



Psalm 23:1; John 10:11-30

The Good Shepherd

David in the pearl of the psalms, "has dried many tears and supplied the mound into which many hearts have poured their peaceful faith" (Spurgeon and Maclaren). In Psalm 23 there is an absence of all doubt, misgiving, fear and apprehension because David has come to know the Good Shepherd is Jehovah.

The shepherd boy David put his trust in the LORD who is the personal name for God who revealed himself to Moses, as the I AM WHO I AM. He is the inexhaustible and self-sufficient who needs no one or anything to meet His needs.

This is the person we need in our turbulent days. Our faith needs to be focused on the one person who can shepherd us. Jesus calls for an intimate reciprocal relationship with Him as a Shepherd with His sheep.

THE LORD IS MY GOOD SHEPHERD

The LORD is my shepherd . . . (Psalm 23:1). The LORD or Jehovah is our Good Shepherd, and He has assumed the responsibility of the care for His sheep. As a Good Shepherd the Lord Jesus Christ keeps His sheep. He is so good that He gave His life for His sheep and rose from the dead.

Jesus uses the divine formula in a solemnly emphatic statement, "I am." In this context it has overtones of deity. The "I AM" that Moses heard from the burning bush is the name Jesus links to Himself in the seven "I am" statements in John (6:34, 48; 8:12; 10:7, 9; 10:11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5). John's purpose in choosing his material is to demonstrate that Jesus is the Son of God. These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name (20:31). In each of these "I am" statements Jesus used the simplest language with awe-inspiring meaning.

Each one of these statements about Himself reveals some important aspect of His character and person. The "I am" (*ego eimi*) of Jesus, echoes the language of the God of Israel, who remains the same from everlasting to everlasting. He existed before His incarnation. Jesus was using language that only God could use, therefore we need to pay close attention to what He says and the claims He makes on us.

The Shepherd is Good

The Good Shepherd invites us to come taste and see that the Lord is good. He is the Good Shepherd. The Greek word Jesus uses to describe Himself in John 10:11 means "good" in the sense of morally good. It is appealing, winsome, lovely and beautiful in that it possesses those qualities that make it "good." Jesus Christ is the Shepherd who has all the perfect characteristics of the true and genuine shepherd. The word *kalos* means, beautiful as well as good. Rieu translates, "I am the shepherd, the Shepherd Beautiful." This

means, beautiful as well as good. Rieu translates, I am the shepherd, the Shepherd Beautiful. This goodness of Jesus is winsome and attractive. It is inconceivable that this shepherd would ever deceive or mislead his sheep.

As parents we encourage our children to be good. We want them to live up to the best and highest qualities that one knows. We want them to model our good behavior. To be good is exactly the opposite of being bad. This is not only our desire for our children, but for ourselves and everyone else we love. We want to live up to the very best we know to be and do.

Since the Good Shepherd is omniscient, He knows what is the best and highest good. He is all knowing, all powerful, ever present; nothing escapes His presence. Therefore, there is absolutely no question about His goodness. But He is not a good shepherd, He is *the Good Shepherd* because He is the I AM. The allegory of the shepherd, and the use of the I am formula makes it very clear that Jesus is claiming to be the Davidic Shepherd Messiah (cf. Ezek. 34:23; 37:24, 25). He is the perfect fulfillment of all the Old Testament imagery of the Messiah. The true shepherd David has arrived.

Moreover, the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep and then takes it back (vv. 11, 15, 17, 18). Not many Palestinian shepherds would die for their sheep, and no hireling can ever be conceived of doing that. However, the set purpose and goal of Jesus was to die for His sheep because He is the Lamb of God. ”

There is another important distinction about this shepherd. He knows His sheep (John 10:14). He knows them by experience, and they likewise know Him by experience.

The Good Shepherd knows His sheep

No one knows sheep like the Good Shepherd. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand (John 10:28).

As the Good Shepherd, He knows what He must do to protect dumb and foolish sheep. They are helpless and weak. His omnipotent strength and omniscient wisdom is sufficient for every need of His sheep. There is no contingency that He cannot meet.

The only thing that will keep the Good Shepherd from tending His sheep is if they will not trust Him and refuse to let Him be their shepherd.

The responsibility of the sheep is to trust and obey. The Shepherd does all the rest. There is nothing else for sheep to do but trust themselves to the Shepherd's care. There really is nothing very complicated about trusting because the Good Shepherd is absolutely trustworthy.

He always leads us to green pastures and still waters. It is not His nature to

He always leads us to green pastures and still waters. It is not His nature to give us bitter water in deserts dry and barren or stones instead of bread. The Good Shepherd always knows what pastures are best for His sheep. If He leads you there you may rest assured that is His very best for you.

Are you feeding from His green pastures, or are you trying to jump fence and wander off into the thicket of sin?

I shall not want

With the Good Shepherd in mind, can you think of a better description of our beautiful Shepherd than that found in the Hebrew Psalm 23? David's Psalm illustrates beautifully what our Shepherd does for us on a daily basis.

- I shall not want because the LORD is my shepherd (v. 1). Since the LORD is my shepherd there are no legitimate needs that will go unmet. And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen (Philippians 4:19-20). What follows in the next five verses tells what will not go lacking because we belong to the self-sufficient, inexhaustible, unchanging LORD. Because He is Jehovah He will provide for us all these things (Matthew 6:24-33).
- I shall not lack peace and rest because He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters (Psalm 23:2). Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee. The peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7).
- I shall not lack life because He restores my soul (v. 3a). The Good Shepherd gives and sustains the life of the helpless sheep. Jesus in the parable of the lost son expresses the elation of the father who rejoiced in the return of the son. Bring the fatted calf, kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found. And they began to be merry (Luke 15:23-24).
- I shall not lack direction because He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name sake (v. 3b). The LORD leads us on the moral and spiritual path. I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me (John 14:6).
- I shall not lack security because Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me (v. 4). The valley of the shadow of death is just as much a part of God's gracious path as the green pastures and the quiet waters. His sovereign presence is our safety and protection, You are with me . . . Your rod and Your staff comfort me. Jesus is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25).
- I shall not lack the best provision because You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows (v. 5). The Good Shepherd is always prepared for the arrival of His sheep. He always has the best provisions for those who follow Him. My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).
- I shall never lack an eternal home because Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever (v. 6). Our Good Shepherd has gone to prepare a perfect home in heaven for us. Our place is prepared, and He is coming to

get us, and take us back to be with Him (John 14:1-3). What a shepherd!

Nothing can go wrong when we are under the constant care of the Good Shepherd. The Lord is good, and it is unthinkable that He can be otherwise. He always lives up to the best and highest good an omniscient and omnipotent person can be.

Since this is true of the Good Shepherd He will always give His very best in every situation. He will not neglect His sheep. He always does what is best in every situation.

The Good Shepherd does not neglect or forsake His sheep. He gives His very best care and protection to His sheep. He is so good that He gave His life for His sheep. He gave, and continues to give us His very best.

He gives peace and security

There is no greater peace and security than being in the care of the Good Shepherd. Since I am His sheep, and He is the Good Shepherd, I am perfectly secure in His fold (John 10:28-30). I shall always receive His very best care for time and eternity.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO THE GOOD SHEPHERD

The unbelieving world hears us say, 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want,' and they look to see what the Shepherd will make of His sheep. They judge the Shepherd by His sheep. Can He point to us with pride and say, 'These are My sheep?'

Because of our depravity and sin it is easy to fall into the habit of wrong attitudes and thoughts about God. The Christian life is a walk of faith, and our mental attitudes toward God affect that walk.

Like the children of Israel we easily fall into the habit of complaining and grumbling against God. God promised to provide all of their needs in the wilderness and He did.

To question whether He was able to supply all of their needs as He had promised is to question His goodness. We are tempted in moments of despair at our circumstances to speak against Him, to grumble and complain. The effect is we limit Him because we do not trust in His goodness.

Are there certain situations and circumstances where we limit the power of God to supply our needs? He is able and willing to furnish us the best table in our wilderness if we will trust Him.

Characteristics of sheep

Sheep lack a sense of direction, so they tend to wander off, and are forever getting lost. Their lack of focus is a great source of concern for the shepherd because they allow the herd to go on without them while they linger. Sometimes it's a matter of sleeping when they ought to be on the move with the herd. Simply stated, there is no protection apart from the shepherd.

The prophet Isaiah noted that we humans also have a tendency to wander from God like wayward sheep (53:6a).

Stray sheep need to be back to the fold. That's what Jesus, our Great Shepherd, does for us. He comes looking for us, scoops us up in His arms, and carries us back to His flock where we belong.

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One of the characteristics of sheep is they are weak. They are always weak, foolish and ignorant. That is why they always need the shepherd to care for them. Sheep need someone to protect them. Ever seen a Beware of Sheep sign posted on someone's gate? Have you ever seen a wide-eyed animal fleeing for its life from a bleating lamb? Never! Sheep aren't dangerous they're virtually defenseless. All they can do is freeze in their tracks, or at best run. Without claws, sharp teeth, speed, or a resounding roar to make predators think twice before pouncing, sheep are easy prey. They can't dash up a tree, camouflage their color, or even swim. When they sense danger, the poor, timid sheep panic. Jesus' disciples must have cringed with fear when He told them, Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves (Matthew 10:16a).

A sheep's best defense is to stay close to the shepherd and remain with the herd. The same is true with us, isn't it? When we're out of fellowship with God and isolated from other Christians, we're most vulnerable. We need the Shepherd's wisdom and strength to survive, as well as the comfort and encouragement of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Sheep need someone to keep them clean. Mary's little lamb, whose fleece was white as snow, must have stayed indoors most of the time watching other sheep in the movies on TV. Sheep have an incredible knack for getting dirty. Dirt clings to wool.

Sheepskin is full of an oil called lanolin. Lanolin comes through the skin and coats the wool. It conditions the wool so that the animal will stay warm in cold weather, but the oily wool is one of the most effective dirt-catching devices known to man. Every time a sheep lies down, grass, dirt, burrs, dust, and everything imaginable clings to its coat. Sheep are huge walking Velcro strips.

Sheep remain dirty until someone cleans them. And so it goes with us. We can't cleanse our souls. But God can, as David reminds us (Ps. 51:7). The apostle John reminds us, If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Even though sheep aren't known for their intelligence, they're smart enough to recognize their shepherd's voice, as Jesus Himself points out (John 10:4).

How foolish to reverse the roles. If you are a sheep, your welfare depends on the Shepherd, not yourself. Don't assume the responsibility of the Good Shepherd. It does not belong to you.

You may be saying, But Wil, we are people, we are much wiser and pragmatic than these stupid animals. "

If you see any of the Good Shepherd's sheep in poor condition it is not caused by the Good Shepherd, but dumb sheep who will not respond to His care. The Good Shepherd gives His very best, and if you refuse to trust and obey Him you will be ugly sheep, dirty, soiled and diseased. Perhaps you do not belong to the Shepherd (John 10:28-30).

Can the Good Shepherd point to us and say with pride, These are My sheep! If we refuse to lie down in His fold, or eat in His green pastures we dishonor Him.

Grumble and complaining sheep

Do we imply in our conversations and complaining that our great Shepherd is not good? Do we speak against Him? Israel sure did. For example:

Is God among us or not? ”

Has God forgotten to be gracious? ”

Has He forgotten to be good?

Is God's mercy gone forever? ”

Has God in anger shut up His tender mercies? ”

Oh God, why have You cast us off forever? ”

Why have You made us like this? ”

We have our modern day complaints that sound so similar.

Where is God when I need Him? That is an age-old question. Israel asked, Is God among us or not? Do we doubt His word when troubles mount against our loved ones or us?

The truth is He is always with us. He has not changed addresses. He will not leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5-6; Joshua 1:5). God has demonstrated that He is with us and He cannot lie. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. We question God's integrity when we ask where is God when I need Him? The Good Shepherd cannot lie. He is always here in our presence. He is closer than the air we breathe.

Has God forgotten to be gracious? Of course not, He has settled that question once and for all when He went to the cross and died for us. How did He treat the woman at the well? What was His attitude toward the woman who anointed His head and feet with costly fragrance? What did He say to the repentant thief on the cross? He continually reaches out to us in grace and tender mercies.

Is God's mercy gone forever? That is impossible because God is immutable. He changes not. He is a good Shepherd, and He will never change from being the Good Shepherd. He cannot be otherwise.

Do God's promises fail forever? Are you in a situation where it seems to you that God's promises have failed? Perhaps you feel that He treats you differently than that the way He treats your friends or others. Remember, because He is the Good Shepherd no good promise of His has ever failed, or ever can fail. His Word abides forever.

Because He sees and knows us from beginning to end, He makes all things beautiful. He always sees the finished product before Him. We are His workmanship, and He will receive glory in all that He does.

The will of God is always good, acceptable and perfect (Rom. 12:1-2). When we fully accept that fact we will love to do it with all your heart and all struggles disappear.

God provided for Joshua

The Good Shepherd because He is always good cannot do anything but that which is good. He can do no evil. He is the same yesterday, today and forever, therefore He is always good. What He declares is eternally true.

true.

The Lord met Joshua and promised him that He would be with him as he led the Israelites across the Jordan.

Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. . . No man will *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. . . Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go (Joshua 1:2, 5, 9).

Joshua s testimony at the end of his life was,

Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass. . . . Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed (Joshua 21:45; 23:14).

Because the Lord is faithful we can say with full assurance, Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel (or Wil Pounds) failed; all came to pass. Our Shepherd is good and faithful. He is true to His people.

Since God is always the same in His eternal attributes it means the Good Shepherd will treat you and me just like He did Joshua, David and Paul. He has not changed. He was like this yesterday and He will be like this tomorrow and the next day. Our Lord will be unchanged and unchangeable forever simply because He is the great I'AM. "

Trust and obey

If we are to know God s perfect peace and security in His goodness we must believe Him. We must take Him at His word. Nothing in God s Word can meet our needs unless we trust Him. Christ s sheep know Him (v. 14), but the most important thing is the fact that Christ knows His sheep. The result of His knowing is they follow him habitually.

Jesus said, My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me (10:27).

Do we look upon Him as a faithful Shepherd? All our doubts and discouragements are but secret accusations against our Good Shepherd. Do you hear, know, and follow Him?

Do you look upon Him as the Good and Faithful Shepherd? Have you accepted and believed as an actual fact the Lord is *my* Good Shepherd? Once you discover and accept that, you have the Good Shepherd who is all you ever need.

Are you His sheep?

Jesus emphasized a mutual intimate knowledge and reciprocal relationship between He and His sheep.

One of the characteristics of sheep is their ability to go astray. Isaiah said, All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way . . . (Isa. 53:6a). But it is also true that the Good Shepherd took our sins upon Himself. But the LORD has caused the iniquity of all to fall on Him (v. 6b). Jesus said, I'am

our sins upon Himself. But the LORD has caused the iniquity of all to fall on Him (v. 6b). Jesus said, I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep (v. 11). With repeated emphasis Jesus continued in vv. 17-18, For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father. ”

Jesus always links His death to the resurrection. The resurrection is just as necessary as the crucifixion of Christ. Jesus states that He has the power to take His life again after His death (Mk. 8:31; Lk. 24:7; Acts 10:41; 17:3; 1 John 4:14). In the New Testament there is also the emphasis that God raised Him up from the dead.

He was given the name Jesus because He will save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). He gave Himself voluntarily for our sins. He died for us in our place. The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep. He died on our behalf, with the sense of in our place. He died as our substitute.

These words are akin the apostle Paul in Romans 5:6, 8; 6:23, For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. . . But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. . . For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. We are sinners and as sinners we deserve to die. We deserve the death penalty. However, Jesus Christ voluntarily died a vicarious death to deal with our penalty. He willingly chose to die in our place, taking our punishment on the cross. He willingly died for sinners and literally paid the penalty for our sins.

Not all shepherds are willing to give themselves for their sheep. The Good Shepherd does, however. It would be disastrous for the sheep if the shepherd was killed. They would perish; however, the death of the Good Shepherd means life for His sheep because He died to give eternal life.

The Good Shepherd chose to be our shepherd. He loves His sheep. He chose to give His life for the sheep without any condition. The LORD God condescended to become my shepherd when Jesus said, I am the Good Shepherd. He was identifying Himself with Yahweh or Jehovah (John 10:14-16, 30). But He did something only a good shepherd would do for His sheep. He said, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep (v. 15).

You become one of His own unique possessions by believing on Him. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16). In the midst of a confrontation with some arrogant religious leaders Jesus said, I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me (John 10:14). Then He added, But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep (10:26). In sharp contrast He went on to say, My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me (v. 28). Jesus knows His sheep, and His sheep know Him. There are no other options. You are either one who has believed on Christ as your Savior, or you have rejected Him. Do you personally know the Good Shepherd? Do you recognize His voice? Are you following Him?

There are other sheep that need to be brought in (v. 16). He is speaking of everyone who belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ as his or her Shepherd. D. M. Lloyd-Jones candidly wrote, We are all equally sinners. . . . We are all equally helpless. . . . We have all come to one and the same Savior. . . . We have the same salvation. . . . We have the same Holy Spirit. . . . We have the same Father. . . . We even have the same trials. . . . And finally, we are all marching and going together to the same eternal home. ”

The Good Shepherd has no pastures that are not green, waters that are not still and folds that are not good. Jesus continues, I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of

My hand. My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one (10:28-30). His eternal pastures are always secure. Eternal life is His gift that does not end. Those whom Christ gives the gift will never perish. If you are a member of His flock no enemy of the sheep will ever snatch one from His hand. This is a personal and permanent relationship with the Shepherd. I am His sheep forever, and He is my Shepherd forever. He purchased me with His own blood as the Lamb of God, and He is never going to disown me! Our Shepherd is always on the alert for His sheep. The Good Shepherd is omnipotent and the sheep in His hand have nothing to dread. No one or anything imaginable will ever snatch them from His hand. Our eternal security depends not on our feeble hold on Christ, but His firm grip on us. We are secure because we have His life abiding in us. Your life is hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3).

Jesus assures us that He holds us in His hand. That is an extremely secure position. Who is it that holds us in His hands? The one who said, I am the Good Shepherd. But Jesus goes on to say the Father's hand is over His hand so we are enclosed in the Father and the Son. I and the Father are one (v. 29b). This is the kind of love and security that keeps the believer from sinning. The Son is one in substance with the Father, and they are equal in power and glory which gives the true Christian double security. They belong to Jesus because they have been given to Him by the Father. You cannot separate the two. Not only does Jesus protect the believer, but God the Father does too! Nothing can snatch the believer from the hand of the Father. We are kept secure by the Father and the Son.

This is the will of Him who sent me, Jesus has already said, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given me, but raise it up at the last day (John 6:39; cf. 17:12).

We have a magnificent shepherd who is called the Good Shepherd (John 10:11), the Great Shepherd (Hebrews 13:20-21) and the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4). Each imagery describes a different ministry He has to His people.

The LORD Jesus Christ is my Good Shepherd, I shall not want. I pray that He is yours, too. When we have the constant care of the Good Shepherd we shall not want. We shall lack nothing. We are like sheep wandering helplessly in need of the most basic needs in life unless we belong to the self-sufficient, inexhaustible and unchanging Shepherd. When we belong to Him we lack nothing. He is sufficient for all the things, and He will provide for us.

The abundant life (Jn. 10:10) is eternal life for all who believe in the Son (3:15, 16, 36; 6:40, 47; 6:51, 58). Eternal life is a gift that originates solely with God. It is to live forever and it is undeserved and unmerited. It is God's eternal gift. Sin makes us heirs of God's wrath, and if God does not intervene, we stand under divine judgment, without hope, facing the punishment due us for our own sins. The Good Shepherd calls and His sheep follow. God's call is accompanied by the power to come to Him, believing on Christ and receiving His salvation. My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me (John 10:27). His sheep hear and follow Him. Have you heard His voice? Are you following Him? Those who belong to Christ hear Christ, and are in the habit of following Him. None of those who are called by God to faith in Christ will be lost? How do you know that? Because if you have been called by God to salvation, you will believe on Christ. Have you responded to the Holy Spirit's pleading in your heart? Have you come to a sense of your need for Christ, and believed on Him to be your Savior?

Those who do not hear His voice and follow the Shepherd are not among His sheep.

Title: Psalm 23:1; John 10:11-30 The Good Shepherd

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