

## **I Lack Nothing in My All-Sufficient Shepherd (Ps 23:1b)**

*Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on May 22, 2010*

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There's something very precious about how this psalm can equally be a blessing to the youngest and oldest, from the beginning of life to the final moments of life. Psalm 8 says God has ordained praise from the mouths of babes, and Jesus even when He was teaching, did not prevent the littlest of children from coming up front to Him and ultimately being an object lesson to adults of a child's faith. I still remember trying to memorize the words of Psalm 23 using a green Gideon's NT sitting in the backseat of our very old blue car as we drove around downtown Tacoma. I was excited when I finally had it all memorized and hidden in my heart. I am also excited to see how our study this summer of Ps 23 might help these familiar words be freshly re-discovered and received in our hearts as a source of treasure, contentment, confidence in our Shepherd. This is a psalm of confidence; may it be this for all of us for all of life.

A couple times a year I get to speak on a Sunday night service for the Gold Country Retirement Home. Some of the wonderful elderly people there are hard of hearing and it's difficult to tell if some are listening to or getting much from my messages, but one time I had my daughter Ella with me (who was 6 at the time) and she recited the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm before I preached, and it brought great joy to literally every face in there. On the way out, a couple people mentioned they appreciated my message, but all of them told Ella how much they appreciated hearing her say Ps 23. I doubt many remember my words, but I'm sure many remember Ps 23's words.

For this morning, I do hope you remember some of what I have to say ... only because it's what God has to say, not me. I hope you not only remember the words of this psalm but that all of you will remember to think about the words of Psalm 23 this week and their meaning, especially the words we'll be focusing on this morning "*I shall not want.*" Psalm 1 says the blessed person delights in God's Word and meditates on it day and night – my prayer is that as we study each phrase in Psalm 23 in depth and detail this summer that we'll taste and see our Shepherd-Lord is good, so that we'll delight in these truths more and more and meditate on them day and night.

A pastor told how someone he knew was present at a meeting where a little girl was asked if she could say the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm before a big group, and she began "The Lord is my shepherd, *that's all I want.*" From the mouths of babes can come pretty good theology at times!

I have read from dozens of scholars on v. 1 and I'm not sure any of them did much better than what that little girl said: "The Lord is my shepherd, that's all I want." The idea of the end of v. 1 is we have all we need, our Shepherd is sufficient so that we do not lack true needs we might want. The greatest words of men are insufficient or inadequate to communicate the greatness of our Shepherd, but He lacks nothing ... and neither do His sheep. He's all we want, or better, *all I need*. All sufficiency is in Christ.

### **OUTLINE:**

- 1. The Nature of our "Want"**
- 2. The Nature of Sheep**
- 3. The Nature of our Shepherd**

## 1. The Nature of our “Want”

I want to make sure we first understand what “want” means in v. 1. Wycliffe in 1300s first translated this verse into English and rendered the end of v. 1 “*and no thing schal faile to me*” (not bad). The 1568 Bishop’s Bible did a better job than most later English versions, even to this day: “... *therefore I can lacke nothyng.*” This is also the wording of one of the old prayer book versions of Ps 23

- “*therefore*” is not required by the Hebrew grammar but helpfully communicates the connection between v. 1a-1b
- “*I can lack nothing*” is better than KJV “*I shall not want*” because the verb tense is not necessarily future, but arguably should be present tense here (this also matches “*is*” in v. 1a and the flow of v. 1-3).
- NASB has this marginal note for *shall not*: “or do not”
- A bigger issue is the word “*want*” from KJV and many other English versions that hesitated to break from this most familiar line. Unfortunately as a result many are not familiar with what this verse is actually saying (NKJV footnote on word *want* at least acknowledges “or, *lack*”)
  - o NIV “*I shall not be in want*” (a little better)
  - o HCSB “*there is nothing I lack*” (best modern major)
  - o NET/NJPS “*I lack nothing*”
  - o Knox: “*how can I lack anything?*”
  - o Our closing hymn: “*I nothing lack if I am His and He is mine*”

The *Theological Wordbook of the OT* (p. 309) says this Hebrew word *haser* ‘is most frequently used to express the sufficiency of God’s grace to meet the needs of his people. They never lack ... The adjective occurs a few times in the sense of the lack of things ... The primary use of this adjective is in expressing man’s predicament spiritually of lacking ... if one realizes this lack, he can gain ... by looking to the provider ... the Lord’

Our “wants” or “desires” are not sin necessarily. Ps 37:4: “*Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart*” [not “give you *no desires* in your heart”]

A spiritual person isn’t marked by the absence of desires or wants. A spiritual person desires the Lord first and foremost, pursuing happiness and joy in the Lord. Ps 37:4 says there are also other good heart desires that the Lord will grant. Delight in the Lord doesn’t remove desires or wants, it reorients desires to the proper things that God desires and wants to give us. Desires and wants, even for physical needs, are not evil (as some false religions taught) but can be God-given desires that are then God-granted and therefore God-glorifying as He provides for us what we can’t showing He is God and we’re not

David is not saying in Psalm 23 *he doesn’t want* anything (to be a good king or good husband or dad or have safety in his kingdom, or even in Psalm 23, his physical needs met like rest, food, drink). He’s saying *he doesn’t lack anything his shepherd knows he needs* (ex: green pastures, still waters, soul-restoration, leading, etc.)

Psalm 34:9–10 *O fear the LORD, you His saints; For to those who fear Him there is **no want**. The young lions do **lack and suffer hunger**; But they who seek the LORD **shall not be in want** [NKJV “lack” like in 23:1b] **of any good thing***

Whatever good things our Good Shepherd determines we need in our life situation and for our future destination, we do not lack. The young lambs are fed and cared for tenderly by their shepherd. He wisely doesn't give us the desires we have when not delighting in him or everything we want. He meets our need, not our greed. It's not unspiritual to include physical or practical needs in Ps 23:1; just read the context of 23:2-5, also how the word *want* is used in OT.

Proverbs 13:25 *The righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite, But the stomach of the wicked is **in need***. [same word as Ps 23:1b]

Proverbs 31 says of the virtuous wife: <sup>11</sup>*The heart of her husband trusts in her, And **he will have no lack** of gain.* <sup>12</sup>***She does him good and not evil All the days of her life.*** [comparable to Ps 23] In Ex. 16, Israel's Good Shepherd began providing daily manna: <sup>16</sup>*“This is what the LORD has commanded, ‘Gather of it every man as much as he should eat ... [God gave just enough for each day] ...* <sup>18</sup>*When they measured it with an omer, **he who had gathered much had no excess, and he who had gathered little had no lack** [same as Ps 23] ...* <sup>35</sup>*The sons of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate the manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.*

Deut. 2:7 reminds them at that border: *These forty years the LORD your God has been with you; **you have not lacked a thing***. (the same is promised of the new land in Deut. 8:9)

Nehemiah 9:21 uses the same phrase: *“Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness, and **they lacked nothing**”* (ESV)

So the language of Psalm 23:1 to ancient Israelites would bring to mind familiar stories of how God shepherded His wandering and often discontent people by His grace providing for their good and their needs, and if He's my shepherd, I can trust Him as well!

Phillip Keller writes of how discontent and dissatisfied Christians remind him of one ewe (female) he once owned as a shepherd:

‘She was restless – discontented – a fence crawler ... No matter what field or pasture the sheep were in, she would search all along the fences ... looking for a loophole she could crawl through and start to feed on the other side. It was not that she lacked pasturage ... No sheep in the district had better grazing ... She was simply never contented with things as they were. Often when she had forced her way through some such spot in a fence or found a way around the end of the wire ... she would end up feeding on bare, brown, burned-up pasturage of a most inferior sort.

But she never learned her lesson and continued to fence crawl time after time. Now it would have been bad enough if she was the only one who did this. But ... she taught her lambs to do the same tricks. They simply followed her example and soon were as skilled at escaping as their mother.

Even worse, however, was the example she set the other sheep. In a short time she began to lead others through the same holes and over the same dangerous paths ...

After putting up with her perverseness for a summer I finally came to the conclusion that to save the rest of the flock from becoming unsettled, she would have to go. I could not allow one obstinate, discontented ewe to ruin the whole ranch operation ... She was a sheep, who in spite of all that I had done to give her the very best care – still wanted something else. She was not like the one who said, “The Lord is my Shepherd – I shall not want.””<sup>1</sup>

That’s a very thought-provoking parallel spiritually, not only for us but for the impact and influence our behavior has on others. As we meditate on Psalm 23 this week, let’s start with the nature of our wants

### ***Then let’s consider secondly ... The Nature of Sheep***

There’s no lack in our shepherd, but sheep by their very nature are insufficient. Let’s consider a few reasons why sheep need shepherd

#### ***- Sheep are Danger-Prone Creatures***

One of the most common descriptions of sheep in Scripture is wandering. Sheep by nature tend to wander off into dangerous situations. We’re all “prone to wander, Lord, I feel it.” Isaiah says “we all like sheep had gone astray, each of us turned to his own way.” Biblical prophets and apostles use this analogy often of us. Sheep who’ve wandered off and who need the shepherd’s rescue are spoken of in Isa. 53, Eze. 34, Matt. 18, Lk. 15, 1 Pet. 2:25, etc.

The gospels tell us when Jesus saw the multitudes of lost people, He felt compassion. He saw danger the lost sheep of Israel were in. He also was angry at predatory Pharisee wolves in sheep-clothing. We as sheep and prodigals so prone-to-wander need protection.

#### ***- Sheep are Defenseless Creatures***

Sheep by nature not only wander into danger, but can’t defend themselves when attacked by wolves or other predators. What’s a sheep to do when a mountain lion gets ready to pounce? It can’t rise up and kick back, it can’t run very fast – the best it can do is muster up a “baaa!” (which doesn’t scare off attackers real well!)

This is probably the 2<sup>nd</sup> most common biblical description of sheep and why God designed them to need a shepherd to protect them from animal attacks (1 Sam. 17:34; Isa. 31:4; Jer. 5:6; Amos 3:12. etc.). The Bible also speaks of sheep-stealers, human robbers or thieves who come to steal or destroy (Gen. 31:39, Job 1, John 10). Spiritually speaking, 1 Peter not only says we’re like wandering sheep (2:25), but also our enemy Satan prowls like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour (5:8) – he’s hungry for lamb chops!

We are totally hopeless and defenseless if we’re shepherd-less.

Matthew 9:36 says Jesus “*had compassion for them, because they were harassed and **helpless, like sheep without a shepherd***” ESV

- *Sheep are Dumb Creatures*

This doesn't do much for our ego when the Bible calls us sheep! But sheep are not only defenseless, they're senseless in many ways and often don't have a clue even when about to be slaughtered (Isa. 53:7). Maybe you don't know much about sheep first-hand (which is true of most of us) but you know that sheep don't know much. You don't have to be smart to know being compared to a sheep is not a compliment of how smart you are. Even Huckleberry Finn picked up on this in Mark Twain's book (chapter 1): "The widow she cried over me, and called me a poor lost lamb, and she called me a lot of other names too, but she never meant no harm by it." God calling us sheep isn't also isn't meant for our harm, but for our humbling help.

One writer who had spent much time with sheep and shepherds wrote: 'On one occasion, a lamb decided to select its own feeding area and found itself ultimately perched on the edge of a 500-foot cliff which we could not approach because of the fragile nature of the rock ... Some sheep were oblivious to their circumstances. These sheep would chomp away at the vegetation, oftentimes unaware of the dangers around them, or even a boulder in front of them. One old ewe, in particular, constantly bumped her head or scraped her leg [into boulders] ... there are times when a lamb or sheep will stand silent when the danger is the greatest. I have seen a sheep stand absolutely quiet ... as the knife fell bringing about its death (Isa. 53:7) ... it is a bit disconcerting to realize that, after all, [according to Scripture] we are but redeemed sheep. It is this realization that [like Ps 23:2 says] causes us to rest in the care of our Shepherd ... Time and time again while walking across the barren wilderness, I have seen the skeletal remains of a sheep or goat that wandered off and died in the desert. This was a dramatic picture of the desperate need for leadership by the shepherd.'<sup>2</sup>

- *Sheep are Difficult Creatures*

Psalm 23:2 says the shepherd has to make them lie down. Verse 4 speaks of the rod (discipline). Several Scriptures speak of sheep needing to be carried by a shepherd and their neediness in general. The difficult task of shepherding is compounded by difficult and stubborn sheep with difficult temperaments across difficult terrain.

I've never been to Israel or been exposed to Eastern shepherds but Dr. John Davis has done much of both and wrote his experiences down in a book:

'My various travels to Jordan, Egypt, and Israel have brought me into numerous contacts with shepherds and their flocks. On one occasion ... I had the privilege of spending a week with a shepherd and his sheep ... I told him it was my desire to learn as much as I possibly could about the life of a shepherd. His response was surprising and caught me off guard. "Dr. Davis, if you wish to know a shepherd, you shall become one and be with me this next week" ... The days that followed in the wilderness of Judah provided some of the richest experiences of my life and the foundation for new insights into my relationship with the Lord ... Before traveling with [this shepherd] I had a very romanticized concept of the shepherd and his relationship with the sheep. A couple of nights in the wilderness and some oppressive days in the desert ... the ever-present quantities of flies that irritate sheep, goats, and shepherd ... helping injured animals whose dispositions become irritable and whose wounds fester rather than heal even with medication ...

The rigor of moving through that territory, at times carrying injured animals, puts a very special demand on the shepherd ... (Isa. 40:11).

The exercise of such strength, my friends, is not the glamorous, picturesque, stained glass representations we see in many of our beautiful cathedrals and churches. To carry a sheep or a lamb is a difficult task. The weight, irritability, smell and the ever-present flies on that animal make the task one of real challenge. Only courage and strength, coupled with special love, enables the shepherd to endure the inconvenience of such activity ...

It was interesting to watch the mood and the activity of sheep in the hills of Judah. On one day in particular, I sat with Mohammad Yaseen and watched the behavior of various sheep and goats. An extended stay in this pasture area afforded me special opportunity to note the great variety of behavior patterns of sheep ... As I observed their change in mood and activity, I was able to discern precise parallels with members of my congregations in past years.

There were those sheep who remained with the flock and enjoyed the benefits of a [shepherd's] selected pasture. But then there were those sometimes very young, sometimes old ewes who consistently wandered away from the flock, even though their newfound grass was of inferior quality. In fact, I found myself utterly amazed at the shabby herbage that would often attract the attention of the sheep.

Then there were the belligerent rams or ewes that would predictably cause unrest in the flock. On one occasion, I sat and watched a couple of old ewes fight with each other over a small tuft of grass which they both desired. I found such a fight incredible, because all around them was an abundant supply of very tender grass and herbs. Watching them tussle brought my mind back to the indictment of James ... (4:1). I found it amazing that these two animals would fight over this one small portion of food when the whole pasture was theirs. I've often wondered how many of God's people are preoccupied with bitter infightings while standing knee-deep in God's richest provisions! It is with a sense of shame and disgrace that we see many undernourished Christians – not because of the Shepherd's failure to provide, but because of their preoccupation with their own selfish desires.<sup>3</sup>

### - *Sheep are Dependent Creatures*

Sheep are among the most dependent creatures ever made and it's no accident that God refers to His people as sheep. Think of this: When God began to inspire His Word, He didn't at that time think, "hmm, now let's see of all the animals I made a couple thousand years ago, what would be a good one to use for an analogy of my people? Let's see, sheep, yeah, those might be a decent metaphor."

No, God actually created and designed sheep *in the beginning* to be the perfect analogy of what His people are like in relation to Him! It's not that David's poetic insight thought up parallels between us and sheep, God's genius design created sheep for this very purpose to reveal to us our nature and need for our Shepherd and His nature

### **3. The Nature of Our Shepherd**

This teaching of Scripture doesn't exalt the sheep, it exalts Christ as He shepherds creatures like us in His goodness and mercy. God didn't intend the sheep-shepherd imagery to boost our self-esteem about how wonderful we are, it's to lift up our thoughts of Christ, to esteem Him as a wonderful wise loving shepherd of lowly sheep

The King of love my Shepherd is, Whose goodness faileth never,  
I nothing lack if I am His And He is mine forever.

Is He truly yours (as shepherd)? Are you His sheep?

As we dependent needy creatures depend on the Lord as our all-sufficient shepherd, then like Ps 23:1 says, we truly lack nothing

- we don't lack rest (v. 2a)
- we don't lack drink or food (v. 2b)
- we don't lack spiritually (v. 3a "restores my soul")
- we don't lack His leading (v. 3b)
- we don't lack His righteousness (v. 3c)
- we don't lack His presence in darkest times (v. 4)
- we don't lack His correction or protection (v. 4b)
- we don't lack His comfort (v. 4c)
- we don't lack His bounty (v. 5 "prepare a table")
- we don't lack His security (v. 5b "presence of enemies")
- we don't lack His special care (v. 5b "anoint my head")
- we don't lack His cup-overflowing provision (v. 5c)
- we don't lack His goodness (v. 6a)
- we don't lack His mercy / lovingkindness (v. 6b)
- we don't lack His house as our dwelling forever (v. 6b)

Each weakness of the sheep's nature is met by our Shepherd's:

- Sheep as *danger prone*->our Shepherd's nature=*Delivering*
- Sheep are *defenseless*->our Shepherd's nature is *Defending*
- Sheep are *dumb* -> our Shepherd's nature is *Discerning w/ all insight, all knowledge, all wisdom for foolish creatures*
- Sheep are *difficult*->our Shepherd's nature is *Displaying Longsuffering to stubborn, strong-willed, selfish sheep*
- Sheep are *dependent*->our Shepherd's nature is *Displaying His All-Sufficiency to meet all our needs so we lack nothing*

Deut. 15:8 used the same word *lack* from Ps 23:1: "*you shall freely open your hand to him [the needy or poor], and **shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks.***"

Israel was to be this way because that's how their Shepherd-Lord acts toward needy people like us, generously opening his hand to us and giving us sufficient for our need in whatever we would lack.

Ps 23:1 isn't promising a life with no problem, pain, or persecution (see 23:5, most of Psalm 22 and other Psalms David wrote as well and think of what we know of David's life). It's not a promise that a believer won't go through dark valleys of suffering, death, or loss (23:4 says the Shepherd will be with us so we won't fear evil). It's the Shepherd's presence and providing whatever He determines we need that gives us comfort, confidence, and contentment in Ps 23:1

‘John Stevenson, renowned expositor of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, tells the story of a poor member of the flock of Christ reduced to circumstances of the greatest poverty in his old age, yet he never murmured [or complained]. “You must be badly off,” said a kind-hearted neighbor to him one day when they met out walking, “you must be badly off; and I don’t know how an old man like you can maintain yourself and your wife, yet you are always cheerful.” “Oh, no,” the aged man replied, “we are not badly off. I have a rich Father, and He does not suffer me to want, and always takes care of me.” ... Don Crawford, the African missionary ... faced many scarcities but said that “God always heard the scraping of the bottom of the barrel,” and produced what was necessary.”<sup>4</sup>

In Luke 12:6 Jesus asks “*Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? Yet **not one of them is forgotten before God.***” <sup>7</sup> “*Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. **Do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows** ...*” <sup>22</sup> “*For this reason I say to you, **do not worry about your life, as to what you will eat; nor for your body, as to what you will put on.***” <sup>23</sup> “*For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.*” <sup>24</sup> “***Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet **God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!*****” <sup>25</sup> “*And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life’s span?*” <sup>26</sup> “*If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters?*” <sup>27</sup> “***Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.***” <sup>28</sup> “*But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you? You men of little faith!*” <sup>29</sup> “*And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and **do not keep worrying.***” <sup>30</sup> “*For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but **your Father knows that you need these things.***” <sup>31</sup> “*But **seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you.***” <sup>32</sup> “***Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.***”

Like a Father delights to give to His children, our Shepherd gladly gives to His little flock all they need and more, even His kingdom! The Lord who feeds the birds that were in your yard this morning and the God who clothes the flowers of the field that you all saw blooming on your drive to church (whether you noticed or not) is more than capable to care for and clothe and feed His own children

Paul knew Psalm 23 didn’t promise a life free of hardship, hurt, or hunger, but he could write from prison as someone who knew Ps 23:1’s truth:  
 Philippians 4:11 ***Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am*** [that’s the key Ps 23:1 spirit]. <sup>12</sup> *I know how to get along **with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and **going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.*****” <sup>13</sup> *I can do **all things through Him who strengthens me** ...* <sup>19</sup> *And my God **will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.***

Matthew Henry: "If the Lord is my shepherd, my feeder, I may conclude I shall not [lack] any thing that is really necessary and good for me ... I shall be supplied with whatever I need; and, if I have not every thing I desire, I may conclude it is either not fit for me or not good for me or I shall have it in due time."<sup>5</sup> Well said.

Jehovah Jireh, my Provider His grace is sufficient for me  
 My God shall supply all my needs According to His riches in glory  
 He will give His angels charge over me Jehovah Jireh cares for me

This truth doesn't mean I'll never suffer or lack earthly resources, but it does mean that when I do, and even if God has ordained for me to die in some suffering, *He will give me all I need to die well*. This was not just hypothetical hope to 6 ministers in Scotland in past centuries, who for their faith were about to be sentenced, and found the all-sufficient Shepherd of Psalm 23 truly all-sufficient for them even to death. One historian tells us 'the ship being ready and many attending their embarking, they fell down upon their knees upon the shore, and prayed several times fervently, moving all the multitude about to tears in abundance, and to lamentation; and after they had sung the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm joyfully [(!) they took] their leave of their brethren and acquaintances ... Calderwood tells us it was John Welsh who prayed, and that the parting psalm, the 23<sup>rd</sup>, was sung at two in the morning, and ... many people accompanied them to the boat, much moved, and praying heartily for them ... Welsh [was] the son-in-law of John Knox, who took a prominent part then and afterwards in the Reformed Church, both in Scotland and France ... It may be interesting to give the old version of the psalm as it was sung on [the] shore:

1. The Lord is only my support, and he that doth me feede  
How can I then lack anie thing whereof I stand in need?
2. He doth me fold in coates most safe, the tender grass fast by  
And after driv'th me to the streams which run most pleasantly
3. And when I feel myself near lost, then doth he me home take;  
Conducting me in his right paths even for his own name's sake.
4. And though I were even at death's door, yet would I fear none ill;  
For by thy rod, and shepherd's crook, I am comforted still.
5. Thou hast my table richly deckt In despite of my foe;  
Thou hast my head with balm refresht, My cup doth overflow
6. And finally, while breath doth last, thy grace shall me defend;  
And in the house of God will I my life forever spend.<sup>6</sup>

'Welsh's wife besought the King for her husband, and was offered his liberty on condition that he preach and teach no more. The brave daughter of John Knox lifted her apron with her hands and said, "I would rather receive his head here than his liberty at such a price."<sup>7</sup> [her husband's persecution was not the end of the story though it was the end of John Welsh's ministry in Scotland, her father's ministry would reform Scotland and make the queen fear!]

Charles Spurgeon ended his sermon on Psalm 23:1 this way: 'I am going to put a few questions to you, or to point out some of the characteristics of one who can say, "The Lord is my Shepherd." If I am the Lord's sheep, *I shall have something of the sheep's disposition ... they always like to be in flocks*; and "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." ... A genuine love to the true children of God is a, sure sign that we are Christ's sheep, just as the fact that the sheep flock together helps to prove that they are sheep. May we have more of this love to all our brethren and sisters ... a love even to the bad-tempered ones, the irritating ones, the unsaintlike "saints." It is very hard work to love some of these "saints." I have often said that I know some good people, with whom I would sooner live in heaven for ever than live for half an hour on earth, for they always seem to look at things at so curious an angle that I cannot possibly agree with them. Yet I must love them for Christ's sake;

for, if I do not love them, I must question whether I really am myself one of Christ's sheep ... Have you been transformed from a wolf into a sheep? Have, you been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son? If so, relying upon the Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood has redeemed every one, of his chosen flock, you can say, "*The Lord is my Shepherd.*" But if not, and you continue to follow your own devices, they will lead you to destruction. God grant that this may not be the lot of any one of us, but may we all come, with childlike confidence, and put our trust in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the one and only Savior of sinners, and then shall each one of us be able to say, with David, "*The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.*" May God bless each one of you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, p. 25-26.

<sup>2</sup> John J. Davis, *The Perfect Shepherd*, p. 60-61.

<sup>3</sup> Davis, 39-41, 59.

<sup>4</sup> Herbert Lockyer, *A Devotional Commentary on the Psalms*, p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> *Matthew Henry's Complete 6 Volume Commentary* (electronic ed).

<sup>6</sup> John Ker, *The Psalms in History and Biography*, Solid Ground Christian Books, p. 41-42.

<sup>7</sup> Lockyer, 87.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Spurgeon, "THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD." *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Sermon # 3006.