

THE SHEPHERD PSALM

by

William Evans

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THE SHEPHERD'S PSALM -- Chapter One

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."

Have you ever noted how the word "**LORD**" is printed in the Bible? Sometimes all the letters are large capitals (**LORD**); or the first letter is a large capital and the other letters small capitals (**LORD**); then, again, the first letter is a large capital and the remaining letters ordinary (**Lord**). Each method of spelling the divine name indicates a different phase of the character of **GOD**. "**LORD**" refers to Jehovah as the covenant-keeping **GOD**, the One who never fails to fulfill all His promises. "**Lord**" points to our Lord **JESUS CHRIST** as the second Person in the Trinity, He who became incarnate. "**Lord**" signifies also **GOD** in **CHRIST**, the Jehovah of the Old Testament, **GOD** of power, the One who is able to do all things and with whom nothing is impossible, manifesting Himself in **JESUS CHRIST**.

What a world of meaning, then, lies wrapped up in the word "**LORD**" in the first verse of this Psalm!

Jehovah who is all-faithful, never failing in His promises, almighty, all-powerful, who is able to supply all of our needs, who created the heavens and the earth, who upholds all things by the word of His power, who spake and it was done, who commanded and it stood fast;

The "**LORD**" of whom Job said: "**I know that thou canst do anything, and no purpose of thine can be hindered**";

The "**LORD**" who never fails in the keeping of His promises, however seemingly impossible of fulfillment, from a natural viewpoint, those promises may be;

The "**LORD**" of whom it is said, "**God is not a man that he should lie, nor the Son of man that he should repent.**" "**Hath he said and shall he not do it; hath he promised and shall he not bring it to pass?**"

The "**LORD**," the incarnate One, who for our sakes took on Himself our nature with all its sinful infirmities, who was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, and who is thus able to feel our needs and sympathize with us in all our trials and temptations;

The "**LORD**" who, speaking to the multitudes, said, "**I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep**" -- such a **SHEPHERD**, faithful, powerful, sympathetic, is our "**LORD**." What a wealth of meaning, then, lies in the first clause, "**The LORD**" (who is **LORD**, and **Lord**) -- such a "**LORD**" is "**my shepherd**."

We can then well say, "**I shall not want.**" With such a Shepherd, how could we want for anything for time or eternity? All that we need for body, mind and soul shall be supplied. The GOD who provided the table in the wilderness, who fed Elijah by the brook, who struck the rock in the wilderness that the thirst of His people might be quenched, will provide for His children according to His riches in glory.

Reviewing Israel's history in the wilderness it could be recorded, "**These forty years the LORD, thy God, hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing.**" How wonderfully GOD supplied the needs of His people when they were traveling through that long, weary wilderness! "**For the LORD thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand; he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness; these forty years the LORD thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing**" (Deuteronomy 2:7). "**Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them, and witheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst. Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not**" (Nehemiah 9:20-21).

Let us, then, as the children of GOD, take all the comfort possible out of these words. Let us not go about mourning, grumbling, and borrowing trouble, thereby proclaiming to the world that our great Banker is on the verge of bankruptcy. The "**LORD**" is our shepherd; we shall not want for nourishment (v. 1), refreshment (v. 2), rest (v. 3), protection (v. 4), guidance (v. 5), home (v. 6). Here is a bank the child of GOD can draw on at any time without fear of its being broken. Millions have been supplied and there's room for millions more. No want shall turn me back from following the Shepherd.

How encouraging to recall the words of JESUS uttered to the disciples when they had returned from their itinerary of missionary activity: "**When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing**" (Luke 22:35).

"The Lord my Shepherd is,
I shall be well supplied,
Since He is mine and I am Him,
What can I want beside?"

-- Isaac Watts

When the writer was a lad he secured a position for which he was promised so much a week in money and "everything found," by which was meant board, room, and clothing. So this verse in this situation may read, "**The LORD is my Shepherd,**" and "everything found."

In a park one day two women were overheard talking. One of them, who by her appearance showed that she was in very straitened circumstances, said to the other, "I am at my wit's end; I know not what to do. My husband has been sick and unable to work for almost a year. What little money we had saved is all spent. We have not a penny with which to buy food or clothing for ourselves or the children. This morning we received notice from the landlord to vacate." And then, in words that were full of suggestive meaning, she added, "If John D. Rockefeller were my father, I would not want, would I?"

Oh, what a world of comfort lies in the thought, "**The LORD is my shepherd,**" and therefore, "**I shall not want**"! I shall want for nothing in time or eternity. Every need of body, mind, and soul shall be supplied. In the great Shepherd lies strength for my weakness, hope for my despair, food for my hunger, satisfaction for my need, wisdom for my ignorance, healing for my wounds, power for my temptation -- the complement of all my lack.

"Thou, O CHRIST, art all I want;
More than all in thee I find."

-- Charles Wesley

CHRIST IS A PERSONAL SHEPHERD

"**The LORD is my shepherd.**" My Shepherd. Christianity is a personal thing. Really speaking, Christianity consists of your personal relationship to GOD in JESUS CHRIST. Not mere profession, but actual possession is what counts. Christianity emphasizes the worth of the individual and his personal relation to GOD. Sin degrades men into mere numbers.

A photograph was placed on my desk. It had inscribed on it a number, but no name. It was the likeness of a convict. It was a number I went to jail to see; a number I spoke with by the cell door; a number I stood by and saw handcuffed; a number with whom I walked down the steps of the jail; a number with whom I walked up the stairs to the scaffold; a number around whose neck I saw the rope placed; a number I saw drop to his death. Sin degrades personality, but the religion of CHRIST exalts its adherents to a place in that innumerable company which cannot be numbered, but every one of whom bears upon his forehead the name of his Redeemer and King. JESUS calleth His sheep by name, not by number.

At the close of a sermon in a church in the Highlands of Scotland the preacher, who was supplying the pulpit for a few Sundays, was asked to call upon a shepherd boy who was very sick. Arm in arm with one of the elders of the church the minister crossed the moor, climbed the hillside, and came to the cottage where the boy and his widowed mother lived. After knocking at the door the visitors were admitted by the mother. Her face showed the marks of long vigil. The boy was her only child. The minister and elder went into the room where the sick boy lay on his cot. The minister, looking upon the pale, haggard face of the sick shepherd boy, asked him tenderly, "Laddie, do you know the Twenty-third Psalm?"

Every Scotch boy knows the Twenty-third Psalm, and so the little fellow replied, "Yes, sir, I ken (know) the Psalm well."

"Will you repeat it to me?" said the minister to the boy.

Slowly and tenderly the lad quoted the words, "**The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want,**" unto the end of the Psalm.

"Don't you see," said the minister to the boy, "that in the first clause of the first verse there is just one word for each finger. Hold up your hand, laddie; take the second finger of your right hand,

put it on the fourth finger of your left, hold it over your heart and say with me, "**The LORD is my shepherd.**"

The fourth finger of the left hand! Why that finger? Every woman knows. It is the ring finger. Who placed that ring on your finger? My friend, my lover, my husband; the man who is more to me and different to me than any other and all other men in this world; the man without whom life would not be worth living; my friend, my lover, my husband.

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

What a world of difference that little word my makes, does it not? As a pastor I have often stood by the open grave that was to receive the body of someone's beloved daughter, the light and joy of some heart. I sought to be deeply sympathetic with those who were suffering bereavement. I tried to mourn with those who mourned, and weep with those who wept, and I think I did, so far as it is possible for a friend to sympathize. But one day I stood by an open grave when my daughter, my child, my own darling girl, my Dorothy, was placed beneath the sod. Ah! then I knew what grief was. Ah, what a world of difference that little word my makes!

It will not profit you much, my friend, to be able to say, "The Lord is a shepherd"; you must be more personal; you must say, "**The LORD is my shepherd.**"

"A Shepherd who giveth His life for the sheep,
A Shepherd both mighty to save and to keep --
Yes, this is the Shepherd, the Shepherd we need,
And He is a Shepherd indeed!
Is He yours? Is He yours?
Is this Shepherd, who loves you, yours?"

-- Ada R. Habershon

~ end of chapter 1 ~
