

# **GOD'S GRACE, DELIVERANCE, AND PRESENCE**

Psalm 23 is surely the most identifiable song in the Psalter. Most people growing up in a Judeo-Christian religious context know these words by heart or are at least familiar with them. In my experience, they are now usually confined to memorials and funerals.

I have found myself contemplating, "What do you say about a passage that most people have heard lessons or read articles about many times over?" So, my intent here is to trace the flow of the poem and give each stanza a heading. Then, point some things out to help us as we meditate on the psalm throughout the week.

In verses 1-3, God's grace is demonstrated in a beautiful metaphor. Of grammatical import, notice that Yahweh (the LORD) is the subject of the verbs in this section. These actions on behalf his sheep are an outpouring of God's grace. Also, the favor shown and given to the sheep is not due to their deserving it, but for his name's sake (3).

Verse 4 shows God's deliverance. Note that the subject of the verbs changes to the psalmist, David. Even though God richly blesses us, humans don't always go down the path representative of God's will. Because of selfish choices, we may find ourselves in a place of deep darkness. Though we may turn away from God, he never gives up on us. Like David, if I will turn back to God, acknowledge my shortcomings, and fully trust in him, he will deliver me through the trials and consequences I face.

Verses 5-6 show the blessings of being in God's presence. Again, notice that God is once again the subject of the verbs in verse 5. When my loyalty and allegiance are to the LORD, enemies are no longer a threat. My relationship to God along with his grace and deliverance overpower anything else.

Greg Surles