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FREEDOM FROM WANT
(Meditations On The Twenty-Third Psalm)

By E. E. Wordsworth

Author of:
Why Worry When You Can Pray
Why Fear When You Can Trust
Steps To Heaven

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INSIDE BACK JACKET TEXT

AUTHOR

You will not have to read long in this book before you discover that the author, Rev. E. E. Wordsworth, is not only well acquainted with the twenty-third psalm but he is equally well acquainted with the Shepherd of the psalm. There is a warmth, an intimacy, that makes one feel that the author turned to his typewriter having come fresh from long and blessed times of fellowship with the Master.

Rev. E. E. Wordsworth has had a long and effective ministry as pastor and evangelist.

He is a father and, with his talented, consecrated wife, has maintained a Christian home from which have come three sons and two daughters, all splendid Christians.

He has been a student of the Word of God for long years and has given special attention during all his ministry to the twenty-third psalm.

His spirit has been fervent in devotion to God and to his fellow men.

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INSIDE FRONT JACKET TEXT

FREEDOM FROM WANT

President Eisenhower discovered seven divine freedoms found in the twenty-third psalm. These are listed as: freedom from want, hunger, thirst, sin, fear, enemies, and freedom to live abundantly.

This psalm is truly a devotional treasure for the trusting child of God. It is inexhaustible.

The traveler in Palestine, the birthplace of this psalm, finds much interesting country made sacred by the footsteps of our Great Shepherd. The Holy Land has its rugged hills, fertile plains, crystal streams and fountains, protruding rocks, deep vales, beautiful lakes, stately trees, snow-clad elevations, and sunny slopes. In David's day sheep would roam over the hills, down the valleys, by the streams and rivulets, along the plains and open spaces, while cared for by the affectionate shepherds. These shepherd-guardians were always faithful to their tasks. Likewise there are varying experiences in the Christian life, and we hope to discover them in this heavenly pastoral.

This psalm has brought blessing, consolation, and peace to millions of souls across the centuries. May its message bring its sustaining benefits to you, is our prayer.

The Author

* * * * *

DEDICATION

To my faithful Christian wife, who has been a constant companion in the ministry for nearly half a century: in counsel my guide, in love my bliss, in trouble my cheer, in inspiration my joy, and in ministry my help in caring for Christ's flock; and to our five children, John, Miriam, Ruth, Paul, and Earl, who early in life memorized the twenty-third psalm and are still following the Good Shepherd,

This volume is gratefully inscribed.

* * * * *

FOREWORD

In this volume, Freedom From Want, ("Meditations on the Twenty-Third Psalm"), a gifted man and the greatest of the Psalms meet. Rev. E. E. Wordsworth, the author, has an aptitude for writing. For years he has been a contributor to the Herald of Holiness and other church periodicals. He has also written three books: Why Worry When You Can Pray; Steps to Heaven, and Why Fear When You Can Trust. These have all been well received by our reading public and have contributed to the uplift of many needy hearts. Further, there are other factors which have entered into making this writer what he is. First, I mention a long and effective ministry as pastor and evangelist. Second, he is a father who, with a talented and consecrated wife, has maintained a Christian home from which have come three sons and two daughters-all followers of the lowly Nazarene. Third, for many years he has been a student of the Word of

God, with special attention being given during much of this time to the twenty-third psalm. Fourth, he has had a spirit which has been fervent in its devotion to God and his fellow men.

The personality of this man whom I have briefly described has been fused with the twenty-third psalm in *Freedom from Want*. The twenty-third psalm stands first in its field because it is so human and yet so divine. In it God and man confront each other -- the infinite ability of God guarantees to supply the deepest needs of the follower of Christ as he walks along life's way. The demands for fellowship, rest, food, drink, shade, and strength in the presence of death are met. In other words, there is the promise of care in the many and varied circumstances of life through the abundance of the goodness and mercy of God. This psalm is indeed a song of satisfaction -- "Freedom from Want," whatever the situation may be. Many books have been written on Psalm 23, but none can take the place of this one which has been written by a man of God who lives and walks among us. *Freedom from Want* ("Meditations on the Twenty-Third Psalm") will thrill your soul!

-- Stephen S. White

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The poems "Lost and Found," "He Chose This Path for Thee," "All Day with God," and "I Am the Door" are included with deep appreciation to the authors, who are unknown. Attempt was made to discover ownership that proper credit might be given. As soon as ownership is established, such will be done.

We are especially indebted to Dr. Stephen S. White for his excellent Foreword.

* * * * *

INTRODUCTION

President Eisenhower discovered seven divine freedoms found in the twenty-third psalm. These are listed as: freedom from want, hunger, thirst, sin, fear, enemies, and freedom to live abundantly.

This psalm is truly a devotional treasure for the trusting child of God. It is inexhaustible.

If we preserve the shepherd imagery throughout the psalm we shall recognize beautiful unity, harmony, and poetic artistry. But if we depart from it there would most certainly be a flaw in art. The retention of it will furnish us with deep, rich pastoral meaning and expository shepherd lore. Would it not be bad breach of art to desert the shepherd figure after verse four and substitute a captured human fugitive? We think so. Most surely the entire psalm can be expounded without such desertion, or improper exegesis. Humbly we say we recognize no justification for the departure from the pastoral symbolism.

Dr. Leslie D. Weatherhead, pastor of City Temple, London, in his book, *A Shepherd Remembers*, an exposition of this psalm, makes a strong plea for the retention of the shepherd imagery throughout. Rev. James Neil, M.A., formerly incumbent of Christ Church, Jerusalem, and author of *Palestine Explored*, *Pictured Palestine*, and *Everyday Life in the Holy Land*, a man truly steeped in the shepherd lore of Palestine, is quite sure the shepherd allegory continues to the end of the psalm. W. Knight, in *The Song of Our Syrian Guest*, is of the very same opinion. Others could easily be quoted. It would surely seem that those most versed in the shepherd life of the East hold tenaciously to the shepherd representation, for often the Oriental sees meanings the Occidental does not discover.

Therefore we humbly join a host of Biblical scholars in presenting the shepherd lore of this "pearl of psalms." And we prayerfully hope the exposition will justify our claim that there are essential unity, harmony, and Eastern shepherd life vividly portrayed throughout.

The traveler in Palestine, the birthplace of this psalm, finds much interesting country made sacred by the footsteps of our Great Shepherd. The Holy Land has its rugged hills, fertile plains, crystal streams and fountains, protruding rocks, deep vales, beautiful lakes, stately trees, snow-clad elevations, and sunny slopes. In David's day sheep would roam over the hills, down the valleys, by the streams and rivulets, along the plains and open spaces, while cared for by the affectionate shepherds. These shepherd-guardians were always faithful to their tasks. Likewise there are varying experiences in the Christian life, and we hope to discover them in this heavenly pastoral.

Most of the psalms are personal, but this is the most personal of all. It contains a heart-warming message for you, dear reader. Again and again we have "I," "me," and "my" over against "thee," "thou," and "thy" -- the earthward answering to the heavenward. It is a down-to-earth psalm for every day to meet the needs of your life amid the engaging tasks, duties, and problems that confront you in the busy marts of life, in the home, the business office, the factory, and the store. Like a refreshing breeze an understanding of this psalm will stimulate and encourage you in the battles of life. It offers you safe guidance in the maze of life, and help and faith in troubled times. It meets the demands of your experiences in this world and gives hope and assurance for the next.

We prayerfully hope that you will often read this marvelous psalm, ponder its profound truths, find solace and peace by its quiet waters, and sense the ever-nearness of the Good Shepherd as you journey homeward. Every Christian should memorize the psalm, feed upon its rich truths, find comfort, peace, assurance, and safety in the Divine Shepherd, and guidance to the eternal sheepfold at the close of life's brief day.

This psalm has brought blessing, consolation, and peace to millions of souls across the centuries. May its message bring its sustaining benefits to you is our prayer.

-- E. E. Wordsworth

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THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

* * * * *

01 -- THE SHEPHERD-LORD

The Lord is my shepherd.

David's beautiful psalm is unsurpassed for its devotional spirit. This "pearl of psalms" is a priceless gem, a "psalm of psalms," to the Christian heart.

The eminent Brooklyn preacher, Henry Ward Beecher, gave it a characterization of real merit. Here are his words: "The Twenty-Third Psalm is the nightingale of the Psalms. It is small, of a homely feather, singing shyly out of obscurity; but, oh, it has filled the air of the whole world with melodious joy, greater than the heart can conceive! Blessed be the day on which the psalm was born!

"What would you say of a pilgrim commissioned of God to travel up and down the earth singing a strange melody which, when once heard, caused him to forget whatever sorrow he had? And so the singing angel goes on his way through all the lands, singing in the language of every nation, driving away trouble by the pulses of the air which his tongue moves with divine power, Behold just such an one! This pilgrim God has sent to speak in every language on the globe. It has remanded to their d u n g e o n more felon thoughts, more black doubts, more thieving sorrows, than there are sands on the seashore. It has comforted the noble host of the poor. It has

sung courage to the army of the disappointed. It has poured balm and consolation into the hearts of the sick, of captives in dungeons, of widows in their pinching griefs, of orphans in their loneliness. Dying soldiers have died easier as it was read to them; ghastly hospitals have been illuminated; it has visited the prisoner and broken his chains, and, like Peter's angel, led him in imagination, and sung him back to his home again. It has made the dying Christian slave freer than his master, and consoled those whom, dying, he left behind, mourning not so much that he was gone as because they were left behind and could not go too.

"Nor is its work done. It will go on singing to your children and my children, and to their children, through all the generations of time; nor will it fold its wings till the last pilgrim is safe, and time ended; and then it shall fly back to the bosom of God, whence it issued, and sound on, mingled with all those sounds of celestial joy which make heaven musical forever."

The metaphor of the shepherd, as David knew it, is essentially emotional as well as devotional. The shepherd of the Orient was as tender and sacrificial as an affectionate mother. He would rather sacrifice his own life than that of the sheep. His presence was always the guaranty of their security. He was their watchman, physician, guide, protector, and savior. Pastures, wells, paths, and folds were in him. Apart from him the condition of the sheep was one of pathetic helplessness. Should any calamity overtake him and tear him from them they would become distressed, scattered, and undone; they would stumble among rocks, or bleed in the thorn tangle, or flee, wild with fear, from the terror of the preying wolf. Hence a shepherd never forsakes his sheep, but accompanies them by day and night. In the morning he goes before them, during the day he protects and feeds them, and at night lies down in their midst. His great shepherd-heart is filled with tenderness all the while, so that the Eastern shepherd is eyes, ears, brain, and heart to his flock.

What the shepherd of the East means to his sheep, Christ is to His devoted followers. The first five words of this wonderful psalm are very meaningful--"The Lord is my shepherd."

Which word shall I emphasize? Let us begin with the very first one, "THE." David was a monotheist, a true believer in the one God. Pagan idolatry surrounded him, but he was not influenced by it. Theism presents many satisfactory arguments for the existence and personality of God. The conviction that there is a superhuman Being on whom we all depend is as widespread as the race. This was David's faith. It is ours.

The next word, "LORD," identifies the shepherd as Jehovah of the Old Testament and Christ of the New. It is the greatest name of God. Whenever you see the word "Lord" in capital letters the Hebrew word is Jehovah, "I am that I am." It refers to the only shepherd mentioned in the New Testament, the "good shepherd" of John 10:11, the "great shepherd" of Heb. 13:20, and the "chief Shepherd" of I Pet. 5:4. The name Jehovah is of divine origin. It occurs seven thousand times in the Bible. It means "The Living One," "The Ever-present One," "Covenant-Keeper." It is an epitome of the whole work, nature, history, and character of Christ. Jehovah was often seen, while "no man hath seen God [the Father] at any time" (I John 4:12). It was none other than Christ who came into the Garden of Eden for fellowship with Adam and Eve. "And they heard the voice of the Lord God [Jehovah] walking in the garden in the cool of the day" (Gen. 3:8). They had companionship and spiritual communion.

Christ manifested himself to the children of Israel in the wilderness, for we read, "And [they] did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (I Cor. 10:4). He also was made known to Abraham on the plains of Mamre, to Moses at the burning bush, to Joshua as "the man with the drawn sword," and to Isaiah in the Temple when he cried out, "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple" (Isa. 6:1). And it was this very same Jehovah-Jesus with whom David communed. Hear him express his faith: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

We must recognize the lordship of Christ. He is Lord as well as Saviour, the Master of our hearts and lives, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is one thing to know Jesus as a Saviour, but quite another to submit to Him as Lord and Master of our thoughts, words, and deeds in all areas of human life. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Cor. 6:19-20). He should have absolute sway over us. His sovereignty must be recognized. He is our Chief to be obeyed. "Even Christ pleased not himself," but was always submissive to the Father's will. Hear His agonizing cry in dark Gethsemane, "Not my will, but thine, be done."

Our third word, "IS," brings to our attention the ever-present Jehovah-Jesus. It is a present tense verb. How glorious to have Christ nigh at all times! Underscore the word "is." He is near. He is the true Shepherd when the days are long and the nights lengthen, or when the skies are somber and the tempests howl. He's as an angel in the den of lions to give each lion lockjaw; He's the Fourth like unto the Son of Man in the fiery furnace; He is the comforting Presence on the storm-tossed sea of life; He is everything needed to His sheep.

Our Shepherd-Lord likewise cares for His own. He most faithfully watches over them by day and night. When some beastly temptation confronts us, or some buzzard of evil is near to devour our flesh, or a wicked human bandit would rob us of our faith, He stands ready to help us and we are secure. His shepherd-heart beats true and His strength and protection are afforded us in time of need. He never forsakes His children. He "sticketh closer than a brother." He cares for His tiny lambs and His grown sheep. "The Lord is my shepherd."

The very location of Psalm 23 is purposeful. Psalm 22 is the psalm of Mount Calvary--the psalm of the Cross. This is past. Psalm 24 is the psalm of the coming Kingdom of glory. We have two mountains--Mount Calvary and Mount Zion. What is it that lies between two mountains? A rich valley with its tender grass, waters of quietness, gorgeous flowers, shady nooks, blooming hillsides and the ever-present shepherd with His grazing sheep, There we find Psalm 23.

Here, then, is a lesson for our souls from the location of this psalm; it is given to us for all the probationary experiences of life, between the cross and the crown.

It is well for the Christian believer to grasp the glorious truth of an ever-present Jehovah-Jesus. Christ said to His disciples, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the

world" (Matt. 28:20). After sixteen years in Africa, Missionary David Livingstone returned to his native Scotland. When he addressed the University of Glasgow, he was asked how he could endure the loneliness of the African interior with its attendant dangers and fevers. He calmly and humbly replied: "Gentlemen, I did not go alone through the wilderness. There was One with me who said, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world' (age)."

We also recognize an expression of David's faith in the word "is." It is assuring. Doubtless he remembered how the Lord wonderfully helped him to slay the lion and the bear and kill the giant Goliath, and so he was sustained in the present. Had David said, "The Lord will be my shepherd," that would have been the last of him, so far as this psalm is concerned. We need a faith that will take hold of God and trust Him for our everyday lives.

Our fourth word is a personal pronoun, "MY." There are seventeen pronouns in the first person singular in this precious psalm. Here they are: "my," "I," "me," "me," "my," "me," "I," "I," "me," "me," "me," "mine," "my," "my," "me," "my," "I." Luther said, "The heart of religion lies in its personal pronouns." It must become personal or it ceases to be genuine religion in any valid sense.

Our blessed Lord and Saviour gave us sure ground for faith, and a true sense of belonging to God by His use of the personal pronouns expressing relationship. He looked upon himself as a true Shepherd of His sheep. Hear Him: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). Christ faithfully shepherds His flock, and He also takes a very personal interest in each one.

Perhaps there is no emotion so necessary to genuine Christianity, nor any so fundamental to it, as the sense of being owned by God. Being possessed by God, and having the satisfying knowledge of possessing Him, are essential to Christian experience and happiness. A shepherd in Palestine can tell his sheep, even though blindfolded, by feeling its face; and the sheep know the shepherd with equal intimacy. No voice can deceive them, "for they know not the voice of strangers." Visitors to Palestine have donned the clothes of shepherds to try to deceive them, but to no avail; when the stranger imitated the shepherd's voice, the sheep fled in panic immediately. If one is truly born again and baptized with the Holy Spirit, he will not be victimized by false religious cults.

A sense of possession is essential to Christian experience. Anything less than this is unsatisfactory. A man proudly says: "This is my car," or "This is my farm," or "This is my home." And when David exclaimed, "The Lord is my shepherd," he was conscious of a true and constant Friend, for the very word friend usually comes from the same root in the Hebrew as our word shepherd. Jesus said to His beloved disciples, "Ye are my friends." And the wise man wrote, "A friend loveth at all times."

At the close of a sermon in a church located in the Highlands of Scotland the preacher, supplying the pulpit for a few Sundays, was requested to call on a shepherd lad who was very ill. Arm in arm with one of the elders of the church the minister crossed the wide moor, climbed the rugged hillside, and came to a cottage where the boy lived with his widowed mother. After knocking at the door for admission, the visitors were welcomed inside by the loving mother. Her

face showed the marks of a long vigil. The boy was her only child. The minister and the elder went into the room where the sick child lay on his cot. The kindhearted preacher, looking into the pale, haggard face of the sick shepherd boy, asked him tenderly, "Laddie, do you know the twenty-third psalm?"

Every Scotch boy knows the twenty-third psalm, and so the little fellow replied, "Yes, sir, I ken [know] the psalm well."

"Will you repeat it for me?" asked the minister. Slowly the lad quoted the words, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want," and on to the end of the psalm.

"Do you see," said the minister to the boy, "that in the first clause of the first verse is just one word for each finger? Hold up your hand, laddie; take the second finger of your right hand, put it on the fourth finger of your left, hold it over your heart, and say with me, 'The Lord is my shepherd.'"

The following Sunday the elder and minister again crossed the moor and came to the cottage on the side of the hill. As the mother opened the door to admit them, they saw by the expression on her face that a deeper sorrow had fallen on her heart since the first visit a week ago. She took them, silently and solemnly, into a little room, and there, covered with a snow-white sheet, lay the lifeless form of the shepherd laddie, her only child. As the minister took the white sheet and passed it from forehead to chin, from chin to breast, and from breast to waist, he saw the second finger of the right hand on the fourth finger of the left hand, which was fastened in the cold embrace of death, over his heart. The dear Highland mother exclaimed amid her tears, "He died saying, 'The Lord is my shepherd.'"

Our fifth word is "SHEPHERD." Shepherds are mentioned 63 times in the Old Testament and 17 in the New. Sheep are alluded to by name 176 times in the Bible, 142 in the Old Testament and 34 in the New. Yet there is not a single reference that is crude or out of harmony with the real life of the shepherd with his sheep.

Prominence is given to men whose occupation was the care of sheep -- men like Abel, Moses, Joseph, David, and Amos. It was to shepherds that the very first announcement of the birth of Christ was made in Bethlehem of Judea. And Christ is called "the good shepherd," "the great shepherd," and "the chief Shepherd" in the Scriptures. As the Good Shepherd, He lays down His life for the sheep. As the Great Shepherd He intercedes for His people, the ever-living Lord at the right hand of God. As the Chief Shepherd He is coming again to this earth to receive His own, and to rule over the earth in glory and majesty and power.

A banquet was held for one of England's leading actors. After the feast the actor was requested to recite something for the pleasure of the guests. He consented and asked the group present if there was something special someone would like to hear. A moment's pause and an elderly minister replied: "Could you recite the twenty-third psalm?" The actor replied: "I will, sir, on one condition, that after I have recited you will do the same." The minister consented with some reluctance since he was not an accomplished reader.

The actor held his audience spellbound. As he finished, hearty applause was given. Then the old minister arose and quoted the psalm. There was no applause when he finished. Only silence pervaded the room. But there were misty eyes and bowed heads. The great actor, with his hand on the shoulder of the minister, said: "I reached your eyes and ears, my friends; but this man reached your hearts. I know the Shepherd's Psalm but this man knows the Shepherd." Blessed are they who know the Shepherd! Christ has a wonderful ear. He listens for the bleating of the sheep, the calls of distress and the plaintive cries of His flock. Our blessed Saviour hears His children when they call upon His name. "His ears are open unto their cry." Sheep are timid and fearful and need the attentive ear of the herder.

Not only so, but a shepherd has a directing voice. Sometimes, in spite of all the care and love of the Eastern shepherd and his faithful dogs, a preying wolf will get into the very midst of the flock. The sheep become wild with fright and seem senseless as well as helpless in such a plight. They run, leap, and act with no intelligence at all, and apparently make it utterly impossible to drive the foe from their midst, who at the very moment may be fastening his cruel teeth in the throat of a helpless lamb or sheep. But the shepherd is still there among them, and he knows just what to do in this moment. He quickly leaps to a rock or hillock, that he may be both seen and heard. Then he lifts his voice and makes a long call: "Ooh! Ooh! Ooh!"

When the sheep hear the voice of their shepherd, they heed his call and come and huddle around him. First an upward look, then hasty movement and quick response, and the devouring wolf is crushed beneath their feet. We are reminded of the words of Christ: "My sheep know my voice."

Also the shepherd has a helpful, strong hand. His hand ministers to their many needs. With it he presses into service the staff and the rod. His crook takes the sheep or lamb by the leg, when endangered by the precipice, and pulls it back to safety. His rod is lifted to smite the approaching beast of prey and defend his flock. He gently strokes the head and soothes to rest the aching pain. With his long-bladed knife he slays the wild beasts and protects the sheep of his care.

The shepherd, too, has a great loving heart. He boasts of his devotion and acts in behalf of his sheep. They are as dear to him as life itself. Just one ewe lamb torn from his bosom, or a sheep molested and slain by a panther, lion, or wolf, would cause him great grief.

In all of this we see pictured Christ, the Good Shepherd. He too has an eye that always sees and an ear that always hears. The faintest whisper does not escape His notice, nor the earnest petition His knowledge, nor the fervent intercession His understanding mind and heart. Furthermore, His loving voice calls us to himself for saving grace and power, for direction when temptation, snares, and pitfalls beset us, for guidance and deliverance in times of trouble, and for soul nourishment in the green pastures of His love. His strong hand befriends us when danger is near and the wolves bark, and we are affrighted, nervous, apprehensive, and almost devoured.

"What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!" The loving heart of Jesus is unfailing.

The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star,
And reaches to the lowest hell.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made;
Were ev'ry stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;

To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Tho' stretched from sky to sky.

* * * * *

02 -- THE SHEPHERD-PROVIDER

I shall not want.

From the opening strain of music in the first verse of this psalm until the close of the pastoral ode there is a melody that never dies away. This supreme song of the Psalter has its application to the individual soul. Other songs set forth the wonders of His kingship, of the nation of Israel and over all peoples. In this psalm there are only two persons, Jehovah and the sweet-singing bard of Israel. The personal note is immediately struck, "Jehovah is my Shepherd," to be followed with the assuring words, "I shall not want." Under His sway there is no lack. Our peaceful days He creates. If we wander we are not abandoned. In the darkest hours He is still with us and delivers us in conflict. He entertains us on our pilgrimage, and receives us into His house forevermore. Our Shepherd-Provider!

The keynote is clearly sounded in verse one, and all that follows is the amplifying of that thought in clearer and varying light. There is a merging of precious truth until the pastoral song is ended. The nightingale sings sweetly in every verse; though the storm may rage, the night be dark, the valley deep and precipitous, still the soft, musical notes are heard until the day dawns and life's brief pilgrimage is terminated.

Christ is our Shepherd-Provider. "I shall not want." A little girl tried to quote verse one and said, "The Lord is my shepherd; that is all I want." Innocently she voiced a blessed truth, for when we have Christ we possess the Supplier of every need.

Our Jehovah-Shepherd cares for our bodies and supplies their needs. He who watches the falling sparrow, numbers the very hairs of your head, clothes the grass of the field, beholds the birds of the air, considers the lilies of the hillside, visits the earth and waters it, enriching it with the river of God, prepares the corn in its season, sends the soft showers, covers the valleys with golden grain, and crowns the year with His goodness, making the hills to rejoice on every side

and the pastures to be clothed with flocks -- He will make your paths to drop fatness and fill your barns with plenty, so that with nature you will sing and rejoice in God.

A drinking, gambling, prize-fighting husband and father frequented the accursed taverns, where intoxicating liquors were sold, and into the small hours of the night would drink until reason left its throne and deserted him in his besotted condition. His brokenhearted wife would often push a wheelbarrow to this den of iniquity and by this means convey her drunken husband home. This tragedy was repeated over and over again. But one night Jim, her husband, decided to go to a revival meeting to hear the gospel preached and, blessed be God, he was wonderfully converted to Christ. From that moment on, cards, gambling, intoxicating liquor -- all the sins of his debauched life -- were forsaken, forgiven, and gone. He was a brand-new creature in Christ Jesus. The revival meeting in which Jim was saved continued, but strangely enough, he was not permitted to return. Instead serious illness immediately came into the family circle and all members of his large family were stricken with a deadly fever and they despaired of life, and the cupboard was scarce of bread. The weather, too, was very inclement and Jim had no employment. To make matters worse, the family was unknown to the church where he found salvation. However, Jim was marvelously and triumphantly saved, and despite their extreme poverty and serious illness he and his good wife, Polly, were happy in the Lord and their faith held fast.

One evening the very last morsel of food was eaten, and after prayers the family retired for the night. Jim and his Christian wife were up early the next morning and soon the children were scampering about. Jim said, "Polly, put the kettle on for breakfast." If she had any misgiving regarding the matter she concealed it, and quietly heeded her husband's request. But she looked at her husband and wondered. Jim got a Bible, and his wife and whole family sat around while he read favorite promises from the Word of God. Then came a melting season of earnest prayer as Jim told the Lord of all their needs -- food, shoes, clothing, money, employment, and so on. He prayed so ardently and believingly that morning for food supplies, and his good wife shouted her "Amen," and the children wept aloud, for they would not doubt the gracious promises of God.

After prayers they were strangely, yes, divinely, impressed to go to the back door and open it and upon doing so saw a big clothes basket filled with provisions of every sort for the physical needs of the family. To his dying day Jim never knew who brought the basket of food, but they all knew that God had answered their prayers. Now prayer was turned to praise and glad "Hallelujahs." This proved in later days to be the beginning of a wonderful life of faith. One day God placed His hand on Jim for the ministry, and for half a century he preached the glorious gospel of Christ throughout the British Isles, saw multiplied thousands of souls seek and find the Saviour, and for his work among the down-and-outs the king of England gave him a medal and greatly honored him as a devoted servant of Jesus Christ. Jim appreciated this gift and honor, but always his greatest honor was in being a child of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He proved the promise true, I shall not want.

Christ also nourishes the spiritual man. We are physical beings and have normal bodily appetites, for grace does not dehumanize us. The drives, urges, appetites, and sensuous nature are God-given, but man is not all material and human. He is spirit and endowed with spiritual

capacities, powers, and needs. Paul wrote about being "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."

But "Jesus has a table spread where the saints of God are fed." We must have renewals of fresh grace. The body wastes and wears away, but the inner, spiritual, true being when nourished by the Word of His grace will live, grow, and abound through the countless ages of eternity. Christ would give us light, life, power, and sustenance for the soul which cannot be seen or felt by others, but is known to us individually, that we may be strengthened and blessed so that we grow in holiness and Christlikeness.

The much-quoted words of the great Augustine, "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee," express the deep inner longing of the soul of man. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (Ps. 42:1). It is utterly foolish to try to meet the demands and cravings of the inner man with the fleshpots of Egypt, the mere temporalities of human existence and trinkets of life. The shepherd's love is graciously expressed in the words, "I shall not want," for the truth of these words finds fulfillment throughout the psalm.

I shall not want a shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd.

I shall not want rest and sweet repose. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.

I shall not want refreshment. He leadeth me beside the still waters.

I shall not want forgiveness and full restoration. He restoreth my soul.

I shall not want guidance. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

I shall not want courage and companionship. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.

I shall not want comfort. Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

I shall not want food and adequate nourishment. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.

I shall not want the soothing healing ministry of the Shepherd-Physician. Thou anointest my head with oil.

I shall not want spiritual luxuries and abundance. My cup runneth over.

I shall not want a heavenly escort. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me.

I shall not want in this life. All the days of my life.

I shall not want in eternity. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

"I shall not want" because our divine Shepherd is rich in possessions, wise in administration, strong to defend, and gracious to give. His riches are unsearchable, His power unlimited, His faithfulness unfailing, and His love infinite and eternal. His sheep hear His voice, know Him, and follow where He leads. With the Shepherd there are pleasant feeding, contented resting, gentle constraining, unerring guidance, blessed fellowship, sweet consolation, sympathetic healing, heavenly luxuries, celestial attendants, assurance for the present life, and confidence for the future.

I shall not want.

The Indian's Translation of the Twenty-third Psalm

"The Great Father above is a Shepherd Chief. I am His, and with Him I want not. He throws out to me a rope, and the name of the rope is love, and He draws me to where the grass is green, and the water not dangerous, and I eat and lie down satisfied.

"Sometimes my heart is very weak and falls down, but He lifts it up again and draws me into a good road. His name is WONDERFUL.

"Sometime, it may be very soon, it may be longer, it may be a long, long time, He will draw me into a place between mountains. It is dark there, but I'll draw back not. I'll be afraid not, for it is in there between the mountains that the Chief Shepherd will meet me, and the hunger I have felt in my heart all through this life will be satisfied. Sometimes He makes the love rope into a whip, but afterward He gives me a staff to lean on.

"He spreads a table before me with all kinds of food. He puts His hands upon my head, and all the 'tired' is gone. My cup He fills till it runs over.

"What I tell you is true, I lie not. These roads that are 'away ahead' will stay with me through this life, and afterward I will go to live in the 'big teepee' and sit down with the SHEPHERD CHIEF FOREVER."

* * * * *

03 -- THE SHEPHERD-LEADER

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

In these words are assurance, rest, satisfaction, resources, and guidance. Here is an answer to the uncertainty and the fearfulness that surrounds us. Our lives need not be circumstance-directed, humanly planned; they can be God-directed and Christ-envisioned. Is it not a sure indication of faltering trust when we seek guidance in the wisdom and ways of the world instead of finding it in God by direct answer to prayer, the reading and searching of His Word with open minds and hearts, and the sure leadings of the blessed Holy Spirit?

To live constantly by the guidance of the Spirit demands complete surrender, holy living, discarding self-sufficiency and self-confidence. "In ALL thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:6). It means taking God into the very center of all life's choices and decisions. God's will, not our own, becomes supreme and final. How glorious to walk humbly with God and be able to say from the heart, "He leadeth me"!

Sheep must have guidance because they are very shortsighted. They can see only about fifteen yards. Did you ever look at a sheep's eyes? They seem almost glassy. Sheep depend more upon sound than sight. This is why the Master said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Without proper guidance they go astray. The Eastern shepherd knew this and provided the leadership his flock needed. Sheep are most defenseless creatures. Cows, horses, dogs, cats, and mules can defend themselves -- sheep cannot; they have a genius for going wrong, and are said to have less brains than other animals of their size. If lost, they cannot find their way back unaided. "All we like sheep have gone astray," the prophet declared.

Palestinian fields in David's day were covered with narrow, crisscross paths over which the Shepherd would lead his flock in seeking new pastures. A path might lead to a jagged precipice or deep ravine or some other perilous place, and sheep seem never to learn to avoid dangerous spots. The shepherd must ever be on the watch for their protection and safety. Stupid sheep easily fall to their death. The shepherd would go ahead of his sheep and lead them in right paths. This was very difficult at times, but the sharp eye of the shepherd made the best choices for his unwary sheep.

No man is clever enough to dispense with a sure and safe guide amidst the devious and strange ways of life. He needs God as a perfect Leader. Man, too, has a genius for going the wrong way. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). We are given to short cuts and jaywalking and the pursuance of forbidden paths. God says, "Nineveh," and we say, "Tarshish." "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isa. 55:8). But no man will go wrong who follows Christ. He never leads the soul into questionable places, forbidden areas and sins, but guides the feet where He himself would go. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5). Sometimes the road He chooses may not be to our liking, but it will always be for our best interest. "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10), Job confidently declared. God's way is always best.

I said, "Let me walk in the fields."

He said, "No, walk in the town."

I said, "There are no flowers there."

He said, "No flowers, but a crown."

I said, "But the skies are black;

There is nothing but noise and din."

And He wept as He sent me back;

"There is more," He said; "there is sin."

I said, "But the air is thick,
And fogs are veiling the sun."
He answered, "Yet souls are sick,
And souls in the dark undone."

I said, "I shall miss the light,
And friends will miss me, they say."
He answered, "Choose tonight
If I am to miss you, or they."

I pleaded for time to be given.
He said, "Is it hard to decide?
It will not seem hard in heaven
To have followed the steps of your Guide."

I cast one look at the fields,
Then set my face to the town;
He said, "My child, do you yield?
Would you leave the flowers for the crown?"

Then into His hand went mine,
And into my heart came He;
And I walk in a light divine
The paths I had Seared to see.

-- George MacDonald

This never-failing Shepherd leads His sheep into green pastures. It demands the greatest skill and knowledge of the Keeper of sheep to do this, but the all-wise One leads to pasturage plentiful and satisfying. The margin reads: "He maketh me to lie down in pastures of tender grass." Green pastures meant to sheep a perfect food supply. The tender grass contained all the elements essential to the nourishment and growth of the sheep, from early days until full maturity. Under the careful guidance of the Shepherd, the green pastures were accessible. In fact, when a sheep left its own particular provender and strayed into other pastures, it was very liable to be taken by some disease, or to be captured and killed by some wild beast. The life of the sheep always depended upon its complete trust in and obedience to the leading of the shepherd. With him it had everything; without him it was lost and a prey to evil beasts.

The greenness of the pastures is an apt simile of the life-giving qualities of the Word of God. It is fresh and satisfying. It never grows old or stale. Intellectually, it is a challenge and a stimulant. Spiritually, it is "honey out of the rock," "the finest of the wheat," "milk," "meat," and the "bread of life." It deals with the highest, holiest, and most essential matters that concern us in this human life. It contains all the elements necessary to spiritual life, health, and prosperity. It provides milk for babies and meat for those of maturer years. We can never exhaust it or outgrow it. It is our only rule of faith and practice. It meets the needs of this life and gives comfort for the future.

The shepherd leads his sheep to luscious pasture-land, waters of quietness, and to shade. Sometimes on scorching-hot days under an Eastern noon sky, when the air is stifling with fever heat, and the landscape is baking in the glaring sun, and the very stones upon the hills burn the tender feet that touch them, the blue shade of some great rock, the shelter of some bushy dell, or the rich pasture of some friendly lowland offers rest to weary, heated sheep. At such a time woe to the sheep without a shepherd and shelter! But the Oriental shepherd knows where to find the sparkling stream as it gently flows through the level plain and the vale of restful shade.

No sheep will drink of turbulent, murky water. All through the hours of travel the shepherd keeps one thing in mind. He must lead his sheep to a drinking place. The refreshment of good, cool water marks the coveted hour of the day away from the dust and heat of the sheep-walks. Here is a place of sweet retreat, a shady spot where flowers and trees overhanging the banks are mirrored on the surface of the water. Every stone in the bed is clearly seen; the banks are luxuriant, green, and fresh, carpeted in spring by a thousand flowers and ferns. The very air is cooled. The flocks browse on the sweet, tender grass and drink the refreshing water from the quiet stream. The waters are not stagnant, but fresh and satisfying to thirsty sheep. Oh, how they drink as the shepherd stands near! He has provided for them "the still waters."

"You cannot grow wool on sheep if you feed them on dry fodder," we heard an aged minister say. You cannot nourish your hungry soul with the husks of the world, nor the emasculated so-called social gospel, nor mere religious works. Just as vitamins are essential to the body, soul food is essential to robust Christianity, personal soul culture, and vital spiritual life. Daily reading of the Word of God, private devotions, family worship, faithful attendance on the means of grace, spiritual worship with God's saints, and unselfish devotion to soul winning, with generous giving of tithes and offerings to the work of God at home and abroad, will greatly enrich the soul of the believer, deepen his spiritual life, and increase his usefulness in the service of God. "Take time to be holy. Speak oft with thy Lord."

Note the gentle compulsion of the divine Shepherd. "He maketh me to lie down." Before the journey there is the feast. It is next to impossible to make hungry sheep lie down. First a feast, then rest, then movement is the divine order. Peaceful resting and conscious assurance precede the steady walk. It is personal. "He leadeth me." "He maketh me." Oh, how we need to be divinely led! There are four quite safe ways to determine this leadership. Ask these four questions: (1) Is it right? (2) Is it reasonable? (3) Is it providential? (4) Is it scriptural? These may not always have a simple answer, but generally speaking the Christian has a right to look for such divine leadings. He is led, not driven. A path is a well-defined way of travel, and we can detect His leadings in many ways. We may be led by Christ's perfect example, the counsel of a saint of God, the message of a sermon or song, the admonition of a text, the inner promptings of the Spirit, the earnest prayer of a prevailing Christian, the Word of God, a wholesome religious book, a mother's devoted life, or a father's solid Christian character. God has many ways of leading us. But if we are not sure which way to go, it is better to wait till we are sensible of the safe leadings of the Good Shepherd.

The proper leadership of our Shepherd must always be preceded by obedience to the Shepherd's call to quietness, meditation, grazing, prayer, and solitude. Indeed the Hebrew "lie

down" is a technical word applying to flocks. Here are composure, restfulness, and satisfaction. A jittery, frustrated person cannot be led in right paths. Between the Palestinian shepherd and his flock there grows up a close union of attachment, tenderness, and understanding; because of this bond of relationship and loving care the sheep trust in his guiding staff and voice and follow where he leads.

Saviour, like a Shepherd lead us;
Much we need Thy tender care.
In Thy pleasant pastures feed us;
For our use Thy folds prepare.

We are Thine; do Thou befriend us.
Be the Guardian of our way;
Keep Thy flock, from sin defend us;
Seek us when we go astray.

The shepherd of the East leads his sheep in paths of righteousness, or right paths. Here are revealed his unerring knowledge of and familiarity with the country; otherwise he might lead the sheep along a wrong and uncertain way which might be entirely too near a precipice or place of deadly peril. Sheep are not like goats of sure foot. They easily slip and fall.

Christ is the Good Shepherd of His redeemed and saved sheep. His guidance is trustworthy and His knowledge infinite. God's children are often tempted to lose heart, become discouraged, give way to somber doubt, and surrender to annoying circumstances and fears. We need constant protection and care lest we go astray. Christ would lead us in safe paths, but if we are to be thus led it is imperative that we keep very close to His side.

One path we must follow, like Abraham, is the path of obedience. Just as a silly, faltering sheep endangers its very life by hesitancy and willfulness so does the child of God when lured away to a course of disobedience. We must sing and practice what the hymn writer said:

Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus
But to trust and obey.

The late Dr. J. H. Jowett said he saw seventy Salvation Army officers receive their commission for foreign service. Not one of them had the least idea where the command would send him -- whether to Africa, India, Brazil, Japan, Alaska, or the isles of the sea. When each man received his commission he welcomed it with a salute. This was glad obedience to Army regulations. The Christian believer dare not be reluctant, hesitant, and questioning, but trustful, responsive, and happy in His obedience to Christ.

Paul's testimony was always: "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19). Such obedience enriched his heart and life, changed the Christian map of the world, practically overthrew the pagan Roman Empire, and ultimately gained for St. Paul "a crown of righteousness."

The Good Shepherd also would lead His sheep into wholehearted, sacrificial devotion in the path of Christian service for others. This is not too involved, but rather simple. It pays big dividends. It does not take great learning to follow it. Childlike trust and simplicity, with a prayer burden, faith, knowledge of the elementary truths of the Word of God, and spiritual wisdom are all that is required.

One might engage enthusiastically in patriotic activities, economic and social welfare, scientific inventions, benevolence, the Red Cross, CARE, temperance and moral reform, the abolition of slavery, prison reform, jurisprudence and good government, ecclesiasticism, educational advancement, materia medica and hospitalization, international peace and brotherhood, and the general good of universal mankind without the saving grace of Christ in his heart and life.

General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, when Christmas was approaching, began to think of a brief message he could send to his commissioned officers, corps, and institutions around the world. The expense had to be considered. He made it a matter of earnest prayer. He wanted to pass on the great burden of his heart to all the Army and express to them its objective. Then the suitable word came to him -- "OTHERS" -- and he cabled it, telegraphed it, and used every means possible at his command to girdle the globe with this significant, unselfish, and Christian word which embodies the very soul of New Testament Christianity.

There is a type of service, though commendable, which is on the mere human level. It is humanitarian and consecrated to high ideals and objectives, but is not of itself within the strict category and tenets of the Christian religion. It is, when analyzed, the by-product of Christianity rather than its essence and soul.

What then, we ask, is genuine Christian service for others? Surely good works must characterize and express Christian faith; otherwise it is meaningless and futile. But works, though good and highly commendable, are not the cause of experiential salvation, but its effect.

All our service to Christ should be solely for His glory and praise and the advancement of His kingdom among men. Billy Graham, the world-famed, world-envisioning Christian evangelist, says: "The Church has only one supreme task, and that is the evangelization of a lost world." Christ himself said plainly, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

Winning souls to Christ is our supreme obligation. "He that winneth soul is wise." Bishop Taylor Smith had a Christlike passion for soul winning. He was taken ill in San Francisco and ordered to the hospital, where, not long after, he died. One day Dr. Philpott and a friend visited him at a late hour. It was eleven o'clock at night, but as they reached his door and looked in, they saw a nurse kneeling beside his bed and the good Bishop with his hands on her head praying for her. They felt they could not intrude. Finally the nurse came out in tears and said, "That dear old man! I am the third nurse he has led to Christ today." Passion for souls! This is following through with the Great Commission.

OTHERS

Lord, help me live from day to day
In such a self-forgetful way
Then even when I kneel to pray
My prayer shall be for OTHERS.

Help me in all the work I do
To ever be sincere and true
And know that all I do for YOU
Must needs be done for OTHERS.

Let self be crucified and slain
And buried deep, and all in vain
May efforts be to rise again
Unless to live for OTHERS.

And when my work on earth is done
And my new work in heaven begun,
May I forget the crown I've won,
While thinking still of OTHERS.

Others, Lord, yes, others --
Let this my motto be;
Help me to live for others
That I may live like Thee.

-- Charles D. Meigs

* * * * *

04 -- THE SHEPHERD-PHYSICIAN

He restoreth my soul.

The word "restoreth" is vashub in the Hebrew and means "turns back to the starting point." If He restores the soul to the starting point, what was the starting point? Was it not in the Garden of Eden that Adam and Eve fell and defaced the image of God? The image was fearfully marred. But through grace there is a renewal of the mind, the very spirit of the mind, and a renewal in knowledge and the divine image (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23-24; Col. 3:10). The moral image of God is righteousness, spirituality, and true holiness.

One evening David, king of Israel, was walking on the roof of his palace, and from the roof he saw a very beautiful woman. When he inquired he found that her name was Bathsheba, and that she was the wife of Uriah, an officer in his army. David fell in love with her. He stole

another man's wife, committed moral sin, put Uriah "in the forefront of the battle," where he was slain, and then Bath-sheba became part of his harem. But God sent His prophet Nathan to rebuke David. In the interview the prophet said concerning the monarch's sin, "Thou art the man," and King David fell into the hands of a merciful God. In Psalm 51 he cried out his soul to God, and it should be carefully noted that his prayer was twofold. Hear him pray: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions" (v. 1). Here is a prayer for the pardon of his sins. But again he prays: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (vs. 5-7, 10). Here David speaks clearly of original sin and the need of inner cleansing from moral and inherited depravity. His thoughts and prayer "turned back to the starting point."

Some sheep, like men, seem to be wayward by nature. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isa. 53:6). Sheep in Palestine, despite the constant watchfulness of the faithful shepherd, would sometimes wander away into the thickets, ravines, near precipices, the haunts of wild beasts, the lurking place of death. The sheep knows not the dangers involved. It is said that if a sheep wandered into a stranger's pasture the finder could cut its throat and keep the carcass, provided the true shepherd did not come in time to save his sheep. Many times the shepherd would arrive just after the sheep had been mutilated, or torn in the thicket, and by tender care would save its life and restore it to health. The sheep was his own -- it was restored. Upon finding it the shepherd would minister to its need, binding up the wounds, resetting a broken limb, feeding and restoring it to health. Lost, wounded, bruised sheep must have very tender care. Our Good Shepherd brings us back and rescues us from forbidden paths, restores us by wondrous grace, and heals our broken hearts.

Sometimes we are helped by being hurt. A skilled physician about to perform a delicate operation on the ear said reassuringly to the patient, "I may hurt you, but I will not injure you." How often the Great Physician of souls speaks to us the same message if we would only listen! The pearl oyster sometimes receives into its tiny shell a sharp and irritating grain of sand. The most natural thing would be to throw out the sand. But this would only injure the sensitive flesh, producing pain, disease, and death. Instead, the oyster throws out an exquisite crystalline fluid with which it covers and smothers the rude intrusion, and frees itself from all friction and annoyance, until gradually the rough grain of sand turns into a beautiful and precious pearl. Sick sheep are inclined to go astray, or they will refuse to follow the shepherd. A gentleman traveling in Syria tells how he stopped to watch three shepherds at a well, watering their flocks. The three flocks were all mingled together at the watering place. The traveler could distinguish no difference between them, and he wondered how they could be separated again without great difficulty. But presently one of the shepherds stood forth and called out, "Men-ah!" (Arabic for "Follow me.") Sure enough, thirty sheep immediately separated themselves from the indiscriminate mass and began at once to follow the shepherd up the hill. Then a second shepherd lifted the cry, "Menah!" and a second flock withdrew from the others, while the rest remained as unconcerned as if no one had spoken at all.

The traveler was so astonished that, as he saw the third shepherd preparing to depart -- laying his hand to his crook and beginning to gather a few dates from a palm tree beneath which he had been resting -- he stepped up to him and asked, "Would your sheep follow me if I called them?" The man shook his head. "Give me your shepherd's cloak and crook, and let me try," the traveler said. He even wound the shepherd's turban round his head, and, standing forth, began to cry, "Men-ah! Men-ah!" but no sheep stirred. They only blinked at him lazily in the sunshine. "Do they never follow anyone but you?" asked the traveler. "Only when they are sick; then the silly creatures follow anyone," the shepherd said.

We are reminded of the words of the Great Shepherd of His flock when He said, "And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers" (John 10:5). But a sickly believer is easily led astray into false doctrines, cults, and isms. It is a sure sign of spiritual illness, a disordered and weakened state, when one becomes an easy prey to doctrinal views and beliefs that are recognized by saintly people to be at variance with the tenets of the true New Testament faith. While God's grace will not give us perfect minds, perfect judgment, nor perfect knowledge, nevertheless it will enable us to discern between right and wrong, fundamental truth as opposed to erroneous religious teaching. "And a stranger will they not follow." Therefore it is imperative that Christians day by day receive spiritual nourishment as a safeguard against imbibing false doctrine and following forbidden rules of practice.

Sometimes the shepherd must resort to drastic measures and inflict punishment in correcting wayward, silly, stubborn sheep. A visitor to the Orient observed a shepherd carrying food to the sheepfold. The next morning the friend accompanied the shepherd and saw in the sheepfold a sheep with a broken leg. He asked the shepherd about the accident. "Was it struck by a stone? Did it fall into a hole? Did a dog bite it? How was the limb injured?" The shepherd replied, "No, I broke it myself." In utter amazement the friend replied, "What, you broke it! Why did you do that?"

Then the shepherd told how wayward this sheep had been, how it had led others astray, and how difficult it had been to come near it. It was necessary that something be done to preserve the life of this particular member of the flock, and also to prevent it from leading other sheep astray. The shepherd therefore broke its leg and reset it. The breakage necessitated the sheep's lying down for a week or more, but the good, tenderhearted shepherd prepared its meals and the sick sheep was compelled to take food from his hand. The compulsion of lying down cured the sheep of its wandering and waywardness. Its whole disposition was changed to glad obedience and submission.

Job said, "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). Peter told us, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1:7). Sometimes our Good Shepherd has to lay us aside, permit illness and hospitalization, put us on our backs as it were, in order that we may look up into His lovely face and learn needed lessons. David said, "Before I was afflicted I went astray." Christ tarried two days after hearing of the illness of Lazarus before going to Bethany. Why did He tarry? For the sake of Mary and Martha as well as His disciples, for the Master wanted them in His school to learn at

His feet. When a shepherd takes a flock of sheep across a somewhat turbulent stream, he takes a lamb in his arms and goes to the other side. Then the sheep follow him over.

We need pauses, rest periods, solitude, private prayer, and devotions in the Christian life. "Christ withdrew from the multitude." We must all learn to "lie down," but we are prone to want to do anything else -- to run, walk, teach, sing, preach, cook, organize, work, visit, or a thousand other things. Just anything but "lie down" in green pastures and beside the still waters! We neglect the devotional for the practical, the closet for the outdoors, the heart for the hand.

The shepherd of the East must needs be a physician as well as a guide. His skill in setting broken bones, applying the healing olive oil, soothing nervous sheep, and ministering to all their needs is a duty and love service by day and by night. Likewise the Lord Jesus is the Great Physician to our souls. He is our Doctor and Nurse when we are ill. When His sheep is injured, He does not knock it in the head, nor send it into the wilderness to be devoured by wild beasts, nor neglect it outside the fold and let it die. No! It is under His special care that He may restore it to health and strength.

Nature is full of restorative processes. When our flesh is wounded the white corpuscles, the soldiers of the body, rush to the rescue and fight the damaged area, even giving their lives, as it were, to heal the broken part. When a deep rent is made in the hillside, rocks and dirt despoil the beauty and nature groans under the rough treatment. But soon the place is festooned with lovely grass, green ferns, creepers, and variegated flowers and shrubs.

So, spiritually, the blessed Holy Spirit is ever brooding over us to restore and repair, mend and heal, our broken hearts and lives.

First of all we mention the restoration of the years lost in sin. Elijah P. Brown was such a man. But later, after conversion, we hear his testimony. "The word 'restore' is a very precious one to me. When more than forty years old, I was converted from lifelong infidelity, through the preaching of D. L. Moody, whom I had gone to hear out of curiosity. For many years I had been a worker against the Bible and Christianity. One of my addresses was being circulated as a liberal tract. As soon as God revealed Himself to me -- which He did in a way so convincing that I have never since had even a temptation to doubt -- I began to be greatly troubled over the wasted years of my previous life. Indeed, I grieved so much about the past as to interfere with present joy and usefulness; but one day as I read my Bible I found a promise that seemed to have been made for me. My faith took hold of it and made it mine at once; and from that hour I have never had one single anxious thought about my past life. The promise was this: 'I will restore unto thee the years that the locust hath eaten.'" Rev. Elijah P. Brown, D.D., became an eminent and useful saint and preacher, editor of the Ram's Horn, a paper of wide circulation in its day to the glory of God.

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That mountain in his day;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.

The backslider also can be restored to Christ. The Master said to Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." "When once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren" (Luke 22:32, A.R.V.). Christ foreknew that Peter would fall and backslide. He said to him, "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Though Peter promised he would never forsake Him, thrice he denied his Lord, to his shame and grief. Then the rooster began to crow and he "went out, and wept bitterly." He was restored to Christ's loving favor. Soon he was in the Upper Room waiting for his personal Pentecost and he, with the rest, was "filled with the Holy Ghost." Now fear was turned to holy courage as he preached Christ and the resurrection in Jerusalem, and heralded the gospel in distant lands until his martyrdom (as tradition says, with his head downward at his request, on a cross, because he felt unworthy of dying in the same position as his Saviour). A backslider restored!

Not only so, but the justified believer can be restored to the spiritual image of God. "He restoreth my soul," cried David. He turns me back to the starting point, to the moral likeness of God. "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20). D. L. Moody was converted in Boston and later filled with the Holy Ghost on the street in New York City. Dr. Reuben A. Torrey, who had been gloriously converted to Christ and was a successful preacher for some years, heard the Spirit whisper clearly to him saying: "I want you to preach on the baptism with the Holy Spirit tomorrow." This was Saturday. Torrey felt he could not do it, but the Spirit insisted. He retired to his room to pray about it and said, "Lord, if Thou dost want me to preach on the baptism with the Holy Ghost, then I must have that baptism. I cannot take another step in Christian service until I know I am baptized with the Holy Ghost." He prayed prevailingly and the Spirit came that Saturday night to the privacy of his room and he was wonderfully baptized with the Holy Spirit. He ever after proclaimed this truth.

This restoration to holiness means complete cleansing from sin. "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light... the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7).

General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, asks: "What is this faith that sanctifies? It is that act of simple trust which, on the authority of Christ's Word, says, 'The blood of Jesus Christ does NOW cleanse me from all inward sin, and makes me pure in heart before Him; and I do here and now commit myself to Him, believing that He receives me, and that He will evermore keep me holy while I thus trust in Him.'"

He restoreth my soul.

LOST AND FOUND

'Twas a sheep that was lost on the mountainside,
Unheeding the Shepherd's call;
It heard the voice -- but it wanted to stay
Where the grass seemed sweet and tall.

But the storm broke over the mountain steep,

And re-echoed in cavern and cave;
And the sheep was lost in the blinding storm,
And no one seemed near to save.

But the Shepherd went forth in the storm of the night
To search for the sheep that was lost,
And after long hours brought it safe to the fold,
But no one e'er knew what it cost.

-- Thomas P. Potter

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05 -- THE SHEPHERD-PATHFINDER

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Being led "in green pastures" -- and "beside the still waters" -- precedes "the paths of righteousness," which speak of travel and movement. The seclusion is before the journey. Without moments of pious meditation, seasons of prayer and communion with Christ, we are wholly unprepared for the toilsome road and the dangerous path. Pastoral peace comes before the pilgrimage. The text can be translated, "He leadeth me in true paths for the sake of his name." Dr. Moffatt says, "In right paths." Our colloquialism, "on the right track," probably conveys the real meaning. The shepherd in the West often walks behind his sheep, driving them, for the road is more or less clear, while trained dogs are pressed into service. But the Eastern shepherd always leads his flock, lest the sheep go along a false track. He makes sure the sheep are "on the right track." Whether it be by the lovely glen or near the jagged precipice, in the heat of the glaring sun or friendly, cooling shade, it matters not if safely led.

The path may wind around the mountainside following the sharp curves of the hills or through the open field. Some paths lead through places of deadly peril, while others seem more safe and sure. Though the journeying be hazardous with the sheep exposed to injury or casualty, or the path be plain and "along God's great out-of-doors," the faithful shepherd leads on toward the ultimate sheepfold.

Christ, our Good Shepherd, is our faithful Guide. He said, "I am the way." Not a way, nor one among many, but "the [only] way."

The Way is figurative of the doctrines of Christ. Saul of Tarsus received letters from the high priest so "that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem" (Acts 9:2).

If we follow our Guide we shall be safely led into all fundamental Christian doctrine. Jesus declared in the Jewish Temple as He taught, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:16-17). As an ambassador might say, "I speak not my own words, but

of the government I represent," so Christ authoritatively declared the divine origin of His teaching. Then He gave us a sure rule by which we may judge doctrine and learn the will of God. By application of His truth we may know -- know the whole sum and substance of His preaching, that is, that men shall love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and their neighbors as themselves, and know Him as the Christ of God, the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. Your Saviour and mine! Blessed doctrine of our faith! What else do we need?

Our Shepherd-Pathfinder will also lead us in the path of life. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life" (Ps. 16:11). Christ said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). This most surely is vastly more than biological, psychic, social, earthly life. It is dynamic spiritual life. When John Bunyan's Pilgrim was leaving the City of Destruction traveling toward the Celestial City, he plugged both ears, ran, and cried, "Life! Life! Eternal Life!" Sin must be left behind if we would possess the life the Saviour imparts. Christ is the very Fountain of Life.

Christ will also lead us in the path of abundant life. It is truly a path of righteousness that leads to God and heaven. Hear the prophet Isaiah: "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isa. 35:8). The Hebrew writer said, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). As the hunter pursues the animal of his chase, so the Christian believer pursues holiness of heart and life.

The hymnist expressed the path of Christian holiness in his poem thus:

Take time to be holy.
Speak oft with thy Lord;
Abide in Him always,
And feed on His Word.

Make friends of God's children;
Help those who are weak,
Forgetting in nothing
His blessing to seek.

Take time to be holy.
The world rushes on;
Spend much time in secret
With Jesus alone.

By looking to Jesus,
Like Him thou shalt be;
Thy friends in thy conduct
His likeness shall see.

Take time to be holy.

Let Him be thy Guide;
And run not before Him,
Whatever betide.

In joy or in sorrow,
Still follow the Lord,
And looking to Jesus,
Still trust in His Word.

Let us enter this way. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13-14).

"Gate," among the Jews, signifies metaphorically the entrance, introduction, or means of acquiring a thing. They talk of "the gate of repentance," "the gate of prayer," "the gate of tears," "the gate of paradise." And the gate to salvation, a holy life, and heaven at last is found only in the path of life.

The shepherd of the East knows that his sheep trust him and follow his leadership. They know his voice, crook, and rod. They listen for the whistle or the call. They never misunderstand; they do not respond to the wrong shepherd nor heed the stranger, but with implicit confidence they walk in the path their own shepherd makes for them. Whether in pastures green, by the quiet waters, along the side of a precipice, down the deep vale, on the open moor, through the valley of death, by the noisy rivulet running down the crevice, or amidst the dangers of prowling beasts of prey, they follow where he leads. Such is their confidence.

The Christian believer learns to walk by faith and unshaken trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, his Good Shepherd and Guide. So with Spurgeon we would say: "Oh, brethren, be great believers! Little faith will bring your souls to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven [Christ] to your souls." Sometimes the shepherd in the Orient leads his sheep through a wilderness or desert country where there are no raised paths, but merely well-worn tracks; and sometimes there are six or eight paths running unevenly alongside each other, but all lead to the same point. Likewise your path and mine may not be the same in all respects, but our destination is where all our paths converge, and heaven is our eternal home. So let us trust Him where we cannot trace Him, and ere long we shall reach the City of Light.

I have read the story of a young Scotch student in a university who was rooming with an old Christian auntie who read her Bible and believed it most profoundly. One day the student came and said to her, "Auntie, you know that verse in Hebrews that you so often quote: 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' Well, I have found out today that there are five negatives in the Greek, and it reads like this: 'I will never, never, never, never, never leave thee.'" "Oh," said the old lady, "one of them is good enough for me, laddie." Because our Good Shepherd has promised never to leave us, we need not fear. Let us praise Him for His abiding presence.

We should further note that we are divinely led aright "for his name's sake." How beautiful are these words! Christ's own glory is involved in the security of His children. He will

not leave us to wander, become ensnared, or be torn by wild beasts if we trust His love and grace. For the sake of His holy name, His divine character, his unfailing fidelity, His immutable love, He will not fail. God cannot forsake us while we abide in His presence; cannot leave us alone in the dark wilderness; cannot ignore us at the bottom of a precipice, wounded, bleeding, dying alone.

Some may chance to read these words who feel lonesome, forgotten, and whose lives are in a desperate muddle. Your life is like a crazy quilt or a Chinese puzzle. It seems a maze with intricate, winding passages, inexplicable difficulties, uncertain tracks leading toward a dead-end street. Perhaps all of life seems crisscross, involved and labyrinthine, and the sun is blotted out. But remember, "for his name's sake," on His word of honor, He pledges you His love and care. If only you will heed His loving voice, obey His command, follow where He leads, you will always find the Good Shepherd of souls standing by or leading away from the barren mountainside and dark ravines, and you will not be friendless, alone, or forgotten. The Good Shepherd is too good to leave us out in the cold exposed to dangers seen or unseen. The good physician cares for your child in illness, even sickness unto death, for your sake, it is true, but "for h/s name's sake" too. His reputation is at stake. To lose your child would hurt his reputation and practice. The lawyer protects his client for your sake, but it is also true, "for his name's sake."

If a sheep gets into a thorn tangle, or fastens its wool in a blackberry hedge and lies down to die by itself, while the shepherd is caring for some other sheep, the responsibility must be placed with the dumb creature so carelessly involved. But the sheep's response to his call will preserve it from ultimate ruin and death. Christ said in His high priestly prayer: "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition" (John 17:12). Judas deliberately forsook the sheepfold and lost his soul. We may too, but we need not. The grace of Christ is adequate, and Christian security is pledged conditionally. If we are lost, it is our own voluntary act.

In the time of the Scotch Covenanters a group of children were condemned to be shot. A little girl of eight looked up into the face of one of the soldiers and said: "Sodger man, will ye let me take my wee brither by the hand and die that way?" "Bonny Whigs ye are," cried Westerha', "to die without a prayer." "If it please ye, sir," said the little girl, "me and Alec canna pray, but we can sing 'The Lord's My Shepherd.' My mother learned it us afore she gaed awa." Then all the bairns stood up, and from their lips rose the quavering strains, "The Lord's my shepherd; I'll not want." As they sang, trooper after trooper turned away, man after man fell out, and the tears rained down their cheeks. At last even Westerha' turned and rode away, for the victory came to the bairns that saved their young lives through the singing of the twenty-third psalm.

HE CHOSE THIS PATH FOR THEE

He chose this path for thee.
No feeble chance nor hand, relentless fate,
But love, His love, hath placed thy footsteps there.
He knew the way was rough and desolate;
Knew how thy heart would often sink with fear;
Yet tenderly He whispered, "Child, I see

This path is best for thee."

He chose this path for thee.
Though well He knew sharp thorns would tear thy feet,
Knew how the brambles would obstruct thy way,
Knew all the hidden dangers thou wouldst meet,
Knew how thy faith would falter day by day;
Yet still the whisper echoed, "Yes, I see,
This path is best for thee."

He chose this path for thee.
E'en while He knew the fearful midnight gloom
Thy timid, shrinking soul must travel through,
How towering rocks would oft before thee loom,
And phantoms grim would meet thy frightened view;
Still comes the whisper, "My beloved, I see This path is best for thee."

He chose this path for thee.
What needst thou more? This sweetest truth to know,
That all along these strange, bewildering ways,
O'er rocky steeps and where dark rivers flow,
His loving arms shall bear thee all the days.
A few steps more, and thou thyself shall see
This path was best for thee.

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06 -- THE SHEPHERD-COMPANION

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.

Life is not all sunshine. There are shadows too. All sunshine and no rain makes a desert. We cannot have mountains without valleys, summer without winter, or flowers and vegetation without rain. Crops and fruitage are brought to maturity and perfection through the kindly ministrations of both rain and sunshine. Oak trees send their roots deeper in the storm. The photographer needs a darkroom as well as the display window.

My good wife and I visited a nurseryman and purchased some begonias. He told us: "Begonias need shade." We took his advice and were soon rewarded in beholding the glossy leaves and lovely flowers. Ferns, too, grow in the shade, and in their place ferns are quite as beautiful as flowers. The humble, golden-yellow marigold is often found in swamps and lowlands as well as in higher places.

The shepherd of the East on occasion would lead his sheep through the valley. Behold him shod with sandals, a crook in his right hand, a weary lamb in his left held securely to his bosom, his flock faithfully following him down the rock-ribbed descent to the valley below. In Palestine one valley is called "the valley of robbers." The very expression found in this psalm, "the valley of the shadow of death," is drawn from a dangerous gorge of the Holy Land south of the Jericho Road between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea.

Just one thing matters to the sheep when journeying through the valley -- the presence of the shepherd of the flock. Surroundings, dangers, and untoward circumstances are purely incidental when the shepherd is near. With the shepherd nigh there are peace, confidence, and safety.

The Eastern shepherd can easily detect the sharp barking of the hyenas; the howling of jackals; the roaring of mountain lions; the rapacious sounds of the timber wolves; the approach of the hungry bear; the ferocious, tawny-bodied and black, wavy-striped tiger; and the huge flesh-eating cat, the leopard. He also knows about the Bedouins and thieves that abound on every side. He knows what to do in time of danger to protect his sheep. He is truly a shepherd-companion in time of need.

Valleys cannot harm us. They have no claws or weapons or venom. The shadow of a dog cannot bite, of a giant cannot kill, of a lion cannot destroy, of a serpent cannot poison, of an enemy cannot murder, of death cannot deprive of eternal life. A valley always has higher ground surrounding it. But valleys are dark and foreboding and deathlike. Darkness is evil, but darkness and "the shadow of death" are the very utmost of evils. David expressed the worst of his case and the best of his faith when he said, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." His faith said, "I will fear no evil" -- place, thing, circumstance, situation, person, nor the combined forces of Satan and hell -- "for thou art with me." The valley emerges into glorious sunlight. A furious beast, a rampaging lion, a devouring wolf, a thieving Bedouin may be near me in the valley; but my Shepherd-Companion is nearer still and I am secure.

A skillful surgeon was overworked, consequently was irritable and often profane. An emergency had played havoc with the morning schedule. The atmosphere of the operating room reflected the doctor's tension and irritability.

The anesthetist spoke reassuringly to the charming young woman on the operating table. "Breathe naturally and count slowly." She wondered if the lovely girl, so relaxed and smiling, knew what a serious operation she was facing.

"I would rather say the twenty-third psalm if you do not object," the patient said quietly.

The doctor's face reflected surprise and sudden interest. "Yes, say it. I need to hear the twenty-third psalm this morning too."

The deep quiet of the operating room was now broken only by the confident voice of the girl: "'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.'" Peace and serenity had suddenly filled the room.

In that simple setting, nurses and doctor listened to the sweet beauty of that glorious old psalm as if they had never heard it before.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Her voice was growing softer and weaker; she spoke more slowly. "Hold it!" the doctor said to the anesthetist. "I want to hear it all."

Her voice trailed off and then all was still. Misty-eyed, but apparently refreshed in spirit, the doctor nodded and the operating room sprang into action, as the patient slipped into the etherized unknown, calm, serene, and comforted.

Carefully note David's strong expression of his faith: "I will fear no evil." Each word is worthy of proper emphasis and meditation. It is well to say, "What time I am afraid I will trust in thee" (Ps. 56:3), but it is far better to declare confidently, "I will trust, and not be afraid" (Isa. 12:2). "I will fear no evil."

My absolute trust is in my divine Shepherd. "Perfect love casteth out fear." Nothing else can do it. You may argue against fear, deride it, try to shame it, frown upon it, and even detest it, but this is not sufficient. All will be in vain. But perfect love expels it. A hard-working man comes home from his work faint and famished; his nature craves material food. But as he enters his home, he learns of a tragedy that has come to his little boy while riding his bicycle in the street, suddenly struck by a passing automobile. At that very moment he forgets his hunger in the paroxysm of grief and love, as he tries to comfort his wife and other children and to minister to his suffering child who lies on the bed awaiting the ambulance. Love is the master emotion.

Some of you may have stood within a darkroom and developed a film. You have seen the gradual strengthening of the image on the little strip of celluloid until at last the picture stood forth clearly. Light and shadow are necessary to successful photography. The light must be focused on the camera and imprisoned on the film to obtain a good picture, but even so, it is developed in the darkroom. Life is like a photograph to be developed. If the image of Christ is to be revealed, the developing process cannot be ignored. There is a price to pay for perfection. We are made perfect through suffering.

A Swarthmore College professor told a religious conference that the Bible has outlived much of its usefulness, that it must be modernized, rewritten. "Take the twenty-third psalm for example," he said, selecting the most frequently memorized verses of scripture. "People who live in the city simply do not know the meaning of 'The Lord is my shepherd.'" Therefore he bluntly concluded, "We must scrap the twenty-third psalm and put its thought into modern language." He suggested this substitute: "The Lord is my automobile's low gear to help me in climbing the high hills. The Lord is my antiseptic in times of dangerous epidemics. The Lord is sunlight in my room, bringing me health of ultraviolet rays." Other emendations were suggested.

Atheists, godless Communists, and skeptical liberals pompously boast that the Bible must be discarded, that it is antiquated, including the twenty-third psalm, that nowadays all thinking people no longer need it; it should be shelved to give room for advanced thought and knowledge.

But this proposed radical change, discarding Psalm 23, had boomeranged only twelve years later by the cruel agonies of war. The newspapers told the touching story of Vern Haugland, noted Associated Press foreign correspondent, who was forced to bail out of a crippled bomber over New Guinea jungles. During forty-three days of groping through the trackless wilderness, over steep, jagged cliffs, through foodless weeks, in which he lost half his weight and developed arm sores and leg ulcers, he was wonderfully sustained with unshakable courage and fortitude. No atheistic boasting that he was master of his fate, no modern unbelieving interpretation of the Scripture, no skeptical view of the Word of God, Christ, and the dependability of the Bible could meet his present distressing need now. NO! NEVER! The intrepid reporter, after receiving the Silver Star from General Douglas MacArthur, wrote his family: "I'd never have made it but for God's care and the prayers I know were being said for me. I often repeated the passage, 'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.' It was marvelous how it worked; I would be unable to go one step farther, and then I would remember, 'I shall not want,' and sure enough, there would be some berries or chewable grass or a creek with good water just ahead."

Dear child of God, remember when you are called upon to pass through some lonely, dark valley, that an Unseen Hand is guiding, sustaining, and keeping you for himself. Then trust and be not afraid, for He is always near to help, cheer, and comfort you.

We believe also that this figure of the valley gives us some comforting thoughts about death, even though this is not its primary meaning. It is not an abiding condition, a fixed place, but rather a passageway, a valley through which we must go. We walk through. "Through" suggests movement, and progress with destination in view. How often we have been riding on a train as it entered the tunnel, but we have noticed again and again that the train lights were turned on for the comfort of the passengers! Ere long we would emerge into broad daylight and behold nature dressed in gorgeous splendor and glory.

Death is a deep, dark valley through which we must pass. It is an enemy, we are told in the Word. Only two men thus far, Enoch and Elijah, have escaped it. It is sheer nonsense to deny its reality, as some do. To deny physical pain, sickness, and death is to ignore the senses. It is to be like the ancient blind man who complained that there were no lights in the house, and that there was nothing wrong with his eyes. A certain system of error says, "Decrepitude is not according to law, nor is it a necessity of nature, but an illusion that may be avoided." "Man is never sick." "Man is incapable of death." "There is no death." The Bible says, "It is appointed unto men once to die" (Heb. 9:27). "These all died in faith" (Heb. 11:13-19). The words "death," "dead," and "died," occur in the Bible more than a thousand times. The experience of every family gives the lie to this deception about death.

Yes, death is a dread reality to both sinner and saint. It is a gloomy ravine usually, but even so it is but a present valley, a passageway to glory. "For thou art with me." We do no injustice to the verse and its message when we include in its scope every shadow experience we

must face. Some saints of God have long, lingering illnesses with bodies racked with pain, while others have a speedy and perhaps painless exodus to the glory world.

In a certain pastorate an aged soldier of the Civil War was a highly respected member of my congregation. It fell to my lot to minister to this man during his last illness. My visits were frequent at his hospital bed. One day I quoted to him Psalm 23 and when I came to "the valley of the shadow of death" he said, "I told my daughter the other day, there is no shadow." He was always so triumphant despite his sufferings that even the hour and article of death seemed more to him like a happy wedding occasion. His face was radiant, his praises to God frequent, and his spirit victorious to the end.

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07 -- THE SHEPHERD-COMFORTER

Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

The shepherd's office represents Jehovah's constant vigilance over His people. Sheep in Palestine were exposed to both heat and cold, and providing food and safety for them often involved great dangers as well as ingenuity. The shepherd, when far from home, had his light tent; it was easily assembled or taken down at his pleasure. Towers were sometimes erected to spy a foe afar off and to guard the flock.

The shepherd's equipment was simple: It consisted of a wallet for food, a sling such as the Bedouins still carry, a rod, and a staff. He would wear a mantle of sheepskin with the fleece on, a large kerchief on his head falling over the neck and bound to the head with ropes made of camel's hair. John the Baptist, who probably followed the life of a shepherd before becoming the forerunner of the Messiah, was clothed with the shepherd's "outer" coat of camel's hair. Such clothing is cited in the Scriptures to make clear that he did not wear the rich robes of the priests, but the lowly dress of a shepherd.

Attached to the leather belt of the shepherd there would be the scrip or purse, a knife, and a rod or club. The rod and the staff were totally different pieces of equipment for a shepherd. The rod or shepherd's club was a little over two feet in length with a knob at the end, into which, frequently, iron nails had been driven. There was a noose through the end of the handle so that the club could be fastened or held in the belt, and when the club was pressed into action the noose could easily be slipped round the wrist to prevent the club from being dropped or lost from the shepherd's grasp. It was somewhat like a policeman's billy-club, a short club for the defense of the flock. Doubtless the wood was hard and strong. Moffatt's translation of the passage under consideration is "thy club, and thy staff -- they give me courage" (Ps. 23:4, Moffatt).

The shepherd's staff which he always carried with him was about six feet long and generally had a crook at the top or end. In the double expression of rod and staff we discover the whole round of guardianship. Each is indispensable for many reasons. Briefly stated, the rod was used for defense purposes in dealing with the enemies of the sheep, and the staff for the discipline of the sheep themselves.

The rod symbolizes the power of the shepherd. Even to this day many adventures with wild beasts occur, not unlike those encountered by David; for though the lions are no longer there, there are wolves in abundance, and leopards, exceedingly fierce, that prowl about these wild wadies and hiding places. They are bold enough sometimes to attack the flock in the very presence of the shepherd, and he must be ready to do battle at a moment's warning.

The Christian has enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Or to press into recognition here John, the tenth chapter, the twenty-third psalm of the New Testament, he has to meet the thief and the robber as well as the hireling. The thief is the cruel consumer; the hireling, the passive protector; while the shepherd is the solicitous savior of the Master's flock. There are three classes in their relationship to the flock: positive opposers, indifferent friends, and active promoters -- persecutors, pretenders, protectors. The thief is aggressive, but the hireling is more subtle and passive. The hireling does his work for wages; the true shepherd does his for love of the flock. The hireling thinks of himself; the shepherd, of others.

The rod also was the symbol of authority; perhaps this gave rise to the use of the gavel, the baton, and the scepter. God said to Moses, "And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs" (Exod. 4:17), and under God it emancipated an enslaved nation from Egyptian tyranny. Christ's sheep belong to Him and His stamp of authority must ever be upon them and His law respected and obeyed.

The rod, too, emblemizes possession. For this very reason the shepherd defends his sheep as the rightful owner. With this war club in hand he bravely faces any foe and slays without mercy the enemies of his flock. Likewise the children of God are protected in times of danger against the preying beasts that would tear and devour the flesh of His innocent sheep. Sometimes the wolves come within the sacred precincts of the church, or the home and family life, and it takes resolute action on the part of the Shepherd to drive the wolves away or bludgeon them to death.

And the rod was the breaker-up of their way among thorns, briars, and brush. In like manner even God's choicest saints meet with the thorn tangle, the prickly brier, and brushwood in the lowlands and thickets of life.

It was under the rod the sheep were numbered for safety, rest, and enclosure for the night. This speaks of God's protecting love and care for His own. What comfort, then, was the rod to defenseless sheep!

We would also take a look at the faithful shepherd's staff, used for the discipline of the sheep. Sheep need correction, training, and some punishment. The shepherd would not hesitate to prod or even beat the sheep with his staff when necessary. Some sheep follow close to the shepherd; others have a strong tendency to wander. Some are very amenable to training and are easily handled; they respond to kindness and meekly obey. Others are just the opposite and seem determined to be unmanageable; they are self-willed and stubborn. They yield only to force, prodding, and punishment. What experienced churchman has not seen men who were like sheep! Yea, verily!

But the staff was used also for beating down the leaves of trees to feed the flock or for brushing aside anything in the way of proper feeding. Thus it brought comfort, blessing, and food to hungry sheep. Here is a suggestion of how our Master seeks to provide for His hungry children along the journey of life.

The staff, too, was employed by the shepherd to rescue sheep from dangerous places. He would gently thrust the crook of the staff between the hind legs or around the horn of the head, and bring the sheep back to safety. By the staff our Shepherd corrects our way. At first perhaps there seems but little comfort here. It is not pleasant to be corrected. The smart stroke of the staff or the steady pull is somewhat painful, yet there is consolation in the reflection that God must care for us or He would not think it worthwhile to spend time and thought upon our chastisement. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. 12:6). Welcome then, O child of God, each stroke and pain from the Shepherd's staff. Find comfort in every smarting experience and hurtful situation. Say, "The Shepherd loves me tenderly or He would not treat me thus!" Let the sand in the oyster become your pearl! Permit the trial to bring you forth as gold! Allow the furnace to expel the dross and reveal the image of the Refiner!

And the staff represents His guidance. See the shepherd as he gently leads his flock with staff in hand. A dog will fight when attacked, but a sheep stands helpless in the presence of its enemy or in places of imminent danger. Without the shepherd's direction voice and staff it is undone, if not doomed.

* * * * *

08 -- THE SHEPHERD-HOST

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.

Some commentators drop the shepherd metaphor at this verse and substitute a human fugitive bursting into a banqueting scene to escape unharmed from his avowed enemies. It is true that the hospitality of the East gives to every table the privileges of a city of refuge. Indeed the fugitive may eat in the very presence of his enemies and no violence, physical harm, or suffering of any sort must touch him. But it seems to us that if we retain the earlier imagery to the end we find rich meaning in the words, the poetic artistry is preserved, the rarest gems of truth like rays of light illuminate the sustained metaphor, and we note the shepherd's highest skill, heroism, and care in a marked degree.

Another psalm asks: "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" (Ps. 78:19) The word "table" literally means "something spread out." We are all familiar with the metaphor. "She provides a good table," we say, meaning, of course, a good meal. There are two meanings suggested in the word "table" as here mentioned: suitable, luscious grass, and also plenty to eat. The Arabs to this day take a piece of skin or a mat or a cloth and spread it on the ground as their table. The words of the Psalmist again press for recognition and understanding, "Let their table before them become a snare; and when they are in peace, let it become a trap" (Ps. 69:22,

A.R.V.). The words "table," "snare," and "trap" clearly apply to the out-of-doors rather than an indoor banquet. Our emphasis is to make clear the truth as we see it, that our word "table" of the psalm refers to an outdoor scene.

Furthermore we would note the Oriental thought as expressed in the kind shepherd's provision and concern for his flock. He would patrol up and down the "table" in the grass searching eagerly for poisonous weeds, and pull them out. His keen eye would also see the holes in which the venomous reptiles hide just under the surface of the ground. The heads would be sticking up in readiness to bite the noses of the sheep. The cobra is not uncommon in Palestine. The horned viper, subtle and dangerous, is also found there. The viper will attack, though unprovoked, and death ensues in half an hour. Vipers flee from flame; so the shepherd would take a quantity of hog's fat from his pouch and cause it to burn at the hole. The viper, attracted by the smell, would shoot out. The shepherd with club in hand would smite and kill it as it emerged.

Sheep raisers in Texas search for poisonous plants and snake holes in the ground where their sheep are grazing, to protect them from snake bites, diseases, and death. They pour a certain mixture down the holes which kills the snakes, and then the sheep eat in peace and safety. The nutritive grass "table" is thus provided for the flock.

In spiritual application we discover the table of the Lord's Supper. The Master gave the Church this holy sacrament. It is like a great bridge spanning the entire interval of the Church's history upon earth until He comes again. One end of the table rests securely on the shame and suffering of His cross, and the other is planted in the glory of His coming kingdom. It has a threefold relationship to the Christian believer: a reminder of past justification, the source of present sustenance in the new life, and a pledge of future blessedness and glory. It is a table of remembrance, obedience, self-examination, confession, communion, thanksgiving, expectation, and hope.

Our Good Shepherd-Host, the Lord Jesus Christ, is a very gracious Banqueter, and His angels are the cupbearers; pardon, peace, purity, life, satisfaction, and finally heaven are the viands; palaces hung with gardens of beautiful eternal grace are the banqueting place; the chalices of God are the consecrated cups of His love; and the wine of the Kingdom is our daily portion to exhilarate and bless our hearts and lives. The gospel feast is large, its provisions ample, its bill of fare satisfying, and its suitableness to every guest unquestioned. "All things are ready; come to the feast."

There is also the blessed and bountiful table prepared for our private devotional life. If one is too group-conscious, not having learned the sweetness of aloneness with God, he has missed some of the very richest moments of the Christian life. In an old church in Europe may be seen a picture of a plowman who has left his plow and turned aside to pray. But while he prays an angel is seen with hands on plow and plowing for him. The moments we spend "looking up" are not lost moments; the time spent with God's Holy Book in prayer, meditation, and devout reading is time well spent.

A missionary was teaching a small class of Navajo Indian boys to say the twenty-third psalm. When Bahi's turn came, he began confidently, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I've got all I

want." We have reached a high peak in Christian experience when we can truthfully say with the poet, "I'm satisfied with Jesus alone." Oh, the sweetness of His presence! Dr. Haldor Lillenas, world-famous hymn writer, wrote:

The closer I walk, the sweeter He seems.
Much fairer is He than all of my dreams.
His love lights my way when pathways are dim,
The closer I walk to Him.

* * * * *

09 -- THE SHEPHERD-ANOINTER

Thou anointest my head with oil.

The day is closing after the long, wearisome journey and the sheep need rest for the night. But before they are allowed to enter the enclosure there are the rodding, the anointing, and the refreshing drink of water from the shepherd's hand. The golden sun is setting in the west as the kind shepherd leads his sheep to the sheepfold. It is eventide now as the last scene of the day takes place.

As he stands at the door to the sheepfold he counts each sheep; not one is overlooked, for he knows them by name and counts them as they pass under his rod. They have been on the bleak mountainside, or in the deep ravine, or near the edge of a precipice; some have bleeding feet; others' knees are bruised by piercing rocks or pricked by many a sharp thorn. Some have cut themselves, torn the flesh, fallen victims of distemper, stumbled into a pit, perhaps broken a leg, and they need a doctor and a nurse. Some are weak from loss of appetite, and emaciated. Unless they have the shepherd's care they will die. Others are just plain weary and worn from travel.

Here comes a sheep with a fever, for sheep are very susceptible to this disease. The feet of another need attention. The grazed head or lacerated flesh must have the healing olive oil. The shepherd has a horn filled with oil and he has cedar tar also; he anoints where needed and heals the wounds. Then another approaches that is quite exhausted; he gently bathes its face and head with the refreshing, soothing oil. He also takes up the two-handled cup filled with fresh water and lets the weary sheep drink. It is brimful, so that the sheep can easily drink and quench its thirst.

As we look again at the shepherd figure we discover sympathetic healing ministry and we are reminded of the parable the Master gave us of the Good Samaritan pouring in "oil and wine" -- wine for cleansing and oil for healing. Dr. W. T. Grenfell, of Labrador, tells of journeying one day among the Syrian mountains and conversing with a dragoman about the various uses of olive oil among his people. He was delighted to hear from his lips: "It is a great medicine with us." These remedies are used all over the East and elsewhere to cleanse the wounds and assuage smartings. This primitive cure was effective in soothing inflammation and healing the wounded parts. The well-known restorative of the East was highly recommended by the Greek and Latin physicians. It was also a common practice with travelers in the Orient to carry oil with them, that

they might anoint and thus strengthen their limbs wearied with continual heat. We have an example in the case of Jacob, who at Bethel anointed his stone pillow; the oil he poured out to the glory of God. He probably used it upon his person also before sleeping beneath the Palestinian sky.

God's sheep often are bruised and torn by outward circumstances. We would choose the easier path. We prefer roses to thorns, sunshine to shadow, and peace to storm. Sometimes the journey seems so long and exhausting, and "we wonder why the test when we try to do our best."

Your roses may have thorns, but don't forget
Your thorns may have some roses, too.

We must take the bitter with the sweet. Follow your Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, to the close of the day and you will enter the sheepfold. Though the road may be rough and forbidding, it leads safely home. Your divine Shepherd with gracious ministration will pour into your soul the soothing, medicinal, refreshing oil and you will be at rest.

Also the anointing will become our instructor. "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (I John 2:27). This refers to fundamental spiritual truth, not academic learning. The Spirit will teach us all things essential to our salvation, though of course we must not despise the Christian counsel of godly ministers and veteran, well-balanced saints. The Church with its rectifying influence and anointed services will illumine our path to the City of God.

There is also the gracious anointing for distinctive service for the Master. Dr. P. F. Bresee in the Nazarene, September 21, 1899, wrote under the head "Unction": "This is a strange word, but no other will quite express it. It is a word full of mystery, also full of meaning. It is the peculiarity of human speech which manifests forth the presence of the Holy Ghost. It is the power of God in human utterance. It is the promised power in testimony and ministry that was to come when the Holy Ghost fell upon us. It may not be possible to describe it, but every one knows when it is present. It is that, without which attempts at preaching and testimony are vain. Nothing reaches the souls of men through human agency in conviction, either for pardon or purity, without it. Without it all our efforts are sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. -- We must have it. We do well to stop all the machinery and cry to God well, to do nothing else until into our souls comes this personal fountain of life to pour Himself through us to His glory.

We must have unction; it is the sword that pierces between soul and spirit; the hammer that breaks the hearts of men, and leads them unto the cross, O, brethren of the ministry, we must have it. -- O, brothers and sisters everywhere, it is your indument of power; you must receive it fresh, by the breath of God, or you are nothing."

Dear reader, seek Christ, and pray and read the Word until you too are truly anointed for Christian service. It is the unction that is indispensable. Without it we are nothing. Receive the Holy Ghost. He is the blessed Spirit of Truth and His anointing, if duly honored and consistently respected, will lead the soul into the heights and depths of glorious spiritual attainment and

eminent usefulness. The great need is for anointed preachers anointed teachers, anointed youth, anointed singers, anointed Christian workers everywhere. The anointing will relieve the strain and tension and frustration and heal the wounds and strengthen the limbs and move forward the work of God. An Indian version of "He anointeth my head with oil" reads, "He puts His hands upon my head and all the tired is gone." A beautiful truth is here expressed.

* * * * *

10 -- THE SHEPHERD-BLESSER

My cup runneth over.

Sheep rarely find food or water by themselves. They must be led to both pasture and water. Water in the Orient is often obtained from deep wells, and drawing it is a part of the shepherd's work. When a shepherd is gathering his sheep into the sheepfold, he will stand at the door; in fact, he himself actually is the door. He calls each sheep by name. He observes whether it is weary or sick or thirsty, and he brings his cup of water for each needy sheep so that it may have a long, refreshing drink. Sometimes a small running stream is pressed into service by the kind shepherd as he fills his cup, but in so doing the cup overflows. Sheep are nervous about drinking from flowing water. The shepherd knows this, so he uses his cup brimful of fresh water to slake their thirst.

Rev. Fred J. Meldau tells his experience in the Holy Land. One of the interesting things he saw in Palestine was the "drinking cups" (troughs) for the sheep. They are rectangular cups cut out of stone, about eighteen inches high and two or three feet long and perhaps eighteen inches wide. The shepherd fills the cup and lets it overflow with fresh water from the well. He sees to it that it overflows so that all the stale water is washed out, for the sheep do not relish stagnant water -- water may have been in the cups for several days.

It is clear then that the shepherd during the day when watering his sheep, or in the evening by the sheepfold, supplies these creatures out of the overflow. So there is a double significance to the statement, "My cup runneth over." It implies not only overflowing blessings, but fresh blessings also, the very best that is to be had. What a significant statement! What beautiful imagery it portrays! What abundance; yea, properly understood, what extravagance! God is the God of the inexhaustible supply of grace and power to every Christian who trusts in Him. No matter how dry the valleys through which we must pass, how scorching-hot the day, how barren the mountain steeps we may need to climb, or how long the weariness journey, there is abundant provision for all of life's needs until we are safe within His fold.

The symbol of water is frequently employed in the Scriptures to set forth spiritual truths. It often represents the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul. It speaks of grace, power, sufficiency. What water is to the physical world, as a cleansing agent, Christianity is to the moral and spiritual world. Society and the human heart are full of pollution and filth. Art, science, intellectual refinement, civilization, diffusion of wealth, and human governments cannot cleanse mankind from depraved tendencies and bad conduct. But the religion of Christ's cross can cleanse. It has the power to purify.

The Christian religion is like water because it is indispensable to the life of man. I state what everyone knows when I say that it is absolutely impossible for the human body to live without water. It is said that a lonely traveler in the desert, having lost his way and wandered many days over the scorching sands without even a drop of water, almost dead, came at last in sight of something on the ground which looked, as he approached, like a leathern bottle such as the Orientals use for carrying drink. Full of hope, he hastened on, expecting to quench his tormenting thirst. When he came to the spot he fell, overwhelmed with despair and disappointment. What he took to be a bottle of water was nothing but a bag of diamonds. Tragic mockery at such a moment!

A pastor was kneeling with his family at worship. He was leading in prayer, and closed with the twenty-third psalm. In giving the psalm from memory he omitted the short sentence, "My cup runneth over." His small son kneeling at his side whispered to him, "Daddy, you forgot 'My cup runneth over.'" Isn't it rather strange that we neglect such abounding fullness of God's grace?

Let us read different renderings of this portion of this wonderful psalm.

"My cup runneth over." (Authorized Version)

"My cup is abundant drink." (Ellicott's Commentary).

"My cup is teemin' fu." (Broad Scotch)

"My happiness cup fills to overflow." (Chinese)

"My cup He fills till it runs over." (Indian)

"My drinking cup bubbles over." (Zulu)

"Thou dost fill my cup to running over." (Tibetan)

"Thou pourest out fullness to me." (German)

"My cup runs over. Yes, happen what may, happiness and grace will accompany me."
(French)

If we would avail ourselves of the exhaustless supply of grace as typified by water, we would never crave again the fleeting pleasures, temporary satisfactions, and momentary indulgences of a sinful life. The wells of public worship, social worship, private prayer, and the Holy Scriptures are close at hand, but faith must be exercised as we come. If we would draw from the "wells of salvation," we must press into service the rope and bucket of faith. This is the only way. You may come to the wells every day; you may lean over the curbs, and see your face mirrored in the water, but not a drop can touch your lips unless you draw with the rope of faith. With this, any child can draw. Without this, the strongest and most gifted man must go away

unsatisfied. O, come to the wells of salvation! They are free to all. Then "with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isa. 12:3).

Not only is there abundance; there is freshness too. The writer has traveled from Seattle, Washington, to San Francisco, California. The route passes the famous Mount Shasta spring, where cold, sparkling water is bursting out of a rock in a great cascade. The refreshing water pours out in a stream that would turn a hundred mills -- bursting forth out of the rock in a great geyser sixty feet high. What a draught of pure delight it is! I will never be thirsty again without thinking of that refreshing, wonderful fountain; and the taste of the pure, crystal water will haunt me as long as I live.

It was something like this the Psalmist had in mind when he wrote of the overflowing cup--only a thousand times better; for in the Christian heart and life, in the deeply spiritual experience you carry with you the fountain that refreshes, satisfies, and slakes the inner thirst. Let tourists refresh themselves from Mount Shasta but, saint of God, refresh thyself at the fountain that "never runs dry." A never-failing fountain!

Our Christian lives should be lived out of the overflow. A Christian minister entitled one of his books *Preaching Out of the Overflow*. The preacher should live daily out of the surplus of grace. Also let the Sunday school teacher get an overflowing well experience, and the choir director, and the youth leader, and the missionary president, every layman and professed follower of Christ. It would revolutionize our churches, precipitate Holy Ghost revivals, and hasten the coming of our Lord.

We have unlimited resources at our command, but too often the Church is failing in its demand. We are too complacent, too content with meager attainment, too impoverished and lukewarm. Dr. Wilbur Chapman told of a time in his life when a great sorrow had come to him which occasioned his taking a trip into the far West. One of his elders, a banker, came to see him, and as he was taking his leave he slipped a bit of paper into Dr. Chapman's hand. When he looked at it, he found it to be a check made out in his name and signed by the banker, but where there should have been figures it was blank. "Do you mean you are giving me a signed blank check to be filled out as I please?" Dr. Chapman asked. "Yes," the banker said; "I did not know how much you might need, and I want you to draw any amount that will meet your wants." "And while I did not use the check," Dr. Chapman said, "it gave me a comfortable, happy feeling to know that I had millions at my disposal." God has given us a signed check in Phil. 4:19, "But my God shall supply all your needs." His resources are unlimited, and the more we draw on Him, the better He likes it. "I shall not want." We shall want for nothing, for God shall supply all our needs day by day and eternally. Praise Him!

MY CUP RUNNETH OVER

There is always something over
When we trust our gracious Lord;
Every cup He fills o'erfloweth;
His great rivers all are broad.
Nothing narrow, nothing stinted

Ever issues from His store;
To His own He gives full measure,
Running over evermore.

There is always something over
When we, from our Father's hand,
Take our portion with thanksgiving,
Praising for the path He planned.
Satisfaction, full and deepening,
Fills the soul and lights the eye
When the heart has trusted Jesus
All its need to satisfy.

There is always something over
When we tell of all His love;
Unplumbed depths still lie beneath us,
Unscaled heights rise far above.
Human lips can never utter
All His wondrous tenderness;
We can only praise and wonder,
And His name forever bless.

-- Margaret E. Barber

* * * * *

11 -- THE SHEPHERD-ATTENDANTS

Surely goodness and mercy shalt follow me all the days of my life.

Life is made up of days. The word "all" of the text is the high, full-toned note sounding out the meaning of the whole psalm. The writer once heard William Jennings Bryan speak on the word "all."

The Great Commoner, statesman and Christian leader, declared it to be the greatest word in the English language. The Psalmist emphasizes -- "all the days."

First of all David seems to be reminiscing. He is recalling to mind the past events of his life. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us," he seems to say. Pastoral scenes and experiences pass before him as he recounts the goodness and mercy of God. A shepherd remembers, and when David wrote of "goodness and mercy" following him all his days he was thinking of the faithful shepherd dogs who bring up the rear. In Thompson's *The Land and the Book*, the author says, "The shepherd walks before them, and they follow after, while the dogs, that Job talks of, bring up the rear." The Bible reference to Job reads: "But now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock" (Job 30:1).

The Eastern sheep dog renders excellent service. He will turn, attack, and frighten off a pursuing wild beast by his loud barking and vicious, angry growls. His dismal howlings at the night season and his defense efforts by day drive off would-be intruders. His main function is to keep the flock together lest individuals with a tendency to lag behind, tempted by some sweet bit of herbage, linger by the wayside. Well-trained sheep dogs keep the sheep from forbidden paths, dangerous straying, and physical harm. We believe this is what David had in mind as he thought of the goodness and mercy of God following him all his days. "All the days"! Days when pasturage is green and the waters are still. Days when journeying through the valleys or traveling the mountainside. Days when howling wolves are near and when sheep enemies are distanced. Days of deep shadows and of brilliant sunshine. Days of lying down and days of movement. Days of evil and days of blessed comfort. Days of leading and days of restraint. Days of fullness and days of scarcity. Days of anointing and days of wearing toil. Days of overflowing blessing and days when the brook runs dry.

"All the days"! Days of springtime and gladness, when all nature seems to dance for joy: the songbirds are in the air, the lambs are frolicking in the fields, blossoms are out on dress parade, and bursting leaf and bud and flower herald the coming of summer and golden harvest. Summer days, when the year reaches its highest glory and folds to its bosom mother earth with golden sunshine, blessing, and fruitfulness, and drawn-out, balmy nights. Autumn days, when the fields are filled with ripened grain, alfalfa hay, and shocks of corn, while busy hands gather from heavy orchard boughs and trailing vines luscious fruit and the rich products of the year. And winter days, when the frost is in the air and snow and ice beneath the feet on slippery paths -- days of mist, rain, somber light, and dense fog -- days of cold, hardship, freezing, and departed glory -- days of confinement, loneliness, and tears.

"All the days"! Days that are golden and cheery, lit with heaven's warm, sunny glow. Red-letter days that stand out like mountain peaks. Birthdays, graduation days, wedding days, anniversary days, vacation days, days filled with happiness, peace, rest, and joy.

"All the days"! Days that are drab, attired in somber tints. Days of darkness, sadness, and heartache. Days when all the lights have gone out. Days of clouds, temptations, tests, tears, trials, troubles. Days of suffering, pain, misunderstanding, hospitalization, desertion, and solitary life.

Let us further note David's great confidence for the present and the future. He had said, "I shall not want"; but now he speaks more positively, more comprehensively, more assuredly: "Surety goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." His hope rises, his faith strengthens, his trust is unshakable and constant. His great faith sees for himself the wonderful goodness and mercy of God, all the refreshing streams of mercy flowing from the fountain, pardoning mercy, sanctifying mercy, protecting mercy, sustaining mercy, supplying mercy, keeping mercy -- mercy for time and eternity.

Note how these mercies and the goodness of the divine Shepherd will be conveyed. They "shall follow me." Just as the Rock (Christ) followed Israel through the wilderness and supplied their needs (I Cor. 10:44), so the Lord and His guardian angels shall follow us in all places and under all circumstances. There will be continuance and constancy "all the days of my life: and.., for ever." As the manna was given daily to the children of Israel in their journeyings or rest

periods in camp, so our Heavenly Father will provide for His own. As we pass through the vale of life, His goodness and mercy shall follow us every step of the way. God never leaves His followers; providential mercies, miraculous deliverances, protection, and defense shall never be wanting when they are necessary. "Surety," "follow," "all" -- these assuring words are all we need.

We recall a district assembly in 1914 presided over by the founder of the Church of the Nazarene, Dr. P. F. Bresee, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In his inimitable way and with clarity of exposition he expounded Psalm 23. It was Sunday morning. In order to emphasize and make clear the blessed, comforting, profound truth of goodness and mercy he likened them to faithful watchdogs, as I have explained. He asked Rev. George Ward and his wife, an ordained deaconess dressed in her garb, to assist him. These devoted saints immediately stepped forward to assist the good Doctor. Standing within the altar he proceeded to move slowly, then faster, and still faster until he was running at a fair pace. While he was moving slowly the Wards kept close at his heels, or with faster step they were still close behind. Not for a moment were they more than two steps behind Dr. Bresee. After this dramatic object lesson the mightily anointed preacher, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, lifted his congregation to heavenly pasturage and drinking fountains until the whole assembly rose to their feet in shouts of praise and victory, and the glory of the Lord filled the great church. It was an unforgettable scene.

An old black aunty, with shining face and sunny heart, was trudging along with a heavy basket of clothes on her head, singing merrily her Negro spirituals, when a dismal-looking man accosted her:

"S'pozen yo' git wh' you' kaint wash no mo', an' hal to go to de po'house; you' won't sing like dat." "Go 'way wid dem s'pozens!" was her reply. "Dem s'pozens is what meks all de trubble in dis wo'ld, an' I ain't gwine to hab nuffin to do wid 'em nudder, I ain't. De Lo'd is my shep'd, an' I sh'll not want!" and with that answer she passed on, singing louder and sweeter than before.

And so David would have treated any insinuation of a doubt, and so should everyone who would keep the peace of God in his heart. If goodness and mercy have followed us all of our lives thus far -- and we know that they have--what stronger evidence could we have that they will keep on doing so? I believe God would put the angels on half rations to share with us, if need be, so that our daily needs would be supplied.

So, trusting child of God, remember that "goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Believe it and your mind will be in sweet repose and your heart will be blessed. Don't forget the word "surely" of the text. Surely, because God has never failed. Surely, because of His pledged promises, exceeding great and precious. Surely, because of the united testimony of all the saints down the centuries of time. Surely, because He has set His love upon us for all time and eternity. Some commentators think the text should read, "Only goodness and mercy shall follow me!"

Fearful, fainting heart, take courage, believe God, trust His unfailing promises, rest in His great love. God knows how many days of your life still remain; He knows your needs, your temptations, your trials, your sorrows, your heartaches, and He has pledged to give strength as

your day. He himself, as the poet said, will be with you "e'en down to old age"; and "when the battle's over we shall wear a crown."

ALL DAY WITH GOD

One word with Thee is conquest;
One touch of Thee is calm;
The radiance of Thy presence
Makes all my day a psalm.

To hear Thee in the morning
Say, "Welcome to this day,"
Makes all my deeds of service
A happy holiday.

To hear Thee in the noontide
Say, "Break thou bread with Me,"
Doth change my daily hunger
To sacrament with Thee.

To hear Thy voice at evening
Say, "Tired child, take rest,"
Is better than the moonlight
Or gentle mother breast.

Thus, every day is comfort
When spent, my Lord, with Thee,
And every step is forward,
And all is well with me.

-- Bishop William A. Quayle

* * * * *

12 -- THE SHEPHERD-HOME

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Some would have us think of "the house of the Lord" as meaning the Temple in Jerusalem. This evidently could not refer to such a temple, for it had not yet been built. We believe its ultimate meaning is heaven, the eternal home of the soul. The words "for ever" seem to carry through this suggestion. The shepherd, when far from home, had his light tent, easily taken down and shifted. David is pressing upon our thought a striking contrast, a change from the transient to the permanent, a movement from the shifting tent to a place to "dwell." Granted that "the house of the Lord" is anywhere where the Lord is present, nevertheless we know there is an eternal sheepfold for Jehovah's flock.

The sheepfold in the hill country of Palestine is a roofless affair, for there are few rains. It is usually square or oblong, somewhat like the walls of a house without rafters and roof. The walls are high, thick, and durable, being built of field stones, which abound in the Holy Land. These stones are carefully laid together for permanent use. The height of the walls prevents marauding animals from leaping over, and the floor is the mother earth, worn smooth from many feet.

The faithful shepherd who has led his trusting sheep during the day now brings them to the entrance of the fold. The roaming of the day is past and the weary sheep must have rest and quietness. The song is hushed, the journey is ended, and sweet repose from the heat or cold of the day comes at its close. Eventide and twinkling stars and crescent moon would hush the sheep to sleep. So the shepherd, who is the door, places himself with staff in hand across the doorway as the sheep slowly pass in. He inspects every one for any injury, illness, or needed care. They crowd, and try to break through too rapidly, for they have eaten and are filled, but tired, longing for the protection and rest within the fold. The loving shepherd tenderly ministers to every injury, bruise, fever, or any form of illness before permitting the sheep to enter the fold. Oil from his ram's horn is pressed into service. When all the sheep are safely within the sheepfold they will ruminate the grass they have swallowed along the way, and lie down to rest for the night.

Now the shepherd spreads his cloak in the doorway, gathers dry sticks to make a fire, which he lights, sits down in that doorway, cooks his own food, and eats it. He may play a reed flute of his own making, or a harp with strings, and sing some ancient shepherd song. Sometimes other shepherds will gather, especially in the lambing season, and they will take turns in keeping awake, watching "their flocks by night." Or the lone shepherd will lie across the doorway, wrapped in his warm outer cloak, dozing by his fire.

The wild beasts may prowl near, but they can never cross the gateway, even though they might attempt entrance there; before they could get to the sheep to destroy them they would have to pass the fire, which they dread, and also the body of the shepherd. The slightest stir among the sheep, the distant howl of a jackal or hyena, arouses the shepherd as the cry of a sick baby in the night does a loving mother. He will battle to the death, if need be, either Bedouin or carnivorous beast, for the safety of his helpless sheep means more to him than life itself. He will lay down his very life for them. Anything that harms his sheep will have to do so over his dead body. He is the door, and his own sheep are safe within his fold.

I AM THE DOOR

A traveler once, when skies were rose and gold
With Syrian sunset, paused beside the fold
Where an Arabian shepherd housed his flock;
Only a circling wall of rough, gray rock--
No door, no gate, but just an opening wide
Enough for snowy, huddling sheep to come inside.
"So," questioned he, "then no wild beasts you dread?"
"Ah, yes, the wolf is near," the shepherd said.

"But"-- strange and sweet the words divine of yore
Fell on his startled ears -- "I am the door!"
"When skies are sown with stars, and I may trace
The velvet shadows in the narrow space,
I lay me down. No silly sheep may go
Without the fold but I, the shepherd, know.
Nor need my cherished flock, close-sheltered, warm,
Fear ravening wolf, save o'er my prostrate form."
Oh, word of Christ, illumined evermore
For us, His timid sheep, "I am the door"!

The term "house of the Lord for ever" cannot be a purely literal thought expressed by David, for no man will live in a literal house forevermore. It affords a blissful spiritual interpretation. Man dies, stones crumble into dust, earthly things vanish away, material existence ends; but the spirit of man is immortal and man craves permanence and an everlasting home. His very nature is keyed, not to the temporal, the transient, but to the everlasting verities. Life here is probationary, changeful, and preparatory. It is a race to be won, a course to be finished, and a training school for the glorious realities of our eternal abode. Grace and the Holy Spirit are adding the finishing touches to our character and fitting us for the City of Light and perfect service.

The "house of the Lord," in Davidic conception, seems to be none other than the eternal abode of the righteous with its attendant blessedness. The words "dwell" and "for ever" suggest permanency and eternity.

There are three heavens mentioned in the Bible: the atmospheric, the astronomical, and "the third heaven," which St. Paul was caught up into. It is the "third heaven," the blessed home of the soul, that captures our thoughts today. However, it is not our purpose in this volume to attempt a full description, or even a meager one, of heaven. No tongue or pen could adequately describe the infinite glories of that "better country." We know that heaven is a place and a state. The grand feature of heaven and its blessedness are represented as consisting first in personal union and immediate face-to-face communion with God and the Lamb; secondarily, of the saints being led by the Lamb to living fountains of water and fed with the fruit of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God, the antitype of the former Edenic paradise. It is no longer merely a garden as Eden, but a heavenly "city," a "better country," a "kingdom," and a place and state of heavenly bliss.

Heaven will doubtless bring to God's redeemed saints many gains. Paul said, "To die is gain." There will be the absence of physical ills and mental imperfections. No sickness, sorrow, separation, death, temptation, nor devil will mar the joys and felicities in the mansions of light. There will be definite moral, social, and spiritual gain with glorified bodies and souls, minds freed from aberrations, infirmities, and blunderings, spirits untrammelled, and faculties unimpaired, with our whole beings perfected. There will be limitless progress, endless development, and fullness of joy. Dr. Hills says, "It must be a progressive state, because growth and progress are the law of our being -- no limit can be set to the acquisition of knowledge, or progress in character and blessedness -- even the rest of heaven will not be a mere cessation from

activity, but a holy and most zealous service, wholly exempt from weariness and the hardship common to earthly toil."

Let us notice David's firm resolution: "I will dwell..., for ever." Just as the sheep at the close of day are determined to enter the fold, so the Christian believer must say with Paul, "I am determined." The revelator said, "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls." Do you know the history of the making of pearls? Humanly speaking, it is one of suffering and pain. There is significance to the fact that the gates are of pearl, and not of gold. There was a time when there was no entrance into heaven, for sin had closed it, the law of God had been broken, and there was no hope. But the Holy Babe of Bethlehem came. He was cradled in the manger, grew to manhood, endured thirty-three years of suffering, culminating on "The Old Rugged Cross" of Calvary. He died of a broken heart for you, for me. And if we would enter heaven when our day of mortal probation is ended it will be by enduring His cross and going "forth... without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Heb. 13:13).

The gates suggest a special way to get in. We cannot live just as we please and at last enter heaven. The Bible says: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way"; one might miss it. Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "I am the door." "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

A child who lay dying said to his father, "I wouldn't be afraid if Mamma would go with me." "But," he replied, "Little One, she can't go." Then the child prayed to Him who had promised to walk through the valley of the shadow, and soon he said, "I am not afraid now, for Christ has said that He will be with me, and He will." In a few moments the child slipped away to be with Jesus forevermore.

The good shepherd of the East saw to it that every one of the sheep was safely within the fold. Not one small lamb, nor ewe, nor ram was left outside to wander on the bleak mountain, or stray away and be lost in the darkness of the night, or be killed by wild beast, or be lost in some deep ravine -- not one! He counted them all and named them one by one and enclosed them within the sheepfold. Christ, our God Shepherd, the Shepherd of our souls, the One who has watched us during life's day, will remember us when the shadows fall and the journey ends, and He will safely gather us all who trust Him into the eternal sheepfold.

The Master said to His sorrowing disciples: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

Many years ago the state of Kentucky had a great "home-coming." Her ex-sons and daughters from all over the land were invited to visit again the old Bluegrass State, the home of their nativity. An important part of the great program was the unveiling of the statue of Stephen Foster, the writer of the world-famous song "My Old Kentucky Home." Twenty-five thousand people gathered in the great armory to witness this great event. When the moment arrived, two of the beautiful belles of Kentucky, clad in white, walked out on the platform and began slowly to draw back a silken coverlet. Just at that moment a brass band of one hundred and fifty or more

pieces began to play "My Old Kentucky Home," and twenty-five thousand people suddenly began to sing the old song, much loved by all Kentuckians. No one can imagine the mighty volume of music from this tremendous choir. There was scarcely a dry eye in all that vast company. It was a moving, unforgettable occasion.

But there is a yet greater home-coming day, when the sons and daughters of God shall come from the north and the south and from the east and the west to the soul's native home, for the coronation of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The glory and magnificence of the Godhead will be unveiled. Perhaps our song will be on that great day:

All hail the power of Jesus' Name!
Let angels prostrate fall.
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.

Some glad day we shall sing redemption's story in the glory-land of the Blood-washed. There will be no throb of the war drum, no bursting shells, no clash of steel, no groans of the dying, no sad good-byes. We shall be safe in the homeland bright and fair forevermore.

"And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Amen.

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THE END