

WHERE TO LOOK IN THIS PSALM

WHEN...

1. Discouraged with circumstances, seek your SHEPHERD, *The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want.* p. 7
2. Desiring inward peace, seek your Shepherd's REPOSE, *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.* p. 10
3. Experiencing escalating calamity, utilize your Shepherd's GOOD PROVISION IN EVERY SEASON, *He leadeth me beside the still waters.* p. 12
4. Needing renewed confidence, seek from your Shepherd a RESTORATION OF SOUL, *He restoreth my soul.* p. 15

IF YOU ARE...

1. Doubting your way, seek your Shepherd's CHOSEN PATH, *He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake* p. 18
2. Fearful of the unknown, seek your Shepherd's PROTECTION IN DEATHSHADE, *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.* p. 20

TO FIND...

1. Healthy provision, feed on your Shepherd's HIGH PLATEAU MEADOW, *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.* p. 26
2. Quietness in difficulty, and comfort in reflection, seek your Shepherd's FLASK OF OIL, *Thou anointest my head with oil.* p. 21
3. Boundless joy in plentitude, rest in your Shepherd's ABUNDANT PORTION, *My cup runneth over.* p. 30

TO KNOW...

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2. Your Shepherd's objective, contemplate your ETERNAL PLACE IN HIS FOLD, *And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.* p. 41

Jesus: the Great Shepherd
Psalm 23

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
all the days of my life:*

*And I will dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.*

INTRODUCTION

This psalm is without doubt the favorite of Christians. Conceivably, no other psalm has comforted so many hurting souls. Psalm 23 means most, however, for those who also esteem and appreciate the messages of the psalms that immediately precede and follow it in the Psalter, Psalms 22 and 24. Actually, Psalms 22, 23, and 24 form a trilogy, which as a unit presents a comprehensive and thorough account of Jesus' shepherding work for His sheep, covering every aspect of Jesus' work as Shepherd, from the very personal to the very public functions of our Shepherd.

In Psalm 22, it is the Cross of the Saving Shepherd; in Psalm 23, it is the Crook of the Sympathetic Shepherd; in Psalm 24, it is the Crown of the Sovereign Shepherd.

With His Cross of Psalm 22, Jesus saves His sheep; with His Crook of Psalm 23, Jesus shields His sheep; with His Crown of Psalm 24, Jesus secures His sheep.

In Psalm 22, the Good Shepherd gives His LIFE for His sheep; in Psalm 23, the Great Shepherd gives His LOVE to His sheep; in Psalm 24, the Chief Shepherd gives His LIGHT of yet future glories with His sheep. You also have His PAST shepherd work in Psalm 22; His PRESENT shepherd work in Psalm 23; and His FUTURE shepherd work in Psalm 24.

Again, it is Christ, the Good Shepherd, DYING to save the sheep in Psalm 22; Christ, the Great Shepherd LIVING to comfort the sheep in Psalm 23; and Christ, the Chief Shepherd, COMING to reign with the sheep in Psalm 24.

Jesus is depicted as the Good Shepherd in Psalm 22, as the Great Shepherd in Psalm 23, and as the Chief Shepherd in Psalm 24. The New Testament defines these three aspects of His shepherding duties in three different references, which parallel precisely these three psalms.

The Good Shepherd: Psalm 22

Jesus designated Himself as the Good Shepherd when He said,

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. [Added emph.]

John 10:11

The word *good* qualified His past shepherding work because He paid the supreme price for His sheep's welfare and safety. Psalm 22 gives vivid details of His sacrifice for His sheep; it allows us to view His experience with the cross and His atoning death upon it as Savior, which makes possible the sheep's entrance into His Father's eternal fold. It reveals our Shepherd as truly *good* by Jesus' own definition, because He gave His life for the sheep.

The Great Shepherd: Psalm 23

Again, another of Christ's holy servants was inspired to write of Jesus' present shepherding work, designating Him as the Great Shepherd,

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. [Added emph.] Hebrews 13:20-21

This special shepherd work of Jesus is appropriately appreciated by multitudes today; and this accounts for the nearly universal popularity and familiarity of Psalm 23. But many somehow seem to moderate the main message of this psalm. The writer of Hebrews clarified its central idea when he referred to Jesus' present Shepherd work, that will ...*make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight.* In Psalm 23 the Great Shepherd's continuing present work of caring for the sheep, perfecting the sheep, maturing the sheep, fitting the sheep for the Father's home is emphasized. Christ's continuing care for His own children is likened to the daily duties of a shepherd, caring for his little flock, giving individual attention to detail in every sheep, and providing for all possible eventualities. Jesus is truly the Great Shepherd because He executes His will for each sheep's

individual endmost maturity and security no matter what the threat, problem, or challenge. It is this consideration of Jesus' personal care presently for His sheep that makes Psalm 23 so very popular and so very comforting for us all.

The Chief Shepherd: Psalm 24

Jesus' holy apostle signified Him as the Chief Shepherd when he wrote,

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. [Added emph.] *1 Peter 5:4*

The word *chief* defines His future shepherd work as encompassing His rule over all things to benefit and to share with His sheep. Psalm 24 enumerates Christ's future work as Head over the whole earth. As the Chief Shepherd, He is King over all men; in fact, His flock will be the ruling government with Him for 1000 years. Peter's reference to a *crown of glory* is a promise to His sheep that they will indeed share in the glories of that rule, ...*they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years*²

Remember this Interrelated Trilogy

As we increase our understanding of and appreciation for our Great Shepherd revealed in Psalm 23, we must not overlook the messages in the other two psalms. In order to benefit from His present shepherd work of caring for and of

² Rev. 20:6

comforting us in this present life found in Psalm 23, one must have been personally benefited through a confrontation with His past work of dying for one's sins as detailed in Psalm 22. In addition, before His yet future shepherd work can provide us with a share in His crown of glory as detailed in Psalm 24, we must have been taken back to the details of the past cross of grief in Psalm 22. That cross of grief will then lead His redeemed sheep to Jesus' personal work as the Great Shepherd, Who always first disciples, then directs and disciplines His sheep throughout this present earthly life, and finally delivers them safely into the Father's eternal house. All three aspects of Jesus' shepherding work—that is, the Shepherd's cross of Psalms 22 and the Shepherd's crown of Psalms 24, as well as the Shepherd's crook of Psalms 23—must be taken into account in order to benefit substantially from any one of them.

MY SHEPHERD

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Hearken, dear friend, these two short phrases go together. The first phrase, *The Lord is my shepherd*, guarantees the second, *I shall not want*. Thou shalt not want for any good if He is thy Shepherd. Dost thou not believe that only as thou dost trust Him to supply thine everything that He shall be able to do it? Only as thou dost believe that He is thy Shepherd will He become such. He meets thy deficiencies in life just because He is thy Shepherd. Thou must accept Him as Shepherd for thyself and then thou shalt be able to say, *I shall not want*. All else in this psalm is meaningless except that thou shouldst go to His Cross in Psalm 22. Begin with Him there, as He is the Good Shepherd giving His life only for His sheep. *Thou shalt not want* only if thou dost believe His substitutionary death wast for thee.

And, Oh! What comfort to thee, dear Christian sheep of His fold, that thou dost know Him as thy Shepherd! Look about thee now—whether thou art ram, ewe, or kid of His flock—Look thoroughly and exhaustively! Search completely! Find a want if thou wouldst doubt thy Shepherd, for any thing that thou regardest as a lack is not such at all. He knows what is best for His sheep. Thy imagined lack or deficiency in this life is most often nothing more than personal desire in a fleshly veneer of pretentious distress. Thy Shepherd knows thy real

needs and thou dost verily have none at all, because He is thy great caring Shepherd. Thou dost not really *want* (need) any good thing, when thou dost depend solely and completely upon Him.

*For the LORD God is a sun and shield:
the LORD will give grace and glory: no good
thing will he withhold from them that walk
uprightly. Psalm 84:11*

In Psalm 23, thy Great Shepherd promises to provide thee with every possible *want*, which promise corresponds with the remaining chapters of our study.

**Thou shall not want for:
REPOSE WITH JESUS**

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. p. 10

**Thou shall not want for:
GOOD PROVISION IN EVERY SEASON**

He leadeth me beside the still waters. p. 12

**Thou shall not want for:
RESTORATION OF SOUL**

He restoreth my soul. p.15

**Thou shall not want for:
A CHOSEN PATH**

*He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His
name's sake.* p. 18

**Thou shall not want for:
PROTECTION IN DEATHSHADE**

*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. p. 20

Thou shall not want for:

**THE PROVISION OF A HIGH PLATEAU
MEADOW**

*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine
enemies.* p. 26

Thou shall not want for:

THE SHEPHERD'S FLASK OF OIL

Thou anointest my head with oil p. 30

Thou shall not want for:

AN ABUNDANT PORTION

My cup runneth over. p. 36

Thou shall not want for:

A REASSURING PURSUIT

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days
of my life.* p. 39

Thou shall not want for:

AN ETERNAL PLACE IN HIS FOLD

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. p. 41

Thou shall not want for:

REPOSE WITH JESUS

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.

So now thou belongest to this Good Shepherd. Then listen to His first word to thee, *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures*. Sheep need rest regularly. Oh to rest in Him! He is the provision of rest. In this troublous life there always *remainest a rest for the people of God*; and His invitation to all knows no limits, *Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*. Our hearts must cry out to Him, *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest thy flock, where thou makest it to rest at noon.*³

But alas! Sheep will not naturally of themselves always lie down in green pastures. They often may stubbornly choose rather to attend to their own *green pastures*. Or they may have some dreadful distractions that hinder their obedience to their shepherd. They must be free of fear and free of all friction with other of the flock. Also they must be free from the insects that torment domestic animals, as well as be free from hunger. But a dependable shepherd will always provide this freedom for his sheep.

This is true also of thy Jesus, dear Christian. His very presence will bypass thy fears: then lie down! Keep thine eye fastened upon thy Shepherd; forget the bothersome sheep next to thee. Look to Him and the friction will soon be forgotten: then lie down! Those nasty, little, petty, nuisances which disturb thee are

³ Heb. 4:9; Matt. 11:28; Song 1:7 ASV.

also chased away by thy Shepherd: then lie down! Yes, thy Shepherd provides for you green pastures, and as sheep could never lack satisfaction because of such greenery, so likewise thou shalt always be satisfied in thy life, when thou retest in Jesus. He is a consistent diet of good sweet nourishment of thy liking: then lie down! *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures*; then lie down!

Dear flock, it is His desire that ye all rest in Him. Is there a cause of turmoil amongst ye? Then lie down! Every day at noon a caring shepherd creates the perfect environment for a “noon repose.” He is careful to pick a safe spot where the sheep will know that he can protect them as they lie down. He then rests his sheep. So likewise the Great Shepherd Jesus will always provide each sheep with the needed repose at the proper time. The problem is not with the Shepherd, but with us sheep. Oftentimes we sheep refuse to seek His presence amidst fears; we do not ask Him *where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon?* We sheep keep looking at our own difficulties and at the irksome troubles around us instead of to Him. We sheep refuse to allow Him in His own way to rid us of the burden of the tribulations of this life. When we sheep neglect the adequate provision of proper diet that He prescribes, we then miss His rest. He is our *green pastures*; we must partake of Him as our daily nourishment. Oh! Let us allow Him to make us lie down in the noon repose, to enjoy His presence, His gaze, His disciplines, and His food. Allow Him to be thy Great Shepherd and He will rest thee well.

Thou shalt not want for:

GOOD PROVISION IN EVERY SEASON

He leadeth me beside the still waters.

To have *still waters* in Palestine is a remarkable event, possible only to the Great Shepherd. Since there are only two seasons of rain there, those seasons are indeed rainy; they must suffice for nearly the entire year's requirements for water. These are *waters*, the plural in Hebrew being used to denote intensive, plenteous, abundant waters. But these intensive, plenteous, and abundant waters are also *still*. Ordinarily, during the two rainy seasons when the water in Palestine is abundant, water is anything except *still*. During those rainy seasons, every brook and stream is flowing with waters that are not at all *still*. Only the Great Shepherd can lead His sheep beside abundant waters and yet they are *still*.

Oh! This is the miraculous work of thy Savior-Shepherd, Jesus. He takes the impossible problems of circumstances and creates *still waters*. For everyone around us, the waters are a gushing surge of assaulting adversity, but to the sheep behind the Great Shepherd they are *still waters*. Often the Scripture likens troubles in this life to waters, which come as a flood to threaten and create destruction for all in their path. It is the stilling, or quieting, of the waters that the presence of our Shepherd assures. Just as in the days of His pilgrimage on earth when *He rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Peace be still*, so does He for us

today. Only Jesus can control the intensive, perilous, *waters* of this earthly life. Therefore, keep close to thy Shepherd, dear Christian sheep. Those waters are a torrent to the sheep of other folds. For those following a mere man or some denominational hierarchy, the troubling waters of life are fearfully swift, but for the true sheep of this Shepherd's fold they are nothing more than *still* waters. Nothing can come thy way, sweet flock, but what will have over it thy Shepherd's hand outstretched to limit and temper its affect upon thy soul, accompanied with His voice, *Peace be still*

But another blessed promise may lie in these words if they are considered from a different perspective. Water is a physical necessity for the sheep. In this sense, *still waters* might also suggest abundance of water even in the dry seasons between the rainfall. What blessedness belongs to us sheep, because we must not rely upon the "whims of the wind" to blow in moisture from the Mediterranean Sea. Rather, we sheep of His fold depend upon the Great Shepherd for the true and spiritual drink from the deep cisterns of heavenly provisions. *If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.*⁴ Therefore, dip deeply into thy Shepherd for thy sustaining spiritual drink, and thirstest not again. Fear not for any drought, because the latter rains continue on forever in Him. It is His Spirit of which the *still waters* speak. Seek that personal provision promised you. He it is Who is to you

⁴ *Jn. 7:37*

bubbling springs of *still waters*, waters which quiet the soul and rest the tumult; and He will quiet not just the upheaval in you, but the turmoil in those all around you, because *from within you shall flow rivers of living water*. He—the Indwelling Christ, thy Great Shepherd, the Holy Spirit—so powerful as to rise from the dead as a gushing spring of life. Yet, so tenderly sensitive to our actions and feelings as to be given to actual envy over us, made to grieve over us, and His intensity even being threatened to extinction, or asphyxiation, at our slight of Him.⁵ Truly, as our Shepherd He provides, and is, *still waters*—peaceful power—a seeming contradictory paradox, a “heavenly oxymoron.”

⁵ *Jms. 4:5; Eph. 4:30; I Thes. 5:19.*

Thou shalt not want for:

RESTORATION OF SOUL

He restoreth my soul.

Sheep sometimes get turned over on their backs and cannot upright themselves. This is known as a “cast sheep.” Especially prone to this are ewe sheep heavy in lamb who may become “cast down” every second or third day.⁶ Unless uprighted, a cast sheep will die. A good shepherd watches for missing sheep who may be “cast down” over yonder hill or even in the midst of the flock. He uprights them, perhaps many times over. There they are, kicking frantically in the air, attempting to get right again, but lacking the skill and the strength to do it by themselves.

A restored soul is a regenerated soul. Not until He in sovereign mercy and love uprighted thy soul with His divine life couldst thou become “uncast.” Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour⁷. The law of sin and death held us sheep in its destructive mastery. But the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made[us]... free from the law of sin and of death.⁸ So that now because Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life

⁶ Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1977), p.60.

⁷ *Titus 3:5-6* ASV ⁸ *Romans 8:2* ASV

*because of righteousness*⁹. And that righteousness is the “restoration of soul,” which comes not from *a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.*¹⁰ True “restoration of soul” is both real or experiential righteousness as well as reckoned or imputed righteousness. Both thy standing in thy Great Shepherd, as well as thy station in thy Great Shepherd, is the result of a *restored soul*. A *restored soul* is to possess by His sovereign act of mercy, a regenerated spirit—a new birthing—, which results in an “uncast life.”

Therefore, Christ Jesus’ sheep should never become “cast down,” but they do. Why should the souls of His sheep need to be *restored* when He has given His own life to become their life? Or to put it another way, why, when provided such life as He has given to us to be in us, could that abundant life—His life—need restoration? Do not His sheep have a Great Shepherd Who watches over them? Oh yes they do! But we sometimes lack inclination to depend upon Him and His indwelling life alone. We are too often careless, and we relax in some fleshly, worldly, or devilish rut or depression of our own choosing where we ought not to lie down at all. We sheep are easily depressed, we are easily beset, and we are easily “cast down” so that we cannot right ourselves by ourselves. But the Great

⁹ *Romans 8:10* ASV ¹⁰ *Philip. 3:9*

Shepherd lifts us up. He uprights us many times over in this life. Rejoice that we have a Shepherd Whose presence will always assure our restoration of soul. The flesh, or the world, or the devil, may turn us upside down for a time, or even for times, but Jesus will restore our souls to their proper spiritual priority for our lives.

Why then be cast down, dear sheep of His regenerated flock? If thou findest thyself in some impossible dilemma where self-help is not sufficient, His help will not tarry long because He is indeed thy Great Shepherd. He will upright thee to thy correct position before God thy Savior; and He will *restore thy soul* to a renewed awareness and consciousness of God thy Shepherd. He can do no less for His sheep who have *become partakers of the divine nature*, and possessors of His *abiding seed*.¹¹

¹¹ *II Peter 1:4; I Jn. 3:9* ASV

Thou shalt not want for:

A CHOSEN PATH

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

One might paraphrase this verse, “He leadeth me in the well-marked ways of righteousness in order to maintain His own integrity, justice, and decrees.” After a “cast sheep” is restored and possessed with His righteousness, then our Great Shepherd will provide a well-marked path of *righteousness* for His sheep. God always maintains His honor by finishing what He begins; likewise with our Great Shepherd. It is because His name is at stake that a well-marked path of righteousness will be laid out for us restored sheep by our Shepherd, Jesus.

A good shepherd looks ahead and scouts out the very best path for each of his sheep. So Jesus has a chosen path for each of us. He marks the way for His sheep so that they always do reach the desired haven with Him. He loses none of His. And the path is always one of righteousness. He never leads His sheep in a path of sin or in a way questionable. He will always correct and guide each sheep to the proper path of His choosing. But it may be a winding path, turning to avoid pit-falls, requiring a steep climb to avoid a valley of snares, or narrowing quickly because of dangerous adjacent terrain. He may require you to bolt as with winged feet to keep up with Him, or He may slow to such a

leisurely pace that it is difficult not to move ahead of Him. Yet, in the entire path, it is one of righteousness. It is the upright, proper path because thy Shepherd leadeth thee in it.

His path may be rocky, or uphill, or treacherous. It may be difficult to see the rightness of this path that He calls a *path of righteousness*. But our eyes must look right on, and look straight before us because He is just ahead. We must not turn to the right hand nor to the left, and when directed by Him, we will always find that His path was righteous. He did *remove our feet from evil*.¹²

¹² *Proverbs 4:25-27*

Thou shalt not want for:

PROTECTION IN DEATHSHADE

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.

You will notice that David addresses the Shepherd directly beginning in this verse through to the end of the psalm. He is now passing on to the more personal associations with his Shepherd. While close behind his Shepherd, he is now going up the mountain to the higher summer pastures.

During the summer, as the snow melts and the greenery bursts forth in higher and higher elevations, a shepherd takes the sheep to those higher pastures. These pastures will be finer and better, with the freshness and newness of early foliage just breaking forth, a newness and freshness repeated with each move higher up the mountain. But valleys—deep and sometimes dark valleys—must be traversed in order to reach those higher and fresher pasturages. These gorges, gullies, ravines, valleys, are in the path to the higher, and in the end, better ground up the mountain. It will be most dreadful to the sheep, very much a “**Deathshade**”; but the prize will be well worth the experiences, especially since their shepherd knows the deep and dark valleys very well, and he leads them close at hand.

Oh, dear sheep of His flock, your trek to higher ground in your Christian experience means a closer walk with your Shepherd, and will, in the end, mean

sweeter provisions for thy soul. Look yonder! Look up the mountain! Compare those green meadows up there on the other side of this near dark valley with those old and somewhat barren and well-eaten pastures under thy feet. Christ would lead thee up to higher ground and to a closer relation with Him. But, mark well, *the valley of the shadow of death* must be crossed in order to get up there to that higher Christian ground.

That near valley is filled with that awful “deathshade” which enveloped the Shepherd in a time past on a hill called Calvary. Dark and foreboding it is, but He has experienced it and overcome it, and will lead thee through it with rod and staff. His presence will be enough to quiet all fears. So continue thy steps in faith, looking to Him. He controls the providence of all things in thy life. This life deals out some darkness which is dark indeed, but His Presence will lighten the foot-weight so it will be easy to step where thou seest not what is beneath the raised sole of thy foot. But look there at the rod in His hand! Thou canst see it by faith. He protects thee. And then see with thy mind’s eye His crooked staff to fetch thee if thou dost fall. That rod and staff will be placed underneath thyself to bear thee along in this gloomy “deathshade.” Remember the Apostle’s word of knowledge, *in deaths oft* as what is customary for His sheep; and gain a degree of comfort from its conformity with the experiences of thy Shepherd, when He was under *the power of darkness* at Calvary.

These travels through “deathshade” are the worst of evils, as His was to Him; and they are the most dismal depths of the human soul for the regenerate sheep of His fold. Recognize that this “deathshade” is only the *shadow* of the death of thy Shepherd on that hill; but it does *fill up on our part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in our flesh*. And through them we *enter into the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death*.¹³ Our “deathshade” never reaches the depth of darkness of His “deathshade.” Nevertheless, for all us sheep, there are times of immense sorrow of affliction and turmoil—scenes of great and unique distress—“of such trials as overpower the soul; throw it into amazement; break its purposes; fill it with alarm and horror like that which invades trembling nature at the approach of the ‘king of terrors.’”¹⁴ But note David’s fearlessness, *I will fear no evil: for thou art with me*. David knew this Shepherd and thou if thou trustest Him knowest Him also. And thou knowest that He hath passed this way before, and recollects every snare and pit of every “deathshade.”

The Comfort of His Rod and Staff

“Deathshade” is filled with ditches and quagmire, with hobgoblins, satyrs, and dragons of the pit,¹⁵ *but thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff,*

¹³ *Col. 1:24 ASV; Phil. 3:10 ASV*

¹⁴ William S. Plumer, *Psalms* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1978), p. 313.

¹⁵ From John Bunyon’s The Pilgrim’s Progress.

they comfort me. His *rod* is of gold and signifieth Deity. His *staff* is of brass, symbol of judgment, which reminds of His payment for thy sin. Therefore, be comforted by His Deity and His Death for thee, and know that He doth indeed love thee, for *having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the uttermost, and ratified his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*¹⁶ Therefore, “deathshade” lasteth not forever, because *weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning* when His light and beaming presence will shine into our hearts.¹⁷

Begin to examine the meadow into which thou hast now passed and for which thou wast prepared by that dreadful “deathshade” of thy just past evil experience. Here is thy Beloved, Who promised and Whom you professed and believed *art with me*, Who now is nearer to thee, because as thou passed through the “deathshade” thou hast drawn thyself close to Him, not to say that in reality He has drawn thee close to Himself. Thrill and delight in His presence! Oh! Thank Him for that *valley*, or at least give Him glory for His wisdom that allowed the darkness as preliminary and preparatory for the more generous provision of this new higher plateau meadow—this new and greater *grace in which you stand*.

The “deathshade” is of *the sufferings of this present time, and are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward*

¹⁶ Jn. 13:1; Rom. 5:8 ASV. ¹⁷ Ps. 30:5

in a future time. “Deathshade” is our light affliction when compared with the *far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* which it *worketh*.”¹⁸ Oh! Immeasurable ecstasy! The Shepherd is nearer to thee. Here lies the truest clover and profuse greenery in abundance. Feed thyself now upon Him as thy sweet manna. Now that “deathshade” with Him has been experienced, He is even more delightful to thy soul, Who to know better is *life eternal* in abundance.

Thank you Jesus for *the valley of the shadow of death*. I have tasted the depth of Thy love for me, having now partially known personally the kind of “deathshade” that thou voluntarily passed through for me.

But remember, dear sheep, there are numerous “deathshades” for us in this life because His “deathshade” was immensely more dreadful than ours; therefore ours must be numerous in order to bring us nearer to His “deathshade” experience which He suffered for us. Also, as our Great Shepherd concluded His sufferings and *dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him*,¹⁹ even so, ours will be concluded when we pass from here to yonder bodily presence with our Shepherd.

The Final Deathshade

And that literal “deathshade” of physical death has for His sheep the same promises as those

¹⁸ *Romans 8:18 ASV; II Cor. 4:17 ASV.*

¹⁹ *Romans 6:9*

“deathshades” of this present life’s dark experiences! Our Shepherd walked through that final valley into the grave itself, passing out into eternal bliss. We shall follow Him. There is not one of His sheep who passes through that final valley alone. He can make death a joy and a far better thing to have than continued life here, just as the wise and blessed apostle affirmed, *For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.*²⁰ That final pathway of physical “deathshade” has the same promise of no fear of any *evil for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.* As His sheep pass through that final passageway of physical death, the same *rod and staff* will be the assured comfort. Again, it is His Death and His Deity, symbolized in the rod and staff, which are the guarantee of comfort and fearlessness in death. As Deity, He alone knows that path, for He fabricated its spectacle; He made its phenomenon; He is God. As Savior, He (His Death) saves from the pain and the fear and the crisis and the obscurity of the experience of passing through whatever physical death really is. In the passing over to the other side, *I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they encourage, they comfort, they reassure, they content, and they insure me.*

²⁰ *Phil. 1:23*

Thou shalt not want for:

THE PROVISION OF A
HIGH PLATEAU MEADOW

*Thou preparest a table before me in the
presence of mine enemies²¹*

The Hebrew word translated *table* is from a Hebrew root meaning, “to send, to put forth, stretch out, extend.” The noun form of this root found here means, “a table, so called from its being extended, spread out.”²² It must be remembered that the psalm’s speaker here is a sheep (metaphorically speaking); therefore to a sheep a meadow is its *table*. Therefore, instead of a table in the usual sense (and in keeping with the shepherd-sheep

²¹ Some have supposed that the Shepherd metaphor ends in the previous verse, changing here to the Host and His guest through to the end of the psalm. This is unacceptable to us because it breaks altogether with the continuity established from the very inception of the psalm; and it violates the Shepherd trilogy established in Psalm 22 which will be continued in Psalm 24. We find immeasurable comfort in understanding that the shepherd-sheep metaphor continues to the end of the psalm.

²² William Gesenius, Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), p.827. Koehler rather originates the Hebrew word from to “strip off hide,” and thus refers it to “meat leather, hide spread upon the ground for dishes, table”..., hence connecting the word’s origin with the ground tables of the eastern culture. Ludwig Koehler, Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958), p. 977.

imagery), the idea may rather be a reference to a vast stretch of tableland—a plateau meadow—high in the mountains. For the sheep it is indeed *a table*, spread with the provision of food fit for sheep. This *table* is the green and fresh grassland to which the shepherd has just led his sheep. He has brought the flock to this higher *table* just beyond the cavernous *valley of the shadow of death*. For the sheep it is the high plateau meadow, provided by a close walk with their shepherd through the “deathshade”.

This interpretation is strengthened further in the Hebrew word translated *enemies*. The Hebrew root means, “to tie or bind up, to be straitened, distressed, to be in pains, pangs.” This is in stark contrast to the vast expanse or stretched out idea of their newly arrived at *table*; and this is precisely what helps strengthen the shepherd-sheep metaphor in the psalm. The concept of enemies present with this word refers to evil entities who apply pressure to the sheep, who attempt to narrow the movements of the flock, who seek to limit the freedom of the flock by bringing affliction and persecution, who present dangers to the individual members of the flock that tend to cause the flock to be rather limited in the use of the newly arrived at high plateau meadow provided by their shepherd. But these new dangers will actually cause individual members to gather closer together in a group near their protective shepherd.

After the sheep have passed through the dark valley and have entered into the high plateau with its vast expanse of green meadow, there are those natural predators who feed on the sheep—lions, cougars, wolves, bears, and coyotes. Next to this “tableland” high in the mountain country are forests. These timber ridges provide a natural hiding place for these oppressors of the flock. They will watch for an opportunity to attack and to kill sheep who are grazing on the meadow. This danger tends to drive the sheep together, but at the same time, to limit their range, to restrict their movements throughout their newly provided pasturage. These *enemies*, therefore, sometimes keep them from their necessary and shepherd-provided provisions.

Now here is thy promise, dear sheep of His flock. He has provided a broad *table* of suitable provision for thy growth in soul and spirit right in the presence of thine enemies. These enemies of thy soul are the world, the flesh, and the Devil; and they are not restricted to the timber ridges but are right here among us. He—our Great Shepherd—provides for us all that our souls need, right in the presence of our greatest and most to be feared enemies, but we must gather closely together in the assembly of his church, and learn more of His provision of promises for our souls. Thou hast many promises of His protective presence as thou movest freely across His vast storehouse of food for thy soul. The broad *table prepared in the*

presence of thine enemies is the Word of God. This *table* is food indeed, and to thy soul it is life indeed. So long as thou dost graze contentedly on the broad expanse of His Word, thou art protected from the world, thine own flesh, and the Devil. But if thou dost stop feeding on His Word and dost wander from the other sheep, and consequently from thy Shepherd, the enemy who lurks right now in thy presence can quickly harm thee.

And remember, the enemy is allowed to threaten you in order to try you, to test you. In that way God uses the enemy to cause you to stay close to the entire flock and to thy Shepherd. That broad *table* is the will and way of our God as revealed in His Word; and which, as a broad expanse, is as comprehensive and sweeping as His promise of abundant life. The broadness of His Word fits it to yield whatsoever thy soul needeth. Feed upon the *table before thee in the presence of thine enemies*, and thou shalt find victory and peace even amidst the fiercest antagonists of thy soul.

Thou shalt not want for:

THE SHEPHERD'S FLASK OF OIL

Thou anointest my head with oil.

A well-equipped shepherd carried on his person a small flask of olive oil, mixed with sulfur and/or spices, to anoint the heads of his sheep. This anointing was a constant thing: *anointest* is a present tense, meaning, "He is anointing my head with oil." This continuous concern and role of the shepherd was essential in order to care for his sheep. The *oil* here is symbolic of the Holy Spirit, as it often is in the Scriptures.²³ Consequently, it should not surprise us that this testimony of the psalmist agrees with the Apostle's word concerning our constant anointing by the Holy Spirit,

And ye have [present tense, "are having"] an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things.
John 2:20 ASV

Furthermore, this reference to the sheep's being continuously anointed with *oil* compares favorably with the promised intercession of Jesus for us in order that the Holy Spirit *may abide with us forever*,

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever,

Even the Spirit of truth: Whom the world cannot receive; because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

²³ E.g. Ps.45:6-7 with Heb. 1:8-9.

I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. [Added emph.] *John 14:16-18*

This assurance from Jesus contains two titles of the Holy Spirit, which correspond precisely with His work as the Great Shepherd Who *anointest my head with oil*. Jesus identifies this anointing of the Holy Spirit as the *Spirit of Truth* for the sheep and as the *Comforter* of the sheep. The comfort corresponds to the soothing effects of the oil as it was applied to the head of the sheep. The truth aspect corresponds to the oil as a guard against what troubles and threatens the head, or mind, of the sheep.

Our Shepherd's Flask of Truth

Jesus' Holy Spirit of truth is like a shepherd's anointing which guarded against all small insects which often trouble sheep. One of the worst is the nasal fly. It deposits its eggs in the nasal passage, which when hatched produces small worms that burrow into the flesh in the upper head and cause intense irritation and inflammation. What a safeguard against such difficulties was this anointing when applied by a shepherd at the proper time!

With the *Spirit of truth*, Jesus guards His sheep from the greatest dangers which threaten His sheep.²⁴ But oftentimes, pesky nuisances, which begin only as small bothers, bring the greatest

²⁴ All so-called "dangers" are not real dangers for any of Jesus' sheep because He is in fact a palpable Great Shepherd. His shepherding work is a reality; it is authentic. *Jn. 17:20-24; Rom. 8:28, 35-39; I Cor. 3:21-23.*

hazards to His sheep. As truth always corrects, so the *Spirit of truth* guards against worries which Satan brings against His sheep. Because His sheep are being anointed with the *Spirit of truth*, they always have truth to heal the troubles that Satan brings. Too often Christians allow petty turmoil to disrupt and to annoy so that they are ineffective as Christians; and if not corrected, this disquietness may lead to greater ills of the soul. But those happenings simply manifest a need for a fresh renewing at the hand of the Great Shepherd. The testimony of David was that *thou anointest my head with oil*. He does provide His truth in the Holy Spirit both to correct His sheep and to guard against any and all troublesome attacks of the Evil one. No matter what comes our way, and no matter how dark the happening may seem, our place is to avail ourselves of that anointing continuously—daily, hourly, minute by minute.

Our Shepherd's Flask of Comfort

Besides being a protection against possible injury, the *oil* also was a pleasurable daily experience for the sheep; it was a soothing salve, bringing comfort to uneasy individual sheep during the typical challenges of a routine day.

We also, as Jesus' followers, find even a routine day filled with challenges to our walk with Him. Yet the Spirit of comfort guides and encourages and instructs each sheep of the Great Shepherd just as the Shepherd Himself would guide, encourage, and instruct if He were

physically present. This is indeed the promise of Jesus to each of us sheep. When Jesus said, *I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you*, He was promising His Presence in the Holy Spirit. For each sheep, He actually becomes the Indwelling Christ since He is present with each sheep always.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.

I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. [Added emph.] *John 14:16, 18*

There is never a time in the life of any of Christ's sheep when Jesus is not present in the Holy Spirit. This is how He constantly and continually performs His work as our Great Shepherd, including how He *anointest my head with oil*. Therefore, the virtue of Jesus is constantly present with every believer of Jesus; and that virtue or goodness is the inner strength for each sheep to bear outwardly the fruit of Jesus' own traits. Paul described this ability and comfort of truth left here in us,

And the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Galatians 5:22-23a

These various virtues of Jesus are themselves the Comfort of His Presence. When sought and yielded to, His abiding Presence does bring about these diverse comforts in His sheep. What are forever His ability, His power, His might, His faculties, become our ability, our power, our might,

our faculty to carry out His purpose. The first in the list of comforting virtues is love. Obviously, there is comfort in love; the love to and in us sheep fills us with His Presence because He is love, and to be filled with His Presence is to know the greatest comfort of love beyond which there is no greater comfort of love.

But think of the comfort of joy. Christ is God and has the greatest joy, and to seek Him is to find Him since He is in-dwelling us; therefore to find Him is to know His joy. What comfort to experience the joy beyond which there is no greater.

And there is the comfort of peace, *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.*²⁵ The cessation of all conflict, the end of all anxiety, and the beginning of all quietness and serenity, that is the peace which He left to comfort us sheep with a peace beyond which there is no greater peace, because He said that it is *My peace*. And in like manner with longsuffering, and gentleness, and goodness, and faith, and meekness, and temperance; each one is the greatest comfort beyond which there is no greater comfort, because these are the virtues of God. That is the comfort of the *anointing* of our Great Shepherd. His power, within us in order to comfort us sheep without fail, is the Presence of the Indwelling Christ. That is the *anointing* provided by the Great Shepherd.

²⁵ *Jn. 14:27*, added emph.

Therefore, seek to walk in the Spirit. Ask Him to fill thee and so remove from thy head the burrowing sins of worry, envy, strife, and such like. And then ask Him to fill thee with the love and joy and peace, and all His virtue, so that thou shalt be comforted from within, and empowered from within to walk a steady journey in truth with Him as thy Great Shepherd. Allow thy Shepherd to anoint thy head with the oil and balm of His fruity Spirit. That ointment is the source of God's mercy and loving kindness toward His people; and thou, if thou art filled with unhappiness, dost need a fresh unction of mercy and love from thy Shepherd. If thou dost continue without that *oil*, thou shalt soon be suffering from the wiles of the Devil, having been burrowed in thy head by Satan's worms, caused from a lack of His precious *anointing*. He promised you,

I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

Seek your Great Shepherd, and He will become your anointing to soothe away the troubles of your head and heart; and then you shall say with the psalmist, *Thou anointest my head with oil.*

Thou shalt not want for:

AN ABUNDANT PORTION

My cup runneth over.

The Hebrew word translated *cup* (cos) is sometimes used with the meaning, “portion, allotment, allowance.” Actually, of the six times it is used in the Psalms, two of them have the metaphorical meaning of “lot,”²⁶ which means “one’s portion,” “the equitable apportionment.”²⁷ The Hebrew root translated “runneth over” means “to drink largely, to be satisfied with drink.”²⁸ The noun that appears in this psalm means “abundance.” This is its most probable meaning in this psalm also. The psalmist may, therefore, be saying, “My lot, or portion, of my shepherd’s oil leaves me well soaked.” This interpretation maintains the Shepherd-sheep metaphor of the entire psalm, and carries the just mentioned *thou anointest my head with oil* a step further. Regardless of which translation one accepts, the meaning comes to the same thing: that for sheep under a good shepherd, there was never a lack of anointing in this life; every sheep was always well soaked with the anointing oil from its shepherd.

²⁶ *Ps. 11:6; 16:5; Gesenius, op. cit., p. 388.*

²⁷ Webster’s New World Dictionary (Cleveland: World, 1964), pp.867, 529.

²⁸ *Gesenius, op. cit., p.759.*

Anointed to Capacity

When compared with Jesus' promises in John to give the Holy Spirit to His disciples, this would mean that, as sheep under the direction of the Great Shepherd, the Holy Spirit is given to us in His full measure. That is, every sheep has the same Spirit to the same degree, not that one sheep has more of the Holy Spirit, and another has a lesser amount or measure of His presence. David, the psalmist, means that Christ soaks us to our own capacity; His anointing is always as much as it can be according to our condition and capability to assimilate His Presence and His gifts into our living.

Notice that it is My cup [or portion] *runneth over*, but we all know by painful and humiliating experience that our own personal *cup* or portion of our Shepherd's Presence does not always *run over*. We all have periods when His anointing seems not there at all, but He is there in just as great a measure and presence as ever. But the problem is ours. Sometimes we simply do not allow Him to "soak" us during those times when we are most needful of His anointing. This is caused by a lack of capacity for the anointing.

Undeniably, studying and learning the Word of God builds, or grows, a thick coat of absorbent and precious "wool" encompassing the *head* (mind) so that His anointing remains longer in order to continue to effect a more constant walk with Him. Because of this apportioned growth through the

Word of God, some of Christ's sheep have more absorbent *heads* (minds) than others. When sin clips the fleece around the *head* (mind) right down to the quick, the Christian sheep has no faculty to receive and maintain the oil. To some Christians, the Spirit's witness at a church service is all the Spirit they ever seem to know. There is no depth to their wool (i.e. little truth in their souls). The anointing accompanying the Word runs off them quickly, and they find themselves at home after church services just as full of the envy, hate, jealousy, and turmoil as when they left home.

David, The Inspired Sweet Psalmist of Israel bids thee to increase thy fleece; and as he experienced, you should be able to say with him, "My portion of the Shepherd's anointing oil saturates me thoroughly; it even *runneth over*." Open thyself up to Christ's Spirit, Oh Christian flock. Fill thy mind, will, and emotions with the Word of God. Then the Holy Oil will envelop you until thy *cup runneth over* with His spiritual presence and gifts.

Thou shalt not want for:

A REASSURING PURSUIT

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life*

This refers to the effect a properly led and healthy flock will leave upon the land behind its movements from pasture to pasture. The sheep, quite contrary to popular belief, will greatly benefit the land they graze if shepherded properly. They eat weeds, which if left in the field hinder the growth of the grass. Their manure is the best balanced of all domestic stock. A wise shepherd can always maintain excellent pastures behind him.

This “reassuring pursuit” is the direct result of the “abundant portion” of the anointing oil of our Great Shepherd. When one of Christ’s sheep *runneth over* with the Spirit of Jesus, then this *goodness and mercy shall follow*. Every Christian is assured of an abundant anointing of the Holy Spirit, and thus can always know that the Shepherd’s leadership will similarly leave only goodness and mercy in his former pathways and abodes, as did follow the Lord Jesus’ life. Everywhere a Shepherd-led, Word-fed, and Spirit-filled Christian goes there is *goodness and mercy* following him. *Goodness* is the stamp of the Shepherd’s virtue left on other people’s lives by the influence of the sheep. *Mercy* is the salvation of others who through the sheep’s witness are brought under the same Shepherd’s merciful work. This

goodness and mercy—the influence that a Christ-led sheep left on others during this life—are the good works which follow each sheep right into heaven,

Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.

Revelation 14:12-13

Thou shalt not want for:

A PLACE IN HIS ETERNAL FOLD

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

This is the ultimate aim of the Great Shepherd. The reason for His constant watch over and care of His sheep is to make each sheep fitted for and worthy of *the house of the Lord forever*. This eternal aim of Jesus is the reason for the constant anointing of His Spirit. The comfort and correction of the Holy Spirit will have metamorphosed each sheep into the image of the Shepherd. The experiences of a lifetime with Jesus as one's Great Shepherd will have produced sheep who are exemplary of *the house of the Lord*, because this *house* is worthy of the skill and devotion of its shepherding *Lord*.

House refers not to a building, but to a household, even the eternal Body of the entire flock of Christ. This abiding and eternal Body of Christ is a refuge because it is the predestined allotment for every sheep of the Great Shepherd.²⁹ Entrance into this *house* is assured for those whose *cups* or portions of Christ have reached the *runneth over* or abundant measure. They will be in full measure made over into His likeness, having been *conformed into the image of his Son*. The constant renewing of life, the always present Shepherd, the profit of every

²⁹ Eph. 1:3-6; Rom. 8:28-30

deathshade, and the growth in grace through many earth-time experiences with His rod and staff, will produce members of this household who together make a house that is *the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*³⁰

In whom [Jesus, the Great Shepherd] all the building [this "house of the Lord"] fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.

In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit
Ephesians 2:21-22

This eternal house is entered, as promised and predestined in eternity past, because of the experience of knowing Jesus as the Great Shepherd, as revealed in this most beautiful of all Psalms. The promise of this Psalm must be viewed as one promise that cannot be divided. That is, not one portion of this psalm of promise concerning the Great Shepherd can be removed or be bypassed. Jesus is everything described and thus promised in this psalm, or else He will be nothing like the Shepherd described and promised in this psalm; He is all or nothing at all. Consequently, the profound beauty of Psalms 23 is the invariable and affiliated phenomenon of all the experiences of the psalmist with Jesus as his own personal Shepherd, which is as follows for every one of His sheep:

³⁰ *Eph. 1:23*

Jesus as the Great Shepherd ASSURES what is:

Over me... The Lord is my Shepherd;

For me... I shall not want.

Beneath me... He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

Beside me... He leadeth me beside the still waters.

Within me... He restoreth my soul.

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

With me... 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.

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

Upon me... Thou anointest my head with oil;

Filling me... My cup runneth over.

Ensuing me... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;

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

Therefore, reaching God's eternal heaven is never in doubt for His sheep. As the Great Shepherd He assures that everything touching His sheep will benefit His sheep. As the Good Shepherd He gave up His life in ultimate sacrifice for His sheep. As the

Chief Shepherd He will at the end be in absolute control of all above the earth, on the earth, and under the earth,³¹ for the benefit of His sheep. What then is left to threaten the safety of the sheep of this Shepherd? Consequently, arrival in the shepherd's house is assured. For weak and easily led astray sheep as we, the primary benefit of knowing such a Shepherd as Jesus is that *I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*

Each individual sheep, who has learned its Shepherd's voice and loving care through a *restored soul*, finds great comfort from just having and knowing such a Shepherd as Jesus. Therefore, His sheep never desire to bolt from the flock in order to escape their Shepherd's authority.³² Likewise the Great Shepherd, whose wise and loving devotion has meant the safety of us sheep, and whose fearless courage and sacrificial service has to this point secured us sheep, could not part with one of us for whom such labors have been made,

How think ye? If any man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and go unto the mountains, and seek that which goeth astray?

And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth over it more than over the ninety and nine which have not gone astray.

Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

Matthew 18:12-14 ASV

³¹ Philip. 2:9-11 ³² I John 2:19

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Romans 8:32

Thou mayest certainly be sure where thy final dwelling place will be. If thou knowest this Shepherd as thy Savior thou shalt have His presence through the ultimate and final deathshade—the passing from this life—that cometh upon all of us sons of Adam. However, without Him as thy Great Shepherd, final deathshade shall be entered alone. Unless thou confessest thy sin unto Him thou shalt never experience the restored, upright inner soul. Unless thou acknowledgeth Him with thy entire life, thou shalt never feel His anointing of peace and mercy. And unless thou suffer Him to make thee to lie down in green pastures in this life thou shalt never be led to his eternal fold in the next.

So right now, rest in Jesus. Right now, follow His leadership to the cross, confess thy sin and believe His substitutionary death as sufficient payment for thy faults. Go to this Great Shepherd in prayer and simply acknowledge to Him that thou needest Him and His salvation for thyself. Then thou canst say with the psalmist, *The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

Conscience requires all persons to consider the following...

QUESTIONS FROM THE SHEPHERD

As **The Good Shepherd**, Jesus asks,

Have you really benefited personally from My death on the cross so that your guilt and any future penalty for your sins are removed by My status as your Good Shepherd?

As **The Great Shepherd**, Jesus asks,

Do you really desire Me to be your Great Shepherd, to be the absolute guide and escort and editor and censor of your present life?

As **The Chief Shepherd**, Jesus asks,

Do you have a peaceful assurance about My specific scrutiny of you, and My holy judgments of you, and My precise personal appraisals of you at My second coming as the Chief Shepherd?

Acknowledge the prior travail of the Good Shepherd on the cross with the soon arrival of His dominion as the Chief Shepherd on this earth, as you consider the current comfort of the Great Shepherd in Psalm 23. His lordship given up on the cross will be restored in the crown, so that only those who today secure His salvation as their Good Shepherd and acknowledge His lordship as their Great Shepherd will benefit from His rule as their

Chief Shepherd tomorrow. Only then will you know the full meaning of these words of The Shepherd,

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one. I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. Come to Me, confess your sin, and commit yourself to My complete work as your Shepherd, because I am the door, only by Me can any man enter into the eternal fold; then he shall be saved.³³

Amen!

³³ Respectively, Jn. 10:27-30; 10:11; the spirit of the Shepherd; Jn. 10:9.