



The Good Shepherd

A gentle mother sits on the edge of the bed. She leans over her frightened girl who lies whimpering in the dark. Her tender hands stroke soft curls and the words of Psalm 23 fill the room, mellow and true. The child sighs; all is well.

A hard-working husband's job takes him away once more. His wife is left in a city of strangers, responsible to care alone for four small children. She recites Psalm 23. The Good Shepherd quells her fears and redirects the path of her thoughts; all is well.

An elderly couple meets inevitable frailties and distresses, not knowing they are experiencing their last days on earth. They recite Psalm 23 aloud, over and over. Above the wavering voices and physical agonies rings a sense of eagerness to meet the Good Shepherd they've been following. As they die; all is well.

Whatever you are facing, follow the Good Shepherd. As you do, you will find that with Him, all is well. Ruth Froese

Many of the thoughts in this booklet have been adapted from Philip Keller's book "A Shepherd Looks At Psalm 23."



Who is this good, understanding, and concerned Shepherd?

God, the Father, is the architect of my life who takes everything that happens to me and works it together for good, if I love Him (Romans 8:28). It was His idea to have a relationship with me—like a loving shepherd has with his sheep, or like a compassionate father has with his child (Psalm 103:13). It was my idea to rebel and disobey Him.

God, the Son, is the Savior who made possible all that the Father planned, when I refused it and chose to go my own way (Isaiah 53:6). Jesus suffered the wrath of God for my sin, so I don't have to. Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd. I lay down my life for my sheep" (John 10:11).

God, the Holy Spirit, is the power that lives inside me by which I can live in freedom from the bondage of sin.

I belong to God because He chose to create me, to love me, to save me, to make me His own. I choose to obey Him as my Shepherd, my Lord, my High King, my Creator, and my Owner.



With the Lord as my Shepherd, I am utterly contented. I never need to desire or crave anything again. This is especially comforting when I experience painful disappointment or loss. Then I can choose to say, "I shall not want."

When I put myself under the management of the Expert who created me, the perfect and Good Shepherd provides all I need. I may not grumble or complain under the care, direction, protection, and control of this Shepherd. He does not allow complaining, because discontentment moves me toward other herdsmen—sin and Satan.

One of the ways I learn contentment is when I realize that trials, dangers, and difficulties are not problems, but opportunities. They give me a chance to show others what a wonderful Shepherd I have (Philippians 1:19-21).

Only the Good Shepherd provides abundant life (John 10:10). I shall not want in the abundant life under my Good Shepherd.



Sheep need four things to be able to lie down. Without these things, they will roam and search until they are weak, weary, and worn. My Shepherd provides all the requirements I need to be able to lie down in green pastures (Ezekiel 34:16-23).

1. Sheep must be free of all fear in order to rest. In my Shepherd's perfect love, I find freedom from fear (1 John 4:18). If I'm fearful, it's evidence that I'm not allowing the love of Christ to flow through me.
2. Sheep must be free from friction and rivalries in the flock in order to rest. In my Shepherd's church, He teaches me how to live in order, harmony, and unity (Ephesians 4:12-13).
3. Sheep must be free from the torment of flies and parasites, otherwise they cannot rest. My Shepherd frees me from the anxieties of whatever pesters me, when I pray about it with a thankful heart (Philippians 4:6-7).
4. Sheep must be free from hunger in order to rest. When I hunger and thirst for righteousness, I am fully satisfied and free from hunger (Matthew 5:6). If I am not satisfied, it means I am hungering and thirsting for the wrong things.



Sheep will drink anything. On their way to green pastures, they walk along trails littered with muddy, urine-packed puddles. They would drink the dangerous toxic water, except the shepherd keeps them moving until they get to still waters.

I tried a lot of wild waters. I drank from a lot of dirty pools that caused me pain and destruction. My Shepherd leads me to still, deep, quiet, clean, and pure waters. He offers living water that fully satisfies my deepest thirst (John 4:14).

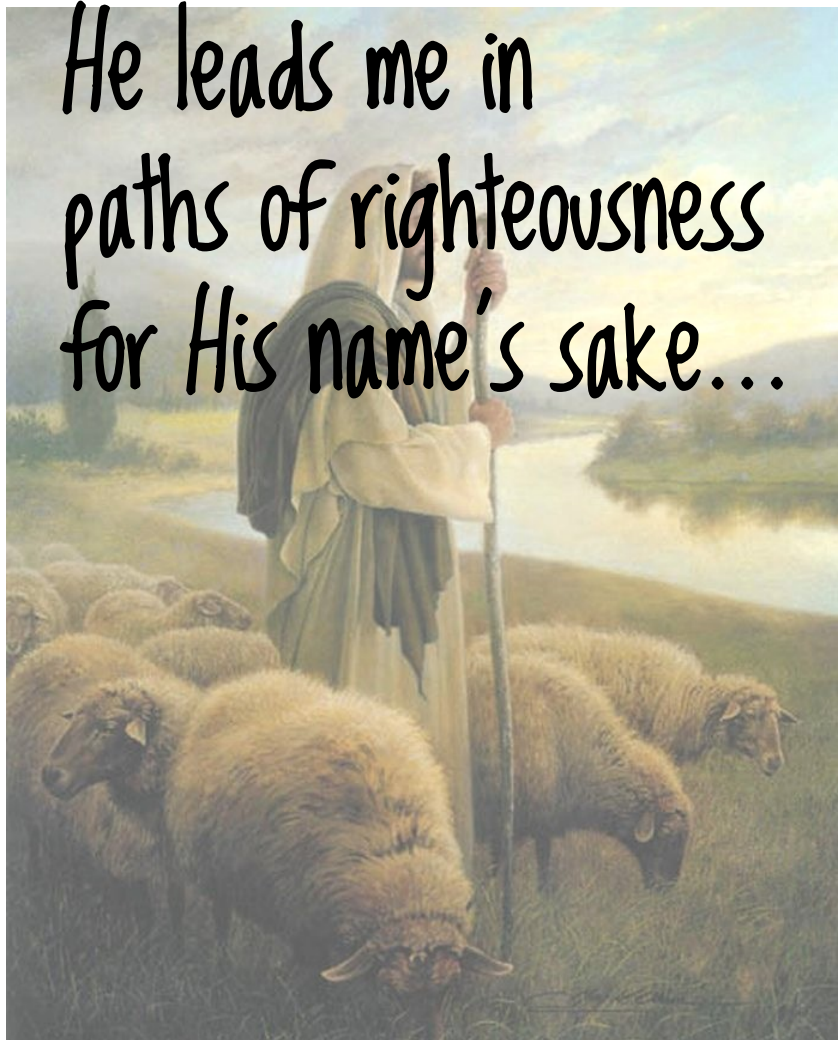


I know what it tastes like to experience defeat. I know the bitterness of falling under temptation. But I have a Shepherd who restores my soul.

When sheep fall down and roll over onto their backs, they are not able to get up without help. This is called being "cast." The frightening thing is that cast sheep can become distressed and die, unless the shepherd rolls them back onto their feet. Sometimes a cast sheep has to be physically supported by the shepherd until he is steady enough to walk again.

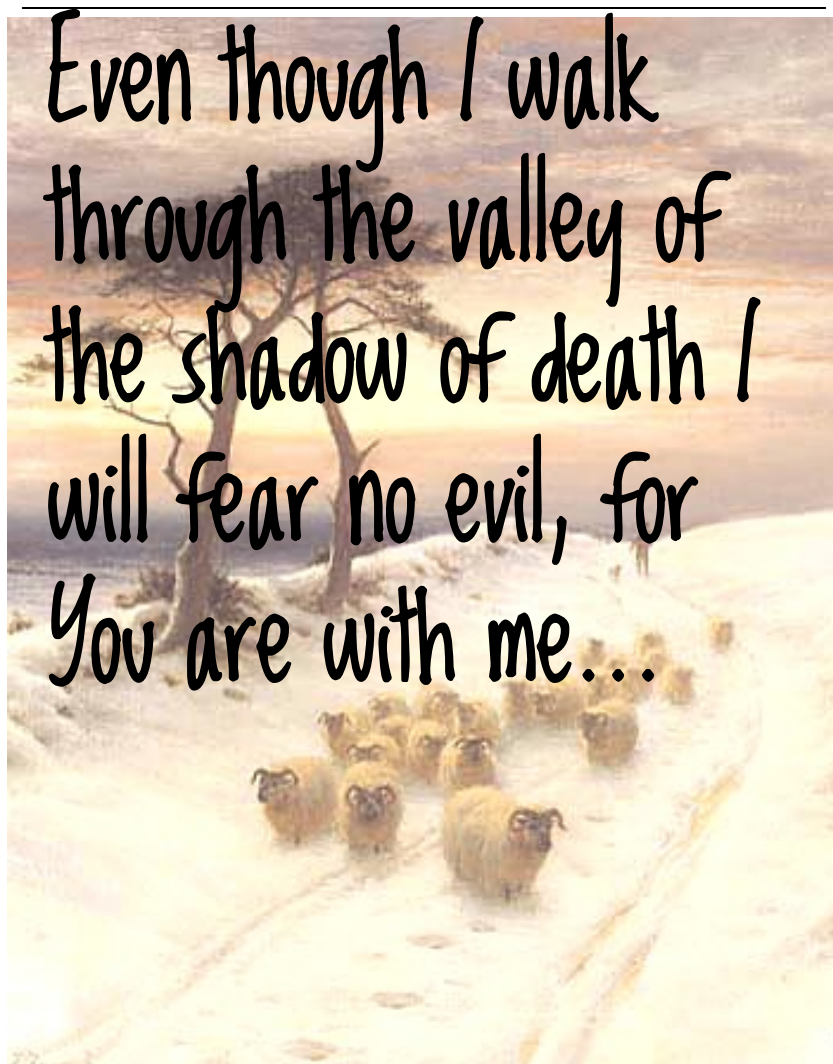
That's exactly what my Good Shepherd does for me. When I am cast down, He picks me up and restores my soul. Then I can walk steady, with trusting eyes fully focused on Him (Psalm 37:24, 42:11).

He leads me in
paths of righteousness
for His name's sake...



The Good Shepherd never tires of leading me. My job is to follow. Following Him means denying myself, mortifying my desires, and staying on the straight, narrow path as He leads (Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23, Romans 8:13).

In my daily struggles, I must be skeptical of my thought processes, and instead trust God (Proverbs 3:5-6). He will lead me on the narrow paths where I can glorify His name in everything I do (1 Corinthians 10:31).



Even though I walk
through the valley of
the shadow of death I
will fear no evil, for
You are with me...

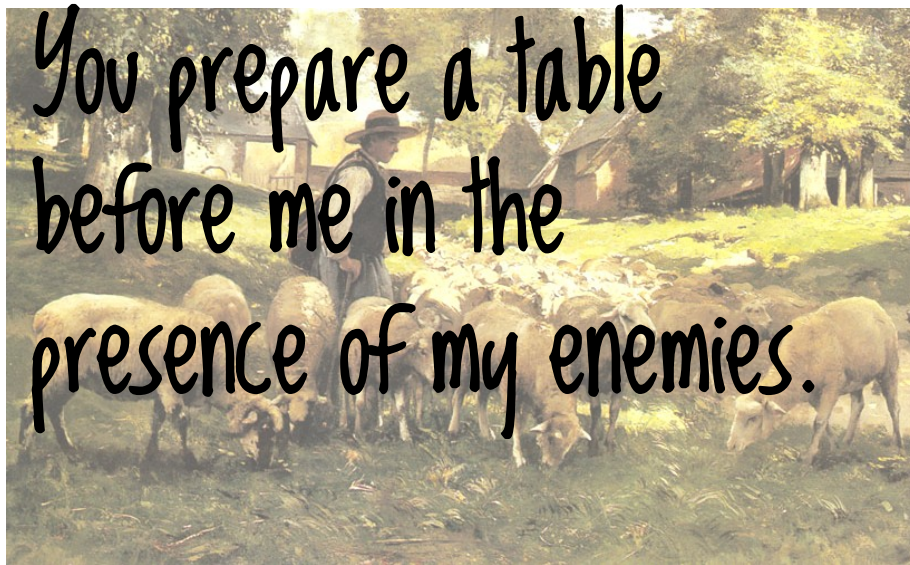
Even in the most horrific times of loneliness, pain, and difficulty, I know that I am not alone. The Good Shepherd is with me, and everything is under control (John 16:33, Hebrews 13:5). He has already defeated sin and death, therefore, I will not fear.



God's Word is my Shepherd's rod. It reveals my sinful motivations and keeps me with the rest of the flock (Hebrews 4:12). When I am going astray, He disciplines me (Hebrews 12:4-13).

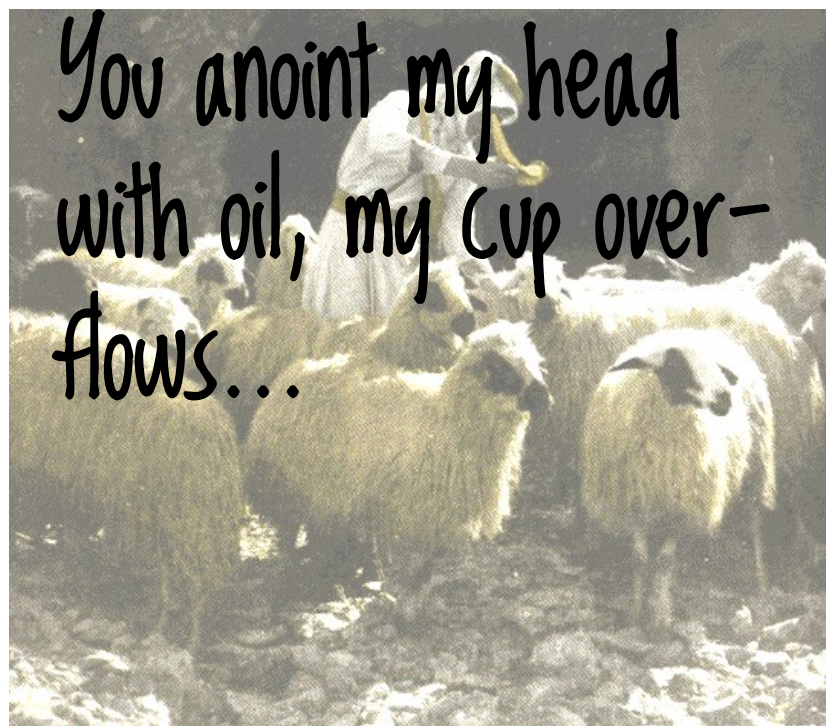
The Holy Spirit is my Shepherd's staff. I tangle myself up in situations where only His staff can pull me out. He hooks me back in when I am straying, by convicting me of my sin and of what is right (John 16:8-10).

When I fight the discipline of my Shepherd's rod, and sneak out from under His staff, there's no comfort for me. But, when I mourn my sin, I am comforted by His forgiveness (Matthew 4:4, Isaiah 40:1-2).




My Good Shepherd already faced all my enemies. He suffered their worst treatment—which I deserved. He laid down His life and poured out His blood for me.

To remember what He did for me, I partake of His bread and drink together with the rest of His flock (Luke 22:19-20).



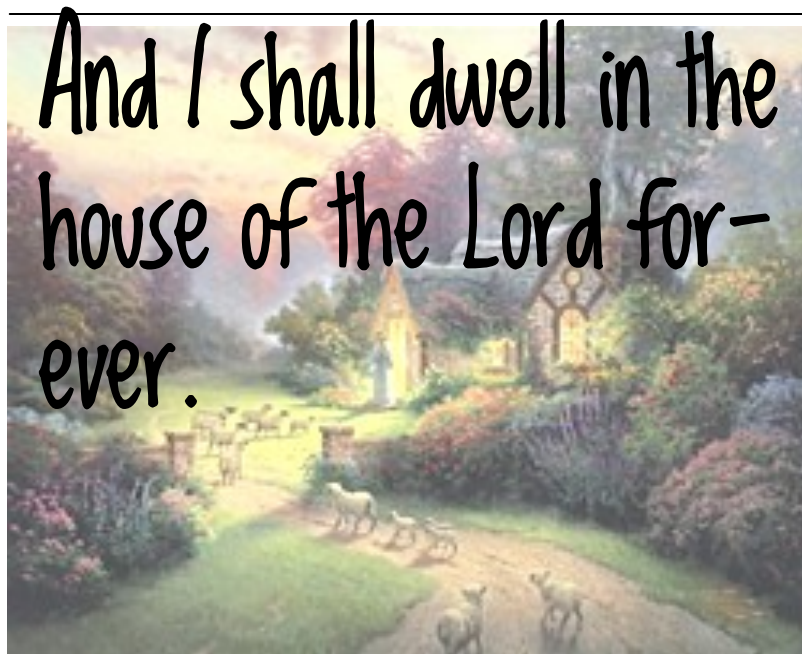
Flies swarm sheep on hot summer days, looking to lay eggs in the damp areas of their moist noses. This egg laying and subsequent larva hatching is torture for the sheep. That's why the shepherd watches for the first sign of flies. To keep the bothersome pests away, he anoints the sheep's head. As soon as the oil is applied, the aggravation, irritability, and frenzy of the sheep ends. They are noticeably calmed and soothed.

My Good Shepherd fills me with His Holy Spirit so that I can control my personality. Instead of being bothered and irritated, I am characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

A religious painting depicting a shepherd, likely Jesus, with long brown hair and a beard, wearing a red robe. He is holding a wooden staff and looking down at a white lamb. Several other white sheep are gathered around him, some resting on the ground. The background shows a hilly landscape with trees and a small building in the distance. The text "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life..." is written in a black, cursive font over the top half of the painting.

Surely goodness and
mercy shall follow me all
the days of my life...

Even when my health is gone, my income is dried up, my loved ones die, and my life is full of dilemmas and disasters, one thing is sure. The steadfast goodness and mercy of my Good Shepherd will never, never fail (Psalm 32:10).



Once I was pitiful and pathetic, doomed to an eternity of wailing and burning in Hell.

Now the Lord is my Shepherd.

Jesus Christ is preparing a place just for me in His Father's house (John 14:2). He is the door by which I will enter (John 10:9). Inside, I will never ever have to move out of the home He has carefully prepared. The best part of it? His presence. Always.

While I eagerly wait for the day of His return, I get to read Revelation 21-22 and enjoy sneak previews of that house of the Lord where I will dwell forever.



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