

## “JEHOVAH IS MY SHEPHERD”

The most famous of all the psalms, and favorite Scripture for even many who are otherwise unfamiliar with holy writ, provides immense comfort and is worthy of detailed attention.

### I. “JEHOVAH IS MY SHEPHERD”

#### A. **Psalm 23:1<sub>a</sub>** *“Jehovah is my Shepherd.”*

David declares that “the Lord”, or, more accurately, “Jehovah”, is his Shepherd.

#### B. **Deuteronomy 32:9-12** *“Jehovah’s portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land and in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings, so Jehovah alone led him, and there was no foreign god with him.”*

None of the dozens of false gods named in the Old Testament were claimed by David, but “Jehovah alone”.

#### C. **Psalm 100:3** *“Know that Jehovah, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.”*

By declaring the true God of heaven to be our Shepherd, we identify ourselves as His sheep. This requires humility and submission.

### II. “I SHALL NOT WANT”

#### A. **Psalm 23:1<sub>b</sub>** *“I shall not want.”*

Lack of want indicates faith in the Shepherd’s providence.

#### B. **Psalm 37:25** *“I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.”*

The Lord is a provider like none other.

- C. **Luke 12:22-34** *“Do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

Anxiety (29) ought to be replaced with assurance, fear (32) with fulfillment, worry (22) with wellness. We are, after all, His flock (32).

### III. “HE MAKES ME TO LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES”

- A. **Psalms 23:2<sub>a</sub>** *“He makes me to lie down in green pastures.”*  
Sheep remain standing unless the shepherd has given them safety. They cannot lie in green pasture unless the Shepherd has put forth some work in either preparing the land or finding it.
- B. **1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 17:34-36** *“David said to Saul, ‘Your servant used to keep his father’s sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it*

*arose against me, I caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it. Your servant has killed both lion and bear.”*

Sheep have no natural defenses against predators but to flee, thus they will stand until a good shepherd makes them feel safe. David was a good shepherd. He fought bears and lions to protect his father’s flocks. He knew what he was writing about in our Psalm.

- C. Ezekiel 34:15-22** *“I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,” says the Lord Jehovah. ‘I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment. And as for you, O My flock,’ thus says the Lord Jehovah: ‘Behold, I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats. Is it too little for you to have eaten up the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pasture — and to have drunk of the clear waters, that you must foul the residue with your feet? And as for My flock, they eat what you have trampled with your feet, and they drink what you have fouled with your feet.’ Therefore thus says the Lord Jehovah to them: ‘Behold, I Myself will judge between the fat and the lean sheep. Because you have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns, and scattered them abroad, therefore I will save My flock, and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.”*

God knows that dominant sheep push, and butt, and scatter the weaker ones. Thus, the weak cannot lie down until they are safe. Yet, the presence of a good Shepherd will bring calm to an agitated herd.

- D. John 10:1-18** *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes*

*before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.’ Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them. Then Jesus said to them again, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.’”*

Jesus claims to be our Shepherd, not a stranger from whom the flock scatters, nor a thief who comes to steal, neither a hireling who will himself flee at the first sign of danger, but the good Shepherd who sacrifices Himself for the wellbeing of His flock.

#### **IV. “HE LEADS ME BESIDE THE STILL WATERS”**

**A. Psalm 23:2,** *“He leads me beside the still waters.”*

God takes us, His sheep, to water.

- B.** **Jeremiah 2:13** *“My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns — broken cisterns that can hold no water.”*

We may think we know how to get our own water, but will be disappointed. When we seek fulfillment through immorality, such as drinking, drugs, and fornication we will remain unsatisfied. When we pursue fulfillment in life by means more innocuous, but still less than divine, such as travel, art, and literature, we will still lack what we need.

- C.** **Psalms 63:1** *“O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.”*

We must thirst for the water only God can provide.

- D.** **Genesis 29:1-10** *“Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the East. And he looked, and saw a well in the field; and behold, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks. A large stone was on the well’s mouth. Now all the flocks would be gathered there; and they would roll the stone from the well’s mouth, water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the well’s mouth. And Jacob said to them, ‘My brethren, where are you from?’ And they said, ‘We are from Haran.’ Then he said to them, ‘Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?’ And they said, ‘We know him.’ So he said to them, ‘Is he well?’ And they said, ‘He is well. And look, his daughter Rachel is coming with the sheep.’ Then he said, ‘Look, it is still high day; it is not time for the cattle to be gathered together. Water the sheep, and go and feed them.’ But they said, ‘We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together, and they have rolled the stone from the well’s mouth; then we water the sheep.’ Now while he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep, for she was a shepherdess. And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother’s brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother’s brother, that Jacob went near and rolled the*

*stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother."*

**Exodus 2:15-17** *"Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well. Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. And they came and drew water, and they filled the troughs to water their father's flock. Then the shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock."*

Watering the flocks from the still waters of a well is hard work, as both Jacob and Moses could attest, and their future wives would thank them.

## V. "HE RESTORES MY SOUL"

A. **Psalm 23:3<sub>a</sub>** *"He restores my soul."*

Restoration is a major activity of sheep herding.

B. **Luke 15:1-7** *"Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, 'This Man receives sinners and eats with them.' So He spoke this parable to them, saying: 'What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!" I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance."*

Shepherds spend serious time in search of wayward sheep to bring them home.

C. **Psalm 42:11** *"Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God."*

In shepherding jargon, a “cast” sheep is one on its back, unable to right itself, a condition especially likely among heavily pregnant ewes or those with heavy fleece. A cast sheep can die within hours due to organ compression or gas buildup. We find ourselves “cast down” sometimes and need the Shepherd to put us back on our feet.

- D. **Proverbs 27:23** *“Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, and attend to your herds.”*

Only a lazy shepherd does not know the condition of his flocks.

**VI. “HE LEADS ME IN THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR HIS NAME’S SAKE”**

- A. **Psalms 23:3<sub>b</sub>** *“He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake.”*

We need to be led.

- B. **Isaiah 53:6** *“All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way.”*

Sheep often choose the wrong path, and so do sinful men.

- C. **John 14:6** *“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”*

Jesus provides Himself as the Way.

- D. **Mark 8:34** *“Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”*

It is a path of self-denial.

**VII. “YEA, THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH, I WILL FEAR NO EVIL; FOR YOU ARE WITH ME”**

David was talking about his Shepherd, but now he is talking to the Shepherd. It seems others are gone now and the sheep are alone with their Master.

- A. **Psalms 23:4<sub>a</sub>** *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me.”*

*“The paths of righteousness”* take us through death’s dark vale, but we *“walk through”* that valley; we don’t linger there.

- B. **James 1:12** *“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”*

Suffering is inevitable; how we respond to it reflects the genuineness of our faith.

- C. **Matthew 28:20** *“Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.”*

We need not fear when we realize who is with us.

#### VIII. “YOUR ROD AND YOUR STAFF, THEY COMFORT ME”

- A. **Psalms 23:4**, *“Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”*

Green pastures and still waters are not credited with bringing comfort, but the rod and staff are! The tools of defense and discipline – indicating the presence of structure and boundaries, they bring comfort.

- B. **Ezekiel 20:37-38** *“I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the country where they dwell, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am Jehovah.”*

The rod indicates authority over the herd, being used to correct the erring, inspect each sheep, and to count them.

- C. **Psalms 89:32** *“I will punish their transgression with the rod.”*

The rod is an implement for discipline.

#### IX. “YOU PREPARE A TABLE BEFORE ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MY ENEMIES”

- A. **Psalms 23:5a** *“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.”*

It seems strange to let animals feed at the table.

- B. *Matthew 15:27*** *“Even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”*

The Master must think we are rather special to work so hard to feed us.

- C. *Ezekiel 34:15*** *“I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,” says the Lord Jehovah.”*

Shepherds expend considerable energy inspecting the grazing lands they intend to lead their sheep into, even working at pulling the noxious weeds that could poison them. God feeds his flock.

- D. *Luke 13:28-29*** *“There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.”*

Enemies will see the blessed reclining at the Master’s table in His kingdom.

**X. “YOU ANOINT MY HEAD WITH OIL; MY CUP RUNS OVER”**

- A. *Psalms 23:5***, *“You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.”*

Protecting against flies and fleas and scabs, shepherds of old would anoint the heads of their sheep with olive oil. Modern shepherds just dip them in insecticide and fungicide.

- B. *Luke 10:34*** *“He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.”*

Oil has been used since antiquity for medicinal purposes.

- C. *2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 1:21-22*** *“He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”*

***1<sup>st</sup> John 2:20-21*** *“You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.”*

God so anoints Christians that we have the Holy Spirit and knowledge.

**XI. "SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY WILL FOLLOW ME ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE"**

- A. Psalm 23:6<sub>a</sub>** *"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."*

This verse does not speak to goodness and mercy bestowed on the sheep of God, but that goodness and mercy "follow" the sheep who walk the paths of righteousness! While sheep are unintelligent, helpless creatures, they are not useless. They fertilize the soil where they graze unlike any other livestock, enhancing the soil, being followed by something worthwhile.

- B. Matthew 5:16** *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*

Christians have the power, by the good works we do, to shine the light of the gospel, resulting in others glorifying God.

**XII. "AND I WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF JEHOVAH FOREVER"**

- A. Psalm 23:6<sub>b</sub>** *"And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever."*

Here is peace: to know we have a permanent home.

- B. John 2:14** *"He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves."*

Sheep get sold. Sheep do not always dwell with one master.

- C. 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 12:3** *"The poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him."*

Yet, some sheep do dwell in their masters' houses!

- D. John 14:2-3** *"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 and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."*

Our home awaits.