

March 19, 2017  
Rick Myatt

## DARK SHADOWS Psalm 23:4-6

In the middle of the night of March 6, 1984, Laurie woke me up urgently telling me that her water had just broken. She was pregnant with our second child, but was only 7 months along. I hoped she was mistaken, but she was not. We immediately called her doctor who instructed us to go to the hospital without delay. We rushed to the hospital where the nurses and doctors examined her and affirmed that unfortunately she was in labor. They explained that the baby was in a breech position and that they needed to do an emergency Caesarian section delivery immediately. They prepped Laurie for surgery and handed me a gown and a cap to put on so I could go into the operating room. They told me to don them and then take a seat in the hall outside the OR. Soon a doctor came and explained that he expected this to go well, but that this was a serious situation. He told me it was likely that our baby's lungs would not be fully developed so he would have respiratory problems, and that there would be a lot of activity when the baby was delivered. He said it was almost certain that the baby would need to go to the Intensive Care Unit. Then he left to make final preparations while I waited until someone came to bring me into the OR. I sat there alone in that hospital hallway afraid for my wife and my about to be born child, and I prayed. I was trembling and could not stop. Laurie and I were about to enter the darkest valley of our lives. Four months later I would once again be in a hospital, trembling again. This time I was in the emergency room waiting area, having been brought there in an ambulance alongside my infant son. Although the doctors were working on him, I knew it was for naught. My son was gone.

Up to that point in life I had experienced some disappointments and a few difficulties, but that dark valley was in a different league. It was in a different universe. It was the first thing that I ever experienced that threatened to totally overwhelm me, a valley that felt like it was so deep and so dark I would never come out of it. Though the valleys may be different, every human being is going to go through valleys that are so ominous, so terrifying that they threaten to undo us. How are we to come to grips with this reality?

Psalm 23 gives us insight on this question. It is a powerful Psalm, so powerful that even just reading or reciting it alone brings comfort and strength to fearful hearts. It was written by a man who had personal experiences with dark valleys. He knew them inside and out. Let's look at the Psalm 23:4-6.

## THE SHEPHERD GIVES PROTECTION

As we saw when we looked at the first half of this Psalm David asserts that the Lord of all creation was his shepherd. This is true of all who put their trust in Jesus. In John 10:14 Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me." In verse 15 he said, "I lay down my life for the sheep." In verse 28 he said of his sheep, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand."

We saw that the Great Shepherd guides his sheep. He leads them and provides all that is necessary for a full and content life. Philip Keller wrote the book *A Shepherd Looks At The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm*. As a shepherd he knows a lot about sheep and caring for them. He said in that book that sheep will not lie down if they are afraid, diseased or need food. In verse 2 David said the Shepherd "makes me lie down in green pastures." In order for the Shepherd to get the sheep to lie down he must make sure they have nothing to fear. That is an aspect of the Shepherd's work that appears beginning in verse 4.

One time several years ago Laurie was away for a couple of days. I woke up in the middle of the night and while lying there hoping to drift back to sleep I heard the door that leads from our garage into our house open and close. Someone was in the house! Someone who shouldn't be there. I was instantly wide awake as the adrenaline started pumping. I have a hockey stick in my closet for just such an occasion. I got out of bed and tiptoed to the closet. My tiptoeing was for naught because we have some creaky floorboards that squeaked as I went to the closet. Whoever was downstairs now knew someone was awake and moving around. I got my stick and headed out. I debated whether to turn on the lights, but decided the squeaky floorboards had given me away so I wasn't going to surprise anyone. Just as I was turning on the lights the thought hit me, "what if the intruder has a gun?" They say it's a bad idea to bring a knife to a gunfight, but bringing a hockey stick isn't any better. Nevertheless I proceeded on my way. I searched the entire house very carefully, looking in closets and under beds, all the while thinking someone was going to jump me from behind. Hey I've seen the movies. I know what happens in that situation. However, I found no one. That left the garage. I thought about just locking the door to the garage and letting the intruder go, but finally decided I needed to find out if he was really there. I screwed up my courage and quickly flung the door open. Nothing. I searched the garage thoroughly, but there was no one there. I checked everything in the house again. There was no one. But I knew I didn't imagine that door opening and closing. I heard it! But there was nothing left to do. I left a light on downstairs just in case, but finally went back to bed. And I laid there wide awake with every sense on high alert. I told myself that I

must not have been awake and only dreamed I heard that door downstairs. But I didn't believe it because I was sure I heard that door. Every creak of the house, every slight noise surely was evidence of the mysterious and seemingly invisible intruder moving in the house. It was a long time before I could finally go back to sleep. It's just very hard to rest when you are afraid. Sheep won't lie down when they are afraid and neither will we. We won't rest in life if we are afraid. To live in peace we need to know we are safe. This Psalm promises us that the Great Shepherd is protecting us, but can we trust that promise?

David wrote, "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil." Older translations were more familiar saying, "even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." That sounds more vivid, but the point is not so much death itself as the scary nature of a dark and foreboding valley. Such a place would cause sheep anxiety to the point they might run away. Sheep do not like dark places and can be spooked by shadows. Notice at this point David switched from writing of God in the third person to the second person. It is no longer "he makes me lie down" or "he guides me," but "you are with me." He changes from speaking about God to speaking to him. I think this is because at this point he becomes emotional. As he thinks about the terrible threats he has faced, and maybe even continues to face, his fear causes him to speak directly to God. "You are with me, and that makes all the difference."

David could remember his days as a shepherd when his skittish sheep might be spooked by some dark landscape, but then they were calmed merely by his presence. They knew the shepherd would protect them, so they felt safe and calm. But second David surely thought about some of the dark valleys he had been through and the fact that God had always been with him. God had saved him so often that he knew when he once again faced a dark valley he would not fear it because God was with him.

How would you feel if the CIA, NSA, FBI and Homeland Security all decided that you were somehow a threat to our nation and bent all their considerable resources to finding and eliminating you? That would make an interesting premise for a novel, or maybe a movie, wouldn't it? Surely you would feel helpless, powerless and hopeless. There is no way you could protect yourself from such powerful forces. That is kind of what David faced, for King Saul, the ultimate leader of all Israel, had decided David had to die and made carrying out his death sentence the top priority for his entire government.

David walked through that dark valley for a long time. God was with him the entire time, and the only times things went really bad for him were when he forgot that God was with him. In our study of David we saw that repeatedly God saved him from his seemingly hopeless situation, at times in bizarre and hilarious ways. The message of this part of this Psalm is that God will always be with us and will protect us also.

There is an app for your phone called the SAS Survival Guide App. The SAS is the British Army's Special Air Service. It is one of the most highly regarded special operations units in the world, the British equivalent of our Delta Force. The app is derived from a book written by SAS veteran John Wiseman. It has all manner of information about how to survive disasters. It tells you how to treat a snake bite, start a fire without matches, hunt wild animals for food, avoid poisonous plants, forage for food and survive all kinds of situations. It's about surviving in the darkest valleys of the shadow of death. Here's my problem with such an app. If you're in some wilderness or in a situation where a terrible natural disaster has wiped out civilization, how is an app on your phone going to help? Why would you think your cell phone will be working? My point here is that in such dark places we are going to need protection from somewhere else, because much of what we face is outside our control. We like to think we are resourceful and strong, masters of our fate. We want to be like MacGyver. No matter what comes along we will somehow use chewing gum, tin foil and some wire to fashion an ingenious solution. But the truth is the world has dark valleys filled with threats for which we have zero answers. That was one of the lessons I learned 33 years ago through the brief life of our son, Joel. That which we feared most happened, and there was not a single thing we could do about it. And it devastated us. This Psalm claims the Lord will be with us in the darkest valleys and will take care of us. This is God's survival guide app.

Does God really protect us? I've walked through many dark valleys where none of the things I was fearful about ever happened. But I've also walked through a few where the worst I imagined was precisely what occurred. All of us have been hurt or suffered loss when what happened in the dark valley was even worse than we feared. Bad things happen to God's people. Sometimes they are grievously bad, so awful we cannot comprehend how God could allow such a thing.

Laurie loves birds. There are usually lots of birds around our yard because she puts food out for them. So we have sparrows, doves, wrens, finches, orioles, crows, and others. Her favorite is a colorful towhee. Yesterday we heard a bang. I knew immediately that a bird had collided with one of our windows. We looked outside

and there was that towhee, lying on its back on the patio, clearly dead. Laurie was so sad. She said “that’s nature. It’s so cruel.” I thought, “No, that’s life. You’re blithely flying along on a normal day and suddenly, boom, out of nowhere you’re slammed by something you didn’t see coming. It may hit you so hard it kills you.” That, my friends, is the reality of life, not just for birds, but for us too.

So is God really our Shepherd who will protect us? Can we really walk through the valley of the shadow of death with no fear? Can we really live with such confidence that our souls can be at rest no matter what awful circumstances we might face?

Here is what we can know about what the Shepherd will do as we go through the dark valleys of life. He will protect us from spiritual evil. We learned about this just a few weeks ago. Remember that the very physical events of the Old Testament such as the way God physically protected David’s physical life were pictures of spiritual truth. They depict how God protects his sheep spiritually. The gravest perils we face are spiritual. This is hard for us to believe because we can’t sense the spiritual realm with our physical senses, so it seems neither as real nor as urgent as the tangible world.

However, remember that in John 17:11 Jesus prayed for his followers, “Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name.” Then in verse 15 he prayed, “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one.” The protection that Jesus was most concerned about was spiritual, for that is where the battle for our souls is won or lost. Jesus specifically did not pray that nothing bad would ever happen to his followers. If that was Jesus’ biggest concern he would have prayed that the Father would protect them from any difficulty, loss or disappointment. Or maybe he would have prayed that the Father take his followers out of the world because if you live in this world bad things will happen. Jesus just a few minutes earlier had specifically said that. In John 16:33 one of the last things he told his followers before he prayed was, “In this world you will have trouble.” Being alive is walking through the valley of the shadow of death and having it be just as painful as it looked like it might be. Jesus didn’t pray any of those things. He prayed for spiritual protection for his people.

Unfortunately we want the shepherd to protect us from all the very tangible threats of this shadowy world. We have learned through bitter experience that many of those things we fear can hurt terribly. Why wouldn’t the Shepherd protect us from those awful things rather than from some vague, intangible spiritual threat? Have I ever been grievously injured by one of those? I can’t see those threats, nor can I

pinpoint any terrible hurt I have experienced from them. But I sure can identify the awful hurts I've gone through from real world threats. So is it possible that some invisible, spiritual threat is the greater issue?

Laurie and I watched an episode of *Hawaii 5-0* recently in which the main characters tracked down some bad guys who had gotten hold of some stolen uranium and made a dirty bomb with it. They were in an uninhabited jungle part of the island of Oahu and the story came down to tense final moments when the bomb was about to explode. They talked about how if it went off it might kill thousands of people on the island. Only it wouldn't. A dirty bomb going off in an uninhabited jungle would do a little damage to the jungle, but that's about it. The radiation would quickly disperse and basically be no threat. But people freak out about radiation. Isn't interesting how people know that it is possible that something they can't see could do tremendous damage to them? That's so true that they have an atavistic, irrational fear of radiation.

We should see spiritual damage as being worse than radiation. What do you think is the core of the human problem? Is it fear of some terrible disease destroying our life? Is it not having enough money, not having a good enough self esteem, not having enough freedom or power, not having your civil rights respected, not having adequate health care, not being loved enough, or your parents doing a bad job of your potty training? The Bible asserts that you could have all of those things be perfect and you would still experience the angst and damage of the human condition. It asserts that at its heart the human problem is spiritual. It always has been, ever since the Garden of Eden.

The deepest, most intractable problems of life are spiritual. Obviously there are problems we all face that have to do with circumstances, physical health, money, relationships and politics. But while those problems may have worldly components every single one of them is rooted in a spiritual issue. It all starts with a spiritual problem. Our only hope for getting through this life with a sense of peace, joy, wholeness and hope is totally dependent upon the Shepherd protecting us from the spiritual evils that lurk in the shadows, out of our sight.

Whatever you think is really the problem of the human condition, or the thing that might destroy your life, it is possible to find people who have experienced it but are still strong, at peace, alive and joyful. That means that thing is not the heart of the human condition. It is not the thing that can keep us from being fully alive. Conversely you can find people who have all that you think life requires but who are still lacking peace and joy. That's because the problem starts with a spiritual

issue. If you have that one solved you can experience life no matter your circumstance. In Christ you have the Good Shepherd caring for you, so you can walk confidently and in peace, knowing he will never, ever abandon you, and know that he is infinitely stronger than any threat you will ever face.

That's a nice, churchy, pastory sort of thing to say that is fine on Sunday morning. I know it is true, but it doesn't bring much comfort when what we fear is physical, tangible, immediate and all too real. Right now our daughter in law, Anna, is going through lots of uncertainty and concern in a high risk pregnancy. Laurie and I, along with Toby and Anna, can start thinking of all sorts of really awful things that could happen in coming months. For Laurie and me this brings up memories of the worst experience of our life and we deeply do not want to go through anything like that again. We quite possibly could face some terribly painful realities. The Bible doesn't promise that none of the things we might fear will ever happen. They might. So does this passage bring us any solace, any hope?

Yes, it does, for we can know that the shepherd will not allow anything to happen to us that will be too great for us to survive. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." But that is talking about temptation, right? What about the hard and painful things, the scary things in life? The translators don't help us with that verse much. We think of temptation as being a lure, like some lurid picture on the Internet tempts a man to lust, or a juicy tidbit of information about someone that tempts us to gossip. But the word translated "temptation" just meant testing. A terrible disappointment or some ghastly loss in life that makes no sense at all if there is a loving God, tests our faith. It is testing whether we will continue to trust him even when we are hurting and cannot possibly understand why he would let this thing happen to us. It is those kinds of tests that Paul was talking about in that verse.

That verse in 1 Corinthians promises us that the Shepherd will not allow anything into our lives that is so awful our faith cannot survive it. He will make a way for us to endure it. God will give us the strength if we look to him to get through whatever comes our way. Isaiah 40:29 says, "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak." Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all this through him who gives me strength."

Imagine that the night I thought there was an intruder in our house that there actually was. Further imagine that I had a security system with cameras that

allowed me to see him and find out he didn't have a weapon of any kind. And imagine that I see that the intruder is in fact a skinny little 12 year old kid hoping to steal video equipment and games. He is no threat. Do you think I am going to be filled with fear? No way. The shepherd promises that the things that happen are like that kid. They are not a threat to our ability to survive and thrive in life, to be at peace and have joy.

Twenty years ago my dad was diagnosed with cancer. At the time he was only a very few years older than I am right now. My dad was a truly godly man. He loved Jesus with all his heart and gave 110% to serve him. He was a good man of sterling character. I wish I were more like him. If anyone ever deserved to have the Shepherd keep him from the dark shadows of this life, it was him. He would have loved to see his grandchildren grow up, graduate from high school and college. He would have loved to see them get married. He would have loved to know his great grandchildren. How proud he would have been to see his grandson going to medical school, among other things. But he got to see none of that. In the space of 4 months he endured the brutal effects of chemotherapy, to no avail whatsoever. The cancer inexorably robbed him of his life. We watched him go through some of the worst that life can deliver. And he did not waver for even a moment. He was trusting in and walking with God right to the very end.

God kept his promise. As sad, as awful as it was, it was not too much for him to bear. That was just one example from my life. I could give you more. Some of them painful in the extreme. But the Shepherd has always been faithful. And if we will only follow the Shepherd, wherever he goes, we can know that will also be true for us, no matter what may happen to us.

We must also ask why a shepherd would lead sheep through a dark valley that frightens them. Does he do it because he is mean and wants to scare the sheep out of their wits? Does he do it because he could not care less about the sheep? So what if they're afraid of the place or even if something bad might happen to them there? No, there is one reason a good shepherd would take them through such a place. He does it because it is to get them to a better place. He takes them through the scary place because he knows they need a lush, green pasture, but it is on the other side of the dark valley.

Romans 8:28 assures us that, "in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." In the darkest times of our lives we need to remember this. God has some good he wants for us, and if we could know what that good was we would also want it for ourselves. Francois



Fenelon wrote, “God never makes you suffer unnecessarily.” We need to remember that many times the road to that good goes twisting through a terrifying valley. God does not waste our hardships and pain. He used the worst thing Laurie and I have ever experienced in profound ways. Jeanne Guyon wrote, “It is the fire of suffering which will bring about the gold of godliness.”

Finally remember what David wrote about those ominous times. Verse 4 says, “I will fear no evil, for you are with me.” Imagine the sheep in some foreboding place, skittish, terrified, on the verge of panic. Perhaps the defenseless creature hears the howl of a wolf and is about to bolt out of fear. Then the animal sees the shepherd standing right beside. Suddenly the fear dissipates.

In Matthew 28:20 one of the last things Jesus said to his disciples and to us was, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” So when is he not with us? There is never even a second of our lives when Jesus is not right here with us. In his book, *Have Faith Without Fear*, Kenneth Wilson says that when he was a boy he slept in the top floor of their house in a dark room all by himself. He said it was pretty scary. At bedtime his dad would read him a story, then give him a goodnight kiss, turn off the light and leave. And at that point his imagination would run wild. Surely there were nameless terrors in every corner of the dark. Every sound was spooky, the portent of something awful about to happen. One night his dad, perceiving his fear, sought to help him. He said, “Would you rather I leave a light on when I go downstairs, or turn off the light but stay here with you for a while?” Wilson says that was an easy choice. He chose his dad’s presence in the darkness over having light but his dad be absent without a thought. He wrote, “Is that not what we really want most in our valleys – the assurance that someone is there?”

#### THE SHEPHERD GIVES VINDICATION

In verse 5 David wrote, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows.” Most of the time we focus on the fact that God is setting the table for us and our cup is overflowing. That is especially true because the next verse says, “Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life.” We interpret this to mean we’re going to have all the good things of life. We’re going to have prosperity and abundance. That sounds good. We are quick to claim that promise.

I believe we will have the good things of life, if we properly understand that to mean the truly good things of peace, joy, love, hope, and so on. It is God’s goodness and love that will follow us our entire lives. It is not the goodness of a

big bank account or lots of success and power that will follow us, but God giving us out of his grace and kindness that which we truly need.

But I think there is an important phrase in verse 5 that is easy to overlook. That phrase is “in the presence of my enemies.” We have moved away from the shepherd and sheep imagery here. David says the goodness of God will be seen in God actually providing a feast for David and anointing his head as an honored guest right in front of his enemy. This is about God vindicating him in front of his enemy. It is God expressing his love and approval of him and blessing him before his enemy’s eyes.

Consider how David must have felt at times. He always showed great respect for King Saul and was invariably faithful to him. David was a hero who had fought courageously, frequently putting himself in grave danger on behalf of King Saul. But Saul was literally paranoid and convinced himself that he and his family would never be safe as long as David was alive because David wanted to take over as king. Saul accused David of conspiring against him. He said David was trying to foment rebellion against him. He broadcast these accusations loudly and long and followed them up with efforts to kill David as a treasonous outlaw. None of it was true, but it still caused huge problems for David because in that day the king’s word was law. The average Jacob didn’t know what was really going on. All he knew was the king said this David guy was a traitor.

Meanwhile Saul himself was only marginally sane, given to outbursts of lethal rage and to extreme paranoia. He manipulated people and, acting on his own imagined threats, slaughtered innocent people. It had to be galling for David to be falsely accused of crimes by an increasingly tyrannical man who had lots of innocent blood on his hands, and to have no way to defend himself or set the record straight. As he endured this at times his heart screamed for vengeance. He wanted some way to prove his innocence and to show that all of these accusations were nothing but Saul’s own fevered insecurity and insanity.

In 1 Samuel 24:15 David had just passed up a golden opportunity to solve his problem by killing Saul. Saul was right in his crosshairs, and David let him go. Then he said to Saul, “May the Lord be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand.” He desperately wanted vindication!

I’ve read articles in the sports section that speak of this. A player is traded from one team to another. What happens when that player’s new team plays his old

team? Much of the time the player will say “it’s just another game.” But often when pressed they will admit that’s not totally true. Eventually it might be in games down the road, but especially that first couple of times the player cannot help but have a deep, “I’ll show them” feeling inside. They want badly to prove their first team made a mistake in trading them. They want vindication!

When Toby played high school football I felt that his coaches didn’t see what they had in him. They badly misjudged his skills, and didn’t play him in positions that would have allowed him to exploit them. So he didn’t have the success I thought he was capable of or get the recognition he could have. They played him on the offensive line, for instance, where his considerable speed and his fundamental understanding of the game weren’t of much use. But I didn’t want to be one of “those dads,” so I never said a word. In the spring of his sophomore year in college he announced that he missed football and intended to try to walk on to the team. It seemed absurd, because he hadn’t been a starter in high school, and he now weighed 185 pounds. Where could he play? And what made him think he even had a chance at a large Division I university? But he proceeded and he made that team as a free safety, a position requiring some of the greatest speed and knowledge of the game. It was totally surprising. One day when he was home on break he visited his old high school and got to share with his coaches that he had successfully walked on to his division I team as a free safety. Man I wish I could have been there. He didn’t want to rub it in, but he admitted that it was rather satisfying to see their jaws drop, and see on their faces the realization that they had blown it badly. Had I been there I would have said to them, “So how come you guys never gave him a chance?” It was a little taste of vindication. And man, the human heart longs for vindication.

Victims of injustice long for vindication. This is universal in humans. And we all feel like we are victims of injustice. All of us feel like we have not been given the recognition, the approval, the applause, the love, the rewards that we should have received. So we want that vindication. In Job 13:18-19 after listening to his friends attack on him Job denied their accusations, proclaimed his innocence, then said, “Now that I have prepared my case I know that I will be vindicated. Can anyone bring charges against me? If so, I will be silent and die.” In Psalm 26:1 David wrote, “Vindicate me, Lord, for I have led a blameless life. I have trusted in the Lord and have not faltered.” In Psalm 135:14 the Psalmist wrote, “For the Lord will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants.”

Super Bowl MVP Tom Brady was asked about the smear on his reputation caused by accusations of cheating in the absurd scandal known now as deflategate. How

could he respond to that? He said the best way to fight back is to play well and win, which he obviously has done. What I find interesting is what he didn't say. He didn't say he doesn't care at all about that. He didn't say that he had no need to respond. He is the most successful, maybe the best quarterback ever to play the game, he is married to a beautiful woman and has a happy family, he is ridiculously rich, he is famous. Why should he care even a little about the stupid and trifling accusation against him? The whole thing was a farce. Yet he claims he is innocent, thus has been unfairly judged, so he feels the need to fight back. It's not about whether he longs for vindication. He does. The only question in his mind had to do with tactics. What's the best way to get it?

We all want it. We want it badly. We want to prove that we are good, that we have worth and value, that we matter, that we are competent, that we are adequate. Over and over we hear the desire to “be somebody” expressed. That is all about vindication. You see it in movies all the time. The person who was the picked on, outsider geek in high school longs to come back years later and be the glamorous success, rubbing it in the faces of teenage tormentors of the past. It's all about vindication. In order for us to have our souls refreshed, to lie down in green pastures totally secure and at peace, to truly experience goodness all the days of our lives, we must know that our vindication is sure.

The desire for it is powerful in all of us. It drives us continually. Here is the great promise of the final part of this beautiful Psalm. God will set a table before you in the presence of your enemies. He will anoint your head with oil. He will give you all the vindication you could ever hope for. All you need to do is be faithful to him and trust in him. Let him set it straight.

I recently for some reason found myself recalling several instances where I was misunderstood by people or treated unfairly by them and got caught up in thinking of how I would want to answer them or prove them wrong. I realized I was thinking about vindication. Then it hit me that God will prepare a table before me in the presence of those enemies. I don't have to defend myself or explain myself. I just need to stay faithful to him and he will give me the vindication I long for.

When we try to vindicate ourselves we create great stress and anxiety, we typically fall into the desire for revenge, we make bad and ugly choices that hurt others, and we set ourselves on a path toward a goal we will never reach. We are never truly at peace. Our alternative is to do what David did. It is to recognize that only God can give me the vindication I long for. Therefore the reasonable action is to simply live

faithfully and humbly before him, be secure in his love and goodness to us, and trust that he will vindicate us when the time is right.