

## THE GOOD SHEPHERD

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A SERMON  
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*“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.”*  
*Psalm 23:1.*

[See Sermon #3006, Volume 52—“THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD.” Sermons on the Parable of the Good Shepherd are as follows—#1877, Volume 32—OUR OWN DEAR SHEPHERD; #1713, Volume 29—OTHER SHEEP AND ONE FLOCK; #995, Volume 17—THE SHEEP AND THEIR SHEPHERD, and #2120, Volume 35—THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS—OR, SHEEP WHO SHALL NEVER PERISH. Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeon.org>.]

DOES not this sound just like poetry or like singing? If you read the entire Psalm through, it is written in such poetic prose that though it is not translated into meter, as it should have been, it reads just like it. “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” It sounds like music for this, among other reasons, because it came from David’s heart. That which comes from the heart always has melody in it. When men speak of what they know and from the depths of their souls testify to what they have seen, they speak with what we call, eloquence, for true eloquence is speaking from the soul. Thus David spoke of what he knew—what he had verified all his life—and this rendered him truly eloquent.

As “truth is stranger than fiction,” so the truth that David spoke is more sweet than even fancy could have imagined. And it has more beauty than even the dream of the enthusiast could have pictured. “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.” How naturally it seems to strike on the ear as uttered by David who had, himself, been a shepherd boy! He remembers how he had led his flock by the waters in the warm summer, how he had made them lie down in shady nooks by the side of the river, how, on sultry days, he had led them on the high hills that they might feel the cool air and how, when the winter set in, he had led them into the valleys that they might be hidden from the stormy blasts. Well could he remember the tender care with which he protected the lambs and carried them—and how he had tended the wounded of the flock. And now, appropriating to himself the familiar figure of a sheep, he says, “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.” I will try to preach experimentally tonight and I wonder how many of you will be able to follow the psalmist with me while I attempt to do so?

First of all, *there are some preliminaries* before a man can say this—it is absolutely necessary that he should feel himself to be like a sheep by nature, for he cannot know that God is his Shepherd unless he feels in himself that he has the nature of a sheep. Secondly, *there is a sweet assurance*—a man must have had some testimony of divine care and goodness in the past, otherwise he cannot *appropriate* to himself this verse, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” And thirdly, *there is a holy confidence*. I wonder how many there are here who can place all their future in the hand of God and can join with David in uttering the last sentence, “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.”

**I.** First then, we say THERE IS A CERTAIN CONFESSION NECESSARY BEFORE A MAN CAN JOIN IN THESE WORDS. We must feel that there is something in us which is akin to the sheep. We must acknowledge that in some measure we exactly resemble it or else we cannot call God our Shepherd.

I think the first apprehension we shall have if the Lord has brought us into this condition, is this—we shall be conscious of our own folly—we shall feel how unwise we always are. *A sheep is one of the most unwise of creatures.* It will go anywhere except in the right direction. It will leave a fat pasture to wander into a barren one. It will find out many ways, but not the right way. It would

wander through a forest and find its way through ravines into the wolf's jaws, but never by its wariness turn away from the wolf. It could wander near his den, but it would not instinctively turn aside from the place of danger. It knows how to go astray, but it knows not how to come home again. Left to itself, it would not know in what pasture to feed in summer, or where to retire in winter.

Have we ever been brought to feel that in matters of providence, as well as in things of grace, we are truly and entirely foolish? I think no man can trust providence till he distrusts himself—and no one can say, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want,” until he has given up every idle notion that he can control himself or manage his own interests. Alas, we are, most of us, wise above that which is written and we are too vain to acknowledge the Wisdom of God! In our self-esteem we fancy our reason can rule our purposes and we never doubt our own power to accomplish our own intentions! And then, by a little maneuvering we think to extricate ourselves from our difficulties. Could we steer in such a direction as we have planned, we entertain not a doubt that we could avoid at once the Scylla and the Charybdis—and have fair sailing all our life! O beloved, surely it needs but little teaching in the School of divine grace to make out that we are fools! True wisdom is sure to set folly in a strong light.

I have heard of a young man who went to college and when he had been there a year, his father said to him, “Do you know more than when you went?” “Oh, yes!” he said, “I do.” Then he went the second year and was asked the same question, “Do you know more than when you went?” “Oh, no,” he said, “I know a great deal less.” “Well,” said the father, “you are getting on.” Then he went the third year and was asked, “What do you know now?” “Oh,” he said, “I don't think I know anything.” “That is right,” said his father, “you have now learned to profit since you say you know nothing.” He who is convinced that he knows nothing as he ought to know gives up steering his ship and lets God put His hand on the rudder. He lays aside his own wisdom and cries, “O God, my little wisdom is cast at Your feet. Such as it is, I surrender it to You. I am prepared to renounce it, for it has caused me many an ill and many a tear of regret, that I should have followed my own devices. But from now on I will delight in Your statutes. As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so shall my eyes wait upon the Lord my God. I will not trust in horses or in chariots; but the name of the God of Jacob shall be my refuge. Too long, alas, have I sought my own pleasure and labored to do everything for my own gratification. Now would I ask, O Lord, Your help that I may seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and leave all the rest to You.” Do you, O my friends, feel persuaded that you are foolish? Have you been brought to confess the sheepishness of your nature? Or are you flattering your hearts with the fond conceit that you are wise? If so, you are indeed fools! But if brought to see yourself like Agur when he said, “I am more brutish than any man and have not the understanding of a man,” then even Solomon might pronounce you wise! And if you are thus brought to confess, “I am a silly sheep,” I hope you will be able to say, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I cannot have any other, I want none other—He is enough for me.”

Again, a sheep is not only foolish, but *it is a very dependent creature*. The sheep, at least in its domesticated state, as we know it, must always be dependent. If we should take a horse, we might turn him loose upon the prairie and there he would find sufficient food for his sustenance. And years later we might see him in no worse condition than that in which we left him. Even the ox might thus be treated and still be able to provide for itself. But as for the silly sheep, set it alone in the wilderness, let it pursue its own course unheeded—and what would be its fate? Presently, if it did not wander into places where it would be starved, it would ultimately come to ruin, for assuredly some wild beast would lay hold upon it and it has no means of defense for itself.

Beloved, have we been brought to feel that we have of ourselves no means of subsistence and no power of defense against our foes? Do we perceive the necessity for our dependence upon God? If so, then we have learned another part of the great lesson that the Lord is our Shepherd. Some of us have yet to learn this lesson. Gladly would we cater for ourselves and carve for ourselves—but as the good old Puritan said, “No child of God ever carves for himself without cutting his fingers,” we sometimes fancy that we can do a little for ourselves—but we shall have that conceit taken out of us very soon. If we, indeed, are God's people, He will bring us to depend absolutely upon Him day by day. He will make us pray, “Give us this day our daily bread”—and make us acknowledge

that He opens His hands and gives us our food in due season. Sweet is the meal that we eat, as it were, out of His hands! Yet some will rebel against this dependence as very humiliating. Men like to vaunt their independence—nothing is more respectable in their eyes than to live in independent circumstances. But it is no use for us to talk of being independent—we can never be.

I remember a dear Christian who prayed very sweetly each Sunday morning at a certain prayer meeting that I once attended, “O Lord, we are *independent* creatures upon You.” Except in such a sense as that, I never knew any independence worth having! Of course he meant, “we are dependent creatures upon You.” So we must be. We cannot be independent even of one another—and certainly we are not independent of God, for when we have health and strength, we are dependent upon Him for their continuance. And if we have them not, we are dependent on Him to restore them to us. In all matters whatever, it is sweet, it is blessed to see the tokens of His watchful care. If I had anything of which I could say, “God has not given me this,” I hope, by divine grace, I would turn it out of doors. Food, raiment, health, breath, strength—everything comes from Him and we are constantly dependent upon Him! As Huntington used to say, “My God gives me a hand-basket portion. He does not give me an abundance at once, but He gives it, basket by basket, and I live from hand to mouth.” Or, as old Hardy once said, “I am a gentleman commoner on the bounty of God. I live day by day upon morning commons and evening commons—and thus I am dependent upon Him—*independent of the world, but dependent upon God.*” The sheep is a dependent creature, always needing some help. And so is the Christian. And he realizes the blessedness of his dependence when he can say, “The Lord is my Shepherd.”

These are the two principal points upon which we view this truth of God with regard to providence. I might wander from what I wished to be the subject of this evening. And I might be doing good if I were to show you some other points of comparison between the Christian and the sheep. O beloved, there are some of you here present who know yourselves to be *sheep by reason of your frequent wanderings*. How often have we made this confession, “We have erred and strayed from Your ways like lost sheep”? And we feel it this night, bitterly rueing the waywardness of our hearts. But it is well to be the sheep of God’s pasture even if we have been wandering sheep! We do not read of wandering dogs, because dogs are naturally wild, while sheep are always accounted to be someone’s property. The straying sheep has an owner—and however far it may stray from the fold, it ceases not to belong to that owner. I believe that God will yet bring back into the fold every one of His own sheep and they shall all be saved. It is something to feel our wanderings, for if we feel ourselves to be lost, we shall certainly be saved! If we feel ourselves to have wandered, we shall certainly be brought back.

Again, we are just like sheep *by reason of the perverseness of our wills*. People talk about free-will Christians and tell us of persons being saved and coming to God of their own free will. It is a very curious thing, but though I have heard a great many free-will sermons, I never heard any free-will prayers. I have heard Arminianism in preaching and talking, but I have never heard any Arminian praying. In fact, I do not think there can be any prayer of that sort—it is a style that does not suit prayer! The theory may look very nice in argument and sound very proper in discourse, though we somewhat differ from it. But for practical purposes it is useless! The language will not suit us in prayer and this alone would be sufficient reason to condemn it. If a man cannot pray in the spirit of his own convictions, it shows they are a delusion from beginning to end, for if they were true, he could pray in that language as well as in any other! Blessed be God, the doctrines of grace are as good to pray with as to preach with! We do not find ourselves out of order in any act of worship when once we have the old fundamental doctrines of the blessed gospel of grace! Persons talk about free-will Christians coming back to Jesus of themselves. I intend to believe them when they find me a free-will sheep that has come back of itself—when they have discovered some sheep, after it has gone from its fold—stand bleating at its master’s door, asking to be taken in again! You will not find such a sheep and you will not find a free-will Christian, for they will all confess, if you thoroughly probe the matter, that it was grace, and grace alone that restored their souls—

***“Grace taught our souls to pray,  
And made our eyes overflow—  
‘Tis grace that keeps us to this day***

*And will not let us go.”*

II. The next thing is THE ASSURANCE THAT THE LORD IS OUR SHEPHERD. It is very easy to say, “The Lord is a Shepherd,” but how shall we appropriate the blessedness to ourselves and be able to say, “The Lord is *our* Shepherd?” I answer that He has had certain dealings with our souls in the past which have taught us that He is our Shepherd. If every man and every woman in this assembly should rise up and say, “The Lord is my Shepherd,” I feel convinced it would be, in many instances, the solemn utterance of a lie, for there are, it is to be feared, many here who have not God for their Shepherd. He is their Guide, it is true, in some sense, because He overrules all the hearts and controls all the affairs of the children of men. But they are not the people of His pasture, they are not the sheep of His hand. They do not believe—therefore they are not of His fold. And if some of you should say that you are, your own conscience would belie you! How, then, does a man come to know that the Lord is his Shepherd?

He knows it, first, *because Jesus Christ has brought him back from his wanderings*. If there is anyone here who, after a course of folly and sin, has been fetched back from the mountains of error and the haunts of evil. If there is one here who has been stopped in a mad career of vice and has been reclaimed by the power of Jehovah Jesus, such a one will know, by a happy experience that the Lord is his Shepherd! If I once wandered on yon mountaintop and Jesus climbed up and caught me, and put me on His shoulders and carried me home, I cannot and dare not doubt that He is my Shepherd! If I had belonged to some other sheep-owner, He would not have sought me. And from the fact that He did seek me, I learn that He must be my Shepherd! Did I think that any man convinced me of sin, or that any human power had converted me, I would fear I was that man’s sheep and that he was my shepherd. Could I trace my deliverance to the hand of a creature, I would think that a creature might be my shepherd! But since he who has been reclaimed of God must and will confess that God alone has done it and will ascribe to His free grace, and to that alone, his deliverance from sin, such a one will feel persuaded that the Lord must be his Shepherd because He fetched him back from his wanderings—He snatched him out of the jaw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear.

We know still further that like a shepherd, *He has supplied our needs*. Some of you, beloved, know of a surety that God is your provider. Sometimes you have been brought into such straits that if it had not been for an interposition of heaven, itself, you never could have had deliverance! You have sunk so deep down into poverty and loved ones and acquaintances have stood so far aloof from you that you know there is but one arm which could have fetched you up. You have been reduced, perhaps, to such straits that all you could do was to pray. You have wrestled at the throne of God and sought for an answer, but it has not come. You have used every effort to extricate yourself and darkness has still compassed your path. Again and again you have tried till hope has well-near vanished from your heart. And then, adding vows to your prayer, you have said in your agony, “O God, if You will deliver me this time, I will never doubt You again!” Look back on the path of your pilgrimage. Some of you can count as many Ebenezers as there are milestones from here to York! Ebenezers piled up with oil poured on the top of them—places where you have said, “Hitherto, the Lord has helped me.” Look through the pages of your diary and you will see, time after time, when your perils and emergencies were such as no earthly skill could relieve and you felt constrained to witness what others among you have never felt—that there is a God, that there is a providence—a God who compasses your path and is acquainted with all your ways! You have received deliverance in so marvelous a way, from so unseen a hand and so unlikely a source, under circumstances, perhaps, so foreign to your wishes—and yet the deliverance has been so perfect, so complete and wonderful—you have been obliged to say, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” Yes, He is! The sheep, we know, fed day by day in good pasture, may forget its Shepherd. But if for a time it is taken from the pasture and then brought home again, after having been nearly starved, it says, “Truly, He is my Shepherd.” If I had always been supplied with bread, without the pinch of anxiety, I might have doubted whether He had given it, and ascribed it to the ordinary course of passing events. But seeing that “everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need,” I acknowledge that it is my God who supplies all my need! Yes, and with gratitude I will write it down for a certainty—“The Lord is my Shepherd.”

But, beloved, do not be distressed even though you should not have had these particular trials and deliverances, for there is a way whereby we can tell that the Lord is our Shepherd without encountering so many rough and rugged passes, as I will show you presently. I have heard it said, by some, that a man cannot be a child of God unless he has gone through a certain set of trials and troubles. I recollect hearing a sermon from these words, “Who passing through the Valley of Baca makes it a well.” Certainly the preacher did not make his sermon a well, for it was as dry as a stick and not worth hearing. There was nothing like cheerfulness in it, but a flood of declamation all the way through against hopeful Christians, against people going to heaven who are not always grumbling, murmuring, doubting, fumbling for their evidences amidst the exercises of their own hearts, always reading and striving to rival Job and Jeremiah in grief, taking the Lamentations as the fit expression of their own lips, troubling their poor brains, vexing their poor hearts, smarting, crying and wearying themselves with the perpetual habit of complaining against God, saying with poor Job, “My stroke is heavier than my groaning.” Such persons measure themselves by their troubles, trials, distresses, tribulations, perplexities and no end of things—things that we will not stop to recount! We believe, indeed, that such things will come to a child of God. We think every Christian will be corrected in due measure—we would be the last to deny that God’s people are a tried people! They must all pass through the furnace of affliction and He has chosen them there, but still, we believe that religion is a blessed and a happy thing and we love to sing that verse—

*“The men of grace have found  
Glory begun below!  
Celestial fruits on earthly ground  
From faith and hope may grow.”*

And what though some of my hearers have not yet had to swim through the rivers. Though they may not have had to pass through the fiery furnace of providential trial, they have had trials enough and trials that no heart has known except their own suffering which they could not tell to flesh and blood, which have gnawed their very souls and catered into the marrow of their spirits. Bitter anguish and aching voids such as those who boast about their trials nearer felt, such as mere babbling troublemakers did never know, deep rushing of the stream of woe with which little bubbling narrow brooks could never compare! Such persons fear to murmur—they cannot reveal their sufferings because they think it would be showing some lack of trust in God. They keep their trials to themselves and only speak of them into that ear which hears and has no lips to babble afterwards.

“But,” you say, “how can you tell that the Lord is your Shepherd if you have not been tried in any of those great deeps?” We know that He is *because He has fed us day by day in good pasture*. And if He has not allowed us to wander as far away as others, we can lift up our eyes to Him and each one of us say, “Lord, You are my Shepherd. I can as fully prove that You are my Shepherd by Your keeping me in the grassy field as by Your fetching me back when I have wandered. I know You are as much my Shepherd when You have supplied my needs day by day as if you had allowed me to go into poverty and given me bitterness. I know You are as much my Shepherd when granting me a continual stream of mercy, as if that stream had stopped for a moment and then had begun to flow again.” People say, if they have had an accident and been nearly killed, or have narrowly escaped, “What a providence!” Yet it is as much a providence when you have no accident at all! A good man once went to a certain place to meet his son. Both his son and he had ridden some distance. When the son arrived, he exclaimed, “Oh Father! I had such a providence on the road.” “Why, what was that?” “My horse stumbled six times and yet I was not thrown.” “Dear me!” said his father, “but I have had a providence too!” “And what was that?” “Why, my horse never stumbled at all! And that is just as much a providence as if the horse had stumbled six times and I had not been thrown.”

It is a great providence when you have lost your property and God provides for you. But it is quite as much a providence when you have no loss at all and when you are still able to live above the depths of poverty! And so God provides for you. I say this to some of you when God has blessed and continually provided for you from your earliest youth. You, too, can each of you say, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” You can see this title stamped on your mercies, though they come daily. They are given to you by God and you will say, by humble faith, the word, “my,” as loudly

as anyone can! Do not get to despising the little ones of the flock because they have not had as many trials as you have had! Do not get to cutting the children of God in pieces because they have not been in such fights as you have! The Shepherd leads the sheep where He pleases and be you sure that He will lead them rightly! And as long as they can say from their hearts, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want,” do not trouble yourselves about where or how they learned it!

**III.** Now we finish up with THE HOLY CONFIDENCE OF THE PSALMIST. “I shall not want.”

“There,” poor Unbelief says, “I am wanting in everything. I am wanting in spirituals, I am wanting in temporals and I shall always want! Ah, such distress as I had a little while ago you cannot tell what it was—it was enough to break one’s heart and it is coming again—I shall want.” That is what Unbelief says, but you must write your own name at the bottom and then I will repeat this, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.” That is what David said and I think David’s faith far preferable to your unbelief. I might take your evidence in some matters, but I really would not take it before David’s. I would accept your testimony as an honest man in some respects, but the words of inspiration must be preferable to your words of apprehension! When I find it written, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want,” I would rather take one of David’s affirmations than 50 of your negations.

I think I hear someone saying, “I would bear the want of any temporal good if I could but obtain spiritual blessings. I am in want this night of more faith, more love, more holiness, and more communion with my Savior.” Well, beloved, the Lord is your Shepherd, you shall not want even those blessings—if you ask of Him, He will give them to you, though it may be by terrible things in righteousness that He will save you. He often answers His people in an unexpected manner. Many of God’s answers to our letters come down in black-edged envelopes, yet mark you, they will come. If you want peace, joy, sanctification and such blessings, they shall be given to you, for God has promised them. The Lord is your Shepherd, you shall not want. I have often thought of that great promise written in the Bible—I do not know where there is a greater one—“No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” “No good thing!” It is a mercy that the word, “good,” was put in, for if it had said, “He, will withhold nothing,” we should have been asking for many things that would be bad for us. But it says, “No good thing!” Now, spiritual mercies are good things and not only good things, but the *best* things so that you may well ask for them! For if no good thing will be withheld, much more will none of the best things! Ask, then, Christian, for He is your Shepherd and you shall not want! He will supply your needs. He will give you whatever you require. Ask in faith, doubting nothing, and He shall give you what you really need.

But still there are some who say, “The text applies to temporal matters,” and persist in it. Well, then, I will accept this sense—the Lord is your Shepherd, you shall not want for temporal blessings. “Ah,” cries one, “I was once in affluence and now I am brought down to penury. I once stood among the mighty and was rich—now I walk among the lowly and am poor.” Well, David does not say, “The Lord is your Shepherd, and you shall not come down in society.” He does not say, “The Lord is your Shepherd and, therefore, you shall have 500 or a thousand pounds a year.” He does not say, “The Lord is your Shepherd and, therefore, you shall have whatever your soul lusts after.” All David says is, “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.” There are different ways of wanting. There are many people whose foolish craving and restless anxiety make them always in want. If you gave them a house to live in and fed them day by day, they would always be wanting something more. And after you had just relieved their necessities, they would still want. The fact is theirs are not real wants, but simply fancied wants. David does not say, “The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore I shall not fancy that I want,” for though God might promise that, it would need His omnipotence to carry it out, for His people often get to fancying that they want when they do not. It is real needs that are referred to. “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not really want.” There are many things we wish for that we do not really need, but there is no promise given that we shall have all we wish for. God has not said that He would give us anything more than we need, but He will give us that.

So lift up your head and do not be afraid! Fear not, your God is with you! He shall prevent evil from hurting you. He shall turn darkness into light and bitter into sweet. He has led you all the way and all the way this shall be your constant joy—He is my Shepherd, I shall not really want that

which is absolutely necessary. Whatever I really require shall be given by the lavish hands of a tender Father. Believer, here is your inheritance, here is your income, here is your yearly living—"He is your Shepherd, and you shall not want." What is your income, believer? "Why," you say, "it varies with some and others of us." Well, but, a believer's income is still the same. This is it—"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." That is my income and it is yours, poor little one. That is the income of the poorest pauper in the workhouse who has an interest in the grace of God—the Lord is her Shepherd, she shall not want! That is the income of the poor foundling child who has come to know the Lord in early life and has no other friend—the Lord is his Shepherd, he shall not want! That is the widow's inheritance—the Lord is her Shepherd, she shall not want! That is the orphan's fortune—the Lord is his Shepherd, he shall not want! That is the believer's portion, his inheritance, his blessing!

"Well now," some may say, "what is this truth worth?" beloved, if we could change this truth for a world of gold, we would not! We had rather live on this truth of God than live on the finest fortune in creation! We reckon that this is an inheritance that makes us rich, indeed—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Give me ten thousand pounds and one reverse of fortune may scatter it all away. But let me have a spiritual hold of this divine assurance, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," and then I am set up for life! I cannot break with such stock as this in hand! I never can be a bankrupt, for I hold this security—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Do not give me ready money now—give me a checkbook and let me draw what I like. That is what God does with the believer. He does not immediately transfer his inheritance to him, but lets him draw what he needs out of the riches of his fullness in Christ Jesus! The Lord is his Shepherd; he shall not want. What a glorious inheritance! Walk up and down it Christian! Lie down upon it, it will do for your pillow—it will be soft as down for you to lie upon. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Climb up that creaking staircase to the top of your house, lie down on your hard mattress, wrap yourself with a blanket, look out for the winter when hard times are coming and say not, "What shall I do?" but just hum over to yourself these words, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

That will be like the hush of lullaby to your poor soul and you will soon sink to slumber. Go, you business man, to your counting-house again, after this little hour of recreation in God's house, and again cast up those wearisome books. You are saying, "How about business? These prices may be my ruin. What shall I do?" When you have cast up your accounts, put this down against all your fears and see what a balance it will leave—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." There is another man. He does not lack anything, but still he feels that some great loss may injure him considerably. Go and write this down in your cash-book. If you have made out your cash-account truly, put this down—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Put this down for something better than gold and silver—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." He who disregards this truth, knows nothing about its preciousness, but he who apprehends it, says, "Ah, yes, it is true, 'The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.'" He will find this promise like China wind of which the ancients said that it was flavored to the lips of him that tasted it! So this truth shall taste sweet to you if your spiritual palate is pure—yet it shall be worth nothing to you but mere froth if your taste is not healthy.

But beloved, we must divide our congregation before we send you away and remind you that there are some of you to whom this truth of God does not belong. Perhaps some of you professors of religion may want this truth badly enough, but it is not yours. The Lord is not your Shepherd—you are not the sheep of His pasture and the flock of His hand. You are not sheep, but goats—unclean creatures, not harmless and undefiled as sheep, but everything that is the very reverse! Oh it is not only eternal loss, it is not only everlasting injury that you have to regret—it is also present loss and present injury—the loss of an inheritance on earth, the loss of an inheritance below. To be deprived of such a comfort as this is a terrible privation. Oh, it is enough to make men long for religion if it were only for that sweet peace and calm of mind which it gives here below! Well might men wish for this heavenly oil to be cast on the troubled waters of this mortal life even if they did not anoint their heads with it or enter into glory with the joy of their Lord upon their countenance!

Beloved, there are some I know here—and your conscience tells you whom I mean—who have a voice within your own hearts which says, “I am not one of Christ’s sheep.” Well then, there is no promise for you that you shall not want! The promise and the providence are for believers, not for you. There is no promise that all things shall work together for your good, but rather you shall be cursed in your basket and cursed in your store, cursed in the field, cursed in your house, cursed in your going out and cursed in your coming in, for, “the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked.” It does not merely peep in at his window but it is in his house! Yet God “blesses the habitation of the just.” If you do not repent, the curse shall follow you until your dying day and not having Christ for your Shepherd, you shall wander where that hungry wolf, the devil, shall at last seize upon your soul—and everlasting misery and destruction from the presence of Jehovah must be your inevitable, miserable and inexpressibly awful doom! May the Lord in mercy deliver you from it!

And this is the way of salvation—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” “He that believes and is baptized”—we omit nothing that God has said. “He that believes and is baptized”—not he that is baptized and then believes (which would be reversing God’s order), but “He that believes and is baptized—not he that is baptized without believing, but the two joined together! He that believes with his heart and is baptized, confessing with his mouth—“he that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Do you neglect one part of it? It is at your peril, sir! “He that believes and is baptized,” says God. If any of you have neglected one portion of it—if you have believed and have not been baptized—God will save you. Still, this promise says not so. “He that believes and is baptized.” It puts the two together and “what God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” What He has ordered let no man disarrange. “He that believes”—that is, he that trusts in Jesus—he that relies upon His blood, His merits, His righteousness—“and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.”

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