



## 11 THE FAITHFUL PROVISION OF THE LORD

*23 The LORD is my shepherd;  
I shall not want.*

*<sup>2</sup> He makes me to lie down in green pastures;  
He leads me beside the still waters.*

*<sup>3</sup> He restores my soul;  
He leads me in the paths of righteousness  
For His name's sake.*

*<sup>4</sup> Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil;  
For You are with me;  
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*

*<sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
You anoint my head with oil;  
My cup runs over.*

*<sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
All the days of my life;  
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD  
Forever. (NKJV).*

This psalm is probably the most recognized passage in the Bible. It is heard by all believers with deep delight and a clear understanding of how the Lord is a personal loving God who takes care of our every need. Even unbelievers have heard it. I have used this psalm often in my personal ministry. I've recited it to people on their death beds, and to people going through great hardship and great difficulty. I hope to take you through this psalm in an unhurried way. I want you to be able to read this psalm and have it penetrate deep into your soul. Over the next few weeks, we will look at it perhaps deeper than you ever have.

Scholars have debated the proper classification of this psalm. Some have said it is royal psalm describing a coronation feast. There are all sorts of classifications that scholars give it, but to me it is a psalm of GREAT COMFORT. Regardless of its proper theological classification, It is a psalm describing God's care and concern for each one of us. To me it is a wonderful declaration of the nature of God and His care for me, and each one of you, personally.

Summary

The psalm seems to begin in a pasture and ends in a banqueting hall. David is meditating on the important ways that the LORD provides for our spiritual and physical well-being. It concludes with a statement of what could be David's characterization of the "abundant life" promised by Jesus (John 10:10); *"surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever"* (Psalm 23:6b).

The Beginning - The LORD is my shepherd.

First, David makes his certain statement so very personal. He says the LORD is **MY** Shepherd. This is so insightful to me because I think one of the most wonderful things about our walk with God is that we each can know Him personally. He is not a far-off God. He is only a whisper away. In fact, He's not even a whisper away. As believers, we have the Holy Spirit of God within us. This is not a privilege that David shared. We evangelicals often talk about this "personal relationship" a lot. We use it when talking about how a person has come to faith. What we're really asking when we ask if someone has a "personal relationship with God" is whether they've actually come to the place of accepting Jesus and His work on the cross personally as our own into our heart and life. Most of us in this room or reading this sermon have come to know of God's salvation, but our relationship can become very lacking. We know we've been saved, but we have not heard, understood, or experienced the loving provision and personal relationship that He can provide in each of our lives.

This is David proclaiming **THE LORD is My shepherd**. He is making that connection. He is saying that he has a personal relationship with God and he wants to state and rejoice in the ways in which God makes wonderful provision for him. David is making a statement almost like the lover in Song of Solomon 6:3, *"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. He feeds his flock among the lilies."*

This psalm does not use the usual word "Adonai" for Lord, rather the text says, "YHWH" is my Shepherd, I shall not want." I want to talk first about what the word means in Hebrew. This will lead each of us to an understanding of what it means to have YHWH as our own personal God who is our Creator and Sustainer. When Moses asked the LORD, "Whom shall I say [to the people] sent me?" God proclaimed his name in saying, "tell the people that **יהוה** sent you." We translate this word saying "*Yahweh*" (some even say it as Jehovah). The four letter rendition consists of the elements of the verb "to be" used in an acrostic way to state the transcendent nature of God. Transcendent means above and beyond the range of the human experience. The Hebrew in the text reads like this. "Ehyeh aser ehyeh". The attached image shows this in Hebrew.



אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה

*'Ehyeh* is the first person form of *hayah*, "to be", and owing to the peculiarities of Hebrew grammar means "I am," "I was," and "I will be." The meaning of the longer phrase *'ehyeh 'ăšer 'ehyeh* is debated, and might be seen as a promise ("I will be with you") or as statement of incomparability ("I am without equal").<sup>1</sup>

Without going into a long grammar exercise, let it suffice to say that that particles and pieces of the verb "to be" are arranged to convey the message, "I am He who was there for you at your point of need in the past, and I am He who is here now meeting you at your point of need, and I am He who will be there in the future to meet you at the point of any and all of your possible needs." Yahweh is so much more than a mere name. It is a verbal statement condensing the attributes of God's person and His provision to each of us.

Next, David makes the very bold statement that He is **my** shepherd and I shall not lack anything. David knew better than most of the relationship between a shepherd and his sheep. He knew of the total dependency of a sheep upon its shepherd. The shepherd is absolutely essential to the welfare of a sheep. The shepherd provides water, food, safety, security, and direction to the flock. If the flock is not managed well, the sheep will suffer and waste away. The same holds true for each of us. David is stating the truth that because He is our shepherd, we shall not "want." This means that we truly are not lacking anything, but also that we are utterly contented in our Shepherd's care.

This goes far beyond our physical needs. We have all known privation, scarcity, and anguish of spirit. We have emotional, spiritual, and physical needs, and the Lord promises to take care of them all. Jesus warned us in John 16:33, *"In this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world."* When we feel in desperate "need" we can be assured that He is still lovingly providing for us and looking after us.

A great misconception in some circles of Christianity is that if someone is prospering financially then God is blessing them. Most of the billionaires in the world are godless people, yet they have great worldly riches. The Bible tells us to not mistake material abundance with God's blessing. Listen to Jesus speaking to the church of Laodicea in Revelation 3. The danger of having great wealth is that a person will not recognize their great need for God, and they are in danger of self-worship. They will be inclined to say, "I made it all! I did this by myself!"

<sup>7</sup> *You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. <sup>18</sup> I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. (Rev 3:17-18, NIV).*

When Jesus realized that the rich young ruler's riches stood before him and God, said to the young ruler, <sup>21</sup> ... *"If you want to be perfect, go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; then come and follow me."* (Matt 19:21, GNT).

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I\\_Am\\_that\\_I\\_Am](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Am_that_I_Am)

We as Christians have to take a long look at our lives. Sometimes, we may be called on to go without or we may go through great hardship. But amid such hardship, we can still boast "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." We have to get our minds right about what it is we think we are missing. Unto whom do *you* belong, to the shepherd or to an imposter? It is impossible to serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). The welfare of a sheep is totally dependent on the Shepherd. People's lives fall to pieces if they are serving the wrong master.

If land goes neglected, the sheep will suffer. We've all seen horses being starved to death around us. They have polluted muddy water. They have no salt or minerals. They have old moldy hay. If livestock exist in a diseased condition, they go down drastically and quickly. An indifferent owner causes great misery on his flock. This is a precise picture of Satan and his minions and how they starve people to death. They are not caretakers; they are destroyers. They are "stealers of joy" and they are thieves. The big difference in whether we prosper or waste away depends on who our master is. You see, **it is the master that makes a difference in the destiny of his sheep**. As I have ministered among men and women, I've seen those whose master is not the Lord. These people are in fact starving to death in their abundance and they don't see their own hunger. They are like the anorexic that sees himself or herself as fat, when they are skin and bones in a state of self-induced starvation. Most in the world today are spiritually malnourished. They are weak. They are sick. Even if they look whole and well on the outside, they are starving to death from within. Their spiritual need is enormous.

Who is your master? Is it Jesus? If it is, the Bible says, you WILL NOT LACK ANYTHING THAT YOU REALLY NEED. The key is that to be taken care properly, a sheep has to be owned by the right master. And it is exactly the same way around us.

I know many people who are near financial poverty, but they are, in fact, rich. They have entrusted themselves to Jesus' control and they have found contentment in their lives. These people are beautiful to behold. They are wonderful to be around. They are so secure in knowing who their master is. It is wonderful to see those who radiate a serene confidence knowing that God is in control. Their lives are not chaotic, but orderly and trust-filled. They are under God's care and they know it. Those who have put their trust in and rely on Jesus are promised to lack nothing. There is an intense discontent in people who are desperate for security and who are trusting in all of the wrong things.

These discontented people are bankrupt in spiritual values. They always want more and more physically and emotionally, and they're never really satisfied with what the Shepherd has provided. They are extremely needy people. I don't know where you are today, but **I am completely satisfied with God's management of my life**. He loves me and takes personal pleasure in me. He also loves you and He takes great pleasure in you. Have you ever met a cattleman who was just really proud of his or her herd? They delight in the condition of their herd, and they know that it is a reflection on their management. In much the same way, God is jealous of His name and His reputation. There is no greater satisfaction than seeing His sheep

flourishing and contented. He will go to great lengths to give us the "clean water, shelter, and forage," so to speak, that we need. He takes care of our every need. Jesus said:

*<sup>9</sup> I am the gate. Those who come in by me will be saved; they will come in and go out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup> The thief comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness.*

*<sup>11</sup> "I am the good shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> When the hired man, who is not a shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees a wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away; so the wolf snatches the sheep and scatters them. <sup>13</sup> The hired man runs away because he is only a hired man and does not care about the sheep. <sup>14-15</sup> I am the good shepherd. As the Father knows me and I know the Father, in the same way I know my sheep and they know me. And I am willing to die for them. <sup>16</sup> There are other sheep which belong to me that are not in this sheep pen. I must bring them, too; they will listen to my voice, and they will become one flock with one shepherd. (John 10:9-16, GNT).*

From early dawn to late at night, a Good Shepherd observes and takes care of His sheep. He examines his sheep to see if some might require special attention. When I put my life under Christ's control, I can have confidence that He is meeting my needs. Don't get into the trap of thinking the grass is greener on the other side of the fence. Some of us in this room know well what we do with that old cow that just won't stay in the fence. She always wants that little bit of grass that's just a little greener on the other side of the fence. If she keeps getting out over and over, we just take her to the sale barn. Part of the problem of keeping wandering livestock is that they end up teaching all of the other animals their bad habits. It's exactly the same with people.

This is a warning to the carnal Christian who wants the "best of both worlds." In short order, they will be cut down. Be aware to not long after those things the Lord has not given to you. Be content. Realize that God has supplied your every need. Rejoice in that. Rejoice in your master. He supplies your needs.

The Apostle Paul says it clearly to each and every one of us, *<sup>19</sup> And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. <sup>20</sup> Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Philippians 4:19-20, NKJV).*

Do you have a personal relationship with the Good Shepherd? He is calling you today from wherever you are to a point of trusting in Him. If you know Him already, acknowledge Him and thank Him for how He cares for you. If you don't know Him, you can come today by "Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."

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