

# Jehovah Roi (Raah, Rohi)

"I shall not want"

RUN INTO THE STRONG TOWER OF

## JEHOVAH ROI

AND BE SAFE

(Exposition and Commentary on Psalm 23)

Jehovah Roi - Part 1 Continued

Jehovah Roi - Part 2

THE SHEEP	THE SHEPHERD	TREADING THE PATH OF TRUTH
<p><b>Who wrote Psalm 23?</b> David but it is always intriguing to read liberal commentaries that still question the literal rendering in Hebrew &amp; in the Greek Septuagint "<a href="#">A Psalm of David</a>"</p> <p><b>When in his life did David write?</b> One cannot be dogmatic but mention of valley of shadow of death &amp; enemies recalls to mine those enemies like Saul (1Sa 18+, etc) &amp; Absalom who sought his life (2 Sa 15-17+, see "<a href="#">The Darkest Days of David's Life</a>"). This would at least suggest that this song was written later in his life and not necessarily when he was a shepherd lad pasturing his flocks. He undoubtedly never forgot his "roots".</p> <p><b>What are David's "credentials"?</b></p> <p>As alluded to above David was a <b>shepherd</b> (cf 1Sa 16:11 "There remains yet the youngest, &amp; behold, he is <a href="#">tending</a> (shepherding) the <a href="#">sheep</a>." cf also 1Sa 17:15,28, 2Sa 7:8)</p> <p><b>Did David understand the responsibility the shepherd had to defend his sheep?</b> (see passage below)</p> <p>1Sa 17:34-37 (explaining to Saul why he should be allowed to defend the "flock" of Israel from the "predator" Goliath) But <a href="#">David said</a> to <a href="#">Saul</a>, "Your <a href="#">servant</a> was <a href="#">tending</a> his <a href="#">father's sheep</a>. When a <a href="#">lion</a> or a <a href="#">bear came</a> and <a href="#">took</a> a <a href="#">lamb</a> from the <a href="#">flock</a>, I <a href="#">went</a> out <a href="#">after</a> him and <a href="#">attacked</a> him &amp; <a href="#">rescued</a> it from his <a href="#">mouth</a> &amp; when he <a href="#">rose</a> up <a href="#">against</a> me, I <a href="#">seized</a> him by his <a href="#">beard</a> &amp; <a href="#">struck</a> him &amp;</p>	<p><b>What is the impression of the "God of the Old Testament" in many people's mind?</b></p> <p>They picture a God Who is fearful, awesome, majestic &amp; Who seems distant &amp; often far removed from their personal life &amp; their everyday trials &amp; afflictions.</p> <p><b>The <a href="#">LORD</a> (Jehovah) is my <a href="#">Shepherd</a> (Roi). I shall not <a href="#">want</a> (Ps 23:1+)</b></p> <p><b>How does Psalm 23:1+ correct this all too common misconception of a "distant" almost impersonal God in the Old Testament?</b></p> <p>David describes God not as "a" Shepherd or even "the" Shepherd but as "my" Shepherd, which pictures the personal, intimate concern God has for every aspect of the life of His "sheep". Yes, God is the "high &amp; exalted One Who lives forever, Whose name is Holy" but He draws near to care for His "lowly" sheep. (see <a href="#">Is 57:15</a>)</p> <p>Keep in mind that "shepherds" in the Oriental world were not the most respected profession &amp; yet the One possessing all power &amp; Who knows no limits, deigns to identify with a shepherd.</p> <p><b>Ken Hemphill</b> adds:</p> <p>The Creator of the universe fashioned each of us distinctively and uniquely to be who we are, but His</p>	<p><b>The "Shepherd's" Name is Jehovah</b> (click Names of God)- "I Am" ("I Am your all in all. I Am all you will ever need" [Play &amp; ponder the power &amp; personal presence &amp; concern of your Good Shepherd as you listen to "<a href="#">Do You Not Know/All in All</a>] based in part on Isaiah 40:28, 29)</p> <p><b>What practical difference does the liberating truth that He is my personal Shepherd make in my life?</b></p> <p><b>Will the Shepherd satisfy all of my "wants"?</b> Asked another way, am I seeking to satisfy my "wants" rather than trusting in the Shepherd's <b>perfect</b> provision to supply all of my <i>needs</i>? How does Paul amplify this truth in (Php 4:13-note) "<i>And my <a href="#">God</a> will <a href="#">supply ALL</a> your <a href="#">NEEDS according</a> to His <a href="#">riches in glory</a> in <a href="#">Christ Jesus</a>."</i>? (Click for illustration of the meaning of "<i>according to</i>") Clearly the Good Shepherd's "<i>divine power has <a href="#">granted</a> to us <a href="#">everything pertaining</a> to <a href="#">life</a> &amp; <a href="#">godliness</a>, <a href="#">through</a> the <a href="#">true knowledge</a> of Him Who <a href="#">called</a> us by His <a href="#">own glory</a> &amp; <a href="#">excellence</a>."</i> (2Pe 1:3+) but this does not necessarily include all of our <i>wants</i>. Sometimes sheep try to drink or eat from unclean sources, but the shepherd impedes their partaking of these sources so that they won't become ill. Remember we "sheep" are dumb animals &amp; we sometimes want things we don't <i>NEED</i>, some of which could ultimately prove very harmful to our [spiritual] life. Remember the maxim: Satiated with the Shepherd provision, we shall not be in want "<i>for <a href="#">Jehovah Elohim</a> is a <a href="#">sun</a> &amp; <a href="#">shield</a>. <a href="#">Jehovah gives grace</a> &amp; <a href="#">glory</a>. <a href="#">No good thing</a> does He <a href="#">withhold</a> from those</i></p>

killed him. Your [servant](#) has [killed both](#) the [lion](#) & the [bear](#) & [this uncircumcised Philistine](#) will be like [one](#) of them, [since](#) he has [taunted](#) the [armies](#) of the [living God](#)." & [David said](#), "The [LORD \(Jehovah\)](#) [Who delivered](#) me from the [paw](#) of the [lion](#) & from the [paw](#) of the [bear](#), He will [deliver](#) me from the [hand](#) of [this Philistine](#)."

### What are the the metaphors David uses in Psalm 23?

Sheep (implied) & Shepherd. A **metaphor** (see [synopsis of figurative Language](#) or [click here](#)) is a word or phrase with one distinct meaning used in place of another word, to paint so to speak a "word picture" of the word it is used in place of. So for example In Psalm 23 what is David picturing himself as? Obviously as a "sheep". In the first 4 verses he speaks from the perspective of a sheep, a metaphor which brings to our mind many comparisons as almost everyone is familiar with sheep. It is interesting to note that "sheep" are the most commonly mentioned animal in the Bible & are used some 400x (including the term "flocks") with "shepherd(s)" being used >100x.

**Does God characterize men as "sheep" anywhere else in scripture?** Again the obvious answer is "Yes" and we'll look at several of those passages in these notes.

**How does Is 53:6+ characterize men<sup>(2)</sup>?**

**Isaiah 53:6+** *All of us like [sheep](#) have [gone astray](#). [Each](#) of us has [turned](#) to his own [way](#); but the [LORD](#) has caused the [iniquity](#) of us [all](#) to [fall](#) on Him."* ([Spurgeon devotional](#))

Men are like sheep. **What do "sheep" do?**

They stray. Notice the "**all**" which takes care of all humanity, but then the use of "**each**" brings it to a very personal level. So God says mankind is like sheep, which should be a humbling revelation when we consider the nature of sheep. Dogs can often find their way home but not sheep. But no matter how far the sheep wander -- if they are truly His sheep -- He will find them & bring them home. This truth should encourage us all, for as the hymn writer

individual concern did not cease at the point of creation. As the Good Shepherd, He knows His sheep by name. This singular thought is so profound that it defies our comprehension. The personal pronouns in the 23rd Psalm create a unique picture of a shepherd who lives with his flock, serves as their guide, caregiver, and protector. David could look back over his life and declare, "The Lord is my shepherd."

We are told in the Babylonian Talmud that some of the ancient rabbis would conclude their Passover service by singing, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." (BORROW [Names of God - Jehovah Rohi](#))

### What truth is implicit in the name Jehovah Roi?

The LORD is **MY** Shepherd = Jehovah Roi. He is not just "a" Shepherd or "Israel's" Shepherd, but is my own personal Shepherd. **Jehovah** = Covenant name of God, the self-existent & self-sustaining One Who needs nothing & Who possesses everything we need. He is the "I Am" ("I Am... all the "sheep" will ever need).

### D. Followwill writes that

To better capture what this divine name means here, we could translate it literally "**He Who Is Here**". Thus, this first clause says literally,

*who [walk uprightly](#)."* (Ps 84:11, 10, 12+) ([Spurgeon devotional](#))

**Which "sheep" can confidently call Jehovah their personal Shepherd ("my shepherd")?** Are we the sheep of God's pasture simply because we accept that God exists or go to church or were raised in a Christian family or are "basically nice" folks? Jesus said "I [am](#) the [door](#). [If anyone enters through](#) Me, he will be [saved](#), & will [go](#) in & out & [find pasture](#)... I [am](#) the [Good Shepherd](#), & I [know](#) My [own](#) & My [own know](#) Me" ([Spurgeon's devotional](#)) So only those who have "entered through" Jesus are His sheep & have the privilege to call Him their personal Shepherd.

### Run into the Strong Tower of Jehovah Roi by keeping your eyes fixed on the Good Shepherd & Guardian of your soul:

Phillip Keller in his book "[A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23 \(page 24 - BORROW\)](#)" emphasizes that

"nothing so quieted & reassured the sheep as to see me in the field. The presence of their master & owner & protector put them at ease as nothing else could do... in the Christian's life, there is no substitute for the keen awareness that my Shepherd is nearby... There is nothing like Christ's presence to dispel the fear, the panic, the terror of the unknown... it is the knowledge that my Master, my Friend, my Owner has things under control even when they may appear calamitous. This gives me great consolation, repose, and rest."

[Click](#) to listen to Max McLean's dramatic reading of Psalm 23 (NIV) (when link opens click "play Ps 23"). Then read the following true story:

At a reception, a famous actor (not Max McLean though) was asked to give a recitation. An old preacher suggested the twenty third psalm. He did it with great oratorical skill & sat down to prolonged applause. Then he turned to the old preacher & asked him to recite the psalm also. In a weak & trembling voice, the kindly man uttered the same simple Psalm, but no one applauded this time. People began surreptitiously to wipe away their tears. The actor rose again. "Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I

says below, we are "*prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love.*" Praise God for His seeking, restoring grace. You are never so lost that the Good Shepherd cannot find you. **"Straying" sheep are also seen in** ([Ps 119:176](#), [Spurgeon's note](#); Mt 18:12,13, 14, Lk 15:4, 1Peter 2:25 [note]) (Click illustration of potential cost of straying)

### **"Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing"**

([play vocal by Fernando Ortega](#))

**Prone to wander, Lord I feel it,  
Prone to leave the God I love,  
Here's my heart. O take and seal it  
Seal it for Thy courts above.**

Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
Wand'ring from the fold of God,  
He, to rescue me from danger,  
Interposed his precious blood

O to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let their goodness, like a fetter,  
Bind my wandering heart to thee

### **WHAT ARE SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF SHEEP? HOW DO THESE APPLY TO MANKIND?**

Webster's definition for "sheep" is interesting:

*"a timid and defenseless creature"*

**Dumb** (You won't find sheep acts in the circus because they can't be trained to perform). Sheep are singularly unintelligent & they don't learn from mistakes but in fact often repeat them. They tend to wander & go astray & are unable to find their way home to the sheepfold even when it is within sight! Now that is dumb! But knowing this the shepherd never takes His eyes off His wandering sheep (cf Ps 32:8, [Spurgeon](#) comments...

*As servants take  
their cue from the  
master's eye, and a  
nod or a wink is all  
that they require, so  
should we obey the  
slightest hints of our  
Master, not needing  
thunderbolts to*

"He Who Is Here is my shepherd." This God is not elsewhere and otherwise engaged in bigger things. This Lord who is here, he is my Shepherd... So much of true Christian faith has to do with the personal pronouns. Doubting Thomas, after poking his fingers into Jesus' wounds, finally believed in the resurrected Christ and said, "My Lord and My God!" (Jn 20:28)... David is speaking of an intimate one-to-one relationship with God" ([Ref](#))

### **Spurgeon writes**

"Give me ten million dollars, and one reversal of fortune may scatter it. Give me a spiritual hold on the divine assurance that "the Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want" and I am set for life. I cannot go broke with this stock in my hand. I can never be bankrupt with this security... Do not give me ready cash; give me a checkbook and let me withdraw what I need. This is how God works with the believer. God does not immediately transfer the inheritance; He lets us draw what we need out of the riches of His fullness in Christ Jesus. "The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want." What a glorious inheritance! Walk up and down it. Rest on it. It will be a soft downy pillow for you to lie on... If you disregard this truth—"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want"—you know nothing about its preciousness... I often think of that great promise—I do not know where there is a larger one—that "no good thing will He withhold from those that walk uprightly" (Ps. 84:11, 10, 12). "No good thing!" It is a mercy that the word **good** is there. If it had said, "He will withhold nothing," we might ask for many things that would be bad for us. But it says "No good thing!" Spiritual

communicated with your ears and your eyes. I know the words. But my old friend here communicated with your hearts. He knows the Shepherd." Do you know Him?

### **An Example of one who came to know the LORD in the valley of the shadow of death:**

When I think of someone discovering quiet intimacy with the Lord in the valley of deep darkness, surrounded by evil but divinely protected by him, I think of Harriet Tubman. Last summer our family was studying the decade of the 1850s, and we read a biography of this great lady to our children. Harriet Tubman was a black slave born in 1820 on a farm in Maryland. She had an opportunity to escape from her master by traveling at night through open fields and across streams into the free state of Pennsylvania. She escaped successfully in 1847, and embarked on a career as a conductor on what became known as the Underground Railroad. During the years from 1849-1860, she made nineteen trips to the South to lead groups of slaves to freedom in the North. She could travel only at night, following a different route each trip to avoid detection by slave hunters. She took nothing with her on her life-and-death errands except her gun and a strange sixth sense for knowing when she was being followed. This woman didn't have much in terms of worldly goods, background, or education, but she had enough. Here, in her own words, was her description of how she made it through all those dark nights: **"'Twarn't me, 'twas the Lord. I always told Him, 'I trust You. I don't know where to go or what to do, but I expect You to lead me.' And He always did."** Just imagine the closeness she must have felt with Jesus Christ at every step along that frightening "railroad!" The Lord was Harriet Tubman's Shepherd. And through her, he was enough to lead some three hundred slaves to freedom through that *deep darkness.*"

Phillip Keller, once a shepherd himself, in his book [A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23](#) (BORROW), relates that the strange thing about sheep is that because of their very makeup, it is almost impossible for them to be made to lie down unless four

*startle our incorrigible sluggishness, but being controlled by whispers & love touches. The LORD is the great overseer, Whose eye in providence overlooks everything. It is well for us to be the sheep of His pasture, following the guidance of His wisdom.*

**Defenseless** (No quills like porcupines, scent like skunks, claws like cats or teeth like lions). A sheep's bite is harmless. Most have no horns. Unable to defend themselves against attacks. Lambs are especially vulnerable & in need of protection. Shepherds on the Bethlehem hillsides still use a sling, made of goat's hair or leather and immortalized by David against Goliath (1Sa 17:49).

**Drown easily** (wool soaks up the H2O & they sink to the bottom). If they get on their backs they cannot right themselves. Kicking & bleating doesn't help although their cries can alert the shepherd who sets them on their feet again.

**Danger poorly perceived** (Poorly developed instincts to warn them of potential danger) Often a sheep will wander into a briar patch or fall over a cliff in the rugged Palestinian hills. The shepherd tenderly searches for his sheep and carries it to safety on his shoulder, wrapped in his own long cloak (Luke 15:3, 4, 5, 6).

**Depend TOTALLY upon their shepherd.**

**Need meticulous care:** Phillip Keller<sup>(1)</sup> writes that

*"Sheep do not just take care of themselves" as some might suppose. They require more than any other class of livestock, endless attention and*

mercies are good. They are more than good. They are the best, and you may well ask for them. If no good thing will be withheld, certainly the best things will be given. Ask then, Christian, for He is your Shepherd, and you will not want. He will supply your need. He will give you whatever you require. Ask in faith, never doubting, and He will give you what you really need."

Elsewhere Spurgeon writes...

What condescension is this, that the infinite Lord assumes towards his people the office and character of a Shepherd! It should be the subject of grateful admiration that the great God allows himself to be compared to anything which will set forth his great love and care for his own people. David had himself been a keeper of sheep, and understood both the needs of the sheep and the many cares of a shepherd. He compares himself to a creature weak, defenseless & foolish & he takes God to be **his Provider, Preserver, Director, &, indeed, his everything**. No man has a right to consider himself the Lord's sheep unless his nature has been renewed for the scriptural description of unconverted men does not picture them as sheep, but as wolves or goats. A sheep is an object of property, not a wild animal; its owner sets great store by it, and frequently it is bought with a great price. It is well to know, as certainly David did, that we belong to the Lord. There is a noble tone of confidence about this sentence. There is no "if" nor "but," nor even "I hope so;" but he says, "The Lord is **my** shepherd." We must cultivate the spirit of assured dependence upon our heavenly Father. The sweetest word of the whole is that monosyllable, "**My**." He does not say, "The Lord is the shepherd of the world at large, and leadeth forth the multitude as his flock," but "The Lord is **my** shepherd;" if he be a Shepherd to no one else, he is a Shepherd to **me**; he cares for **me**, watches over **me**, and preserves **me**. The words are in the **present tense**. Whatever be the believer's position, he is **even now** under the pastoral care of Jehovah." (Ref)

requirements are met.

(1) due to their timidity, they must be free from all fear.

(2) because of their sociability, they must be free from friction with others of their kind.

(3) they must be free from flies or parasites if they are to relax.

(4) they will not lie down unless free from hunger. It is only the shepherd who can provide release from all these anxieties.

**As our Good Shepherd, the Lord meets all these needs for us, so that we can "lie down in green pastures," with our souls restored by his care.**

**Spurgeon** comments on Ps 23:4 "He leads me":

We wish for many things that we do not really need, and there is no promise that we will have all we wish for. God has not promised anything more than what we need. But He will give us that. Lift up your head. Do not be afraid. God is with you. He will turn darkness into light and bitter into sweet. All the way, He has led you. And all the way, He will lead you. Let this be your constant joy. He is your Shepherd. You will not lack what is absolutely necessary. Whatever you really require, you will be given it by your tender Father's lavish hand. Believer, this is your estate, your inheritance, your annual income, your yearly living: He is your Shepherd, and you shall not want (Ps. 23:1). What is your income? "It varies," you say. Oh, but your spiritual income is always the same, for the Lord is your Shepherd, and you shall not want. It is my income, and it is your income. It is the income of the poorest pauper who has an interest in God's grace. It is the income of the believing orphan who has no other friend. It is the orphan's fortune, for the Lord is his Shepherd, and he shall not want. It is the widow's inheritance, for

*meticulous care."*

In water-hungry Syria and Palestine, shepherds have always had to search diligently for water, sometimes for hours every day for they know that the sheep must be watered daily.

**Sheep have actually been known to nibble themselves over the cliff!** That is dumb! But as you say it or think it, remember that "sheep" are a metaphor for men! So what is the great need for mankind? Clearly without a tender, caring shepherd willing to lay down his life for the sheep, they would surely perish & so it is with all men who do not have a "Good Shepherd" (discussed more fully in the next column) WE ARE THE "SHEEP".

### CONCLUSION: SHEEP NEED A SHEPHERD

Sheep need their shepherd's touch daily. Sheep answer his call, rub against his leg & wait for a pat. Personal attention is better than food. Satisfied sheep eat drink and get fat & fulfill their purpose. They will only answer to the herdsman's call, except when sick.

Spurgeon adds in a [sermon \(The Blood of the Covenant\)](#)

*sheep have nothing to do with their own feeding, guidance, or protection; they have only to follow their Shepherd unto the pastures which he prepares, and all will be well with them*

John Walvoord writes that...

"Sheep are utterly dependent upon the shepherd for almost everything pertaining to their well-being. In the work of Christ for His sheep, there is accordingly the ministry of leading the sheep in the path of the will of God. **Only as sheep are willing to**

### How is God first pictured as a Shepherd in Genesis 48:15?

Ge 48:15 (Jacob) blessed Joseph & said "The God before Whom my fathers Abraham & Isaac walked, the God Who has been my [Shepherd](#) all my life to this day"

Notice Jacob (meaning "usurper", "supplanter", "deceiver") calls the covenant keeping God His own personal Shepherd, highlighting the tender care & watchfulness God had shown for Jacob all the days of his life, despite his faults. Jehovah can be your personal Shepherd regardless of your past failures or present faults.

Remember that "he who comes to God must believe that He is & that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." (Heb 11:6+)

### How does Isaiah 40:11 portray Jehovah as a Shepherd?

Isaiah 40:11 Like a shepherd He will tend His *flock*, In His arm He will gather the lambs And carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.

(Click & read Spurgeon [devotional #1](#), [devotional #2](#))

Ponder **Spurgeon's** insights on this beautiful verse

Why doth he carry the lambs in his bosom? Because He hath a tender heart & any weakness at once melts His heart. The sighs, the ignorance, the feebleness of the little ones of His flock draw forth His compassion. It is His office, as a faithful High Priest, to consider the weak. Besides, **He purchased** them with blood, they are **His property: He must & will care** for that which cost Him so dear. Then He is responsible for **each** lamb, **bound by** covenant engagements not to lose one. ([devotional #1](#))

### What does Ezekiel 34:11-16 teach about God's as a shepherd?

Note that Ezekiel 34 is a prophecy that applies to Israel & will not be fulfilled until the "Chief Shepherd" (1Pe 5:4+) returns to

the Lord is her Shepherd, and she shall not want. It is the believer's share, the believer's portion, and the believer's blessing. The Lord is our Shepherd. We shall not want."

### Spurgeon on Ps 23:4:

"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" (Ps. 23:4). I intended to keep this choice promise in reserve until I came near the river Jordan. Then in my last hour, I hoped to enjoy its sweetness. But the other day I needed this heavenly loaf, and I ate it. Children are told that they cannot have their cake and eat it too, but this rule does not apply to God's comforts. You can have a promise and enjoy it too. Several days ago, when a trial howled around me, I ate the honey out of this verse. Its sweetness is still there, and no doubt I will enjoy this promise again when I come near death's gate. The blessed Holy Spirit has already sealed it to my soul with rich and full comfort. Would to God that every believer who is burdened and depressed might find it precious. Although this promise has an inexpressibly delightful application to the dying, it is also for the living. If you are depressed by any difficult trial, then you are walking through the valley of death-shade; I urge you to repeat this promise, and may the Lord help you to feel its truth. "Yea, though (even now) 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." The words are not in the future tense; they are not reserved for a future moment, so use them now. Do not let this song lie on the shelf until your last day. Sing it all the days of your life.

Warren Wiersbe writes in "Prayer, Praise & Promises":

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (v1). That must be one of the most familiar quotations from the Old Testament. Everybody has some kind of shepherd. Jeremiah said, "It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jer 10:23). We are like lost sheep, not able to guide our own lives. We need a shepherd. Who is your

follow Christ will they find their complete spiritual needs supplied. It is their privilege to follow the shepherd, completely trusting Him for all the things that characterize their needs, such as food, water, shelter, and protection from their enemies. Just as natural sheep follow their shepherd, so believers in the Lord should follow Christ as the Great Shepherd and have their spiritual needs completely supplied... The green pastures and still waters are to be found by those who are near the shepherd... (In sum we see) on the one hand, the wonderful divine provision and on the other hand, the utter need of the sheep for that which God alone can supply." John Walvoord: Bibliotheca Sacra Vol 121: p298

**What is the state of the sheep of the Good Shepherd according to Psalm 23:1+?**

They shall not want (lack for anything they need). The Greek word for "want" (lack, be without, have need) is **hustereo** which means to "fall short of the end" including falling short of expectations. Like the little girl recalled who was memorizing Ps 23 "I shall not want- I've got all I need". But not necessarily everything I want. The Shepherd knows some things are not best for my spiritual health. This phrase indicates that the Shepherd is committed to meet the needs of the sheep. It could be paraphrased "The LORD is enough"! John D. Rockefeller, the billionaire oil man,

set up His 1000 year Messianic kingdom & fulfill the promises of the **Abrahamic covenant**. Our purpose for reviewing this text is to see what it teaches about God as a Shepherd, so read it through & list out the actions of the Shepherd - look especially at the verbs & truths repeated. Click on the relevant verb definitions for additional insights.

13 "I will **bring** them out from the **peoples** and **gather** them from the **countries** and **bring** them to their own **land**; and I will **feed** them on the **mountains** of **Israel** by the **streams** & in **all** the **inhabited places** of the **land**. 14 I will **feed** them in a **good pasture**, & their **grazing ground** will be on the **mountain heights** of **Israel**. **There** they will **lie down** on **good grazing ground** and **feed** in **rich pasture** on the **mountains** of **Israel**. 15 "I will **feed** My **flock** and I will **lead them to rest**," declares the **Lord GOD** 16 "I will **seek** the **lost**, **bring back** the **scattered**, **bind up** the **broken** and **strengthen** the **sick**; but the **fat** and the **strong** I will **destroy**. I will **feed** them with **judgment**."

God as our Shepherd

**searches, seeks, cares, delivers** (rescues, snatches away, saves, meditate on the 43 uses in **Psalms**), **brings out** (plucks = same word Ps 25:14+), **gathers, feeds** (**good pasture, rich pasture**), **leads to rest** (lie down), **seeks** the **lost, brings back** (restores = same word Ps 23:3+) the **scattered** (outcasts) (Jer 23:2), **binds up** (same word in Ps 147:3+ (**Spurgeon**) & Isa 61:1+) the **broken** (Ps 34:18+ (**Spurgeon**); Ps 51:17+ - (**Spurgeon**) & **strengthens** the **sick**.

Will Jehovah Roi not do the same for His sheep who "are **Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise**?" (Gal 3:27+)

What tender care from the Shepherd have you experienced this past week?

Are you running into the security & safety of His "sheepfold" when faced with trials, anxieties, etc?

Is Jehovah Roi not worthy of all our thanksgivings?

**Who is the "Shepherd" according to**

shepherd?

**When the Lord is your Shepherd, what will happen in your life?**

**First**, you will live a day at a time. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life" (v6). Psalm 23 talks about all the days of our lives, and they are lived one day at a time when the Lord is our Shepherd. **Someone has said that the average person is being crucified between two thieves--the regrets of yesterday and the worries of tomorrow. Consequently, he can't enjoy today.**

**Second**, when the Lord is your Shepherd, you listen for His voice. In John 10:27 the Lord Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice." The Shepherd does not drive his sheep from behind. Rather, He calls them from ahead. **How do we listen to the Lord's voice? Through the Word of God.**

**Third**, when the Lord is your Shepherd, you must expect changes. You may have green pastures and still waters. Then you go through the valley of the shadow of death. You have a table in the presence of your enemies. Then you live in the house of the Lord (heaven) forever. **You will experience changes in life. Expect them; don't be afraid of them.** When you follow the Shepherd, **the future is your friend**, because the Lord is going before you. Live one day at a time, following the Shepherd, and you won't have to be afraid. Some people fail to adapt to life's inevitable changes. As a believer, you need never fear the future. Trust the Shepherd, who goes before you, and listen to His Word. **Commit this day to the Lord and thank Him for His guidance."**

**Dr. Wiersbe** goes on to add:

Psalm 23 depicts Jesus Christ as the Great Shepherd living for His sheep. It also gives us two assurances.

(1)

**First**, Jesus shepherds us throughout each day. **Dr. Harry Ironside** used to say that goodness and mercy are the two sheepdogs that help keep the sheep where they belong. We live our lives one day at a time, because God built the universe to run one day at a time. There must be a time for labor and a time for

was once asked, "How much money is enough?" He replied, "Just one more dollar." He was never satisfied & the word "enough" eluded him all his days. For us who are His sheep, the Lord is enough... but is He?... if we should have to declare bankruptcy? **Is the Lord enough..** if we don't get that job we desire? Is the Lord enough... if our husband or wife leaves us, or if they die suddenly, or our children get sucked into the drug & alcohol scene? Is the Lord enough... if we remain single all our life? Is the Lord enough... if we are never a success by worldly standards? Pithy points worth pondering.

### Spurgeon writes

Does He not feed the ravens, and cause the lilies to grow? How, then, can He leave His children to starve? I shall not want for spirituals, I know that His grace will be sufficient for me. Resting in Him He will say to me, "As thy day so shall thy strength be." I may not possess all that I wish for, but "I shall not want." Others, far wealthier and wiser than I, may want, but "I shall not." "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." (Ps 34:10)

It is not only "I do not want," but "I shall not want." Come what may, if famine should devastate the land, or calamity destroy the city, "I shall not want." Old age with its feebleness shall not bring me any lack, and even death

**John 10** (see in depth comments) ? **For context note who Jesus is addressing (Jn 9:40+)**

but [climbs](#) up [some other way](#), he is a [thief](#) and a [robber](#).<sup>2</sup> But he who [enters](#) by the [door](#) is a [shepherd](#) of the [sheep](#). **3** To him the [doorkeeper opens](#), and the [sheep hear](#) his [voice](#), and he [calls](#) his [own sheep](#) by [name](#) and [leads](#) them out. **4** [When](#) he [puts forth all](#) his [own](#), he [goes ahead](#) of them, and the [sheep follow](#) him [because](#) they know his [voice](#). **5** A [stranger](#) they simply will not [follow](#), but will [flee](#) from him, [because](#) they do not know the [voice](#) of [strangers](#).

**6** [This figure](#) of [speech Jesus spoke](#) to them, but they did not [understand what](#) those things were [which](#) He had been [saying](#) to them. **7** [So Jesus said](#) to them [again](#), "[Truly, truly](#), I [say](#) to you, I [am the door](#) of the [sheep](#). **8** "[All who came before](#) Me are [thieves](#) and [robbers](#), but the [sheep](#) did not [hear](#) them. **9** "[I am the door](#); if [anyone enters through](#) Me, he will be [saved](#), and will [go](#) in and out and [find pasture](#). **10** "The [thief comes only](#) to [steal](#) and [kill](#) and [destroy](#); I [came](#) that they may [have life](#), and [have](#) it [abundantly](#). **11** "[I am the Good Shepherd](#)"; the [good shepherd lays down](#) His [life](#) for the [sheep](#). **12** "He who is a [hired hand](#), and not a [shepherd](#), [who](#) is not the [owner](#) of the [sheep](#), [sees](#) the [wolf coming](#), and [leaves](#) the [sheep](#) and [flees](#), and the [wolf snatches](#) them and [scatters](#) them. **13** "He flees [because](#) he is a [hired hand](#) and is not [concerned about](#) the [sheep](#). **14** "[I am the Good Shepherd](#), and I [know](#) My [own](#) and My [own know](#) Me, **15** [even](#) as the [Father knows](#) Me and I [know](#) the [Father](#); and I [lay down My life for the sheep](#). **16** "I [have other sheep](#), [which](#) are not of [this fold](#); I [must bring](#) them [also](#), and they will [hear](#) My [voice](#); and they will [become one flock](#) with [one shepherd](#)."

(Click [Torrey's Topic on Christ, the Shepherd](#))

The **helplessness of sheep** helps to explain the actions and qualities of a good shepherd, who is a case study in **care** and **compassion**. It was the task of a shepherd to lead sheep from nighttime protection in a sheepfold on safe paths to places of grazing and watering. After

rest. When we try to live two or three days at a time, we cannot enjoy today. Eventually, this catches up with us physically, emotionally and spiritually. We need to remember that "as thy days, so shall thy strength be" ([Dt. 33:25](#)). As His sheep, we can begin each day with confidence. [John 10](#) tells us that Jesus goes before His sheep. **We cannot walk into any experience where Jesus has not first been.** Though we may not know or understand what is taking place around us, we will fear no evil because we are close to the Shepherd. **His rod takes care of the enemies; His staff takes care of the sheep (discipline and guidance). We can stay close to the Shepherd through His Word.**

(2)

Our **second** assurance is that Jesus shepherds us all the days of our lives. This psalm is a summary of the Christian life. Verses 1 and 2 speak of childhood. Children need protection and provision. God loves and watches over them. Verse 3 speaks of youth. Teenagers need direction and discipline. The Great Shepherd finds these wandering youth and brings them back. Verses 4 and 5 talk about the middle years. These are not easy years, when the children are growing up and there are bills to pay. Verse 6 speaks of the mature years.

We don't understand why some things happen. But one day we'll realize that everything is under God's goodness and mercy. Then we'll look ahead and see His house. What are your needs today? Stay close to the Shepherd by reading the Word. Resolve to follow His leading."

**Spurgeon** comments on sheep following the Shepherd from (Jn 10:27)

We should follow our Lord as unhesitatingly as sheep follow their shepherd, for he has a right to lead us wherever he pleases. We are not our own, we are bought with a price-let us recognize the rights of the redeeming blood. The soldier follows his captain, the servant obeys his master, much more must we follow our Redeemer, to whom we are a purchased possession. We are not true to our profession of being Christians, if we question the bidding of

with its gloom shall not find me destitute. I have all things and abundant; not because I have a good store of money in the bank, not because I have skill and wit with which to win my bread, but because "The Lord is my shepherd." The wicked always want, but the righteous never; a sinner's heart is far from satisfaction, but a gracious spirit dwells in the palace of content." (Ref)

### Why do the sheep of Jehovah Roi not want?

**1) PROVISION (Ps 23:2+ ): He makes them lie down (to lie stretched out) in green pastures -**

Green pastures and quiet waters are mentioned first because they are priority needs of the sheep if they are to survive and grow. The idea here is "*He makes me rest*" (the tense of the verb suggests He repeats this action over & over) & the Septuagint uses a verb picturing "pitching a tent", "tabernacling" or tarrying. Am I taking time to "pitch my tent" & "tarry" in the presence of the pastoral provision of my Shepherd? Or am I so busy, in such a hurry, that I hardly hear His voice? The Shepherd went before the sheep & searched out the

morning grazing and watering, sheep typically lie down for several hours at midday in a shady or cool place (Song 1:7+), returning at night to the sheepfold, where the shepherd would attend to fevered or scratched sheep. To protect sheep against predators, shepherds would carry two pieces of equipment, the "rod and staff" of Psalm 23:4+, one of them a club like weapon and the other the familiar crook used for protection, rescue and placing across the backs of sheep to count them as they entered the sheepfold (a process known as "the rodding of the sheep"; see Lev 27:32+). Psalm 23+, built around a typical day in the life of a shepherd, is a virtual handbook of these shepherding practices.

### It is good to remember several facts about the Good Shepherd:

(1) He owns the sheep. (cf 1Cor 6:18 19, 20+, Titus 2:11, 12, 13, 14+). The Septuagint for "LORD" (Jehovah) in Ps 23:1+ is "[kurios](#)" which means the possessor, owner, master or one who has control over another. An interesting question then would be to ask "Can He be my Shepherd and not be my [Kurios](#) (Lord, Master)?" Don't answer this one too quickly.

(2) He always knows where He is leading & is not aimlessly casting about for the oasis. Remember what the Good Shepherd said to His sheep? It was simply "[Follow Me](#)" (Mt 4:19+, cp Mark 8:34, 35, 36+, Lk 9:23+) for He knew where He was leading.

(3) He calls His sheep by name (Jn 10:3+). Each individual in the flock is known well and is an integral member of the flock, so much so that it is immediately missed if it strays, even when it is one out of a hundred (Lk 15:4+).

(4) Everything the Shepherd does is for the good of His sheep. His all-consuming concern is for them, not for Himself nor for the suffering he may endure along the journey (Jn 10:11,15, 1Pe 2:24, 25+, Mark 10:45+).

(5) Finally, this Shepherd never, ever leaves the sheep during the entire journey (Heb 13:5, 6+). And he will lead them to their final destination-the sheep will get

our Leader and Commander. Submission is our duty, calling is our folly. Often might our Lord say to us as to Peter, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." Wherever Jesus may lead us, he goes before us. If we know not where we go, we know with whom we go. With such a companion, who will dread the perils of the road? The journey may be long, but his everlasting arms will carry us to the end. The presence of Jesus is the assurance of eternal salvation, because he lives, we shall live also. We should follow Christ in simplicity and faith, because the paths in which he leads us all end in glory and immortality. It is true they may not be smooth paths-they may be covered with sharp flinty trials, but they lead to the "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant." Let us put full trust in our Leader, since we know that, come prosperity or adversity, sickness or health, popularity or contempt, his purpose shall be worked out, and that purpose shall be pure, unmingled good to every heir of mercy. We shall find it sweet to go up the bleak side of the hill with Christ; and when rain and snow blow into our faces, his dear love will make us far more blest than those who sit at home and warm their hands at the world's fire. To the top of Amana, to the dens of lions, or to the hills of leopards, we will follow our Beloved. Precious Jesus, draw us, and we will run after thee.

### [My Shepherd — Will Supply My Need](#)

by Isaac Watts

My Shepherd will supply my need:  
Jehovah is His Name;  
In pastures fresh He makes me feed,  
Beside the living stream.

He brings my wandering spirit back  
When I forsake His ways,  
And leads me, for His mercy's sake,  
In paths of truth



places of repose but the sheep had to follow Him. Are you following the Shepherd's lead or going your own way, to pastures of your own making (Pr 14:12)? Notice that the implications of the psalm are that sustenance is discovered only as the sheep follow the shepherd. He will lead them to quiet waters and green pastures, but if they fail to follow the Shepherd, they may well find themselves with unresolved needs. **Have you noticed that your satisfaction level is directly related to your proximity to the Good Shepherd?**

Remember also that Israel was an arid land so it took a wise experienced shepherd to find the oases. Any disturbance or intruder scares sheep. They are very fearful & cannot lie down unless they feel **totally secure** as the were here in the setting of green pastures & in the presence of their watching Shepherd. Similarly **hungry** sheep would not lie down. So when sheep are lying down in green pastures, it means their tummies are full. They are content with the Shepherd's provision. Are you?

home (Phil 1:6+; 1Th 5:24+; Heb 10:23+)

### **What shift in metaphors does David make in verse 5 of Psalm 23+?**

**Ps 23:5+** Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; Thou hast anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.

Although not everyone agrees, it seems that David now shifts the metaphor from that of a shepherd to that of a gracious host. One lesson here is that no metaphor for God is all encompassing enough to fully describe the enormity of His character & largeness of His heart. For context remember that David faced many enemies: Lions & bears, Goliath, an enraged King Saul, Philistines and probably most painful of all open rebellion from his son Absalom. So in this setting we discover that our Shepherd has become our host, serving us a banquet in the presence of our enemies. Kidner adds

"The shepherd imagery has served its purpose, to be replaced by one of greater intimacy."

What is the message David intends to convey with this picture? First let's look at our "[enemies](#)" & then at what the "[table](#)" pictures.

### **Who are our enemies today?**

[Enemies](#) is an interesting Hebrew word that literally means to bind up something & can refer to anything that is narrow or confining. It pictures one who is in dire straits or distress. It pictures a strong emotional response experienced when pressed externally by enemies or internally by wrong decisions or passions as for example when Jacob was confronted by Esau (Ge 32:7).

**Followwill** adds some helpful thoughts on who our "enemies" are:

"Paul tells us from his own experience that our enemies will sometimes press us from within and without. (2Co 7:5 & Torrey's topic "[Warfare of the Saints](#)" ) **From**

and grace.

When I walk thru the shades of death

Thy presence is my stay;

One word of Thy supporting breath

Drives all my fears away.

Thy hand, in sight of all my foes,

Doth still my table spread;

My cup with blessings overflows,

Thine oil anoints my head.

The sure provisions of my God

Attend me all my days;

O may Thy house be my abode,

And all my work be praise.

There would I find a settled rest,

While others go and come;

No more a stranger, nor a guest,

But like a child at home.

**What are the "green pastures"?**

Although, we cannot be dogmatic, surely this picture includes the nourishment found in the Word of God (cf Jer 15:16+) which alone satisfies the Good Shepherd's flock. As the Good Shepherd of the sheep **He meets every need** of His flock (Php 4:19+), and there is no want to those who trust him. When we follow the Shepherd closely, His will and desires will become our will and desires. We can trust the Good Shepherd to be consistent with His own nature. As someone has well said, the "Secret" of growing in grace is to be like a sheep & to **FILL UP, LIE DOWN & RUMINATE**

(Meditate) A hungry, ill fed sheep is ever on its feet, on the move, searching for another scanty mouthful of forage to try and satisfy its gnawing hunger. Such sheep are not contented, do not thrive & are no use to themselves nor to their owners. They languish and lack vigor and vitality. Can we not see the clear spiritual application? **ARE YOU RESTING IN THE PRESENCE OF THE SHEPHERD OR**

**within** we may be attacked by various anxieties & fears, by an inner voice of self-doubt or self-condemnation that plagues us or by lies that assail us with terrifying "what if?" scenarios about which we obsess.

**From without** we often face persecution for believing in Jesus Christ in this anti-Christian age, or we face rejection when our Christian identity becomes known among our family and friends. Some of our enemies today may simply be those who love to see us fail or those who are quick to criticize us or marginalize our efforts. **But whoever our enemies may be, when they surround us, it is very easy to focus exclusively on them.** It becomes difficult to think about anything else. But in this maelstrom of conflict, God steps between us and our enemies. We would expect him to appear in this scene as the mighty **Jehovah Sabaoth (LORD of hosts - of armies)**, whose strong right arm wields his sword to execute justice and wipe out our enemies. But instead, God appears here as a humble host serving

RESTLESS  
BECAUSE YOU'RE  
ALWAYS LOOKING  
FOR GREENER  
PASTURES of  
INFERIOR  
FORAGE?

In his "[Farm Sermons](#)" Spurgeon comments that

Just as the sheep has nourishment according to its nature, and this nourishment is abundantly found for it by its shepherd, so that it not only feeds, but then lies down in the midst of the fodder, satiated with plenty, and perfectly content and at ease; even so are the people of God when Jesus Christ leads them into the pastures of the covenant, and opens up to them the precious truths upon which their souls shall be fed. Beloved, have we not proved that promise true... My soul has sometimes fed upon Christ till I have felt as if I could receive no more, and then I have laid me down in the bounty of my God to take my rest, satisfied with favor, and full of the goodness of the Lord.

**2) PEACEFUL REST (Ps 23:2+): He leads me beside quiet waters.**

Lit. "waters of resting places," i.e., restful waters--waters that provide refreshment and well-being (Is 49:10). Sheep are afraid of fast flowing streams. God's provision of still waters has a soothing effect & calms the sheep. The root word

a banquet; focused exclusively on honoring us, welcoming us, and meeting our every need. He appears totally oblivious to our enemies-he has our enemies totally under his control! The poetic shock of this scene is immense: In the verse before when evil threatened, God bristled as a powerful Shepherd armed with rod and staff... but when the enemies actually surround us, God humbly serves us a totally unexpected banquet." ([Ref](#))

**What then does "prepare a table" picture?**

This word pictures God's provision for man's needs (Ps 78:19 Then they spoke against God; They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? [Spurgeon's note](#)). Luke 22:28, 29, 30+ describes a yet future "table" (Gk = [trapeza](#)) when Jesus' disciples will sit at His table in the Messianic Kingdom. (cf Rev 19:9+ "the [marriage supper](#) of the **Lamb**.')

In the ancient Near East the hospitality offered to a traveler was of great significance. According to the Bedouin law of hospitality, once a traveler was received into the shepherd's tent & his host had spread food before him, he was guaranteed immunity from enemies who might be attempting to overtake him. In pastoral circles no human protection was greater than that afforded by the hospitality of a Bedouin chief. No greater security or comfort could be obtained by a traveler in the ancient Near East than to be offered the hospitality of a home. Even an enemy, once served a meal, was totally secure for as long as his visit should last. It was understood that this was a provision of shelter and food, but even more it was a guarantee of protection from harm. This

for "[quiet](#)" (hold pointer over "quiet" for Septuagint or Lxx word) in Hebrew = "**absence of movement**" w/ the idea of being settled next to the waters to which He leads me. The verb [hodegeo](#) is used by the Septuagint (or Lxx) is to translate the Hebrew word for "[leads](#)" & interestingly is the same verb used by John to describe the leading of the Holy Spirit (Jn 16:13) & is also used to describe the leading of the Lamb in (Rev 7:17+: the **Lamb** in the center of the throne will be their **Shepherd**, and will guide (*hodegeo*) them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.").

Similarly the Lxx word for "[quiet](#)" ([anapausis](#)) is used by Jesus Himself in His invitation for all those who are weary & heavy laden to come to Him (Mt 11:29+).

### Spurgeon adds

*Our Lord leads us beside these "still waters;" we could not go there of ourselves, we need his guidance, therefore it is said, "he leadeth me." He does not drive us. Moses drives us by the law, but Jesus leads us by his example, and the gentle drawing of his love.*

### 3) POWER RESTORED: He restores my soul. (Ps 23:3+)

He revives me & refreshes my spirit, where the Hebrew word "shuwb" (shuv) describes movement back to the point of departure, a reversal of direction (literally in 2 Ki 20:10) so one sense of restoring our souls may be that He restores us from our wandering way (cf Ps 51:12+ where David prays to be restored; cf Ps 85:4, 5, 6, 7+). In addition our "spiritual battery" tends to run down with the toil & testing of each day & thus we find ourselves in daily need of restoration & revival (2 Cor 4:16+, cf Ps 119:25+ ([Spurgeon note](#)). But how? Thru disciplined regular intake of His life giving Word (cp Ps 19:7+ "The [law](#) of the [LORD](#) is **PERFECT**, **restoring** the [soul](#)" - [Spurgeon note](#)) & thru the ministry of the

figure then encompasses all the figures David has used before in which God feeds, provides, leads and protects -- all bound up in this symbol of a gracious host.

### Spurgeon adds this thought

Thou preparest a table," just as a servant does when he unfolds the damask cloth and displays the ornaments of the feast on an ordinary peaceful occasion. Nothing is hurried, there is no confusion, no disturbance, the enemy is at the door, and yet God prepares a table, and the Christian sits down and eats as if everything were in perfect peace. Oh! the peace which Jehovah gives to his people, even in the midst of the most trying circumstances! ([Ref](#))

### What is the picture conveyed by "anointed my head with oil" & "My cup overflows"?

Both activities represent the first two things a gracious host would do for an honored guest in David's day. The host would take a small clay pitcher with a very narrow neck, break the neck and pour the perfumed oil over the guest's head until it drips onto his beard and clothes, thus anointing him with a sweet smell. What a scene of blessing and honor (see Ps 104:15+, Eccl 9:8, Lk 7:46+) The psalmist's head was anointed with oil, a generous gesture which bestowed honor on him as an esteemed guest.

### Spurgeon notes that

The easterns use oil more than we do, and probably are wiser in this respect than we are: they delight in anointing with perfumed oils, and regard the shining of the face as a choice **emblem of joy**." ([Ref](#)) Others have written "The ancients made much use of oil to beautify their persons. Oil and perfumes were symbolic of rejoicing, and as such they would be used on festive occasions

**"My cup overflows"** not only enough, a full cup but more than enough, an overflowing cup, not half-filled, but running over, not "leftovers" but abundantly given. God's provision is as abundant as the drink offered to a guest by a generous

Spirit of Christ. While a shepherd provides his sheep with food, rest & restoration, God provides His sheep with His Word, which is the principle means of giving spiritual nourishment, rest & restoration. Do you feel rested & restored? Are you daily taking in the Word? (if you having difficulty w/ this discipline let me encourage you to begin reading brief devotional in the [Daily Bread](#) along w/ the Scriptural passage. The more you eat "good food" the more you will desire it.)

**Spurgeon:** *"Do we feel that our spirituality is at its lowest ebb? He who turns the ebb into the flood can soon restore our soul. Pray to him, then, for the blessing--"Restore thou me, thou Shepherd of my soul!" (cf Ps 119:176- Spurgeon note)*

**4). PURPOSE REVEALED: He guides me in the paths of righteousness** (Psalm 23:3+):

When we follow the Good Shepherd we will always be on the right paths, which are safe & productive because of His leading. How does He "guide" us today? A central aspect of this guidance comes from His **Word** (Pr 6:22, 23+, 2Pe 1:19 [note], [Ps 17:4](#)) as well as from our "[Helper](#)", the Holy Spirit Who "will [guide](#) (us) into [all](#) the [truth](#)" (Jn 16:13, 1Co 2:12, 13, 14+)

**Hemphill** writes

Being on the right path does not mean that we will not face danger or difficulty as we follow the Shepherd. In verse 4, the reader is reminded that the sheep may have to travel through the valley of death, yet the sheep are assured that no evil will befall them if they remain near the shepherd. We frequently desire and plead that we might avoid the difficult circumstances of

host. The lavish treatment of the guest is indicative of the loving care of God for His people. (cf Eph 3:20+) . Annie Flint Johnson offers this perspective...

His love has no limit,  
His grace has no measure,  
His power has no boundary known unto men:  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus  
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.

**What is David's conclusion? How certain is he of his conclusion?**

["Surely"](#) (truly, verily, certainly) is the first word in the original Hebrew sentence & according to The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, it signifies "**affirmative emphasis**". If indeed this psalm was written later in David's life, he had many times experienced the good hand of the Lord upon him. And so David concludes this great song with this affirmation of Jehovah's faithfulness.

**What will [follow](#) David (& us) all the days of our life? What is the idea inherent in the verb "[follow](#)"?**

"goodness (note) & lovingkindness (note on God's mercy)" will not just "[follow](#)" but will actively pursue me, which more accurately reflects the meaning of this Hebrew verb (the Septuagint translates it with a Greek verb meaning to "search for eagerly, to track down, to hunt for someone as in Mark 1:36) What a great thought - it's almost as if "goodness" and "mercy" are God's two "sheepdogs" that track me down nipping at my heels when I go astray or wander off the path.

God's inexhaustible goodness describes the attribute of God (see Attributes of God) which gives to others, not according to what they deserve but according to His good will & kindness toward them. Goodness may be appended to all his other attributes. His wrath is good. His mercy is good. His justice is good. His holiness is good. His love is good. Everything God does is good. There is nothing but goodness in His being! Since God is good, He always has our best interests at heart. That must be true and if we are going to be content, we must believe it & lay hold of this profound truth by faith (not by sight). Because God is

life, when in truth our greatest concern should always be our proximity to the Shepherd. (Ref)

Four characterizing activities of the Lord as Shepherd (i.e., emphasizing His grace and guidance) are followed by the ultimate basis for His goodness, i.e., "His name's sake" (cf. Ps 25:11; 31:3; 106:8; Is 43:25; 48:9; Ezek. 36:22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32) God guides us for the sake of his reputation. The prosperity of the Lord's servant brings honor to the Lord's name. The professional guide's "name" or reputation was the traveler's only guarantee of protection and safe arrival, as it was the guide's main claim to employment.

The measure of a shepherd is the condition of his flock. God's reputation rests upon His ability to guide and care for His people.

**Ken Hemphill** adds:

Don't overlook the fact that the green pastures and the still waters are the essential provision by which the shepherd restores the sheep for their journey. It is important for us to remember that the journey is not complete when the sheep reach the green pastures and the still waters. The sheep are only being restored so that they might continue the journey, which may well lead them through dark valleys before the day is done. Rest is always a means to an end. The Shepherd renews the sheep so that they might follow Him as He leads

good, nothing happened in David's life that was not for his ultimate good. This truth by no means downplays the pain of tragedy or the sorrow of unexpected loss (as when David's son Absalom was killed). We all know what it is to stand by the graveside and say farewell to those I love and we all have wept many tears. But no matter -- **GOD IS GOOD**. His other great attribute of Immutability prevents Him from being anything other than GOOD... **ALL THE TIME**. Darkness veils His lovely face so we must lean on His unchanging grace, knowing that He is still GOOD, even in the valley of the shadow of death.

**Goodness** supplies our needs, and mercy blots out our sins.

**LOVINGKINDNESS** (hesed, checed) is a covenant term with the basic meaning of "loyal love" or "steadfast love." Because it is related to God's covenant, this attribute expresses the idea of unfailing love & faithfulness. Together with goodness it suggests the steady kindness and support that one can count on in the family or between firm friends. In the past David had experienced enemies pursuing him but now it is God's goodness & lovingkindness which is actively pursuing him.

**What's David's final conclusion?**

"I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever".

David knew that he was not yet home & Christian you too can know that no matter what your current experience, you are not home yet. But eternity future is not far away for any of us where we will learn in the final & eternal sense that Jehovah is enough & we will never want for anything throughout eternity. John described our future state beautifully in Rev 7:16-17+

They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat for the **Lamb** in the center of the throne will be their **Shepherd**, and will guide them to springs of the water of life and God will wipe every tear from their eyes (see Rev 7:16, 17+)

Hayford has a nice summary statement: "One day Jesus the **Chief Shepherd** (1Pe

them in the paths of righteousness. (Ref)

### 5) PROTECTION RIGHT BY MY SIDE:

Our Shepherd goes before us when the path is smooth, but He stands beside us when the way is dangerous and frightening. In a way the best 2 words in the entire Psalm are "**WITH ME**". How often the assurance of His presence has encouraged the hearts of tremulous saints walking through valleys with dark shadows (cf Moses Ex 3, Joshua Dt 31:6-8, Josh 1:5,9, the remnant of believing Israel Isaiah 43:1, 5, every saint of every age Ps 46:7, Heb 13:5,6, Mt 28:18, 19, 20) The presence of the shepherd also offers comfort to the flock. Sheep are content merely to be in the same field with their shepherd; Christians are comforted by the very presence of the Lord. This thought is especially comforting when darkness overshadows the believer. It is the Shepherd's presence which dispels our fears. (See [Spurgeon's devotional](#)) How often we turn a corner (even when being led in the paths of righteousness) & find ourselves plunged into deep darkness against our will! The fact that God was David's shepherd did not keep him from many trials and tribulations ([1 Sa 18:6-9](#)) nor will it shelter us from similar dark valleys. Life is full of "deep darknesses". In these tight & suffocating places, the walls begin to close in, the light is expelled, & our vision becomes very dim. But in the valley of deep darkness in Ps 23:4, we "see" our Good Shepherd in a much more personal way. ([Click](#) real life example during US Civil War) We may not be able to literally see Him, but He is present. This Lord Who Is Here, Yahweh, is indeed with us in those times of darkness. Notice the shift in the pronouns from "**HE**" ("*he makes me*", etc) in (Ps 23:1, 2, 3) to "**Thou**" when he entered the valley of deep darkness. David clearly reaffirms the sufficiency of His Great Shepherd as he exclaims "Thou art with me!" Is there any other place more fitting for us to find Him this intimately than in the moments of darkness & despair? Don't despise the dark valleys for in them you will discover sweet communion with "[Shepherd & Guardian of your souls](#)" (1Pe 2:25-note), no longer ahead, to lead, but alongside to escort. And so in keeping with David's opening affirmation, we will

5:4-note) will return, gather His whole flock into one fold, and divide the sheep from the goats (Mt 25:31, 32, 33). Until that time, Jesus continues His search for every lost sheep (Mt 18:12, 13, 14). His sheep are to yield themselves to Him for His useful service until, at last, they "will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Ps 23:6+). - BORROW [Hayford's Bible Handbook page 756](#)

**Cares" or "Looks after"** in Ezekiel 34:12 suggests careful examination of each animal. Our Shepherd-God is a good shepherd. He knows well the condition of His flock. He sees the marks of sorrow on each face. He knows every cut and bruise, every ache and pain. He recognizes the signs of hounding, misuse, and abuse--the wounds that others have given us and the residue of our own resistance.

never "want" or lack for the comfort which comes from the Shepherd's presence, power & protection. While we are never promised there will be no evil, we can be assured that we need "fear no evil" (v4), for we will always be in the Shepherd's presence if we follow Him in His paths. How did David qualify the valley of death? It was only a "[shadow](#)" for to the LORD's sheep death is but a doorway into the Shepherd's presence. The **Good Shepherd** in laying down His life was then brought up from the dead as the "[Great Shepherd](#)" (Heb 13:12,21note) thus conquering death. (1Cor 15:24,25, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56)

This section is often applied to death of a saint to which Spurgeon writes

Observe that it is not walking **IN** the valley, but **THROUGH** the valley. We go through the dark tunnel of death and emerge into the light of immortality. We do not die, we do but sleep to wake in glory. Death is not the house but the porch, not the goal but the passage to it." ([Ref](#))

Elsewhere **Spurgeon** adds

Behold, how independent of outward circumstances the Holy Ghost can make the Christian! What a bright light may shine within us when it is all dark without! How firm, how happy, how calm, how peaceful we may be, when the world shakes to and fro, and the pillars of the earth are removed! Even death itself, with all its terrible



influences, has no power to suspend the music of a Christian's heart, but rather makes that music become more sweet, more clear, more heavenly, till the last kind act which death can do is to let the earthly strain melt into the heavenly chorus, the temporal joy into the eternal bliss! Let us have confidence, then, in the blessed Spirit's power to comfort us." ([Click for full devotional](#))

**Chuck Smith** from Calvary Chapel had the following interesting note in a message on Psalm 23+ especially the section referring to "death". He says

Death doesn't hold any terror or fear for the child of God. A survey was recently done among morticians 2000 of them responded to it. And it was a survey that dealt with the preparation of bodies of those people who they knew to be truly born again and those who were not, and you can ask a mortician to put a smile on a persons face when they are dead. Did you know that? Next to impossible, unless the person was a born again Christian! And they had observed this phenomena and so they made a survey among morticians, and it all came back, yes, they had all observed the same

phenomena.

Interesting isn't it?

**What gave David comfort?** (Psalm 23:4+)

"Thy **rod** & Thy **staff**".

The shepherd's **ROD** was generally a short club used to fight off wild beasts & clearly pictures **PROTECTION**. The "**STAFF**" was a slender pole with a little crook on the end used to aid the sheep & depicts **GUIDANCE** (how many times have we seen the idea of guidance in Ps 23? Why so frequent?) The crook of the staff could be hooked around the leg of a sheep rescue him from harm.

**Has He ever rescued you from harm?**

Gentle taps of the staff on the sheep's side provided direction & even discipline for sheep that were prone to wander from the "narrow path". In sum the Shepherd's rod and staff comfort the us as "sheep" because they convince us he has the necessary equipment to dispose of any evil or enemy we may meet in the darkness. What is your impression of God? A gentle Shepherd or an angry ogre eager to beat us? Note that the shepherd was not waiting for the sheep to take one false step so he could whap them. Our Shepherd is gentle in His directing & even in His disciplining of His sheep. Note also that while God may not always use His power to keep us out of trials, His presence and His power will always be with us to keep us through our trials.

At times the shepherd will throw his rod at a stubborn, straying sheep that refuses to hear his voice. At other times he gently nudges the stray with the end of his six-foot staff, crooked at one end to fit his strong hand.

(1) [A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23](#) by Phillip Keller - This book can be BORROWED.

(2) **NOTE:** As alluded to above, God frequently uses the metaphor of *sheep* to describe mankind, but be aware that most of the Old Testament sheep metaphors refer to Israel. I personally think that many of these passages can be legitimately applied to believers today and that is the

general approach of these notes (cf Jn 10:16+). I do not believe however that the church has replaced Israel (cf Jer 31:1-40, esp Jer 31:36+; see also Ro 11:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 - see notes) nor that God's covenant promises & plans for Israel will culminate & be brought to fruition until Messiah returns to reign in Jerusalem as the King of kings & LORD of lords.

#### Related Resources:

- See In Depth Verse by Verse Commentary on John 10 - The Good Shepherd and the Door into the Sheepfold
- Borrow Kenneth Hemphill's excellent book on the [Names of God - Jehovah Rohi begins on page 3](#) (Highly Recommended)
- [Jesus The Lamb of God](#)
- See chart on Redemption by the Lamb of God - in the OT "Where is the Lamb?", in the NT "Behold the Lamb!" and in eternity forever "Worthy is the Lamb!"

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#### Spurgeon's Devotional (1) on Isaiah 40:11

"Who is He of Whom such gracious words are spoken? He is **THE GOOD SHEPHERD**. Why doth He carry the lambs in His bosom? Because He hath a tender heart, and any weakness at once melts His heart. The sighs, the ignorance, the feebleness of the little ones of his flock draw forth His compassion. It is His office, as a faithful High Priest, to consider the weak. Besides, He purchased them with blood, they are His property: He must and will care for that which cost him so dear. Then He is responsible for each lamb, bound by covenant engagements not to lose one. Moreover, they are all a part of His glory and reward. But how may we understand the expression, "**He will carry them**"? Sometimes He carries them by not permitting them to endure much trial. Providence deals tenderly with them. Often they are "carried" by being filled with an unusual degree of love, so that they bear up and stand fast. Though their knowledge may not be deep, they have great sweetness in what they do know. Frequently He "carries" them by giving them a very simple faith, which takes the promise just as it stands, and believingly runs with every trouble straight to Jesus. The simplicity of their faith gives them an unusual degree of confidence, which carries them above the world. "**He carries the lambs in His bosom**" Here is boundless affection. Would He put them in His bosom if He did not love them much? Here is tender nearness: so near are they, that they could not possibly be nearer. Here is hallowed familiarity: there are precious love-passages between Christ and his weak ones. Here is perfect safety: in His bosom who can hurt them? They must hurt the Shepherd first. Here is perfect rest and sweetest comfort. Surely we are not sufficiently sensible of the infinite tenderness of Jesus! (C H Spurgeon, Morning and Evening)

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#### Devotional (2): Another devotional by Spurgeon on Isaiah 40:11:

"Our good Shepherd has in His flock a variety of experiences, some are strong in the Lord, and others are weak in faith, but He is impartial in His care for all His sheep, and the weakest lamb is as dear to Him as the most advanced of the flock. **Lambs are wont to lag behind, prone to wander, and apt to grow weary**, but from all the danger of these infirmities the Shepherd protects them with His arm of power. He finds new-born souls, like young lambs, ready to perish-He nourishes them till life becomes vigorous; He finds weak minds ready to faint and die-He consoles them and renews their strength. All the little ones He gathers, for it is not the will of our heavenly Father that one of them should perish. What a **quick eye** He must have to see them all! What a **tender heart** to care for them all! What a **far-reaching and potent arm**, to gather them all! In His lifetime on earth He was a great gatherer of the weaker sort, and now that He dwells in heaven, His loving heart yearns towards the meek and contrite, the timid and feeble, the fearful and fainting here below. How gently did He gather me to Himself, to His truth, to His blood, to His love, to His church! With what effectual grace did He compel me to come to Himself! Since my first conversion, how frequently has He restored me from my wanderings, and once again folded me within the circle of His everlasting arm! The best of all is, that He does it all himself personally, not delegating the task of love, but condescending Himself to rescue and preserve His most unworthy servant. How shall I love Him enough or serve Him worthily? I would fain make His name great unto the ends of the earth, but what can my feebleness do for Him? Great Shepherd, add to Thy mercies this one other, a heart to love Thee more truly as I ought." (C H Spurgeon, Morning and Evening)

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#### Spurgeon on Isaiah 53:6+

Here a confession of sin common to all the elect people of God. They have all fallen, and therefore, in common chorus, they all say, from the first who entered heaven to the last who shall enter there, "All we like sheep have gone astray." The confession, while thus unanimous, is also special and particular: "We have turned every one to his own way." There is a peculiar sinfulness about every one of the individuals; all are sinful, but each one with some special aggravation not found in his fellow. It is the mark of genuine repentance that while it naturally associates itself with other penitents, it also takes up a position of loneliness. "We have turned every one to his own way," is a confession that each man had sinned against light peculiar to himself, or sinned with an aggravation which he could not perceive in others. This confession is unreserved; there is not a word to detract from its force, nor a syllable by way of excuse. The confession is a giving up of all pleas of self-righteousness. It is the declaration of men who are consciously guilty-guilty with aggravations, guilty without excuse: they stand with their weapons of rebellion broken in pieces, and cry, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." Yet we hear no dolorous wailings attending this confession of sin; for the next sentence makes it almost a song. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." It is the most grievous sentence of the three, but it overflows with comfort. Strange is it that where misery was concentrated mercy reigned; where sorrow reached her climax weary souls find rest. The Saviour bruised is the healing of bruised hearts. See how the lowliest penitence gives place to assured confidence through simply gazing at Christ on the cross! (C H Spurgeon, Morning and Evening)

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**Spurgeon on Psalm 23:4** "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."

Behold, how independent of outward circumstances the Holy Ghost can make the Christian! What a bright light may shine within us when it is all dark without! How firm, how happy, how calm, how peaceful we may be, when the world shakes to and fro, and the pillars of the earth are removed! Even death itself, with all its terrible influences, has no power to suspend the music of a Christian's heart, but rather makes that music become more sweet, more clear, more heavenly, till the last kind act which death can do is to let the earthly strain melt into the heavenly chorus, the temporal joy into the eternal bliss! Let us have confidence, then, in the blessed Spirit's power to comfort us. Dear reader, are you looking forward to poverty? Fear not; the divine Spirit can give you, in your want, a greater plenty than the rich have in their abundance. You know not what joys may be stored up for you in the cottage around which grace will plant the roses of content. Are you conscious of a growing failure of your bodily powers? Do you expect to suffer long nights of languishing and days of pain? O be not sad! That bed may become a throne to you. You little know how every pang that shoots through your body may be a refining fire to consume your dross—a beam of glory to light up the secret parts of your soul. Are the eyes growing dim? Jesus will be your light. Do the ears fail you? Jesus' name will be your soul's best music, and his person your dear delight. Socrates used to say, "Philosophers can be happy without music;" and Christians can be happier than philosophers when all outward causes of rejoicing are withdrawn. In thee, my God, my heart shall triumph, come what may of ills without! By thy power, O blessed Spirit, my heart shall be exceeding glad, though all things should fail me here below. (C H Spurgeon, Morning and Evening)