



66. The Climb to the Tableland

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me,” Psalm 23:4.

Shepherds in David's time took their sheep from the springtime village-pastures to the summer-meadows in the mountains. The only paths up to the mountaintops were through dangerous valleys. There were predators, poisonous plants, and steep narrow paths in the valleys. Spring storms

brought chilling winds, cold nights, rain, freezing rain, flash floods, and sometimes even snow. The sheep had to climb steep, wet or icy paths to get to the mountain tablelands where the best grass grew in the summer. The shepherd guided the sheep safely up through those shadowy valleys. The sheep had to stay close to the shepherd to be fearless. Feeding in the mountains was worth the difficult climb even though there were enemies on the tablelands ... more predators, poisonous plants, and storms.

Because of Jesus, we are no longer slaves to the fear of death, Hebrews 2:14-15. Death is a door to Heaven. However, the tableland of Psalm 23:5 doesn't represent

Heaven. We will not be in the presence of our enemies when we are in Heaven. Therefore, the valley of the shadow of death is different from death. Following Jesus through the valley of trials into the mountain of being His disciple is difficult ... but it *is* worth the climb. Paul described it as a struggle, as a fight, as a war. Jesus said, *“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me,”* Matthew 16:24. Carry your cross up through the valley of shadows and trials. Climb to His Psalm 23 mountain table. The grass is greener there.