIS ROD WAS ONLY USED ONCE BY OUR SHEPHERD.

HE DOESN'T HAVE TO KEEP WHACKING & FIGHTING OUR ENEMIES ...

HE'S ALREADY WHACKED THEM.

HE DID IT ONCE & FOR ALL TIME ON THE CROSS!

Colossians 2:15 NIV

... Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

THERE IN ITSELF IS A GREAT COMFORT ... KNOWING SATAN & EVIL HAVE BEEN TOTALLY DEFEATED BY JESUS CHRIST UPON THE CROSS ... AND THEY CANNOT EVER HURT YOU ... IT CAUSES A GREAT 'SIGH OF RELIEF'.

Isaiah 40:1-2 NASB **SLIDE**

*"**Comfort, O comfort** My people," says your God. ²"**Speak kindly to Jerusalem; and call out to her, that her warfare has ended, that her iniquity has been removed, that she has received of the LORD'S hand Double for all her sins.**"*

NB: THE SAME WORD IS USED FOR COMFORT IN THIS VERSE AS IN PSALM 23:4

NB: THIS IS INDEED THE FINISHED WORK OF THE CROSS. ALL OUR BATTLES HAVE ALREADY BEEN WON THERE BY JESUS. OUR 'WARFARE HAS ENDED', AND ALL OUR 'INIQUITY HAS BEEN REMOVED'.

BUT WAIT THERE'S MORE

**SLIDE THE SHEEP ALSO PASSED UNDER THE ROD EVERY MORNING
& EVENING ... IT WAS HIS ROLL-CALL**

AS THE SHEEP PASSED UNDER THE SHEPHERD'S ROD THEY ONCE AGAIN ACKNOWLEDGED HIS AUTHORITY OVER THEM & ENTERED INTO HIS CARE & COMFORT. (See Leviticus 27:32 where every tenth animal to pass under the rod was set apart for God.)

Here we know again that we are His ...

**SLIDE WHEN WE PASS UNDER HIS ROD, OUR SUBMISSION TO HIS DIVINE
AUTHORITY IS RENEWED & WE CONFIRM WE DO NOT BELONG IN THE
ENEMY'S COUNTERFEIT DOMINION ...**

Romans 6:13b Berean Literal **SLIDE**

... Yield yourselves to God, as living out from the dead, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness.

CHRIST'S AUTHORITY -

- **WITH SATAN:** Jesus conquered and enforced His authority over Satan when He defeated him on the Cross ... However ...
- **WITH US:** Christ's authority is never enforced. We willingly submit to Jesus' Authority out of love, because of His love and grace.

Here we begin to experience Comfort ... here, where we've been placed with Christ ... under His banner ... in His kingdom ... where He is Lord ...

This is not just a symbol ... **We begin to feel the atmosphere ... we experience** His kingdom ... **we sense** His realm ... with His Holy Spirit ... **a place of light and life** ... where there is no oppression ... where there is love and grace ... free from sin ... **Joy from our spirit starts to spring up within our hearts.**

HERE WE BREATHE THAT 'SIGH OF RELEASE' EVEN THOUGH WE MAY STILL
HAVE NEGATIVE CIRCUMSTANCES & EMOTIONS OF SORROW ... WE KNOW HERE THERE IS
A GREATER POWER THAN THE DARKNESS ...

Romans 6:14b

For you are not under law but under grace.

IN THE REALM OF GRACE.

SO HOW DO WE EXPERIENCE THIS?

SLIDE **WE MUST BOW OUR HEAD – OUR WILL –**
UNDER HIS AUTHORITY

OUR HEAD IS THE PROBLEM

IF WE DO NOT BOW OUR HEAD TO JESUS' AUTHORITY - EVEN THOUGH WE
HAVE HIS NATURE - **WE WILL STILL BE STANDING IN OUR OWN AUTHORITY ...**

NOT BOWING YOUR HEAD OR YOUR WILL to Christ's supreme authority -
Means you will be constantly trying to fight the devil ...
(Or just be surrendering to his evil ways ...)

SO MANY CHRISTIANS TRY TO RESIST SATAN & SIN BY STANDING IN THEIR
OWN AUTHORITY ...

TRYING TO STAND AGAINST THE DEVIL ...

THEY BECOME **INTENSE ... UPTIGHT ... CAN'T REST**

YOU NEVER HEAR THEM JOKING ... RELAXING ... SMILING ... LAUGHING ...

THEY LIVE SHOUTING SCRIPTURE AGAINST SATAN ...

TRYING TO MAINTAIN **THEIR AUTHORITY** ...

UNTIL THEY DIE OF **SOME SICKNESS BROUGHT ON BY HYPER-TENSION &**
ANXIETY ...

I KNOW ... I WAS ONE OF THEM & I GOT CANCER EVEN THOUGH I WAS A
CHRISTIAN & A PASTOR.

I HAD TO LEARN -

- I WASN'T THE MASTER OF MY OWN FATE ...
- I WASN'T THE CAPTAIN OF MY SOUL

A quote from 'INVICTUS' BY WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

In the fell clutch of circumstance ...

I have not winced nor cried aloud.

Under the bludgeonings of chance ...

My head is bloody, but unbowed.

It matters not how strait the gate ...

How charged with punishments the scroll.

I am the master of my fate,

I am the captain of my soul.

THIS IS A MAN STANDING IN HIS OWN AUTHORITY – HEAD UNBOWED!

HOWEVER, I FINALLY BOWED MY HEAD UNDER THE SHEPHERDS
ROD & I RECEIVED HIS GREAT COMFORT ... I BREATHED MANY
'SIGHS OF RELEASE' ...

WHY FIGHT WHEN JESUS HAS ALREADY DEFEATED SATAN? Paul said:

Ephesians 3:14 KJV

*For this cause **I bow my knees** to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

James 4:7 **SLIDE**

... Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Literally ... He'll run away ...

NB: **OUR FLESH DOES NOT WANT TO BOW** ... THIS IS ONE OF THE GREAT
WAYS YOU KNOW WHETHER YOU ARE LIVING IN THE FLESH OR THE SPIRIT ...
WHETHER YOU WILLINGLY CAN BOW YOUR HEAD – YOUR WILL – TO THE
SHEPHERDS AUTHORITY ...

SLIDE WHAT IS THE STAFF?

THE STAFF IS A WOODEN IMPLEMENT THAT THE SHEPHERD USED FOR **HIS**
SUPPORT.

Staff or **misheneth** {mish-eh'-neth}; **feminine** of **mish'en**; support, a walking-
stick – staff;
properly signifies what a person leans upon for support

What did Jesus ever need when He walked upon the earth?

What was always at His side? Only one thing! A person ... The Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was Jesus support as He walked the rugged paths of earth...

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE ONE WHO COMES ALONG SIDE

John 14:16 KJV **SLIDE**

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.

The Greek word for helper is “**paracletos**” and means **‘one called alongside’** to help or comfort; an advocate, intercessor. A paraclete is someone who can do something for you that you cannot do for yourself.

THE HOLY SPIRIT ... ONE WHO COMES ALONG SIDE

- Holy Spirit's name, ‘**Paracletos**’ is a **Feminine Noun**
- The Staff ‘**mish'enah**’ (mish-ay-naw') is also a **Feminine Noun**

HOW DOES HE COMFORT US IN THE VALLEY-WORLD?

*In this Covid-19 ... imagine your older mother is in an agecare facility in Victoria which has had an outbreak of the virus. She becomes unwell and goes to be tested. While the results are being processed, you wait with baited breath ... Then you get a phone-call from the doctor ... It's a tense moment and he seems to take forever to tell you what the results are ... when suddenly you hear ... 'The test was negative. Your mother doesn't have the virus'. **NOW YOU BREATHE A SIGH OF RELIEF** (Comfort = a sigh of release).*

NOW WE UNDERSTAND THAT SCENARIO! BUT NOW IMAGINE ...

The doctor says, 'I'm sorry your mother HAS GOT COVID-19 & ISN'T EXPECTED TO LAST TILL THE END OF THE WEEK'.

What do you do now?

Your heart breaks ... You try to come to terms with this situation ...

You pray and beg God to heal her, you know He can, but she seems to get worse ...

You weep ... you rant and complain to God ... you might even throw a tantrum ...

But you CANNOT COME TO TERMS WITH THIS SORROW ...

HOWEVER, ONE DAY SOON AFTER, you bow your head to the Rod of the Shepherd,
bringing all your pain and confusion ...

IN THIS PLACE ... THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES ALONG SIDE INTO YOUR HEART...

HE ENTERS INTO YOUR PAIN WITH YOU ... HE WEEPS WITH YOU ...

BUT NOW YOU SENSE THIS AMAZING COMFORT & UNDERSTANDING ... THIS DIVINE STRENGTH ... UPLIFTING YOUR HEART ...

YOU BEGIN TO LET GO TO HIM MORE & MORE AS HE NOW, NOT ONLY HOLDS
YOUR PAIN, BUT LIFTS YOU UP ...

YOU GASP FOR BREATH AS THE PAIN IS SO DEEP INSIDE YOU ...

AND YOU POUR OUT YOUR SIGH AS YOU FALL INTO HIS WINGS ...

YOU STILL FEEL THE PAIN ... BUT IT'S NO LONGER A BURDEN, AS HE HAS
TAKEN THE BURDEN FROM YOU AND HE IS CARRYING IT ...

HE HOLDS YOU AND YOU REST IN HIM ...

YOUR BITTER TEARS NOW TURN INTO OVERWHELMING PEACE ...

THIS IS HOW THE STAFF COMFORTS US ...

THE SITUATION HAS NOT CHANGED ... BUT WE ARE SUSTAINED.

Romans 8:26 Berean Literal Bible **SLIDE x 2**

Now likewise also, *the Spirit joins to help us in weakness*; for we do not know
the things which we should pray for as it behooves, but the Spirit Himself
makes intercession with inexpressible groanings.

Groanings = **stenagmois**; sighing. From **stenazo**; a sigh.

THIS IS THE STAFF OF COMFORT COMING ALONG SIDE.

NB: THE ROD COMES BEFORE THE STAFF. THAT'S BECAUSE ...

WE MEET THE STAFF AFTER WE'VE PASSED UNDER THE ROD

*So many of us have carried, and still do carry, the pressure of pain
within us ... It causes our cells to break down and can bring on
sickness and diseases like cancers ... immune deficiencies ... diabetes
... heart disease etc ...*

**THE POWER OF THIS COMFORT RELEASES US FROM WITHIN, SO THAT WE
ARE FREE ON THE INSIDE, EVEN THOUGH THERE'S GREAT PRESSURE
WITHOUT ...**

THE POWER OF THIS COMFORT CAN BRING ABOUT PHYSICAL HEALING ...

SLIDE Randy Stonehill - KING OF HEARTS

*Pockets full of pain and fear,
That's a load there's just no need to carry.
Let it go and leave it here,
Now there's no price that's left to pay
With one more mile or one more day.*

THE SHADOWS WILL NOT GO AWAY FROM THIS WORLD UNTIL THE END ... WHEN WE
RETURN WITH JESUS. SORROW AND MOURNING WILL FLEE AWAY THEN ...
BUT UP UNTIL THEN WE TRAVEL THROUGH THESE TIMES AND HIS GREAT COMFORT
SUSTAINS US AND CHANGES US ...

THINGS WE CANNOT BEAR ALONE WE NO LONGER HAVE TO BEAR ALONE ...