

“Provision Provided”

Psalm 23

April 29, 2012

1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. 3 He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.

4 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. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and loving-kindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

1a: “The LORD is my shepherd”

- “The LORD” = note that we are talking about Creator God
- “my” = ultra personal... possession...
- “shepherd” =
 - Provides & Decides...
 - Protects & Detects
 - Pronounces & Denounces

*** Implies a profound yet practical working relationship...

*** **“To think that God in Christ is deeply concerned about me as a particular person immediately gives great purpose and enormous meaning to my short sojourn upon this planet.”**
- Phillip Keller

*** **NOTE:** David is speaking... AS A SHEEP... bragging on his Shepherd!

*** **John 10: “I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.”** - Jesus, the Shepherd!

*** Sheep don't take care of themselves... most time intensive care-takers of all livestock... WE ARE SHEEP!

- Parallels between SHEEP & PEOPLE:
 - Mob mentality
 - Fearfulness
 - Timidity
 - Stubbornness
 - Stupidity
 - Perverse habits

- Other Biblical Parallels:
 - Selfish shepherds = Sickly sheep
 - Defiant sheep = biblical fools
 - Goats = non-sheep that look & act like sheep...
- EAR-MARK = distinctive mark of the shepherd... on his sheep...
 - Can be seen from a distance...
 - Voluntary Hebrew slaves.... Voluntary EARMARK...
 - EARMARK of CHRISTIANS = the CROSS! (Luke 9:23)
 - Are you easily (and TRULY) recognized from a distance?

1b: "I shall not want." = a sheep **TOTALLY contented** in/by this shepherd's care & provision

2a: "He makes me lie down in green pastures;"

- "He" = again, note Creator-God's active, personal role in this one sheep's life
- "makes me" = loving leadership... note power & authority: a King vs. a president...
- "lie down" = a metaphor for peace... the fruit of contentedness... tough in troubled times
- "green pastures" = plentiful in provision; shows wisdom & attentive care being provided

NOTE: Uniqueness / hard-work for **GREEN in ARID lands** = **"good" Shepherd!**

LIE DOWN = DEMONSTRATES the CONTENTEDNESS from above...

4 Barriers to Sheep Lying Down:

- Fear
- Tension
- Aggravations
- Hunger

2b: "He leads me beside quiet waters."

- "He" = repetition of personal attentiveness by Creator-God
- "leads me" = demonstrates tenants of true shepherd/sheep relationship (lead/follow)
- "besides quiet waters" = to the best environments/sources for life-sustaining living water

Jeremiah 2:13 = *"For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water."*

NOTE: Still waters are NOT ALWAYS EASY WATERS...

3a: "He restores my soul;" = submission begets provision... Restoration is the Shepherd's gift!

Restores = "CAST SHEEP" (turn upside down... disabled)

3 Primary "Causes of Cast-ness"

- "Wallow" (always looking for soft/easy hollows)
- Wool – old self that needs to be sheered off (by the WORD)

"Sheep do not really enjoy being sheared, and it represents some hard work for the shepherd – but it must be done. Actually, when it is all over, both sheep and owner are relieved... And similarly, when dealing with our old 'self-life,' there will come a day when the Master take us in hand and apply the keen cutting edge of His Word to our lives. It may be an unpleasant business for a time. No doubt, we'll struggle and kick... We may even get a few cuts and wounds. But what a relief when it is all over. Oh, the pleasure of being set free from ourselves! What a restoration!"

- Phillip Keller

- Weight = DIET, EXERCISE, & DISCIPLINE in response.

3b: "He guides me in the paths of righteousness"

- "He guides me" = the Creator/Shepherd provides loving provision for His children/sheep
- "paths of righteousness"
 - Truly "righteous" direction is truly divine...
 - Thus, unrighteous paths = unrighteous shepherd(s) &/or sheep!

"No other single aspect of the ranch operations commanded more of my careful attention than moving the sheep... It literally dominated all of my decisions." - Keller

MOVING SHEEP = INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP!!!

- NOTE the importance of the shepherd's role...
 - Protects sheep from THEMSELVES...
 - Protects sheep from OTHER SHEEP (mob mentality)
 - Protects sheep from GOATS
 - Protects sheep from PREDATORS
 - Protects sheep from their PRIDE...

*"There is a way that seems right to a man
but in the end it leads to death."*

- Proverb 14:12 & 16:25

"Most of us possess a formidable amount of factual information on what the Master expects of us. Precious few have either the will, intention, determination, (or surrendered heart) to act on it, and comply with His commands/instructions." - Keller/Pearson

3c: "For His name's sake." = It's never been "about" the sheep... All for the Shepherd's glory!

4a: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,"

- Note the implications... the Shepherd's sheep will walk thru deadly dark valleys at times
- Notwithstanding this reality, the Shepherd's sheep find it irrelevant – Amen!

ROMANS 8:28

4b: "I fear no evil,"

- Fearless sheep are not super-sheep... they are sheep who know their super-Shepherd!
- The sheep will only fear what they do not trust to their shepherd's protection/provision
- There is perhaps no greater testimony to the majesty of our Messiah, to the sovereignty of our Savior, than a fearless child of God committed to championing truth in love!

4c: "For you are with me;"

- Listen to these simple, yet profound words... true Inspiration through Intimacy!
- You will never be afraid when you are holding hands with the King of kings...
- That which the sheep run from... itself, runs from the sovereign Shepherd – Amen!

4d: "Your rod & Your staff, they comfort me."

- God's "rod" = God's Word
- God's "staff" = the Holy Spirit (no pulling wool over His eyes...) (hand in hand)
- The Shepherd's sheep are comforted by the Truth, Love, Discipline, Protection, & Nurture that comes as a gift of grace for every child of God

"Living as we do in an era when numerous confused voices and strange philosophies are presented to people, it is reassuring to the child of God to turn to the Word of God and know it to be his Shepherd's hand of authority. What a comfort to have this authoritative, clear-cut, powerful instrument under which to conduct ourselves. By it we are kept from confusion amid chaos. This in itself brings into our lives a great sense of quiet serenity which is precisely what David meant when he said: 'Your rod... comforts me.'"

Phillip Keller

"It is the Spirit of the living God, using the living Word of God, that convicts (and comforts) our conscience of right conduct." - Keller

NOTE: Jesus used the "rod of God's Word" in desert with Satan!

5a: "You prepare a table before me..." = provision is provided... the Shepherd feeds His sheep.

PREPARE = PROVIDENCE....

PREPARE = PROVISION

PREPARE = POWER

PREPARE = PAIN-STAKING care

PREPARE = PROTECTION (poisonous weeds & predators)

5b: "...in the presence of my enemies;"

- The Shepherd's sheep need not run nor hide... peace in the midst of the storm.
- Such confidence does not presume the elimination of danger... it trusts the Shepherd.

**John 16:33 = "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart!
I have overcome the world!" - Jesus, the Shepherd**

5c: "You have anointed my head with oil..."

- "anointed" speaks to the supernatural blessing from Creator-God ("You have anointed")
- "head with oil" = practical blessing to combat **flies & "scab"** disease

BEWARE THE DISTRACTIONS & DISEASES!!!

God's anointed PROVISION PROVIDES PEACE... NO MATTER WHAT!

LIVING "FRUIT" OF THE SPIRIT

"CONTENTMENT" = Hebrews 13:5

5d: "My cup overflows."

- What constitutes your cup? What filled Christ's most infamous cup?
- "overflows" can also be translated "satisfies completely." Can you say with David that you are satisfied completely, fully contented... even in the valley?
- The Shepherd's sheep can eat, sleep, and relax in the Shepherd's care – no matter what!

6a: "Surely goodness & loving-kindness will follow me..."

- Note the confidence... "Surely" (without a doubt, guaranteed, etc.)
- How do you interpret the phrase "will follow me?"
 - Will goodness & loving-kindness follow in pursuit of you?
 - Or will goodness & loving-kindness be the legacy you leave behind?

"Just as God's goodness and mercy flow to me all the days of my life, so goodness and mercy should follow me, should be left behind me as a LEGACY to others wherever I may go."

- Keller

"Some people leave such a sorry mess behind them wherever they go that they prefer to cover their tracks. For the true child of God, the one under the Shepherd's care, there should never be any sense of shame or fear in going back..." - Keller

6b: "...all the days of my life."

- Notice that the benefits and blessings of being a sheep owned by the Great Shepherd are life-long realities – Amen!

6c: "And I will DWELL in the house of the LORD..."

- To "dwell" is to live-well and whole-heartily in the house of the Lord...
- Residency in the palace is reserved for royalty... all children of the King dwell with Him!

6d: "...forever." = eternal... there are no foreclosures or eviction notices in heaven – Amen!