

## Praising the Ceiling

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by Robert F. Turner

I wouldn't trade "Grampa, I love you!" for an hour of oratory. A warm look of trust, or a child's touch, is praise far exceeding mere words. And I am persuaded the heavenly Father would have us talk **to** and **with** Him, rather than **about** Him. Perhaps that is why I am intrigued by a shift of pronouns in the beloved 23rd Psalm.

David begins, "The Lord is my shepherd... He maketh me to lie down..." — speaking of the Lord in the third person. The psalmist is talking **about** the Lord. "**He** leadeth me... **He** restoreth my soul..." etc. This continues through verse three.

Then in verse four there is a change to second person — David begins to talk **to** or **with** the Lord. Now it is, "**Thou** art with me, **thy** rod and **thy** staff, they comfort me." The first portion is a tender testimonial of David's love for the Lord, and declares the personal relationship of shepherd and sheep. But it is a declaration — it tells *others* something *about* the Lord. The second portion loses sight of all others, and speaks directly to the shepherd.

I am reminded of a story, heard long ago, about a social gathering where guests were asked to contribute something to the occasion. Many recited poetry, and one eloquent speaker made a theatrical production of the 23rd Psalm. The next in line was an unlettered man, now greatly embarrassed because the 23rd Psalm was the only poetry he knew; and he was forced to repeat what had just been recited by the talented gentleman.

There was a stir among the guests as he began his halting, unpolished presentation. But my shepherd was more than words to this man; and as he followed David into his close personal relationship with the Lord, he forgot the audience. He ceased to talk **about** the shepherd, and began to speak **to** Him. The room grew quiet.

And when he had finished, the eloquent man arose to apologize for his "production." "I know the 23rd Psalm well," he said. "But this man knows the shepherd."

Of what value is a well-worded prayer — that stops at the ceiling?

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