

Paths of Righteousness

Ponder: What path are you walking? Who is leading you?

Scripture: “He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake” (Psalm 23:3, NKJV).

King David grew up a shepherd; he was with his father’s flock the day Samuel came to anoint him king (1 Samuel 16:11-13). No doubt David led the sheep to pasture, to water, and to the sheepfold at the proper times. Sheep should follow where their shepherd leads; their safety and well-being depends on it.

As he wrote the matchless 23rd psalm, David said that the Lord was his shepherd (v. 1). Among the blessings of being shepherded by God Himself was this: “He leads me in the paths of righteousness” (v. 3). Since God is righteous, it follows that He leads in the paths of righteousness. In another psalm David said, “Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness . . . make Your way straight before my face” (5:8). And, in Psalm 27:11, David pleaded, “Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a smooth path . . .”

The Lord did not lead David in visible ways as He had led the Hebrews in the wilderness (the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night). Another psalm specifies the method by which God led David, and by which He still leads people: “Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me” (43:3). God’s leading is not by subjective feelings or nudges, but by the enlightening truth of His word!

We should not be surprised that our righteous God would lead us in the paths of righteousness by means of His word, for His word is righteous. At least ten times in Psalm 119 alone, the word of God is described as being righteous. For example, “all Your commandments are righteousness” (v. 172).

When David strayed into sin (such as his adultery with Bathsheba), he was not following his Shepherd. He allowed Satan to lead him, and the result was disastrous! When we stray into sin of whatever variety, we are not following the Good Shepherd (Jesus Christ, John 10). Satan is only too happy to lead us “in the ways of darkness” (Proverbs 2:13).

What path are you walking today? Who is leading you?