

“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.” {Psalm 23}

The LORD is my shepherd – *Possession*

“The” Lord, not just some lord but **THE** Lord of Lords!

He is **THE** self-Existent or Eternal Lord. He is Jehovah!

As a Christian, He is **MY** shepherd; this makes it very personal!

What a shepherd does for his sheep:

1. Leads them out and in, so that they find pasture and safety.
2. Knows where to feed them, and by his grace and providence leads them in the way in which they should go.
3. Watches over them and keeps them from being destroyed by ravenous beasts.
4. If any have strayed, he brings them back.
5. Brings them to the shade in times of scorching heat; in times of persecution and affliction, he finds an asylum for them.
6. Takes care that they shall lack no manner of thing that is good.

But who are his flock?

All real penitents, all *true* believers; all who obediently follow his example, abstaining from every appearance of evil, and in a holy life and conversation showing forth the virtues of Him who called them from darkness into His marvelous light. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:” {John 10:27}

I shall not want – *Provision*

“I shall not want” for food: the green pastures

My great shepherd provides everything I need!

Sheep have no needs because their needs are provided by the shepherd. Our great Shepherd has all power in heaven and earth; therefore, He can protect us. The silver and gold are His, and the cattle on a thousand hills; and therefore, He can sustain us. He has all that we need, and His heart is full of love to mankind; and therefore, He will withhold from us no manner of thing that is good. **God has a way of taking care of His own!**

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures – *Position*

Not green pastures, but cottages of turf or sods, such as the shepherds had in open campaign countries; places in which themselves could repose safely; and pens thus constructed where the flock might be safe all the night. They were enclosures, and enclosures where they had grass or provender to eat. [*copied*]

Just as a shepherd took good care of his sheep and they were not wanting, so too, God takes good care of His people.

He leadeth me beside the still waters – *Progress*

Deep waters, that the strongest heat could not exhale; not by a rippling current, which argues a shallow stream.

I shall not want for drink: the still waters. Sitting beside still waters in the heat of the day there is a tranquility that can only be provided by our great Shephard.

He restoreth my soul – *Personal*

Brings back my life from destruction; and converts my soul from sin, that it may not eternally perish. Or, after it has backslidden from Him, heals its backslidings, and restores it to His favour.

Spiritual strength for daily living we shall not lack.

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness – *Progression*

I shall not want for guidance because He leads me.

In many places of Scripture man appears to be represented under the notion of a secondary planet moving round its primary; or as a planet revolving round the sun, from whom it receives its power of revolving, with all its light and heat. Thus, man stands in reference to the Sun of righteousness; by His power alone is he enabled to walk uprightly; by His light he is enlightened; and by His heat he is endowed with life, and enabled to bring forth good fruit. When he keeps in his proper orbit, having the light of the glory of God reflected from the face of Jesus Christ, he is enabled to enlighten and strengthen others. He that is enlightened may enlighten; he that is fed may feed. [*copied*]

For his name's sake – *Purpose*

To display the glory of His grace, and not on account of any merit in me. God's motives of conduct towards the children of men are derived from the perfections and goodness of His own nature. It is all for His glory!!

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death – Parting

The reference is still to the shepherd. Though I, as one of the flock, should walk through the most dismal valley, in the dead of the night, exposed to pitfalls, precipices, devouring beasts, etc., I should fear no evil under the guidance and protection of such a Shepherd. He knows all the passes, dangerous defiles, hidden pits, and abrupt precipices in the way; and He will guide me around, about, and through them. [*copied*]

I will fear no evil – Peace

Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” {John 14:27}

We have an amazing Shepherd and, because of His great love for us, He gives a peace that this world cannot comprehend.

For thou art with me – Protection & Presence

He who has God for a companion need fear no danger; for he can neither mistake his way, nor be injured.

Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me – Pilgrimage

I shall not want for comfort: comforteth me.

With the “rod” “staff,” symbols of the shepherd’s office, he used them to defend and guide his sheep however needed. These also reflect God’s pastoral care over His sheep.

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

A magnificent banquet is provided by a most liberal and benevolent host; who has not only the bounty to feed me, but power to protect me; and, though surrounded by enemies, I sit down to this table with confidence, knowing that I shall feast in perfect security. This may refer to the favour God gave the poor captive Israelites in the sight of the Chaldeans who had grievously treated them for seventy years; and whose king, Cyrus, had not only permitted them now to return to their own land, but had also furnished them with everything requisite for their passage, and for repairing the walls of Jerusalem, and rebuilding the temple of the Lord, where the sacrifices were offered as usual, and the people of God feasted on them. -Adam Clark (1760 or 1762 - 1832)

Thou anointest my head – Preparation

Anointing guests at a feast was common custom and, the greater the anointing, the greater the distinguishing and favor.

My cup runneth over – Plenty

The cup running over is an indication that the master of the feast has given much more than the guest needed and, that which was given, was the best.

I will not want for satisfaction because my cup is full and running over.

God has given me what I need for my sufficiency and what He gives is the best.

“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” {Philippians 4:19}

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

“Surely” and without a doubt, during this time of my earthly pilgrimage, the goodness and mercy of our loving God is with me every step of the way. In the Old Testament, the rock smitten by Moses in the wilderness {Exodus 17:6} followed them until they reached the Promised Land. {1 Corinthians 10:4} For us as Christians, our God has quenched the spiritual thirst we once had, He continues to quench this thirst daily and, He will continue to do so until we cross our Jordan River and enter into Heaven and His eternal rest.

And I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever – Place & Prospect

As we travel the pilgrim pathway, we will encounter struggles, sorrows, joys, and blessings but, these are all temporary for they will all pass with time. Once we were enemies of God but, when we repented of sin and trusted Jesus Christ as personal Saviour, we were cleansed by His shed blood, adopted into the family of God, and became joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Ephesians Chapters 1 & 2. Jesus promised us a home in His Heaven {John 14:1-3} and our desire is, “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” {2 Corinthians 5:8}

~Richard A. Ciarrocca