

Comfort From God's Rod And Staff

Ponder: How can a rod and staff comfort me?

Scripture: "Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4b, NKJV).

In his younger days, David had shepherded his father Jesse's flock. As king, he was the shepherd of Israel. In both cases, his over-all performance was quite good. Still, this shepherd needed his own Shepherd, and the Lord was it.

Shepherds carried two wooden instruments. One was basically a big club to ward off predators. The other was a long pole, sometimes with a crook at one end. A shepherd used it to help him walk, especially in rough terrain. Both are mentioned in Psalm 23:4, but scholars disagree as to which Hebrew word refers to what instrument.

We might not immediately think of either as being an instrument of comfort; yet David said he was comforted by them. What would he have found comforting about God's rod and staff?

First, there is the fact that God would protect him, just as a shepherd protects his sheep. David certainly needed God's protection from his enemies – not only foreign armies, but treasonous subjects, including his own children! But he also needed God to defend him against Satan's temptations. We need such protection too, do we not? "Let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them" (Psalm 5:11).

Second, knowing that God recognized him as one of His own would be of great comfort to David, as it should be to the people of God today. As the sheep went into the fold, they would pass under the shepherd's rod/staff and be counted (see Leviticus 27:32). Even so, the Lord knew David and recognized him as belonging to Him, as a sheep in His flock. We still have this same assurance. Paul told Timothy, and by extension tells us, that "the Lord knows those who are His" (2 Timothy 2:19).

God's rod and staff comforted David, and they still comfort us. We take enjoy the assurance that the Lord will defend us, and that He recognizes us as His own. What more could we ask?