



Comforted by God's Rod and Staff

"Yea, 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." Psalm 23:4 (NKJV)

Number 16 in the series "The Lord is My Shepherd"

Beloved, you and I know that the world today is full of pain and suffering. Suffering is no respecter of persons. At some point in time it touches every family, close friend or neighbor. Pick up a newspaper or listen to the daily news and we could be overwhelmed by the evil that is all around us. When King David wrote this psalm, he was living among great evil. However, we can sense his trust and confidence in God as he says, "...I will fear no evil; for You are with me...". David's trust came from many previous experiences when he knew that God had protected him. He had no doubt about that. Beloved, whenever we are in painful situations, it is important for us to remember past experiences when God was faithful to help us. I do this continually, and I am overwhelmed at God's love and mercy as He helps me through each situation. God's amazing grace has never failed me.

The shepherd's rod was like a club—a powerful weapon in the hand of a skilled shepherd. It was used to protect the shepherd and his sheep. It was also used to discipline wayward sheep that insisted on wandering away. The rod is symbolic of the Bible in the life of the believer. It is God's strength, power and authority for every situation. It protects us from Satan's attacks. It disciplines us when we go astray from the Lord.

The staff was a long pole with a large hook on the end. The shepherd would gently hook it around the neck of the sheep and draw the sheep close to him-

self. It was also used to lead and guide the sheep into new paths or when a sheep would fall off a cliff or into dangerous water, the shepherd would gently hook the staff around its neck and pull it to safety. The staff is symbolic of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Daily the Holy Spirit draws us close to Jesus. He leads us into new situations. When we fall in sin and are in dangerous waters of temptations, the Holy Spirit convicts us. He brings us to repentance, and He pulls us back into the safe, loving arms of Jesus.

Is the evil in your life today a broken marriage, a job loss, financial problems, or a rebellious child? Is it the death of a loved one or serious illness? Is it a church split or the consequences of your own rebellion? Do you have a child who has run away from home, and you have no idea where he is, etc., etc.?

Beloved, Jesus our Good Shepherd gave His life for us. He will never leave us nor forsake us. His rod, which is the Bible, and His staff, which is the Holy Spirit, will protect and comfort us. Trust Him. He loves you. And may I speak to the unbeliever today. Today is the day to surrender your life to Jesus Christ. He gave His life for you. He wants to help you, and He will never fail you.

— *Janice McBride*

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