

# Psalm 23 Commentary

NOTE: The primary text utilized in Ps 23:1-6 below is the 1977 NAS as that is the version in which I originally memorized my Scriptures and I still like Thee and Thy and Thou.

**Psalm 23:1 (A Psalm of David.) The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.**

- **my:** Ps 79:13 80:1 Isa 40:11 Jer 23:3,4 Eze 34:11,12,23,24 Mic 5:2,4 Joh 10:11,14,27-30 Heb 13:20 1Pe 2:25 5:4 Rev 7:17
- **I shall:** Ps 34:9-10 Ps 84:11 Mt 6:33 Lu 12:30-32 Ro 8:32 Php 4:19 Heb 13:5,6
- [Psalm 23](#) - Barry Horner

## Related Passages:

1 Samuel 16:13+ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

Psalm 34:9-10<sup>±</sup> O fear the LORD, you His saints; For to those who fear Him there is no want. 10The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; But they who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing.

Psalm 84:11<sup>±</sup> For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.

Matthew 6:33+ "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Luke 12:30-32+ "For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. 31 "But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you. 32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.

## MY SHEPHERD MY SUSTAINER

**A Psalm of David** - Since these words were inspired by the Holy Spirit (2Pe 1:21+), we do not have to guess who penned this psalm, the shepherd-king himself who was anointed (like sheep were in ancient times) king by Samuel in 1Sa 16:13+, but then had to flee for his life for about the next 10 years as Saul sought to slaughter him (cf Ro 8:36+)! And we think that we have problems!!!

"The Lord is my shepherd—what more shall I want?"

-- Misquote from a young child

**Bob Deffinbaugh** - Knowing David was a shepherd in his early years, we may be inclined to interpret this psalm from the perspective of the shepherd. Phillip Keller has written a book on Psalm 23 entitled [A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23](#), which has many helpful insights. He writes from the background of growing up in East Africa and later making his living as a sheep rancher for about eight years. However as Keller points out, the vantage point of the psalm is from the perspective of the sheep, not that of the shepherd. I am tempted to entitle these verses, "A Sheep Looks at his Shepherd in Psalm 23." No portion in writing of any time or of any work has been so widely circulated. Jews, both Orthodox and Reformed, know this psalm. Christians of all denominations are acquainted with this psalm. The world has caught its beauty. ([Psalm 23: A Psalm That Calms the Soul](#))

**Dave Roper** - We know something of the circumstances of its composition. In the fifteenth chapter of Second Samuel there is recorded the instance in David's life when his own son rebelled against him and toppled him from the throne. David was forced to flee into the Judean wilderness with his family and servants, and for a period of time he was unable to reclaim his throne. His life was in jeopardy and he was hunted and hounded for a number of months. Perhaps, because so much of his early life had been spent as a shepherd in that same wilderness, the circumstances recalled his shepherd life. The images in this psalm are drawn right out of his experience as a young shepherd. This is a psalm for people who, like David, are experiencing a major upheaval in their life. Perhaps you too have children who are rebelling, or your home is in turmoil, or some long-standing relationship in your life is breaking up. This psalm is written for you. It is a psalm for people who are shaken and in turmoil. ([The Shepherd Psalm](#))

**Spurgeon** - There is no inspired title to this psalm, and none is needed, for it records no special event, and needs no other key than that which every Christian may find in his own bosom. It is David's Heavenly Pastoral; a surpassing ode, which none of the

daughters of music can excel. The clarion of war here gives place to the pipe of peace, and he who so lately bewailed the woes of the Shepherd tunefully rehearses the joys of the flock. Sitting under a spreading tree, with his flock around him, like Bunyan's shepherd-boy in the Valley of Humiliation, we picture David singing this unrivalled pastoral with a heart as full of gladness as it could hold; or, if the psalm be the product of his after-years, we are sure that his soul returned in contemplation to the lonely water-brooks which rippled among the pastures of the wilderness, where in early days she had been wont to dwell. This is the pearl of psalms whose soft and pure radiance delights every eye; a pearl of which Helicon need not be ashamed, though Jordan claims it. Of this delightful song it may be affirmed that its piety and its poetry are equal, its sweetness and its spirituality are unsurpassed. The position of this psalm is worthy of notice. It follows the twenty-second, which is peculiarly the Psalm of the Cross. There are no green pastures, no still waters on the other side of the twenty-second psalm. It is only after we have read, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" that we come to "The Lord is my Shepherd." We must by experience know the value of blood-shedding, and see the sword awakened against the Shepherd, before we shall be able truly to know the Sweetness of the good Shepherd's care. It has been said that what the nightingale is among birds, that is this divine ode among the psalms, for it has sung sweetly in the ear of many a mourner in his night of weeping, and has bidden him hope for a morning of joy. I will venture to compare it also to the lark, which sings as it mounts, and mounts as it sings, until it is out of sight, and even then is not out of hearing. Note the last words of the psalm—"I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever;" these are celestial notes, more fitted for the eternal mansions than for these dwelling places below the clouds. Oh that we may enter into the spirit of the psalm as we read it, and then we shall experience the days of heaven upon the earth!

**The LORD is my Shepherd** - Clearly David knows the perfect character of the One to Whom he is entrusting himself for his every need. He knew that the lot of any sheep depended on the love of his master. And David had come to know his Shepherd personally as exemplified by his words in Ps 18:1-2 - "I love You, O LORD, my **strength**. The LORD is my **rock** and my **fortress** and my **deliverer**, My **God**, my **rock**, in whom I take refuge; My **shield** and the **horn of my salvation**, my **stronghold**." Notice the repetition of the personal possessive pronoun "my" (8x)! Oh, to have David's sense of personal possession of Jehovah!

**NET Note** - In vv. 1-4 the psalmist pictures the Lord as a shepherd who provides for his needs and protects him from danger. The psalmist declares, "The Lord is my shepherd," and then extends and develops that metaphor, speaking as if he were a sheep. In vv. 5-6 the metaphor changes as the psalmist depicts a great royal banquet hosted by the Lord. The psalmist is a guest of honor and recipient of divine favor, who enjoys unlimited access to the divine palace and the divine presence.

**LORD** is Jehovah (see [notes below](#)), Yahweh, the great "I Am (ego eimi)" is Jesus, the Good Shepherd. As Jesus declared **I Am** (ego eimi) the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. 14 **"I Am** (ego eimi) the Good Shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me." The Good Shepherd has a personal relationship with His "sheep," which prompted David to use the possessive pronoun "**my**." David, an experienced shepherd, knew that sheep above all things, need a good shepherd. David understood the "sheep-like" tendencies of his fallen flesh, as described in Isaiah 53:6+ "All of us like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way." So David an good shepherd humbles himself under the mighty rod and staff of the Good Shepherd. In effect David echoes the words of Paul that he was not his own, but had been bought with a price (David by faith looked forward to the Cross) (1Co 6:19-20+) At this point, we must add that while this psalm is beloved by millions, only a select per cent of those millions can truly call the LORD their Shepherd. While all of us are "sheep," not all sheep belong to Jesus. As mentioned above Jesus declared "I know My own and My own know Me." So this begs the question, do you (I) know Him as my personal Good Shepherd? Jesus gave us the answer in John 10:9 declaring "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture." Have you entered that "Door" by grace through faith in Jesus? (Eph 2:8-9+, cf Titus 3:5-7+, Acts 16:31+, Acts 4:12+) If you have, then you are entitled to call Him YOUR Shepherd. If you have not, then He is not yet truly your personal Shepherd, so why wait? Why not enter that "Door" today so that you might experience life and experience it abundantly (Jn 10:10b)? Today could be your day to enter into His temporal and eternal watchcare of the Good Shepherd! (Read 2Co 6:2+) Once we enter His flock, we enter into an entirely new life and new future, but sheep (fallen flesh) can still be sheep (go astray), so see the thought below.

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, to affirm and acknowledge Jesus as our Good Shepherd, is tantamount to being willing to lay down our life, our desires, our goals, our wants, etc, and submit to the wisdom and guidance our the Chief Shepherd. It is to be willing to daily (yea, even moment by moment) "present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And **do not be conformed** ([present imperative with a negative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) to this world, but **be transformed** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." (Ro 12:1-2+)

**Larry Richards on Sheep and God as Shepherd** - In the ancient Middle East sheep were precious symbols of wealth. Their wool provided yarn for clothing; their bodies were preferred for sacrifice. Yet sheep are dependent creatures who must be guided to food and water and protected from wild animals. **God as Shepherd**. Sheep cannot survive alone in the wild, but must always be in the

company of a shepherd. The Middle Eastern shepherd loved his sheep, gave each one a name (Jn 10:14, 27 2Ti 2:19), and cared for each one tenderly (Isa 40:11). Many a shepherd interposed himself between wild beasts and his sheep, and at night the shepherd lay down and slept in the single doorway to his sheepfold. Any enemy would have to pass him to attack his flock. How marvelous then for us whom Scripture sees as sheep that God presents Himself as our shepherd. He leads us, protects us, and because He is always with us, we fear no evil. (BORROW [The Bible Reader's Companion](#))

**Spurgeon - The Lord is my Shepherd.** "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, defenceless, and foolish, and he takes God to be his Provider, Preserver, Director, and, 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.

*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.*

-- C H Spurgeon

## NO NEEDS EXCEPT HIM ALONE

**I shall not want** - NET = "I lack nothing." This affirmation is in a sense is a prophecy and in another sense is also a promise partaken. This is the heart of a sheep utterly satisfied with the Shepherd, and fully content with his or her lot in life. It transcends time and extends into eternity. **Want** in Hebrew means to e lacking and the Septuagint verb [hustereo](#) also means to lack or to be in need. As His sheep, we are always needy, always dependent on our Shepherd, our Creator and our Sustainer Who always meets our **needs**, but not our "**greeds**."

**W Phillip Keller** says "Sheep do not "just take care of themselves," as some might suppose. They require, more than any other class of livestock, endless attention and meticulous care....It is no accident that God has chosen to call us sheep. The behavior of sheep and human beings is similar in many ways as will be seen in further chapters. Our mass mind (or mob instincts), our fears and timidity, our stubbornness and stupidity, our perverse habits are all parallels of profound importance. Yet despite these adverse characteristics Christ chooses us, buys us, calls us by name, makes us His own, and delights in caring for us. It is this last aspect that is really the third reason why we are under obligation to recognize His ownership of us. He literally lays Himself out for us continually. He is ever interceding for us; He is ever guiding us by His gracious Spirit; He is ever working on our behalf to ensure that we will benefit from His care. In fact, Psalm 23 might well be called "David's Hymn of Praise to Divine Diligence." For the entire poem goes on to recount the manner in which the Good Shepherd spares no pains for the welfare of His sheep. (BORROW [A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23](#))

Contentment does not depend on  
what we have but on  
Who we have within and on  
what we have in Him.

**Deffinbaugh** - As a young boy I was troubled by the language of this verse and thought the expression, "**I shall not want**," meant that David didn't want the shepherd. Now I understand that David meant that since he had the Lord as his shepherd, he had no other want; he was lacking nothing. The significance of this statement can hardly be overemphasized. All through the ages Satan has attempted to portray God as a begrudging giver who only provides when He must. Satan desires to deceive those who trust in God, and wants them to believe they are lacking and deprived of the good things in life. This is the picture Satan tried to paint in suggesting that God had withheld the fruit of every tree of the garden from Adam and Eve (Ge 3:1). God is also portrayed as a begrudging giver in the temptation of our Lord (Mt. 4:1-11) and in the warning of Paul concerning the doctrine of demons (1Ti 4:1-4). The mentality behind David's words is completely opposed to the Madison Avenue propoganda where we are constantly being told that we have many needs, all of which can be met by buying some new (or old) product. We need "sex appeal" so we must buy a

new toothpaste, a new kind of mouthwash and a new brand of soap. We need self-confidence and a better self-image, therefore we must wear stylish clothing determined by the garment industry. Our whole mode of thinking is "want-centered." David tells us that to have God as our shepherd is indeed to have everything we want. He who is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-caring, is enough; He is sufficient. With Him we need nothing else (cf. Ps. 73:25-26).

**Spurgeon** on **not want** - I shall not lack for *temporal things*. 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 (2Co 9:8+, 2Co 12:9+). Resting in him he will say to me, "As thy day so shall thy strength be." (Dt 33:25+) 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 with its gloom shall not find me destitute. I have all things and abound; 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.

**Jeremiah Burroughs** in his classic book [The Rare Jewell of Christian Contentment](#) describes **contentment** as that "sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition....It is a work of the Spirit 'indoors.' It is a box of precious ointment, very comforting and useful for troubled hearts in times of troubled conditions....Certainly our contentment does not consist in getting the thing we desire, but in God's fashioning our spirits to our conditions...To be well-skilled in the mystery of Christian contentment is the duty, glory and excellence of a Christian...That man or woman who is never without a contented spirit, truly can never be said to want much. Oh, the Word holds forth a way full of comfort and peace to the people of God even in this world. You may live happy lives in the midst of all the storms and tempests in the world. There is an ark that you may come into and no men in the world may live such comfortable, cheerful and contented lives as the saints of God. **Oh, that we might learn this lesson.**" (Amen!)

**TRUE CONTENTMENT** consists not in the **LARGENESS** of our possessions, but in the **FEWNESS** of our wants. **SOUL CONTENTMENT** is vital to our spiritual health. [Thomas Watson](#) writes that "There is no better antidote against coveting that which is another's than **BEING CONTENT** with that which is our own." The more content we are with what God has given us, the less we crave what we don't possess. On the other hand, the more we get the more we want. When we focus on material things, our **HAVING** will never catch up with our **WANTING**! I am so convicted as I write this — how often I want something more or something other than what God has already generously given me! Oh, that we all might have a heart saturated with the sweetness of His sufficient provision in Christ, always confident that "God is able to make all grace abound to (us), that always **HAVING ALL SUFFICIENCY IN EVERYTHING**, (we) may have an abundance for every good deed" (2 Cor 9:8+) Contentment is more a reflection of the *state* of a one's heart rather than the *statement* of one's bank account! Is Jesus our Good Shepherd enough?

#### Related Resource:

- [Christian Contentment](#)

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#### The 23rd Psalm Explained!

- The Lord is my Shepherd - That's Relationship!
- I shall not want - That's Supply!
- He makes me to lie down in green pastures - That's Rest!
- He leads me beside the still waters - That's Refreshment!
- He restores my soul - That's Healing!
- He leads me in the paths of righteousness - That's Guidance!
- For His name sake - That's Purpose!
- Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death - That's Testing!
- I will fear no evil - That's Protection!
- For Thou art with me - That's Faithfulness!
- Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me - That's Discipline!
- Thou prepares a table before me in the presence of mine enemies - That's Hope!
- Thou anoints my head with oil - That's Consecration!
- My cup runs over - That's Abundance!
- Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life - That's Blessing!
- And I will dwell in the house of the Lord - That's Security!

- Forever - That's Eternity!

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**Each of the OT names for God is seen in this psalm:**

1. Jehovah-Jireh, "The Lord will provide" (Gen. 22:13–14);
2. Jehovah-Rapha, "The Lord will heal or restore" (Ex. 15:26);
3. Jehovah-Shalom, "The Lord our peace" (Jud. 6:24);
4. Jehovah-Tsidkenu, "The Lord our righteousness," (Jer. 23:6);
5. Jehovah-Shammah, "The Lord is there," (Ezek. 48:35);
6. Jehovah-Nissi, "The Lord our banner" (Ex. 17:8–15); and
7. Jehovah-Raah, "The Lord my shepherd" (Ps. 23:1).

In other words, Jesus Christ is to His sheep all that they ever need.

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**J Vernon McGee** - We have here a declaration and a deduction. **"The Lord is my shepherd."** I'm sure when unbelievers quote this verse they mean the Lord is a shepherd or the shepherd. But they don't mean to say personally, "The Lord is my shepherd." This personalization makes all the difference in the world. A preacher friend of mine was telling about an accident he saw. He came upon the edge of it and stopped to look. Someone said, "Some boy is hurt." Well, he was interested so he looked over and saw that the "some boy" was his boy. He recalled, "When they said, 'It's just a boy,' I was interested but not very interested. But when I saw him, I said, 'He's my boy.'" My makes all the difference in the world. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." How can you say that? You can say it only by the authority of His redemption—by His death and resurrection, by His grace and His mercy and His love.

I was asked many years ago to give a message at a presbytery in Cisco, Texas, on the subject of eternal security, and I took John 10 as my text. After I had finished, a rancher from San Angelo, Texas, came up to me. He said, "Young man, that was a pretty good sermon, but you don't know sheep." And I said, "Well, you tell me." So he said, "I have out on the range right now about two thousand sheep. I have a whole army of helpers out there taking care of those sheep. I have about that same number of cattle, and nobody is with them. Every cow will bring in a calf at the end of the year. We don't need to put anybody with them, but we have to put somebody with the sheep." He continued, "A sheep is not only the most helpless creature in the world, but a sheep is the most stupid creature that God ever created. A sheep is helpless, can't defend itself. It doesn't have sharp claws, doesn't have fangs—no way of defending itself. It's not like a jackrabbit. A jackrabbit doesn't have fangs or claws either, but he can run. A sheep can't run. He can't get away from trouble. If two little sheep were to wander away from the flock, over the hill just two hundred yards, they couldn't find their way back. They're lost and you'd have to go get them. If a wolf comes along, he'll kill one of the sheep. You'd think the other little sheep would be smart and say, 'While he's eating my brother I'm going to get back to the flock,' but he doesn't do that. He just goes around saying 'baa, baa' and waits to become dessert for the wolf. A sheep is a helpless and very stupid little creature."

You know, I've thought of that many times since then. The Lord must smile when He calls us sheep because He knows all about us. Then this rancher said to me, "If a sheep is safe, it's because the sheep has a wonderful shepherd." And so when I say to you, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," I'm not bragging about Vernon McGee, because he's just a sheep. The Lord has already told me I'm stupid and helpless. He's made that clear to me. But He has made it gloriously clear that He is the Good Shepherd who today is also the Great Shepherd of the sheep. And He is able to take care of His own. How wonderful that is. (David A Man After God's Own Heart)

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**Shepherd** ([07462](#)) **raah** is actually a verb meaning to feed, to tend; to be a shepherd (its participial form rō'eh), its sense in over 60 of the 160 uses in the OT. And so raah means generally to care for, to protect, to graze, to feed flocks and herds (Ge. 30:31, 36; 37:2; Ex. 3:1; 1 Sa 17:15). The first use describes "Abel was a keeper of flocks" (Ge 4:2) and later shepherders (Ge 29:9) those who pasture and lead the sheep. Figuratively raah is used of God as the Shepherd of Jacob (Ge 48:15; Isa. 40:11; Hos. 4:16). Raah referred to the king of Israel who was to shepherd the people for God (2 Sa 5:2; 7:7; Jer. 3:15) and in general to leaders of God's people (Jer. 2:8; 22:22; Ezek. 34:2, 3, 8, 10). God is pictured as the one who shepherds an individual soul, a person (Ps. 49:14).

The shepherd must be familiar with the available pastures and the routes to them. The shepherd must also be timely in leading the flock to a watering place, a permanent stream (Am. 5:24; Ps. 23:2; 74:15; Jer. 15:18), or a well dug to provide water (Ge 21:25, 30; 26:18, 19, 25, 32). A vivid picture of how flocks were watered is painted by the well episodes in Ge. 29:1-10 and Ex. 2:15b-16, in which women also appear. The shepherd must be timely in bringing the flock to a pen where they can safely spend the night, especially when the pasture is too distant to permit returning to house and stall or the encampment (Gen. 37:12-18) and the fold does not provide adequate protection. In an emergency the shepherd must keep watch over the flock in the open field (Lk. 2:8). A shepherd needs appropriate equipment if he is to do the job of protecting the flock entrusted to his care against wild animals or



other human beings. These included the staff, used to control the flock, and a club (šēbeṭ, Ps. 23:4; Lev. 27:32), a stick with a knob of hardened asphalt. David may have used the latter to fight off wild animals (1 Sa 17:35). A shepherd also needed a sling (qela') to confront both wild animals and robbers (1 Sa. 17:40, 50; Sir. 47:4), as David boasts. A watchdog could also be very helpful to a shepherd (Isa. 56:10; Job 30:1). In addition to his other responsibilities, a shepherd also had to use careful selection to breed robust animals to provide meat, leather, and wool. Musical instruments were also very helpful in calming and influencing the behavior of the flock. The commonest instrument used by shepherds was the pipe (Jdg 5:16) (Summarized from TDOT)

#### Related Resources:

- Torrey Topical Textbook [Shepherds](#)
- American Tract Society [Shepherd](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Shepherd](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Shepherd](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Shepherd](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Shepherd](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Shepherd](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Shepherd](#) [Sheep](#), [Shepherd](#)
- Smith Bible Dictionary [Shepherd](#)
- Vines' Expository Dictionary [Shepherd](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia • [Shepherd](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia • [Shepherd](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia • [Shepherd](#) • [Shepherd Kings](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia • [Shepherd](#)

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**Dave Roper - The Lord is My Shepherd - Rest and Renewal in Psalm 23.** - Finding your way through life can be easier when you have the right One leading the way. Below are links to an excerpt from Roper's book [Every Day Is a New Shade of Blue: Comfort for Dark Days from Psalm 23](#), in which he takes a closer look at the relationship between the Shepherd and the sheep expressed throughout Scripture. Gain insight from the lives of David, Isaiah, and others who found hope, encouragement, and rest under the watchful care of God.

1. [Who is God? Excerpt](#) - "So the question is God Himself: Who is He? This is the question to which all others lead—the question that God Himself put into our hearts. And if He put it into our hearts, there must be an answer in His heart waiting to be revealed. David gave us a comforting and compelling answer: "The Lord is my shepherd" (Psalm 23:1). *Shepherd* is a modest metaphor, yet one that is loaded with meaning. Part of the comparison is the portrayal of a shepherd and his sheep; the other is David's experience and ours. David painted a picture and put us into it. The genius of the psalm is that it belongs to us. We can use David's words as our own....It's one thing to say, "The Lord is a shepherd." It's another to say, "The Lord is *my* shepherd."
2. [Rest and Renewal Excerpt](#) - In David's day, "green pastures" were oases, verdant places in the desert toward which shepherds led their thirsty flocks. Left to themselves, sheep would wander off into the wilderness and die. Experienced shepherds knew the terrain and urged their flocks toward familiar grasslands and streams where they could forage and feed, lie down and rest. The picture here is not of sheep grazing and drinking, but at rest, lying down—"stretched out" to use David's word. The verb *leads* suggests a slow and leisurely pace. The scene is one of tranquility, satisfaction, and rest. The common practice of shepherds was to graze their flocks in rough pasture early in the morning, leading them to better grasses as the morning progressed, and then coming to a cool, shaded oasis for noontime rest.
3. [Time Alone With God Excerpt](#) - "Begin small and start promptly" is an old Quaker saying. The idea is to keep things simple and to begin soon. Simplicity begins with solitude—not mere time alone, but time alone with God.
4. [Listening to God - Excerpt](#) - Until we take time to be quiet we'll not hear God. God cannot be heard in noise and restlessness; only in silence. He will speak to us if we will give Him a chance, if we will listen, if we will be quiet. "Be still," the psalmist wrote, "and know that I am God" (psalm 46:10). "*Listen, listen to me,*" God pleads, "and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live" (isaiah 55:2-3, emphasis added). Listen to Him. There's no other way to take Him in. "When your words came, I ate them," said Jeremiah (jeremiah 15:16). Sit at His feet and let Him feed you.
5. [Responding to God - Excerpt](#) - As we listen to God, we should answer. This is prayer—our response to the revelation and unfolding of God's heart. "My God, Thy creature answers Thee," said the French poet, Alfred de Musset. Prayer, understood in that way, is an extension of our visits with God rather than something tacked on. Our meetings with God are like a polite conversation with a friend. They're not monologues in which one person does all the talking and the other does all the listening, but dialogues in which we listen thoughtfully to one another's self-disclosure and then respond.

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**ILLUSTRATION OF SHEEP BELONGING TO THE SHEPHERD** - The day I bought my first thirty ewes, my neighbor and I sat on the dusty corral rails that enclosed the sheep pens and admired the choice, strong, well-bred ewes that had become mine. Turning to me he handed me a large, sharp, killing knife and remarked tersely, "Well, Phillip, they're yours. Now you'll have to put your mark on them." I knew exactly what he meant. Each shepherd has his own distinctive earmark that he cuts into one of the ears of his sheep. In this way, even at a distance, it is easy to determine to whom the sheep belongs. It was not the most pleasant procedure to catch each ewe in turn and lay her ear on a wooden block, then notch it deeply with the razor-sharp edge of the knife. There was pain for both of us. But from our mutual suffering an indelible lifelong mark of ownership was made that could never be erased. And from then on every sheep that came into my possession would bear my mark. There is an exciting parallel to this in the Old Testament (Ex 21:2-5,6+). When a slave in any Hebrew household chose, of his own free will, to become a lifetime member of that home, he was subjected to a certain ritual. His master and owner would take him to his door, put his ear lobe against the door post and, with an awl, puncture a hole through the ear. From then on he was a man marked for life as belonging to that house. For the man or woman who recognizes the claim of Christ and gives allegiance to His absolute ownership, there comes the question of bearing His mark. The mark of the cross is that which should identify us with Him for all time. The question is—does it? Jesus made it clear when He stated emphatically, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34). Basically what it amounts to is this: A person exchanges the fickle fortunes of living life by sheer whimsy for the more productive and satisfying adventure of being guided by God. It is a tragic truth that many people who really have never come under His direction or management claim that "The Lord is my shepherd." **They seem to hope that by merely admitting that He is their Shepherd somehow they will enjoy the benefits of His care and management without paying the price of forfeiting their own fickle and foolish way of life.** One cannot have it both ways. Either we belong or we don't. Jesus Himself warned us that there would come a day when many would say, "Lord, in Your name we did many wonderful things," but He will retort that He never knew us as His own. (Mt 7:22-23+) It is a most serious and sobering thought that should make us search our own hearts and motives and personal relationships to Him. Do I really belong to Him? Do I really recognize His right to me? Do I respond to His authority and acknowledge His ownership? Do I find freedom and complete fulfillment in this arrangement? Do I sense a purpose and deep contentment because I am under His direction? Do I know rest and repose, besides a definite sense of exciting adventure, in belonging to Him? (Phillip Keller - [A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23](#))

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**ILLUSTRATION - I KNOW THE WORDS - HE KNOWS THE SHEPHERD** - At a reception, a famous actor was asked to give a recitation. An old preacher suggested the Psalm 23. He did it with great oratorical skill and sat down to prolonged applause. Then he turned to the old preacher and asked him to recite the psalm also. In a weak and 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 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?

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### The Television Psalm

The TV is my shepherd, I shall not want.  
It makes me to sit down and do nothing for His name's sake,  
Because it requires all my spare time.  
It restores my knowledge of the things of this world.  
It keeps me from the study of God's Word.  
Its sound and picture, they comfort me.  
Even though I live to a hundred, I shall keep on viewing.  
As long as it works, surely no good thing will come of my life.

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### J Vernon McGee - Comparison of Psalm 22, 23, 24

Psalm 22 speaks of the past; Psalm 23 speaks of the present; Psalm 24 looks to the future.

Psalm 22 is the psalm of the cross; Psalm 23 is the psalm of the crook; Psalm 24 is the psalm of the crown.

You see Him dying in Psalm 22; you see Him living in Psalm 23; you see Him coming in Psalm 24.

Psalm 22 is the foundation; Psalm 23 is the manifestation; Psalm 24 is the expectation.

He is the Savior in Psalm 22; He is the Satisfier in Psalm 23; He is the Sovereign in Psalm 24.

It is my position that you must know the Savior of Psalm 22 before you can know the Shepherd of Psalm 23. I do not believe that any man can say, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," until he can say, "The Lord is my Savior."

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## Robert Morgan - Misplaced Buts

Robert C. McQuilkin established a great Bible conference in Asheville, North Carolina, called Ben Lippen, and years later Vance Havner preached there. Both men came away with the same lesson from Psalm 23:1.

In the early days of Ben Lippen, McQuilkin gave a breakfast devotion one morning, saying: "Is the Lord meeting all your needs or isn't he? Now, most Christians will say, 'Why certainly the Lord is meeting all my needs, but ...'—and then follow that **'but'** with all the things that are troubling them. 'The Lord is my Shepherd, **but** I have not a gift for personal work. The Lord is my Shepherd, **but** I don't have a job. The Lord is my Shepherd, **but** my child is sick.' You see? You have the **but** in the wrong place. And so I would say, 'We have tremendous deficits, **but** the Lord is my Shepherd. I'm not very strong, **but** the Lord is my Shepherd. I'm all confused, **but** the Lord is my Shepherd. ...'"

Years later, evangelist Vance Havner came to preach at Ben Lippen. He was worried about his wife, Sara, who had contracted a rare and deadly disease. Her life was ebbing away, and doubt and dread overwhelmed him. While there he began thinking of Psalm 23. The Lord impressed him that he was acting more like a billy goat than a sheep—always butting. "Yes, I know that the Lord is my Shepherd BUT ... I'm growing old and who is going to care for me? What if I get sick and my helpmeet cannot come to my aid?" Havner climbed the nearby mountaintop to pray, and there the Lord restored his soul. Surely He who has brought me through nearly seventy-two years of dangers, toils, and snares will see that I finish the journey. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me the rest of the way and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. "Lord," he said, "help me be a lamb and not a billy goat!" (BORROW [From This Verse](#))

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## Henry Blackaby - Better than Lions

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing. Psalm 23:1

According to the Scriptures, it's better to be a sheep than a lion. Lions are fierce and strong; sheep are weak and defenseless, but they don't have to fear for their safety. Lions are mighty hunters, yet it is the sheep that doesn't go hungry. That's because the sheep has something the lion doesn't have—a shepherd. The lion must depend upon its own strength and cunning; the sheep belongs to one who will lay down his very life for its safety. Psalm 34:10 observes: "The lions may grow weak and hungry, / but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing." In other words, even the strongest, most ambitious people may not always have all they need, but those who trust God to provide for them will have all their needs met and more.

God himself is the greatest security you have. No enemy can succeed against you when you are under God's care. You will never lose your way in life when God is the one guiding you. No crisis you face will be too difficult for God to overcome. It's all a matter of where you put your trust. Have you put your trust in prayer instead of putting it in God? Is your faith based on your religion? Do you put your faith in other Christians? Your church? These things are all part of your Christian life, but your ultimate trust should be in your Shepherd. God is the only one you can always depend on to meet your needs.

If you wander away from your Shepherd, you will miss out on what the Shepherd wants to give you. Even then, however, he will not abandon you (see Psalm 139:7–12). He is your Shepherd by choice—his choice (John 15:16) as well as yours (John 14:15). If you have drifted away from the Shepherd, he urges you to return to him today (Matthew 11:28–30). Under his care, you will find strength, purpose, and security. (BORROW [The Experience](#))

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## James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose - THE ALMIGHTY SHEPHERD

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want" (Psa. 23:1).

This is a fountain of Living Water, an unfailing star in the night of sorrow and suffering. Look at it as the language of—

I. Real Confession. The Lord is my Shepherd, because I have taken my place at His feet as a sheep—

1. Acknowledging my ignorance—"Mind blinded."
2. Acknowledging my waywardness—"Gone astray."
3. Acknowledging my helplessness—"Undone."
4. Acknowledging my dependence—"I will trust."

II. Peaceful Assurance. "The Lord is my Shepherd." He is mine—

1. Because He hath purchased me with His blood.
2. Because He hath led me by His Spirit.



3. Because He hath fed me by His Word.
4. Because He hath kept me by His power.

III. Unwavering Confidence. "I shall not want." I shall not want whatever He thinks shall be for my highest good and His glory—

1. Because His riches are unsearchable.
2. Because His power is almighty.
3. Because His faithfulness is unailing.
4. Because His love is unchanging.

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### James Smith - THE ALMIGHTY SHEPHERD PSALM 23

Among all the Psalms, the twenty-third is the "pet lamb" of the flock to many. Beecher called it the "Nightingale Psalm, small, and of a homely feather, singing shyly out of obscurity; but, oh! it has filled the air of the whole world with melodious joy." After the Psalm of the Cross comes the Psalm of Life, and fullness of blessing. The path of this pilgrim is like the shining light that shineth more and more till the day of perfection. Let us follow him step by step. There was—

**I. Decision.** "The Lord is my Shepherd." His personal choice was made as to whom he would follow. He would not follow his own heart nor the blind reasonings of men; he would claim Jehovah as his Saviour and Guide and not be ashamed to say so.

**II. Assurance.** "I shall not want." The godless, although strong as young lions, do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good. "My God shall supply all your need." He has his Shepherd's promise, and he believes it.

**III. Rest.** "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, and beside the waters of rest" (margin). The rest of faith in the Lord is a rest that is calm and refreshing. He does not say "rest," without leading into the best place where it can be found—in His love—green pastures.

**IV. Restoration.** "He restoreth my soul." If through self-confidence, or discontent, we should stray from His paths of greenness, He is gracious enough to forgive and restore. He, only, can restore the backsliding soul (1 John 1:1).

**V. Guidance.** "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness." The paths that are right may not always be the paths that seem easiest. Bunyan's pilgrims found it "easy going" over the stile which led to the castle of Giant Despair. His leading is for His own Name's sake.

**VI. Courage.** "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." The shadow of death is a dreadful thing to the man whose portion is in this life. But there is no evil to fear when the Shepherd is near (Isa. 43:2).

**VII. Fellowship.** "Thou art with me." The heavenly pilgrim is always in good company. The Lord stands by when all men forsakes (2 Tim. 4:16, 17). His presence is always sufficient at all times.

**VIII. Comfort.** "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." The club and the crook of the shepherd were the instruments of defence and deliverance. What they were to the sheep, the Word of the Lord is to us. It is a club to beat off our enemies, and a crook to guide or lift those who have fallen into a pit or ditch. The sword of the Spirit doth comfort me.

**IX. Provision.** "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." He knows when and how to feed His flock. We have a meat to eat that they know not of.

**X. Enduement.** "Thou anointest my head." This anointing, or unction from the Holy One, is significant of authority and power. Kings and priests were anointed. Ye are a kingdom of priests unto God (Acts 1:8).

**XI. Satisfaction.** "My cup runneth over." The God of grace gives good measure, pressed down, shaken together, heaped up, running over. The holy anointing must go before the overflowing (see John 7:37, 38).

**XII. Prospect.** "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me ... and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Goodness to supply, and mercy to forgive, all the days of this life; and a mansion is prepared beyond this life, where we shall be for ever with the Lord (John 14:1–3).

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### Psalm 23, Antithesis by Marcia Kay Hornok

The clock is my dictator, I shall not rest.  
It makes me lie down only when exhausted.  
It leads me to deep depression.

It hounds my soul.  
It leads me in circles of frenzy for activity's sake.  
Even though I run frantically from task to task,  
I will never get it all done,  
For my "ideal" is with me.  
Deadlines and my need for approval, they drive me.  
They demand performance from me, beyond the limits of my schedule.  
They anoint my head with migraines.  
My in-basket overflows.  
Surely fatigue and time pressure shall follow me all the days of my life,  
And I will dwell in the bonds of frustration forever.

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### James Smith - PSALM 23.

1. Beneath me, "green pastures."
  2. Beside me, "still waters."
  3. With me, "my Shepherd."
  4. Before me, "a table."
  5. Around me, "mine enemies."
  6. Upon me, "anointing."
  7. After me, "goodness and mercy."
  8. Beyond me, "The house of the Lord."—Selected.
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### Elmer Towns - [Psalm 23: Green Pastures and Still Waters](#)

#### A. INTRODUCTION

1. What are our two greatest needs?
  - a. Food, i.e., green pastures.
  - b. Drink, i.e., still waters.
2. How can the Shepherd meet our needs? Relationship.

#### B. LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES

1. Why do sheep lie down?
  - a. Natural. Standing people naturally want to lie down.
  - b. Tired. The Lord gives us rest in green pastures.
  - c. Sleep. We need rest to replenish our strength.
  - d. Hide. Sheep want to hide from danger.
  - e. Stop working. When we lie down, we stop working.
  - f. To be in His presence. Sometimes we want to be near the one we love.
2. Why does our Shepherd choose green pastures?
  - a. Chosen pastures. The original language suggests "choice pastures."
    - (1) Why not the pastures of another? Best for our need.
    - (2) Why not the pastures of the past? Not help us today.
    - (3) Why not the pasture of next year? We are not ready.
    - (4) Why not lie in the desert? The Shepherd always gets us home.
  - b. His choice. The Shepherd knows us . . . knows the pastures . . . knows the future; so His choice is best.
3. The original words suggest "tender new green grass." What vegetables are best tasting? Tender grass is best.
4. What does the Lord not do with the grass?
  - a. Does not choose what grass for us to eat.
  - b. Pick it for us. He leads us to the Scriptures, but we must, (1) listen, (2) read, (3) study, (4) memorize, (5) meditate.

- c. We must lie in it and eat it.
- d The Shepherd chooses the pasture for us.
- e We choose when, how much, and what to eat.

5. What does it mean because the word lie down is a continuous verb form?

- a. Repeated. The Lord will feed us “this day our daily bread.”
- b. Not just once. Every time the Lord gets us to a pasture of green grass, He gives us food.
- c. Daily. We get food, protection, fellowship and strength every day.

### **C. WHY DOES THE SHEPHERD MAKE US LIE DOWN?**

1. What does the word “maketh” not mean?

- a. To face down.
- b. To ride down
- c. To pull down.

2. What does the Lord not use to make us lie down?

- a. Sheep dog.
- b. His club.
- c. His strength.
- d. Punishment.

3. The word “maketh” means, “to cause me to lie down.” The emphasis is on “me.” What does this picture?

- a. God creates circumstances. The green grass looks so good the sheep want to lie down. Mother feeds and rocks the baby to get the baby to lie down and sleep.
- b. God creates appetite. After a long walk, the hungry sheep want to lie down.
- c. God creates desire. When Israel would not obey, God sent the hornets to make them willing to obey.

### **D. WHY DOES THE LORD LEAD BY STILL WATERS?**

1. What does the word “lead” suggest?

- a. Not drive the sheep. He knows the way.
- b. Not force the sheep. He faces danger first.
- c. Not point the way. We don’t obey well.
- d. Not tells us when to find water. He takes us to water.

2. What does the word “by” suggest?

- a. Not into the water.
- b. Not within sight of water.
- c. Not maketh us drink from still water. We all have a thirst “indicator” that lets us know when we are thirsty.
- d. He leads beside still waters so we can drink when thirsty.

3. What does the word “still” suggest?

- a. Able to drink without choking.
- b. Not to a river or waterfall to feel its power.
- c. Not to a lake to enjoy its beauty.
- d. “Still” suggests a place to rest and relax.

4. What does “water” do for us?

- a. Keeps us alive. “A well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).
- b. Refreshes. “As the deer thirsteth after a stream of water, so panteth my soul for you, O God” (Ps. 42:1, ELT).
- c. Enjoyment. “Oh that one would give me a drink of water of the well of Bethlehem” (II Sam. 23:15).
- d. Cleansing. “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Ps.51:7).

### **PRAYING THE 23rd PSALM**

Because Thou art my Shepherd,  
I commit my needs to Thee.  
Provide green pasture for me to lie in,  
Lead me beside still waters.

Restore my soul when I'm empty,  
Lead me in right paths for Your name's sake.  
Be with me in danger when I walk,  
Through the valley of the shadow of death.

Deliver me from evil,  
And protect me with Your rod and staff.

Prepare a table to feed me,  
So my enemies can see Your provision.  
Anoint me with the oil of Your healing,  
Let me drink from the full cup of Your provision.

Surely goodness and mercy will always follow me,  
And I will live with You forever.

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**John Butler - A PRICELESS POSSESSION "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1).**

The Psalmist possessed a prized possession that few have. The Gospel application is that the psalmist had Christ as His Savior.

**FIRST—THE SOVEREIGN IN THE POSSESSION**

**"The LORD is my shepherd."** The focus here is "LORD." This refers to Jehovah the great "I AM" of Exodus 3:14. This is no second-rate hero. This is God Almighty. You cannot have a greater possession than God. However, it is obvious that much of our society and especially the courts of our land do not want God. They rule out the mention of God in schools and other places when some antigod person complains. They seem to not want the Lord in any capacity in life. Then when God is not around and terrible things happen, they ask "why?" and blame God. The want of many vital things increases when God is put out of our life.

**SECOND—THE SHEPHERD IN THE POSSESSION**

**"Shepherd."** We need a "shepherd" in life. The word "shepherd" involves rule (position), guide (pilot), provision and protection. Sheep are in desperate need of these things. Without them, they will perish. The Gospel message is seen here. We need Christ as our Savior ("Shepherd") to rule, guide, provide and protect us or we perish. In the New Testament, Christ is portrayed as the Shepherd (John 10).

- Position. "Shepherd" refers to the Lord's position. He rules our life. We, however, do not like the "rule" part of the Shepherd. Jesus the Savior is a wonderful thought, but Jesus the Lord is something else. However, if the Lord is to be your "Shepherd," He will rule every aspect of your life. "Ye are not your own ... ye are brought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20)
- Pilot. The Shepherd knows where to lead the sheep. We sheep do not know where to go and therefore should follow Him.
- Provision. The shepherd knows and provides what the sheep need. God provides for his own.
- Protection. A shepherd protects his sheep from harm. David spoke of killing a lion and a bear to protect his sheep (1 Samuel 17:34–37). Christ the Shepherd will protect us eternally.

**THIRD—THE SATISFACTION IN THE POSSESSION**

**"I shall not want."** This not only speaks of adequate supplies but more it says, those who have Christ as their Shepherd will be satisfied. If there is one thing evident in our society, it is the lack of satisfaction among the people. They buy every gadget that comes along but it does not satisfy. Those who have wealth are not satisfied as suicide emphasizes. John D. Rockefeller, who had wealth upon wealth, was asked how much money it took to satisfy a man, his answer was one that expressed the lack of satisfaction. He said, "A little bit more." How that portrays mankind. He wants just a little bit more. He is never satisfied. But the Lord brings satisfaction to the heart and soul of man.

## JEHOVAH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IS JESUS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Whenever one reads **LORD** in all capital letters in the OT (in NAS but not capitalized in ESV), the Hebrew word is Jehovah. Jehovah also identifies Himself as "I Am" in Exodus 3:14+. So Who is "I Am"? And Is "Jehovah" mentioned in the New Testament? In John's Gospel we read "These things Isaiah said, because he saw His glory and he spoke of Him." (Jn 12:41).

**John** in explaining the judicial hardening of Israel records

38 that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?" (**quoting Isaiah 53:1 - note that in the NAS, NT verses in all caps are indicative of direct OT quotes** - and most of the OT quotes are actually from the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew text)" 39 For this cause they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, 40 "HE (**Who is He? Jehovah = Jesus**) HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES, AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART; LEST THEY SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED, AND I HEAL THEM." 41 These things Isaiah said, because he saw His (**Whose? Jesus'**) glory (**When? Isaiah 6:3 "Jehovah of hosts"**), and he spoke of Him (**Jesus**). (John 12:38-41)

Here is **Isaiah's record** of this event in Isaiah 6:1-3 (See also Isaiah 6 Commentary) ...

1 In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the **Lord (Adonai)** sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. (This is His **glory!**) 2 Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the **LORD (Jehovah)** of hosts, the whole earth is full of **His glory.**"

Numerous commentators in this century and prior centuries have concluded from John's passage that Jesus is Jehovah or Yahweh in the context of Isaiah's vision. However as discussed more below, not every use of Jehovah in the OT can be identified as Jesus. .

**John MacArthur** concludes that John 12:41 "is a reference to Isaiah 6:1**note. John unambiguously ties Jesus to God or Yahweh of the OT** (see John 8:58). Therefore, since John 12:41 refers to Jesus, it makes Him the Author of the judicial hardening of Israel. That fits His role as Judge (see John 5:22, 23, 27, 30; 9:39). ([The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word](#)) (Bolding added)

**James Montgomery Boice** commenting on John 12:41 writes that "The Gospel of John is a book filled with many extraordinary verses. But none is more extraordinary than (and few are equal to) the verse to which we come now. It is a verse in which John refers to one of the most glorious visions of God ever given to a human being—the vision received by Isaiah at the beginning of his ministry as a prophet, in which he saw **Jehovah** sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, with his train filling the temple—saying quite naturally, it would seem, that this applies to Jesus. John says, "Isaiah said this because he saw **Jesus' glory** and spoke about Him" (Jn 12:41). ([The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary](#)) (Bolding added)

**William MacDonald** - In [Isaiah 6](#) the prophet was described as seeing the **glory of God**. John now added the explanation that it was **Christ's glory** which Isaiah saw, and it was of **Christ that he spoke**. Thus, this verse is another important link in the chain of evidence that proves Jesus Christ to be God. ([Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#)) (Bolding added)

**Edwin Blum** in the respected **Bible Knowledge Commentary** agrees writing that "John wrote that this glory Isaiah saw was Jesus' glory. The implication is startling: **Jesus is Yahweh!** ([Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., et al: The Bible Knowledge Commentary. 1985. Victor](#)) (Bolding added)

**Adam Clarke** - It appears evident, from this passage, that the glory which the prophet saw was the **glory of Jehovah**: John, therefore, saying here that it was the **glory of Jesus**, shows that he considered **Jesus to be Jehovah**. (Bolding added)

**Jamieson** et al write that **John 12:41** is "a key of immense importance to the opening of Isaiah's vision (Isaiah 6:1-13), and all similar Old Testament representations. "**The Son is the King Jehovah** Who rules in the Old Testament and appears to the elect, as in the New Testament the Spirit, the invisible Minister of the Son, is the Director of the Church and the Revealer in the sanctuary of the heart" [Olshausen]. (Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments) (Bolding added)

**Life Application** commentary - Isaiah had seen the **Lord of glory**, Who is none other than **Jesus Himself**—Jesus is God, yet He is also a distinct part of the mysterious **Trinity**, and He is also Jesus the Son. (Bolding added)

**Matthew Poole** - Isaiah's sight of God's glory is described, Isaiah 6:1, "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, etc."



The evangelist expounds this of Christ, which is an evident proof of the **Deity of Christ, that He is Jehovah**; for it was Jehovah Whom the prophet there saw (Matthew Poole's Commentary on the New Testament) (Bolding added)

**Believer's Study Bible** - The passage undoubtedly refers to the magnificent vision of Isaiah (cf Isaiah 6:1-9), but also to the great Suffering Servant prophecy of Isaiah 53:1-12. Again the theme is sounded: the Messiah's glory is revealed in His suffering. Since John declares that **Isaiah saw the glory of Jesus**, it is certain that this vision was a **Christophany**, i.e., a preincarnate appearance of the living Lord. (Bolding added)

**Beasley-Murray** - The glory of God that Isaiah saw in his vision (Isa 6:1-4) is identified with the glory of the Logos-Son (**See John 1:1 Commentary**), in accordance with John 1:18 and John 17:5. (John 8:56 is a little different; Abraham had a vision of the day of Jesus in the future, i.e., in the time of the coming kingdom of God). (Word Biblical Commentary : John. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated)

**John Calvin** commenting on **John 12:41** writes - Lest readers should think that this prediction was inappropriately quoted, John expressly states, that the prophet (Isaiah) was not sent as a teacher to a single age, but, on the contrary, that the **glory of Christ** was exhibited to him, that he might be a witness of those things which should take place under his reign. Now the Evangelist takes for granted, that **Isaiah saw the glory of Christ** (Bolding added)

**Jamieson** comments that "**JEHOVAH**, (is) a name implying His *immutable constancy to His promises*. From the *Hebrew* root, meaning "existence." "He that is, was, and is to be," always the same (see Heb 13:8-note; Rev 1:4- [note](#); Rev 1:8-[note](#); compare Ex 3:14, 15; 6:3). As He was unchangeable in His favor to Jacob, so will He be to His believing posterity. ([Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments](#)) (Bolding added)

**Spurgeon** comments ""Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him" (Revelation 1:7). This judgment by Christ is by our apostle proved from an Old Testament prophecy which certainly refers to **Jehovah** Himself. Read Isaiah 45:23, and learn from it that our **Lord Jesus is Jehovah**, and let us joyfully adore Him as our Savior and God, to Whom be glory for ever and ever.

**Spurgeon** in his comments on Psalm 47:5 writes "The Lord with the sound of a trumpet. **Jesus is Jehovah**. The joyful strain of the trumpet betokens the splendor of his triumph, leading captivity captive, and well might the clarions ring out the tidings of Emmanuel's victorious return."

**Harry Bultema** in his assessment of the heresies of [Emanuel Swedenborg](#) writes "The Trinitarians received, according to his (Swedenborg's) visions, the greatest punishment. He fairly burned with hatred against this foundation-doctrine ([The Trinity](#)), which the church universal has always stood for. We need not sniff and smell here the heresy from afar, it is avowed and thrust forward upon every occasion, supported with revelations and visions from heaven. This undermines the very foundation of Christianity, just what Satan wants. **Christ claimed Himself to be God**, John 5:17, 20; 10:33, 36; 8:58; 19:7. He has the names, attributes, works and honor of God. **He is the Jehovah of the Old Testament as appears from the quotation of Isa 40:3**:"Prepare ye the way of Jehovah." John the Baptist prepared the way of Jehovah-Jesus, **Jehovah is Jesus** manifested in the flesh as a real man. This is the great mystery of godliness and it is as true as great, and we may safely say that Swedenborg did his best to rob Him of His divine glory. ([Emanuel Swedenborg Part 1 -- By- Harry Bultema: Bibliotheca Sacra: Volume 096:383 - July 1939](#))

**Comment:** Isaiah 40:3 can be used to refute the belief by Jehovah's Witnesses that Jesus is not Jehovah. Andrew Thomson writes "This is a useful text to quote to Jehovah's Witnesses, as their New World Translation of Isaiah 40 uses the name 'Jehovah'. So you can ask them whom John the Baptist prepared the way for, and, when they answer 'Jesus', you can show them from their own Bible that the passage in Isaiah 40 shows that Jesus is Jehovah." [Opening Up Isaiah])

#### Related Resources:

- Study: Angel of the LORD
- Caveats Regarding the Name Jehovah
- Note by Allen Ross

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**John Walvoord** - A comparison of the Old Testament and New Testament passages proves beyond doubt that the **Christ of the New Testament bears the title Jehovah or Lord in the Old Testament**. This fact has long been recognized by conservative theologians. This does not deny that the Father and the Spirit bear the title Jehovah, but affirms that it also belongs to Christ. The name is used both of the Persons of the Trinity severally and of the Trinity as a whole.

Many passages link Christ with the name Jehovah. In Zechariah 12:10b (ASV), where Jehovah is speaking, the description is to be

applied clearly to Christ: "They shall look unto me whom they have pierced." Revelation 1:7 describes Christ in the same language. Again in Jeremiah 23:5–6 (ASV) , Christ is declared to be "Jehovah our righteousness" (cf. I Cor. 1:30). Similar comparisons are found in other passages (Ps. 68:18, cf. Eph. 4:8–10; Ps. 102:12, 25–27, cf. Heb. 1:10–12; Isa. 6:5, cf. John 12:41). Christ is the Jehovah of the temple (Mal. 3:1; Matt. 12:6; 21:12–13) and the Jehovah of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8).

The fact that the term Jehovah was used of Jesus Christ is most significant as it affirms that Jesus Christ is worthy of the most ineffable name of God used in Scripture. This is confirmed by the New Testament use of Kyrios for Christ, the word used in the LXX as equivalent to Jehovah (cf. Acts 2:36). So holy was this name regarded that Jews reading the Old Testament would substitute some other name for Deity rather than to express vocally what the text actually said when it used the word Jehovah. The use of this term alone affirms beyond any question the deity of Jesus Christ and with this all the attributes of God. ([Jesus Christ Our Lord](#))

## OTHER REFERENCES TO JESUS IS JEHOVAH

(1) **Norman Geisler** and **Ron Rhodes** comment on the perversion of Romans 10:13 - "for "WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.""

**MISINTERPRETATION** - The New World Translation renders Romans 10:13, "Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved." **Jehovah's Witnesses cite this verse in arguing for the necessity of using God's proper name, Jehovah, in attaining salvation** (Reasoning from the Scriptures, 1989, 149).

**CORRECTING THE MISINTERPRETATION** - The New World Translation mistranslates this verse. It is correctly rendered, "**Whoever will call upon the name 'of the Lord' (Gk: kurios) will be saved**" (NASB). In context, "**Lord**" refers to **Jesus Christ**, as is made clear in Ro 10:9 (note): "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." So, by their own argument, if Lord means "Jehovah"—and Lord refers to Jesus here—then Jesus must be Jehovah, a doctrine they emphatically reject. Likewise, if "Lord" (kurios) means Jehovah, then Jehovah's Witnesses should accept Jesus as Jehovah, since Philippians 2:10-11 (NIV) declares that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (kurios)." Hence, if kurios is Jehovah, then Jesus is Jehovah. ([Correcting the Cults- Expert Responses to Their Scripture Twisting](#))

(2) **Jesus** is clearly **Jehovah** in Isaiah 43:10-11

You are My witnesses," declares the LORD (**Jehovah**), "And My servant whom I have chosen, In order that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He (Lxx = ego eimi just as in Jn 8:58, Ex 3:14). Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me. 11 "I, even I, am the LORD (**Jehovah**); And there is no **Savior (yasha')** besides Me.

**Ray Stedman Comments** - There is no Savior besides the LORD. He, alone, has power to deliver men from their sins. This brings to mind those wonderful words of the angels to the shepherds at Bethlehem, "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people, for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior (**soter**)," (Luke 2:10-11a). This verse in Isaiah says there is no Savior besides the LORD: "I am the LORD and besides me there is no Savior." But the angels declare, "there is born to you this day ... a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord," ( Luke 2:11). Clearly, Jehovah is Jesus, and Jesus is Jehovah. ([Who is Like our God- - Isaiah 40-43](#))

None other Lamb, none other Name,  
None other hope in land, or earth, or sea.  
None other hiding place from guilt and shame,  
None, but in Thee

(3) **Jesus** is **Jehovah** in Isaiah 44:6

"Thus says the LORD (**Jehovah**) , the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD (**Jehovah**) of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me.'" (See **Jehovah Sabaoth, LORD of hosts (of armies)**)

**Comment:** Jesus is the King of Israel, so this declaration by Jehovah clearly links Jesus with Jehovah. (See also Isa 33:22 Isa 43:15 Mal 1:14, Mt 25:34 Mt 27:37, Mk 15:26 Lk 23:38 John 19:19-22 )

**Charles Roll comments:** The profound and awesome title Jehovah, which is mostly rendered by the word Lord in the Authorized Version, is used 7,600 times in the Scriptures and is definitely applied to Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord. We may confidently say in the light of this wonderful designation that the Bible as a

book is the revelation of the name. In the Greek language there is no equivalent for this Hebrew title; therefore, whenever a quotation in which it occurs is made from the Old Testament, the word Lord is substituted. The One who affirmed five times over in the book of the Revelation, "I Am the first and the last," added further confirmation of His identity with the name Jehovah by also declaring on four occasions in the unveiling, "I am Alpha and Omega." The use here made of the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet not only corroborates the statement of our heading, but the letters also comprise the two vowels used in the Hebrew word Jehovah.

**Wherefore, Jesus is Jehovah.** Notice, **John the forerunner of Jesus was to go before the face of Jehovah to prepare His ways** (Luke 1:76, Isa 40:3-5 Newberry).

Jehovah is the age-abiding, all-pervading One, who, in His eternal being, inhabits eternity. Our finite minds falter when we attempt to comprehend that the repository of infinite wisdom, the residence of infinite power, and the reservoir of infinite love are centered in the intrinsic holiness of the Christ, bodily (Colossians 2:9). This magnificent name, Jehovah, incorporates every capacity conceivable of creative ability, redemptive activity, and mediative authority. All the benefits and blessings emanating from such attributes have been made available to man through the manifestation and mediation of Jesus, which title in Hebrew means "Jehovah saves." Wherefore, in Jesus the Saviour we are able to comprehend the incomprehensible, and know the unknowable, because He verifies the invisible realities.

We remember that under the old economy the lights and perfections of the adorable name Jehovah were made known to Israel through the medium of Urim and Thummim, which appeared on the breastplate worn by the high priest (Exodus 28 -30). That which would otherwise have been hidden in mystery concerning God's justice and judgments was made known through the breastplate worn over Aaron's heart. Urim means lights, and Thummim, perfections, indicating that Jehovah's character consists of lights and perfections, in whom is no darkness at all, and whose entire nature is absolutely free of all imperfection. The instruction contained in this teaches us that the true character of Deity is expressed most clearly in the righteousness of His judgments. Even His mercy is based on His justice. (See [Charles Roll](#))

Jesus bruised and put to shame  
Tells me all Jehovah's name,  
God is love I surely know  
By my Saviour's depth of woe  
--R C Chapman

(4) **Jesus is Jehovah** in Isaiah 45:21-23

Declare and set forth your case; Indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD (**Jehovah**)? And there is no other God besides Me, **A righteous God and a Savior**; There is none except Me. 22 "**Turn to Me, and be saved,** (cp Acts 4:12) all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other. 23 "I have sworn by Myself, The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness And will not turn back, That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance."

**Comment:** This is obviously Jesus speaking in the OT and offering salvation to all who will turn to Him!

(5) **Robert Hawker** (1753-1827) in his "Reflections" after his commentary on 1 Corinthians 12 has these words - "BLESSED GOD the SPIRIT! suffer my poor soul never to be ignorant of spiritual gifts! I know, indeed, O LORD, through thy divine quickenings, and gracious teachings, that like those Corinthians, I was once an ignorant, blind, and senseless Gentile; carried away unto the idols, and stumbling blocks of sin, and iniquity, which a fallen nature, under the dominion of Satan, had set up in my heart, **Blessed be the LORD the SPIRIT, which brought me out of darkness, and hath enabled me to say, that JESUS is JEHOVAH, and my LORD!** ([Hawker's Poor Man's Commentary](#))

(6) **Norman Geisler** and **Ron Rhodes** write "That **Jesus is Jehovah (Yahweh)** is clear from the fact that the New Testament consistently applies to Jesus passages and attributes which in the Old Testament apply only to Jehovah (compare Ex 3:14 with John 8:58; Isa. 6:1-5 with John 12:41; Isa. 44:24 with Col. 1:16; Ezek. 43:2 with Rev. 1:15; Zech. 12:10 with Rev. 1:7) (Ed; See Scriptures below). ([Correcting the Cults- Expert Responses to Their Scripture Twisting](#))

**Psalm 23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.**

Amplified: He makes me lie down in [fresh, tender] green pastures; He leads me beside the still and restful waters. [Rev. 7:17.]

- **makes:** Isa 30:23 Eze 34:13,14
- **green pastures:** Hebrew - pastures of tender grass
- **leads:** Ps 46:4 Isa 49:9,10 Rev 7:17 Rev 21:6 Rev 22:1,17
- **quiet waters:** Hebrew - waters of quietness, Job 34:29 Isa 8:6

#### Related Resources:

Revelation 7:17 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."

Revelation 21:6 Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.

Revelation 22:1; 17 Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb...(17) The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

## GREEN PASTURES AND QUIET WATERS

**He makes me lie down in green pastures** - Sheep must be led to green pastures, but don't always want to stay there.

**Spurgeon** - The Christian life has two elements in it, the contemplative and the active, and both of these are richly provided for. First, the contemplative. "*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.*" What are these "*green pastures*" but the Scriptures of truth—always fresh, always rich, and never exhausted? There is no fear of biting the bare ground where the grass is long enough for the flock to lie down in it. Sweet and full are the doctrines of the gospel; fit food for souls, as tender grass is natural nutriment for sheep. When by faith we are enabled to find rest in the promises, we are like the sheep that lie down in the midst of the pasture; we find at the same moment both provender and peace, rest and refreshment, serenity and satisfaction. But observe: "*He maketh me to lie down.*" It is the Lord who graciously enables us to perceive the preciousness of his truth, and to feed upon it. How grateful ought we to be for the power to appropriate the promises! There are some distracted souls who would give worlds if they could but do this. They know the blessedness of it, but they cannot say that this blessedness is theirs. They know the "*green pastures,*" but they are not made to "*lie down*" in them. Those believers who have for years enjoyed a "full assurance of faith" should greatly bless their gracious God.

**He leads me beside quiet waters** - **Quiet waters** are necessary for "flighty" sheep to drink. Quiet waters in Hebrew is "menuwachah mayim" which is literally "waters of resting places," or "waters of rest". This describes restful waters that provide refreshment and well-being (Isa 49:10). Sheep are afraid of fast flowing streams. The Shepherd's provision of quiet waters has a soothing effect which calms the sheep. Goats are quite independent, but sheep depend on the shepherd to find pasture and water for them. Shepherds also provide shelter, medication and aid in birthing. In sum, they are virtually helpless without the shepherd.

**NET Note** - Some take מִנְחָה in the sense of "still, calm" (i.e., as describing calm pools in contrast to dangerous torrents), but it is unlikely that such a pastoral scene is in view. Shepherds usually watered their sheep at wells (see Gen 29:2-3; Exod 2:16-19). Another option is to take מִנְחָה as "resting places" and to translate, "water of/at the resting places" (i.e., a genitive of location; see *IBHS* 147-48 §9.5.2e).

The image of placid waters emphasizes the concept of rest—the condition of having all our needs satisfied. God Himself is our "true pasture" (Jer 50:7) and our pool of quiet water. He is our true nourishment, our living water. If we do not take Him in, we will starve. There is a hunger in the human heart which nothing but God can satisfy. There is a thirst that no one but He can quench. (Jn. 6:27,35).

**Matthew Henry** - Those that feed on God's goodness must follow his direction; he leads them by his providence, by his word, by his Spirit, disposes of their affairs for the best, according to his counsel, disposes their affections and actions according to his command, directs their eye, their way, and their heart, into his love. God leads his people, not to the standing waters which corrupt and gather filth, not to the troubled sea, nor to the rapid rolling floods, but to the silent purling waters; for the still but running waters agree best with those spirits that flow out towards God and yet do it silently.

**Deffinbaugh:** I am inclined to think that the emphasis of verses 2-3a falls upon the rest which the Good Shepherd provides for his

sheep. This seems to be the point of the key terms in each line. The expression "lie down" speaks of rest (cf. the use of the same term in Ge 29:2; Isa. 17:2; Ezek. 34:15). Leupold reminds us that sheep do not graze lying down. From Ezekiel 34:15 I understand that the sheep would lie down to rest after having been fed. The adequate provision of lush pasture land, or "grassy meadows" and "quiet waters" (literally, "waters of rest," margin NASB) to which the shepherd has led his sheep, causes them to lie down in rest.

**Spurgeon** - The second part of a vigorous Christian's life consists in gracious activity. We not only think, but we act. We are not always lying down to feed, but are journeying onward toward perfection; hence we read, "*he leadeth me beside the still waters.*" What are these "still waters" but the influences and graces of his blessed Spirit? His Spirit attends us in various operations, like waters—in the plural—to cleanse, to refresh, to fertilise, to cherish. They are "*still waters,*" for the Holy Ghost loves peace, and sounds no trumpet of ostentation in his operations. He may flow into our soul, but not into our neighbour's, and therefore our neighbour may not perceive the divine presence; and though the blessed Spirit may be pouring his floods into one heart, yet he that sitteth next to the favoured one may know nothing of it.

"In sacred silence of the mind  
My heaven, and there my God I find."

Still waters run deep. Nothing more noisy than an empty drum. That silence is golden indeed in which the Holy Spirit meets with the souls of his saints. Not to raging waves of strife, but to peaceful streams of holy love does the Spirit of God conduct the chosen sheep. He is a dove, not an eagle; the dew, not the hurricane. 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.

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**J Vernon McGee** - "**He makes me to lie down in green pastures.**" That speaks of safety. A sheep won't lie down if there is danger. Even the laughter of a child will startle a sheep, and he'll get to his feet. If a sheep is lying down, that sheep is safe. My Shepherd makes me to lie down, and He makes me to lie down in green pastures. No sheep will lie down in green pastures if he's hungry. He's going to eat the green grass until he's full, then he'll lie down. And so you have safety and you have sufficiency here.

"**He leads me beside the still waters**"—the place where it is quiet. Sheep do not like to drink in turbulent, muddy water. They want it to be still and quiet. The human family needs that too—the deep satisfaction that only the Lord Jesus can give. I listen to some of these TV programs and I hear testimonies that say, "I trusted Jesus and He made me successful in business, He gave me a good job, He did this for me." My friends, that's not what the Word of God says at all. When people talk like that, they've missed the entire point. He doesn't give you rest, He is rest. He doesn't give you the bread of life, He is the bread of life. He doesn't give you the water of life, He is the water of life. Today there are those who are running everywhere trying to find satisfaction, but you find real satisfaction only in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The psalmist expressed that longing in Psalm 55:6, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest." Oh, how many people want to fly away. So many think, If only I could get away from this place and my problems and these people I'm with. If I could just get away and settle over yonder. That's the reason so many folks migrated to California, isn't it? I came along with all the rest, and I'm not going back to Texas either, I'll tell you that. But no matter where you go, you will not get away from your problems.

I once heard of a woman who complained and whined about everything. Time and again she'd say, "If I could just get away from this place." Her maid got tired of hearing it and finally said, "What are you trying to get away from? Trying to get away from this lovely home, this lovely family, the lovely husband you have? No matter where you go you've got to lug yourself along. You'll be taking your skin. All of your problems and all of your difficulties will go right along with you."

Oh, to find rest in the person of Christ! The psalmist again said in Psalm 37:7, "Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him." When the Lord Jesus was announcing that the kingdom of heaven was at hand and He was rejected as the King, He then sent out this personal invitation,

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will [literally, "rest you"] give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)

That's the rest of redemption.

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:29)

It's that soul-rest that is needed today—not just physical, not just mental, but the rest of the soul. Only the Great Shepherd can give that to the human heart.

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**Henry Blackaby** - Green Pastures

He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters. Psalm 23:2



Some people will gladly run your life for you if you let them! Some people have a way of always bringing you down rather than building you up. They encourage you to get involved in destructive things. They take advantage of you. Their concern is what you can give them, not what they can give you.

There is another kind of friend. This friend actually cares about what's best for you. It may be a teacher, classmate, coach, teammate, pastor—anyone God brings alongside you to help you make smart choices. These friends are your “green pastures,” your “quiet waters.” They are God's provision for you. They will encourage you to slow down when you take on too much. They will challenge you to get busy when you're too idle! They care about you enough that they'll warn you when you're heading into danger.

The Christian life is not meant to be difficult. If you find that your Christian life is wearing you out and leaving you distressed, you have wandered away from the “green pastures” and “quiet waters” your Shepherd has prepared for you. God will see that you have all the spiritual help that you need. He knows exactly what you need and when you need it. He knows where he's leading you. He has placed people around you who will guide you along the best path. If you've been wandering in the wrong direction, return to the Shepherd. He wants to give you peace and rest. (BORROW [The Experience](#))

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## Look for the Green

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. Psalm 23:1

Today's Scripture & Insight: Psalm 23

The gravelly voiced captain announced yet another delay. Crammed in my window seat aboard a plane that had already sat unmoving for two hours, I chafed in frustration. After a long workweek away, I longed for the comfort and rest of home. How much longer? As I gazed out the raindrop-covered window, I noticed a lonely triangle of green grass growing in the gap of cement where runways met. Such an odd sight in the middle of all that concrete.

As an experienced shepherd, David knew well the need to provide the rest of green pastures for his sheep. In Psalm 23, he penned an important lesson that would carry him forward in the exhausting days of leading as king of Israel. “The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, . . . he refreshes my soul” (vv. 1–3).

On the concrete jungle of an airport tarmac, delayed from my destination and feeling the lack of comfort and rest, God, my good Shepherd, directed my eyes to a patch of green. In relationship with Him, I can discover His ongoing provision of rest wherever I am—if I notice and enter it.

The lesson has lingered over the years: look for the green. It's there. With God in our lives, we lack nothing. He makes us lie down in green pastures. He refreshes our souls. By: [Elisa Morgan \(Click to go to the full devotional including a related picture and a link at the bottom of the page to one of their excellent devotional booklets.](#) Reprinted by permission from Our Daily Bread Ministries. Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Where can you look for the green today? In what ways has God provided a moment of rest when you thought it was impossible?

Loving God, thank You for being my Shepherd and for making me lie down in green pastures to refresh my soul.

**Psalm 23:3 He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.**

- **He restores my soul:** Ps 19:7 Ps 51:10,12 85:4-7 119:176 Job 33:30 Jer 32:37-42 Ho 14:4-9 Mic 7:8,9,18,19 Lu 22:31,32 Rev 3:19
- **He guides me in the paths of righteousness:** Ps 5:8 34:3 143:8-10 Pr 8:20 Isa 42:16 Jer 31:8
- **for His Name's sake:** Ps 79:9 Eze 20:14 Eph 1:6

## Related Passages:

Psalm 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

Psalm 51:10-12 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation And sustain me with a willing spirit.

Ruth 4:15 “May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”

Proverbs 25:13 Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest Is a faithful messenger to those who send him, For he refreshes the soul of his masters.

Lamentations 1:16 "For these things I weep; My eyes run down with water; Because far from me is a comforter, One who restores my soul. My children are desolate Because the enemy has prevailed."

2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

## RESTORING TO WALK WORTHY

**He restores my soul** - Observe first, our soul needs restoring! Believers are not "energizer bunnies" that keep on running! Yahweh revives me, refreshes my spirit and the daily restoration of the anxious, weary soul is a major human need (2Co 4:16). But how? Through intake of His Word (cp Ps 19:7 = "The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul") and the ministry of the Spirit of Christ (cf 2Co 3:18, Jn 6:63). While a shepherd provides his sheep with food, rest, and restoration, Jehovah provides His sheep with His Word, which is the principle means of giving spiritual nourishment, rest, renewal, revival and restoration.

**Matthew Henry** - "He restores me when I wander." No creature will lose itself sooner than a sheep, so apt is it to go astray, and then so unapt to find the way back. The best saints are sensible of their proneness to go astray like lost sheep (Ps 119:176); they miss their way, and turn aside into by-paths; but when God shows them their error, gives them repentance (Ro 2:4), and brings them back to their duty again, he restores the soul; and, if he did not do so, they would wander endlessly and be undone. When, after one sin, David's heart smote him, and, after another, Nathan was sent to tell him, Thou art the man (2Sa 12:7+), God restored his soul. Though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, He will not suffer them to lie still in it. "He recovers me when I am sick, and revives me when I am faint, and so restores the soul which was ready to depart." He is the Lord our God that heals us, Ex 15:26. Many a time we should have fainted unless we had believed; and it was the good shepherd that kept us from fainting.

**Spurgeon** - "*He restoreth my soul.*" When the soul grows sorrowful he revives it; when it is sinful he sanctifies it; when it is weak he strengthens it. "*He*" does it. His ministers could not do it if he did not. His Word would not avail by itself. "*He restoreth my soul.*" Are any of us low in grace? 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!"

As a side note Psalm 23 cannot be fully appreciated apart from the word of God spoken to Israel through the prophet Ezekiel. Against the backdrop of the false shepherds who had abused and oppressed God's flock, God promised to return to His people as their shepherd and to give them rest: (Ezekiel 34:11-15).

**He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake**- The Good Shepherd ascended and asked the Father and then sent the Holy Spirit to enable us "prone to wander" sheep to "toe the line" of righteousness (doing what is right). We are not speaking of keeping legalistic rules. Our doing what is right is not possible in our own strength, but requires daily filling with His Spirit that He might "energize" our hearts (our "control center") giving us both the desire and the power (Php 2:13NLT+) to walk in a manner worthy of our high calling as the Shepherd's sheep (Eph 4:1+, Eph 5:2+, Eph 5:8+, Php 1:27+, Col 1:9-10+, Col 2:6+, 1Th 2:10-11,12+, 1Th 4:1+, 1Pe 1:15-16+, 1Jn 1:6-7+, 1Jn 2:6+ - see related topic [Walking Like Jesus Walked!](#)).

**Dave Roper** - "The Hebrew word translated "**paths**" means "a well-defined, well-worn trail." That indicates again how stupid sheep are, because even when the trail is well laid out, they still need a shepherd. They are still inclined to wander away, no matter how obvious the path may be. The shepherd knows the trails. He has been there before, and the sheep trust him."

**Deffinbaugh** - Guidance<sup>86</sup> is recognized as one of the principle tasks of the shepherd. He leads his sheep to places of nourishment and rest (v. 2), but he also leads them in the proper paths. Often it is necessary for the shepherd to lead his flock great distances to find both pasture and water. Some paths are dangerous and should be avoided. The good shepherd leads his sheep in the right paths. God's guidance in the life of a believer is more than just a matter of leading us in the "right path"; it involves His leading us in "paths of righteousness."<sup>87</sup> What a wonderful word of comfort for those who seem to think that God's will is some kind of mystery, known only to the few who are so fortunate to find it. One of the assurances the psalmist is confident he will never lack is the leading of God in his life. Let us learn from David that we can be confident of God's leading in our lives when the Lord is our Shepherd, for the shepherd always leads his flock.

**Matthew Henry** - God instructs me by His **word** and directs me by **conscience** and **providence**. These are the paths in which all the saints desire to be led and kept, and never to turn aside out of them. And those only are led by the still waters of comfort that walk in the **paths of righteousness**. The way of duty is the truly pleasant way. It is the work of righteousness that is peace. In these paths we cannot walk unless God both lead us into them and lead us in them.

**Spurgeon** *He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.* "The Christian delights to be obedient, but it is the obedience of love, to which he is constrained by the example of his Master. "He *leadeth* me." The Christian is not obedient to some commandments and neglectful of others; he does not pick and choose, but yields to all. Observe, that the plural is used—"the *paths* of righteousness." Whatever God may give us to do we would do it, led by his love. Some Christians overlook the blessing of sanctification, and yet to a thoroughly renewed heart this is one of the sweetest gifts of the covenant. If we could be saved from wrath, and yet remain unregenerate, impenitent sinners, we should not be saved as we desire, for we mainly and chiefly pant to be saved *from* sin and led in the way of holiness. All this is done out of pure free grace; *"for his name's sake."* It is to the honour of our great Shepherd that we should be a holy people, walking in the narrow way of righteousness. If we be so led and guided we must not fail to adore our heavenly Shepherd's care.

**NET Note** on for **His Name's sake** - The Hebrew term שְׁמוֹ (shem, "name") refers here to the shepherd's reputation. (The English term "name" is often used the same way.) The statement לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ (lma'an shmo, "for the sake of his name") makes excellent sense within the framework of the shepherd/sheep metaphor. Shepherds, who sometimes hired out their services, were undoubtedly concerned about their vocational reputation. To maintain their reputation as competent shepherds, they had to know the "lay of the land" and make sure they led the sheep down the right paths to the proper destinations. The underlying reality is a profound theological truth: God must look out for the best interests of the one he has promised to protect because if he fails to do so, his faithfulness could legitimately be called into question and his reputation damaged.

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**J Vernon McGee** - He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Now the soul is sheltered in the sanctuary with God, but physically and mentally we must grapple with life. We must face its problems, we must meet the issues. We can't retire into a monastery today. We are out rubbing shoulders with humanity. And so we have here the discipline and correction that the Shepherd gives. "He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." We have direction as well as discipline.

When David said, "He restores my soul," he was referring back to the awful sin that he'd committed with Bathsheba. He committed actually two terrible sins at that time. He committed adultery and he committed murder, the second one to cover up the first. And David thought he might get by with it. The fact of the matter is, when he got on his throne and the court was around him, he looked over the crowd and thought, There's old Joab. I wonder if he knows. I don't think he does. He looked over the whole crowd and mused, I don't think they know. And he sat back very comfortably.

Later on, Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar got by with sin. But you see, David was God's man. Nebuchadnezzar could get by with it; David could not. The difference is this: God does not whip the devil's children. He whips His own. He'll take them to the woodshed, which is what He did with David.

So into the court came nosy Nathan. He came in and David spoke to him because David loved Nathan. Nathan had brought him all those wonderful messages. Nathan said, "I have a story to tell you, David." And David said, "I sure like Nathan's stories." Up to that time he did like them. So he said to him, "Go ahead, tell the story." Nathan said, "Well now, here in your kingdom there are two men. One is a very rich man. He has lambs, he has herds, he has land, he has everything. Down the road from this man is a poor man, and all he has is one little ewe lamb. One day a visitor came to see the rich man and you would think that he would send out to get one of his own little lambs. After all, he wouldn't miss it and he could use that little lamb to feed the visitor. But he doesn't do that. What he does is go and get the lamb of this poor man, and he kills it in order to feed his guest." At that, David stood to his feet and, boy, he's hot now. It's interesting how we see sin in other people, isn't it? But it's hard to see sin in ourselves. Intending to punish the offender, David stood there and asked, "Where in the kingdom is that man?" And Nathan, I think, is the bravest man in the Bible, for he pointed his finger at David and said, "You are the man!"

Do you know what David could have done? He could have lifted that royal scepter and the soldiers would have taken Nathan out and executed him. And believe me, if he'd been in any other kingdom that's exactly what would have happened. But David bowed his head and confessed that he was indeed the guilty man. Then he went before God in that marvelous Fifty-first Psalm and prayed, "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation" (v. 12).

He didn't get by with it. God put the lash to his back and never took it off as long as David lived. And personally, I have felt like saying, "Well, Lord, You should have taken the lash off his back. You've whipped him enough." But David never said that. He never whimpered, never cried aloud at what happened. David knew that he was God's man.

A man said to me some time ago, "Oh, God is sure taking me to the woodshed." And by the way, God did take that man to the woodshed and gave him a good beating. This man said to me, "Oh, it's been terrible!" I asked, "But aren't you glad for it?" He said, "What do you mean, glad?" I said, "Aren't you glad for it because now you know you're a child of God?"

Listen to David, "Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (v. 4). The rod is for discipline. When a little stubborn sheep insists on going to the side, the shepherd takes that rod and hits him over the head to get him back in line. God said to David, "Get back in line." Then there is the staff or crook. That's for direction. When David was on the throne looking back over his life he could say, "I can see that point and this point and the other point where God was leading me." Can you look back like that today? Many people can say, "God was leading me here, and God was leading me there."

Now notice something else David said here, "He leads me in the paths of righteousness." David learned that God leads only in the paths of righteousness. A young fellow who was living with a girl, not married to her, talked to me. He said, "I want to know what God's will is for my life." Since he claimed he was a Christian, I figured he should know that he and his girlfriend were violating God's Word and will, so I said, "I can tell you clearly: 'He leads me in the paths of righteousness!'" And if God is leading you, my friend, He won't lead you into sin. He never will. The Lord tempts no one to do evil, never does. He will not lead you except in paths of righteousness. Do you want to know whether you are in God's will? If you are in sin, just put it down right now—you are not in the will of God because He leads in the paths of righteousness. (See [David: A Man After God's Own Heart](#))

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## Henry Blackaby - Restoring Your Soul

He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Psalm 23:3

Do you sometimes feel spiritually worn out? It can happen to anyone. Maybe you're carrying an unusually heavy load of problems. Perhaps you've been battling a nagging temptation, or you've been on the receiving end of unfair criticism. Whatever it is, it has beaten you down. Way down, deep within your soul, there's a weariness that you think you can't overcome.

Spiritual exhaustion can catch you by surprise. It seems invisible; you can't see it coming. It can happen so gradually that before you know it; you've become disoriented to God. Perhaps you've gotten so far from God that you're not sure you even care about spiritual things anymore. Your problems have distracted you from spending time with God as you used to, and now he seems like a stranger.

God can help you. God has a way of strengthening you at the deepest levels of your life. His Spirit searches out the most private corners of your mind to renew your thinking. Your Good Shepherd can lead you to people and to places where you'll be refreshed and energized. God may teach you something about himself that will give you a fresh excitement about being a Christian. He'll guide you back into a life that reflects his own righteousness. He'll give you a fresh start. The way he chooses to restore you is as unique as you are, but your Shepherd will revitalize your soul if you ask him. Don't be afraid to ask. (BORROW [The Experience](#))

**Psalm 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.**

Amplified - Yes, though I walk through the [deep, sunless] valley of the shadow of death, I will fear or dread no evil, for You are with me; Your rod [to protect] and Your staff [to guide], they comfort me.

- **Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death:** Ps 44:19 Job 3:5 10:21,22 24:17 Jer 2:6 Lu 1:79
- **I fear no evil:** Ps 3:6 27:1-4 46:1-3 118:6 138:7 Isa 41:10 1Co 15:55-57
- **for Thou art with me:** Ps 14:5 46:11 Isa 8:9,10 43:1,2 Zec 8:23 Mt 1:23 28:20 Ac 18:9,10 2Ti 4:22
- **Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me:** Ps 110:2 Mic 7:14 Zec 11:10,14

**Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death** - David knew the fear of death, for in his final meeting with Jonathan we declared "truly as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, there is hardly a step between me and death." He is alluding of course to Saul's continual seeking to kill David, which went on for almost 10 years!

**NET Note on shadow of death** - At the metaphorical level, v. 4 pictures the shepherd taking his sheep through a dark ravine where predators might lurk. The life-threatening situations faced by the psalmist are the underlying reality behind the imagery.

**Spurgeon** This unspeakably delightful verse has been sung on many a dying bed, and has helped to make the dark valley bright times out of mind. Every word in it has a wealth of meaning. "Yea, though I *walk*," as if the believer did not quicken his pace when he came to die, but still calmly *walked* with God. To walk indicates the steady advance of a soul which knows its road, knows its end, resolves to follow the path, feels quite safe, and is therefore perfectly calm and composed. The dying saint is not in a flurry, he does not run as though he were alarmed, nor stand still as though he would go no further, he is not confounded nor ashamed, and therefore keeps to his old pace. 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. The dying article is called a *valley*. The storm breaks on the mountain, but the valley is the place of quietude, and thus full often the last days of the Christian are the most peaceful of his whole career; the mountain is bleak and bare, but the valley is rich with golden sheaves, and many a saint has reaped more joy and knowledge when he came to die than he ever knew while he lived. And, then, it is not "the valley of death," but "the valley of *the shadow* of death," for death in its substance has been removed, and only the shadow of it remains. Some one has said that when there is a shadow there must be light somewhere, and so there is. Death stands by the side of the highway in which we have to travel, and the light of heaven shining upon him throws a shadow across our path; let us then rejoice that there is a light beyond. Nobody is afraid of a shadow, for a shadow cannot stop a man's pathway even for a moment. The shadow of a dog cannot bite; the shadow of a sword cannot kill; the shadow of death cannot destroy us. Let us not, therefore, be afraid.

**I fear no evil; for Thou art with me** - Fear God and you will not fear man. Pr 29:25 says "The fear of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted. ."

John writes "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love." (1 John 4:18)

**Spurgeon** "*I will fear no evil.*" He does not say there shall not be any evil; he had got beyond even that high assurance, and knew that Jesus had put all evil away; but "I will *fear* no evil;" as if even his fears, those shadows of evil, were gone for ever. The worst evils of life are those which do not exist except in our imagination. If we had no troubles but real troubles, we should not have a tenth part of our present sorrows. We feel a thousand deaths in fearing one, but the psalmist was cured of the disease of fearing. "I will fear *no evil*," not even the Evil One himself; I will not dread the last enemy, I will look upon him as a conquered foe, an enemy to be destroyed, "*For thou art with me.*" This is the joy of the Christian! "*Thou art with me.*" The little child out at sea in the storm is not frightened like all the other passengers on board the vessel, it sleeps in its mother's bosom; it is enough for it that its mother is with it; and it should be enough for the believer to know that Christ is with him. "*Thou art with me; I have, in having thee, all that I can crave: I have perfect comfort and absolute security, for thou art with me.*"

**Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me** - These were the weapons the shepherd carried to ward off predators.

**NET Note on they comfort me** - Within the metaphorical framework, it refers to the way in which a shepherd uses his implements to assure the sheep of his presence and calm their nerves. The underlying reality is the emotional stability God provides the psalmist during life threatening situations.

**McGee** - The rod is for discipline, but the staff is for direction—and David felt them both. God disciplined him, and this says the rod comforted him. Thank God, friend, that when you get away from Him He doesn't let you be happy, does He? If you are His child, He won't let you be. That rod is there. I thank God for His rod. It hurts but He says, "Get back in line, child." That's what He says, and how wonderful this is. (See [David: A Man After God's Own Heart](#))

**Spurgeon** - "*Thy rod and thy staff,*" by which thou governest and rulest thy flock, the ensigns of thy sovereignty and of thy gracious care—"they comfort me." I will believe that thou reignest still. The rod of Jesse shall still be over me as the sovereign succour of my soul. Many persons profess to receive much comfort from the hope that they shall not die. Certainly there will be some who will be "alive and remain" at the coming of the Lord, but is there so very much of advantage in such an escape from death as to make it the object of Christian desire? A wise man might prefer of the two to die, for those who shall not die, but who "shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air," will be losers rather than gainers. They will lose that actual fellowship with Christ in the tomb which dying saints will have, and we are expressly told that they shall have no preference beyond those who are asleep. Let us be of Paul's mind when he said that "To die is gain," and think of "departing to be with Christ, which is far better." This twenty-third psalm is not worn out, and it is as sweet in a believer's ear now as it was in David's time, let novelty-hunters say what they will.

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**J Vernon McGee** - Now will you notice that here you have not only courage but also comfort. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me." The entire human family today is in the shadow of death. A great many folks seem to think that "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death" applies to some well-known figure who went through it a while back. Some people will say, "Well, those people who got on the plane that crashed a while back, they were walking in the shadow of death." They were. But you and I also are walking through the valley of the shadow of death. You see, that walk begins at the moment of your birth. You begin walking through a life in which you're in the shadow of death all the time. It's always there. You could go out tonight and be killed in an accident. You could have a heart attack. All of us are walking through the shadow of death. Someone has said, "The moment that gives us life begins to take it away from us." As we walk on, this valley gets more and more narrow. I feel now like I can touch both sides of it!

Death today is a fad. Have you ever noticed that we Americans go in for fads? Do you remember the yo-yo? All of us had yo-yos. I went to college with a yo-yo. One of my professors had a yo-yo. Everybody had a yo-yo. And then we had the hula hoop. Now I did pretty well with the yo-yo, but I did not do well with the hula hoop. My daughter did all right, but I couldn't make it there. We are



faddists, today. And we Christians are faddists too. First there was the tongues movement. It went across the country and then died out. Then another fad came along—demonism. Can you remember everybody talking about demons? People were casting out demons just like you swat flies. They were around everywhere. The next kick that came along was angels. That was better than demons. We were all talking about angels. I had several women tell me or write to say that they had seen angels. They never saw angels and I haven't met anybody recently who has seen an angel but everybody was writing about them.

Do you know what the subject is now? Death! Abortion—killing all those little ones before they get here. And euthanasia—just get rid of the old people. I'm opposed to that. Yes, sir! And there's also an epidemic of suicide. There are twenty-four-hour phone lines you can call if you're thinking about suicide. It's in epidemic proportions. Why? Oh, the meaninglessness of life for multitudes today, especially among college students. They are never given a challenge so they have no reason for living, no hope at all. May I say to you that it takes courage to live today, but some folk are trying to make death a very acceptable and attractive thing.

I heard a preacher on the radio delivering a sermon on death. In fact, he made it a very pleasant affair, a nice sort of experience. May I say to you, death is horrible. There's nothing beautiful about death. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Death has come to us, not because God wanted it to come but because of man's sin. The doorway of death was the only way God could get man out of this sin-cursed world, but it is not a pleasant thing.

I used to ride with the undertakers to the funerals I conducted, and I carried on a "friendly warfare" with them the whole time I was there. We liked each other, and they were very nice to me. But I said, "You fellows, what a business you're in. Here you paint them up and try to make them look like they're alive. There are a lot of flowers and a lot of music. You try to cover death up, but you can't cover it up."

May I say to you, friends, death is not a pleasant thing. But for the child of God, listen to David, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me." It's terrible to die by yourself. But as someone has said, that's one thing you must do by yourself. I want to say this to you: I'm not going through the doorway of death alone. I've got Somebody who says He is going with me. He's going through that door with me so I'm not going to fear because of that. Otherwise it would be a terrible thing. And I think people ought to be told it's a terrible thing. Death is terrible unless Jesus goes with you. (See [David: A Man After God's Own Heart](#))

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### **Henry Blackaby - Shadows -Psalm 23:4**

According to Webster, a shadow is the darkness cast by something cutting off light. It's an illusion. There's no substance to a shadow, but shadows can be terrifying because they play tricks on you. When you were a child, did you ever hide under your bed covers to get away from the frightening shadows in your bedroom? When you turned on the light and the shadows disappeared, you saw that you had nothing to fear.

David's beautiful psalm about the Good Shepherd is one of the Bible's most well-known passages. The Twenty-third Psalm is probably read or recited as much out of church as in it. Why? Because it gives an inspiring message of hope in a way that all of us can understand. David did what every good writer does; he wrote about what he knew. He knew lots about life's shadows, and he was intimately acquainted with shepherding; he masterfully joined the two together to pen some of the most comforting words of hope ever written. David faced many dangers in his life—times when he didn't know if he'd live out the day; times when he was misunderstood, threatened, and attacked; times when the shame of his own sin sent him into the depths of despair. Through it all, he experienced the unwavering presence of God. Just as he used to lead his sheep through the valleys, David's Shepherd guided him through the dark times in his life. Just as David's sheep used to recognize his voice through the darkness and follow the sound, God's voice brought comfort and direction to David when he didn't know where to go.

Life is full of shadows. There is evil out there. There are dangers. There are frightening valleys where the mountains block out the light. Death casts a shadow of fear across life. But Jesus, your Good Shepherd, will walk with you through the valleys. He'll dispel the shadows of fear because he is the Light (John 1:4). (BORROW [The Experience](#))

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### **Dying Grace**

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me. —Psalm 23:4

Today's Scripture: Psalm 23:1-6

Several years ago I read a pamphlet that quoted the dying words of various people who did not profess faith in Jesus Christ. The English atheist Thomas Hobbes said, "I am taking a fearful leap into the dark!" The French infidel Voltaire cried out, "I am abandoned by God and man; I shall go to hell!" Sir Francis Newport wailed in anguish, "Oh, eternity, eternity forever and forever! Oh, the unsufferable pangs of hell!"

What a sobering contrast to the last words of people who knew and loved Christ as their Lord and Savior. Dwight L. Moody said, "This is glorious! Earth recedes; heaven is opening; God is calling me!" Sir David Brewster declared, "I will see Jesus—see Him as He is. I have had the light for many years. Oh, how bright it is! I feel so safe, so satisfied!" And these words from a man being burned at the stake: "Blessed be the time that ever I was born for this day. We shall not lose our lives in this fire," he said to his fellow martyrs, "but only change them for something better."

Child of God, even if physical pain and heartache are a part of our closing days, the heavenly Father will give us dying grace. When we pass through that dark valley, we need not fear. The Great Shepherd will be with us. By: Richard DeHaan ([Click to go to the full devotional including a related picture and a link at the bottom of the page to one of their excellent devotional booklets](#)). Reprinted by permission from Our Daily Bread Ministries. Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Thy rod and staff shall cheer me  
In death's dark vale and shade,  
For Thou wilt then be near me—  
I shall not be afraid.  
—Ewing

Those who truly fear God need not fear death.

#### Related Resource:

- BORROW [Last words of Saints and Sinners](#) - Herbert Lockyer

**Psalm 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.**

- **Thou dost prepare a table before me** : Ps 22:26,29 Ps 31:19,20 Ps 104:15 Job 36:16 Isa 25:6 Jn 6:53-56 John 10:9,10 Jn 16:22
- **Thou hast anointed my head with oil**: Heb. makest fat, Ps 45:7 92:10 Amos 6:6 Mt 6:17 2Co 1:21 1Jn 2:20,27
- **My cup overflows**: Ps 16:5 116:13 1Co 10:16 Eph 3:20

### SHIFT OF METAPHOR FROM DUMB SHEEP TO ONE SERVED

**Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies** - Clearly the metaphor has shifted from sheep to a guest in one's home. For a sheep to eat at a prepared table is highly unlikely, for a sheep was much more likely to be prepared for the table!

**Larry Richards** -The last two verses (Ps 23:5-6) picture a guest eating in the home of a generous host. In the Middle East, hospitality was greatly valued. The needs of a guest were gladly supplied, even if the family of the host had to go without as the price of generosity. A person who had taken a meal in one's home was assured of the protection of his host. Even an enemy, once served a meal, was totally secure for as long as his visit should last. God Himself set a table before David and treated him generously as His guest. Because David is under God's protection, he is sure that "goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life." (BORROW [The Bible Reader's Companion](#))

**Spurgeon** - "*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.*"The good man has his enemies. He would not be like his Lord if he had not. If we were without enemies we might fear that we were not the friends of God, for the friendship of the world is enmity to God. Yet see the quietude of the godly man in spite of, and in the sight of, his enemies. How refreshing is his calm bravery! "*Thou preparest a table before me.*"When a soldier is in the presence of his enemies, if he eats at all he snatches a hasty meal, and away he hastens to the fight. But observe: "*Thou preparest a table,*" just as a servant does when she 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!

"Let earth be all in arms abroad,  
They dwell in perfect peace."

**Thou hast anointed my head with oil** -

**Spurgeon** - "*Thou anointest my head with oil.*" May we live in the daily enjoyment of this blessing, receiving a fresh anointing for

every day's duties. Every Christian is a priest, but he cannot execute the priestly office without unction, and hence we must go day by day to God the Holy Ghost, that we may have our heads anointed with oil. A priest without oil misses the chief qualification for his office, and the Christian priest lacks his chief fitness for service when he is devoid of new grace from on high.

### My cup overflows -

**Spurgeon** - *"My cup runneth over."* He had not only enough, a cup full, but more than enough, a cup which overflowed. A poor man may say this as well as those in higher circumstances. "What, all this, and Jesus Christ too?" said a poor cottager as she broke a piece of bread and filled a glass with cold water. Whereas a man may be ever so wealthy, but if he be discontented his cup cannot run over; it is cracked and leaks. Content is the philosopher's stone which turns all it touches into gold; happy is he who has found it. Content is more than a kingdom, it is another word for happiness.

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**Overflows** (07310) (revayah) means abundance or a state of overflowing. In Ps 66:12 (revayah in the Lxx in Ps 66:12 = anapsuche = a cooling, refreshing) it refers to the richness, safety, and blessing of God's deliverance from enemies **TWOT** - rewāyâ. Saturation. In Ps 66:12 it refers to This noun is formed from the Hiphil stem of the root rāwâ. rewāyâ, used in highly poetic contexts, occurs in only two passages in the Psalms. They are both poetic passages that are well known in the KJV form, even though that reading obscures some of the nuances of the Hebrew. A literal translation is, "You have anointed my head with unguent, filled my cup to saturation" (Psalm 23:5); "But thou did bring us to saturation" (Psalm 66:12). Used 3x in the OT - Ps. 23:5; Ps. 66:12; Prov. 14:33

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### Henry Blackaby - Don't Miss the Banquet - Psalm 23:5

Soldiers don't usually sit down for a picnic in the middle of a raging battlefield. They either fight to the death, or they turn and run! The scene David paints is one of total security. In the midst of the worst his enemies could dish out, David found peace and joy in God. He found reason to celebrate. He enjoyed more blessings than he could even take in. His enemies were trying to keep the crown from him, but they couldn't stop God from making him a king.

Sometimes going through life's hardest times teaches us the most about God. When our enemies are after us and we want to panic, God gives us peace. He lays out a banquet to celebrate the victory that's already ours. He reminds us who we are—royalty—because the King has claimed us as his own. He pours out his goodness, so our lives overflow with his blessings. When everything is going well, we might take God's presence for granted; but when life is hard, we can see his presence more clearly. That's because he gives us peace and cause for celebration when we'd expect only despair.

If you're experiencing some of the difficulties that life throws at you, look to see what God is doing. He hasn't gone anywhere. He's preparing a table for your victory party. He's getting ready to honor you in front of your enemies. He's pouring out his blessings on you. You don't have to leave the battlefield to have your picnic, for God is with you and your enemies don't intimidate him. (BORROW [The Experience](#))

**Psalm 23:6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.**

- **Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me:** Ps 30:11,12 36:7-10 103:17 2Co 1:10 2Ti 4:18
- **And I will dwell in the house of the LORD** Ps 16:11 17:15 73:24-26 2Co 5:1 Php 1:23
- **forever:** Heb. to length of days, Ps 21:4

## GOD'S "SHEEPDOGS" GOODNESS AND LOVINGKINDNESS

### Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life

**NET Note** on **follow** - The use of רָדַף (radaf, "pursue, chase") with טוֹב וְאֵמֶת (tov vakheshed, "goodness and faithfulness") as subject is ironic. This is the only place in the entire OT where either of these nouns appears as the subject of this verb רָדַף (radaf, "pursue"). This verb is often used to describe the hostile actions of enemies. One might expect the psalmist's enemies (see v5) to chase him, but ironically God's "goodness and faithfulness" (which are personified and stand by metonymy for God himself) pursue him instead. The word "pursue" is used outside of its normal context in an ironic manner and creates a unique, but pleasant word picture of God's favor (or a kind God) "chasing down" the one whom he loves.

**Spurgeon** - *"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."* This is a fact as indisputable as it is encouraging, and therefore a heavenly *verily*, or *"surely"* is set as a seal upon it. This sentence may be read, *"only goodness and mercy,"* for there

shall be unmingled mercy in our history. These twin guardian angels will always be with me at my back and my beck. Just as when great princes go abroad they must not go unattended, so it is with the believer. Goodness and mercy follow him always—*"all the days of his life"*—the black days as well as the bright days, the days of fasting as well as the days of feasting, the dreary days of winter as well as the bright days of summer. Goodness supplies our needs, and mercy blots out our sins. "

**And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever-** Did you observe the two time phrases? The days of my life would apply mainly to our short time on earth (but of course does not exclude the coming life). The second time phrase forever, speaks of now and throughout eternity.

**Spurgeon** - *And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*" "A servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the son abideth ever." While I am here I will be a child at home with my God; the whole world shall be his house to me; and when I ascend into the upper chamber, I shall not change my company, nor even change the house; I shall only go to dwell in the upper storey of the house of the Lord for ever. May God grant us grace to dwell in the serene atmosphere of this most blessed Psalm!

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#### **Henry Blackaby** - The Right Perspective - Psalm 23:6

People say we can only count on two things in life: death and taxes. Maybe so, but Christians can add two more absolutes to our lives: God's love and his goodness. It's important for us to establish these truths firmly in our lives once and for all: God loves us, and God is good to us.

We run into trouble when we try to look through our circumstances to understand what God is like. We have a bad day, so we conclude God doesn't love us. If it's a really bad day, we may even decide God is picking on us. When things are going well, we assume God has decided to be good to us that day. It's crucial to our spiritual growth that we always look to God first and let him show us our circumstances from his perspective. When we do this, life will take on a whole new dimension. For example, that bad day that proved God doesn't love us becomes something totally different when we see it through God's eyes. It becomes an opportunity to trust God. It provides an occasion for God to reveal his power, to encourage us with his presence, and even to do a miracle. Mature Christians often find the worst situations to be times they experience God the most!

If circumstances determined God's character, David would have wanted to run as far away from the house of the Lord as he could, not dwell in it! He lived through some terrible hardships! Instead, he discovered that the right perspective gave him a completely different view of his life. He was free to experience God deeply in both good times and in bad.

Don't focus on your problems and miss God's goodness. Focus on God's goodness instead. Take note of the many ways he's expressing his love to you in spite of your problems, or even through them. When you look at life from the right perspective, you'll see God as he really is. Thank him that on good days or bad, you can always count on his love and goodness. (BORROW [The Experience](#))