

Psalm 23 **The Lord is My Shepard**

The Lord is My Shepard – is JESUS your Shepard? Is JESUS the Lord or Master (Boss or have Control) of your life, have you completely given and submitted your life to him? The Shepard is the Leader of the flock, he is the Provider, the Protector, he has complete control or authority of his sheep. Is this your situation?

I Shall not Want – we need to be fully trusting in the Good Shepards care, not craving or desiring anything more, being content. The sheep that are in the Shepard's care, will never experience lack or need.

He Maketh Me to Lie Down in Green Pastures – sheep does not like to lie down because of fear, they are timid and refuse to lie down unless they are free of all fear. **2 Timothy 1:7 – For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.**

He Leadeth Me Beside the Still Waters – **Matthew 5:6 – Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled (satisfied).** The Good Shepard alone knows where the still, quiet, deep, clean, pure water is to be found that alone can satisfy His sheep and keep them fit and strong.

He Restoreth My Soul – We assume that anyone in The Shepard's care could never become so distressed in their soul as to need restoration. But the fact remains that this does happen. Even **David, the author of the Psalm 23**, who God loved very much, knew what it was like to be cast down and dejected. He had tasted defeat in his life and felt the frustration of having fallen under

temptation. David was familiar with the bitterness of feeling hopeless and without strength in himself. **Psalm 42:11** – **David cries out, Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God....** Caring for sheep and understanding their habits come only with those of understanding, and really understand the significance of a cast sheep or a cast down sheep. This term for a sheep that has turned over on its back and cannot get up again by itself, is what I'm talking about when I speak about being cast or cast down. A cast sheep is a very unpleasant sight. Lying on its back, with its feet in the air, always struggling trying to stand up, without success. Sometimes it will bleat a little for help, but generally it lies there lashing about in a panic of frustration from being so frightened. If the Shepard doesn't arrive within a reasonably short time, the sheep will die. This is another reason the Shepard look's carefully over his flock daily. The Shepard is not the only one who keeps a sharp eye on the sheep, the predators also keep a close watch on them such as Buzzards, vultures, dogs, coyotes and cougars, they all know that a cast sheep is easy prey and death is not far off. Just knowing that any cast sheep is helpless, close to death and vulnerable to attack, makes the whole problem of cast sheep serious for the Shepard. The fact even the largest, fattest, strongest and sometimes healthiest sheep can become cast and be a casualty. Actually it is often the fat sheep that are the most easily cast. As the sheep lies there struggling, gases begin to build up in the rumen (being the first and largest division of the stomach, where the food is fermented by microorganisms in sheep). As these expand they tend to limit or cut off the blood circulation to the extremities of the body, especially the legs. When this happens if the weather is hot and sunny a cast sheep can die in a few hours. If it happens to be cool, cloudy and rainy the sheep can survive in a cast position for several days. When the Shepard finds or reaches the sheep in this position the first thing he does is pick it up. He will gently roll the sheep over on its side. This relieves the pressure of the gases in the rumen. If the sheep has been down for a long period of time he

will lift it to its feet and hold it in an upright position rubbing its legs to restore the circulation to the sheep legs. During the time the Shepard is doing this he will be talking to the sheep. Sometime when the sheep started to walk off at first they will stumble and fall and the Shepard will have to pick them up again, and repeat what he did. Little by little the sheep will regain its equilibrium, and begin to walk steadily and surely, soon it will run away to rejoin the others, being set free from its fear of frustrations and death, and given another chance to live a little longer.

Many people have the idea that when a child of God falls, when he is frustrated and helpless in a spiritual dilemma, God becomes disgusted, fed-up and even furious with him. This simply is not so.

God has a great concern and compassion for cast men and women as the Shepard has for his sheep.

We see JESUS, in the Bible as he carefully copes with the human needs, we see Him again and again as the Good Shepard picking up cast or fallen down sheep. He always uses tenderness, love and patience to restore the one that is in need of being picked up. JESUS comes quietly, gently, reassuringly to us no matter when or where or how we may be cast down.

Psalm 56:13 – says, thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living.

We need to be real about the life of the child of God and face facts like they really are. As most of us belong to Christ and truly desire to be under his complete authority or control, do find ourselves on occasion cast down. It seems when we are most sure of ourselves we stumble and fall. Sometimes when we seem to be at our most spiritual high or when our faith is at its peak we find ourselves in a situation of great frustration or feel of no use or ineffective. Paul says in **1 Corinthians 10:12 - Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.**

Christians are as sheep, here are some basic principals to apply and will help us grasp the way in which a man or woman can be cast.

First of all, the idea of looking for a soft spot or the easy way all the time. The sheep that choose the comfortable, soft hollows in the ground in which to lie down very often become cast. In this situation it becomes so easy for them to roll over on their backs.

Living a Christian life there is great danger in always looking for the easy spot, the comfortable position where there is no hardship, no need for endurance, no demand upon self-discipline. When we are at the point of thinking we got it made or have made it, is when we are actually in great danger. There is such thing as the discipline of poverty which can be self-imposed to do us worlds of good.

There is too, of a sheep having to much wool. Often their fleece becomes very long, and heavily matted with mud, manure, burrs, and other debris, it is much easier for a sheep to become cast, literally weighed down with its own wool.

Wool in Scripture refrains to the old self-life in the Christian. It is the outward expression of an inner attitude. Here we find holding on to things, of possessions, of worldly ideas begin to weigh us down or drag us down and keep holding us down.

The high priest never was allowed to wear wool when he entered to the **Holy of Holiest**. Because it spoke of self, of pride, of personal preference, and God would not tolerate it.

When the Shepard found his sheep cast down because of too long and heavy a fleece, he would immediately take action and shear the sheep and sheep do not really enjoy this and it is really hard work for the Shepard, but it must be done. When it is all finished both the sheep and Shepard are relieved. The threat of being cast down is relieved, free from a hot, heavy coat, often the fleece is clogged with all kinds of unwanted trash (reminds of our life sometime).

What a relief to get rid of all this stuff!!!!

We need to be assured that He will never expect us or ask us to face more than we can stand. **1Corinthians 10:13** – says, **But what He does expose us to will strengthen and fortify our faith and confidence in His control.**

If he is The Good Shepard we can rest assured that He knows what He is doing. **“God knows what he is doing with you and me”**
HE RESTORETH MY SOUL!!!!

He Leadeth Me in the Paths of Righteousness for His Name’s Sake – Sheep are notorious creatures of habit, (Does this remind us of anything?). If left to themselves they will follow the same trails until they become ruts; graze the same hills until they turn to desert wastes; pollute their own ground until it is corrupt with disease and parasites. Many of the world’s finest sheep ranges have been ruined beyond repair, by over-grazing, poor management and indifferent or ignorant sheep owners.

A commonly held, but serious misconception about sheep is that they can just **“get along anywhere.”** The truth is quite reverse. No other class of livestock requires more careful handling, more detailed direction, than do sheep. No doubt David, as a Shepard himself, had learned this firsthand from tough experience. He knew beyond dispute that if the flock was to flourish and the owner’s reputation was to be held in high esteem as a good manager, the sheep had to be constantly under his meticulous control and guidance.

The greatest single safeguard which a Shepard has in handling his flock is to keep them on the move. That is to say, they dare not be left on the same ground too long. They must be shifted from pasture to pasture periodically. This prevents over-grazing of the forage. It also avoids the rutting of trails and erosion of land from over-use. It forestalls the re-infestation of the sheep with internal parasites or disease, since the sheep move off the infested ground before these organisms complete their life cycles.

In a word- there must be a pre-determined plan of action, a deliberate, planned rotation from one grazing ground to another in

line with right and proper principles of sound management. This is precisely the sort of action and the idea David had in mind when he spoke of being led in **paths of righteousness.**

A pattern of grazing is worked out carefully in advance so that the sheep do not feed over the same ground too long or too frequently. Some Shepards set up a base camp and fan out from it in wide circles, like the lobes of a clover leaf, covering new pasturage each day, returning to camp at night.

Coupled with this entire concept of management, there is of course the owner's intimate knowledge of his pastures. He has been all over this ground again and again. He knows its every advantage and every drawback. He knows where his flock will thrive and he is aware of where the feed is poor. So he acts accordingly.

A point worthy of mention here is that whenever the Shepard opens a gate into a fresh pasture the sheep are filled with excitement. As they go through the gate even the staid old ewes will often kick up their heels and leap with delight at the prospect of finding fresh feed. How they enjoy being led onto new ground.

First of all Scripture points out that most of us are a stiff-necked and stubborn. We prefer to follow our own fancies and turn to our own ways. **“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.” Isaiah 53:6**”. And this we do deliberately, repeatedly even to our own disadvantage. There is something almost terrifying about the destructive self-determination of a human being. It has to do with personal pride and self assertion. We insist we know what is best for us even though the disastrous results may be self-evident.

Just as sheep will blindly, habitually, stupidly follow one another along the same little trails until they become ruts that erode into gigantic gullies, so we humans cling to the same habits we have seen ruin other lives.

Turning to **“my own way”** simply means doing what I want. It implies that I feel free to assert my own wishes and carry out my own ideas. And this I do in spite of every warning.

The Book of Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25 says “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”

In contrast to which Christ the Good Shepard comes gently and says, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” John 14:6. “I am come that they might have life, and they might have it more abundantly.” John 10:10.**

The problem or difficult point here is that most of us don't want to come. We don't want to follow. We don't want to be led in the paths of righteousness. Somehow it goes against our grain. We actually prefer to turn to our own way even though it may take us straight unto trouble.

The stubborn, self-willed, proud, self-sufficient sheep that persists in pursuing its old paths and grazing on its old polluted ground will end up a bag of bones on ruined land. The world we live in is full of such folk. Broken homes, broken hearts, confused lives and twisted personalities remind us everywhere of men and women who have gone their own way. We have a sick society struggling to survive in a cruel world. The greed and selfishness of mankind leaves behind a legacy of ruin and remorse.

Amid all this mess and confusion Christ the Good Shepard comes and says, **“If any man will follow me, let him deny himself daily and take up his cross and follow me (Mark 8:34)”**. But most of us, even as Christians, simply don't want to do this. We don't want to deny ourselves, give up our right to make our own decisions – we don't want to follow; we don't want to be led.

Sure most of us, if confronted with this charge, would deny it. We would speak with certainty that we are led of the Lord. We would insist that we would follow wherever He leads. We sing songs to this effect and give praise to him and to this idea. But as far as actually being **led in paths of righteousness is concerned, precious few of us follow that path.**

Actually this is the pivot point on which a Christian either “goes on” with Christ or at which point he “goes back” from following him.

There are many willful, wayward, indifferent, self-interested Christians who cannot really be classified as followers of Christ. There are relatively few diligent disciples who forsake all to follow the Master.

Jesus never made light of the cost involved in following Him. In fact He made it painfully clear that it was a rugged life of rigid self-denial. It entailed a whole new set of attitudes. It was not the natural, normal way a person would ordinarily live and this is what made the price, to be rejected by so many people.

Briefly, there are 7 fresh attitudes that have to be acquired. They are the equivalent of progressive forward movements onto new ground with God. If one follows them they will discover fresh pasturage; new, abundant life; and increased health, wholesomeness and holiness, in their walk with God. Nothing will please Him more and most certainly no other activity on our part will or can result in as great benefit to other lives around us.

1. Instead of loving myself most I am willing to love Christ best and others more than myself. Now love is in a scriptural sense is not a soft, sentimental emotion. It is a deliberate act of my will. It means that I am willing to lay down my life, lay myself out, put myself out on behalf of another. This is precisely what God did for us in Jesus Christ. **“Hereby perceive or (understand) we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us” 1 John 3:16.**

The moment we deliberately do something definite either for God or others that costs me something, I am expressing love. Love is self-lessness or self-sacrifice in contradistinction or right the opposite from selfishness. Most of us know little of living like this or being led in this right way. But once a person discovers the delight of doing something for others, he has started through the gate being led into one of God’s green pastures.

2. Instead of being one of the crowd I am willing to be singled out, set apart from the gang. Most of us want to belong, we do not want to be different in a deep, distinctive way, though we may wish to be different in some minor details that appeal to our selfish egos. But Christ pointed out that only a few would find His way acceptable. And to be marked as one of His would mean a certain amount of criticism and sarcasm from a critical society. Many of us don't want this. Just as He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, so we may be. Instead of adding to the sorrows and sadness of society we may called on to help bear some of the burdens of others, to enter into the suffering of others. Are we ready to do this?
3. Instead of insisting on my rights I am willing to forego them in favor of others. Basically this is what the Master meant by denying one's self. It is not easy, nor normal, nor natural to do this. But the person who is willing to pocket his pride, to take a back seat, to play second fiddle without a feeling of being abused or put upon has gone a long way onto new ground with God. There is tremendous freedom from self in this attitude. One is set free from the shackles of personal pride. It's pretty hard to hurt such a person. He who has no sense of self-importance cannot be offended or deflated. Somehow such people enjoy a wholesome outlook of carefree abandon that makes their Christian lives contagious with contentment and happiness.
4. Instead of being boss I am willing to be at the bottom of the heap. Or to use sheep terminology, instead of being Top Ram I'm willing to be a tail-ender. When the desire for self-assertion, self-pleasing gives way to the desire for simply pleasing God and others, much of the fret and strain is drained away from daily living. The person who is prepared to put his personal life and personal affairs in the Master's hands for His management and direction has found the place

of rest in fresh fields each day. These are the ones who find time and energy to please others.

5. Instead of finding fault with life and always asking “Why?” I am willing to accept every circumstance of life in an attitude of gratitude or being thankful. Human beings, being what they are, somehow feel entitled to question the reasons for everything that happens to them. In many instances **life itself becomes a continuous criticism** and dissection of one’s circumstances and acquaintances. **We look for one or something on which to pin the blame for our misfortunes. We are often quick to forget blessings, slow to forget our misfortunes.** But if one really believes his affairs are in God’s hand’s every event, no matter whether joyous or tragic, will be taken as part of God’s plan. To know beyond doubt that He does all for our welfare is to be led into a wide area of peace and quietness and strength for every situation.
6. Instead of exercising and asserting my will, I learn to cooperate with His wishes and comply with His will. It must be noted that all the steps outlined here involve the will. The saints from earliest times have repeatedly pointed out nine-tenths of religion, of Christianity, of becoming a true follower, a dedicated disciple, lies in the will. **When a man or woman allows his will to be crossed out**, canceling the great I in their decisions, then indeed the Cross has been applied to that life. This is the meaning of taking up one’s cross daily- to go to one’s own death-**no longer my will in the matter but His will be done.**
7. **Instead of choosing my own way** I am willing to choose to follow in Christ’s way: simply to do what He asks me to do. This basically is simple, straightforward obedience. It means I just do what He asks me to do. I go where He invites me to go. I say what He instructs me to say. I act and re-act in the manner He maintains is in my own best interest as well as for His reputation (if I’m His follower). The person who decides to do what God asks him has moved onto fresh

ground which will do both him and others a world of good. Besides, it will please the Good Shepard at no end. God wants us all to move on with Him. He wants us to walk with Him. He wants it not only for our welfare but for the benefit of others as well as His own dear reputation. **There are those who think He expects too much of us.** Maybe they feel the demands are too drastic. **Some may even consider His call impossible to carry out. It would be if we had to depend on self-determination, or self-discipline to succeed.** But if we are earnest about wanting to do His will, and to be led, He makes this possible by His own gracious **Holy Ghost who is given to those who obey (Acts 5:32).** **For it is He who works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).**

Yea, Though I Walk Through the Valley – God’s people only gains higher ground by climbing up through the valleys. Every mountain has its valleys. The sides of these mountains are scarred by deep ravines, steep hillsides and draws. The best route to the top is along these valleys, (you are growing thru this climb). Notice it says **I Walk Through the Valley of the Shadow of Death,** it does not say I die there, or stop there ---But rather “I walk Through”. You know this verse is used to comfort or console those who are going through the dark valleys of death, but even for a child of God, death is not an end but the door into a more exalted life of intimacy and in the presence of God. Death is nothing but a dark valley opening out into an eternity with God. We are not to fear but should look at it as passing on to a more perfect life. You know **The Good Shepard (Jesus) knows this, that’s why He says “Lo I Am with You Always” yes, even in the valley of death,** what comforting words. You know the disappointments, the frustrations, the discouragements, the dilemmas, the dark, difficult days, even all these are shadowed valleys, do not need to be

disasters to us. They need to be the road to higher ground in our walk with Jesus. Knowing and accepting this in this manner makes life much easier to accept and easier to bear than before.

You know it is not until we have walked through some very deep troubles that we can really understand He can lead us to find our victory in Him right there in the middle of our difficulty. We get so thrilled when there comes restoration to our souls and spirits from His own Gracious Spirit. Most of us do not want valleys in our lives. We really stir away from them with a sense of fear, in spite of the worst things God allows to come our way he can bring all things together for the good and use your valleys to bring benefit to others who walk thru those valleys. We need to trust him with all our hearts during these times, it can even though it doesn't seem like anything good it can and usually does bring victory and joy into our lives and those around us. Our Shepard (Jesus) knows of all this when He leads us through the valleys with Himself. He knows where we can find strength, and despite every threat of disaster around us. **It is a reassuring experience to a born again child of God to find there is, even in the valley, a source of strength and courage** that can be found in **(Jesus)** our Good Shepard. Just look back over your life and see how the Shepard's hand has led and guided you in the darkest hours. It will grow your faith and confidence in Christ doing this. **It will put stamina into you and give you strength in life.** Knowing this that He can do this again and again and having this knowledge causes fear to fade away, and then comes a peace in the heart and mind settles in. You know all the sudden you just realize He is in the situation with me, and **I Shall not Fear**. Only those of us who have been there can encourage and inspire the ones around who are going through these situations. There are way too many of us who are shook up, frightened and panicked by the storms of life. We say we have confidence

in Christ but when the first dark shadow sweeps over us and the path we are walking looks a little rough we go into a deep slump or rut of some kind. Sometimes we just want to give up or lie down and die. This is not the way it should be. If we can just hold on and get thru this the next time we will be able to face these situations with a different look. The one who has proved by past experience that God is with him in adversity; the one who walks through life's dark valleys without fear, his head up in the air high, is the one who in turn is full of strength and a inspiration to everyone around him or her. There are valleys in everyone's life, **the Bible says "in this world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" John 16:33**

It is not how many are how few valleys we've had are have in our lives, but how do I react to the one's I have? How do I go through them? How do I cope with the troubles that come my way? With Jesus we can face them calmly, let his Holy Spirit guide us as we face them fearlessly. It is only through them we can possibly go to a higher ground with God. Through these circumstances we personally will not only be blessed but everyone around us will be, we will become strength to others.

Thy Rod and Thy Staff They Comfort Me – The rod and staff are **the main weapon of defense for both the Shepard and the sheep**. The rod in the Shepard's hand is actually an extension to his right arm. **This stands for a symbol of His strength, His power, His authority, in any situation** that arises. He relies on the rod as a safeguard for himself and His flock in danger. He also uses this rod to discipline and correct any wayward sheep that would try to wander away. **The rod is the Shepard's weapon of power, authority, and defense**. He is able to carry out effective control of His flock with it. The rod has been throughout the Bible used to express intent, and to show the extended activity of God's

mind and will in dealing with men. It implies authority and divinity. **The rod carries with it the convicting power** and the remarkable impact of “**Thus saith the Lord**”. **The Scriptures in the Bible are His rod. This is what changes lives and gives life to people.** When we go to the word of God in any situation that is needed we get comfort through it, because we understand that the Shepard’s hand is upon it. What a great comfort we have in this authoritative, clear-cut, powerful instrument in which to conduct ourselves. We are kept from confusion and term oil, in itself it brings to our lives a great sense of quiet peace and serenity which is exactly what the Psalmist David said “**thy rod, comforts me**”. The Good Shepard of our souls **has our own best interests at heart** when He searches us. This should comfort us as we trust in God’s care for us.

The staff is a **symbol that identifies the Shepard as a Shepard**. It is a instrument used for the care and management of His sheep and only sheep. It will not do for cattle, horses or hogs. It is only designed to the needs of sheep and is only used for their benefit. **The staff is a symbol of the concern, and compassion a Shepard has for his charges and concern.** Nothing better describes the staffs function on the behalf of the flock than that **it is for their comfort**.

The Shepard’s Staff is normally a long, slender stick, with a crook or hook on one end. It is carefully selected by the Shepard; it is shaped, smoothed, and cut to best suit the Shepard’s personal use.

Just as the Rod of God is an Emblem of the Word of God, so the Staff is symbolic of the Spirit of God.

In our walk with Jesus Christ we are told by Christ himself His Spirit who would be sent to guide us and to lead us into all truth (John 16:13). Yes, Jesus your Staff comforts me.

Thou Preparest a Table Before Me – A great example of this is when Jesus warned Peter that **Satan desired to tempt him and sift him like wheat**. Jesus pointed out that He had prayed that Peter's faith might not fail during this difficult encounter. So even today our Good Shepard is going ahead of us in every situation, anticipating what danger we may encounter, and praying to God for us that **in this we might not give in to or submit to any of this pressure**. Again we see that Jesus our Saviour who knows every thought, every trick, every move of our enemy Satan and his armies. We are always in danger of attack. **The Bible refers to him as “a roaring lion” who goes about seeking whom he may devour**. But our great Good Shepard, has already gone before us into every situation and every level that we might encounter. We are told in the Bible that **Jesus was tempted in all points like we are**. We know He entered into this world fully as man, he has known our sufferings and struggles and experienced our sorrows and been acquainted with grief. Because of this He understands us, He has totally identified Himself with humanity, so He therefore has a care and compassion for us way beyond our ability to grasp or get a hold of. Therefore our Christian walk can and should become a mountaintop experience, a tableland trip, simply because we are in the care and control of Jesus who has been over all this territory before us and prepared the “table” for us in plain view of our enemies who will try to demoralize and destroy us if they could. But just because Jesus has gone ahead and made every possible provision for the safety and welfare of his sheep does not mean they will not have problems. Predators still attack, storms still brew, other obstacles and hazards can still come up. We need to really look at what Jesus did for us, he laid aside His splendor, His position, His prerogatives as the perfect and faultless One. Even though he knew He would be exposed to terrible times, to ridicule, to false accusations, to rumor, gossip and

malicious charges that branded Him as a glutton, drunkard, friend of sinners and even an imposter. It belittled His reputation. It involved physical suffering, mental anguish and spiritual agony. But Jesus told us himself that He came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. **Jesus is very happy when he sees us happy and prospering from the table He has Prepared for us**, the life He has made possible for you and I. Jesus is so pleased to see us walk in the ways of holiness, of selflessness, of contentment in His care, aware of His companionship.

Thou Anointest My Head With Oil - It is very logical for us to desire for us to have the daily anointing of God's gracious Spirit upon us daily. God all by himself can form in us the mind of Christ. The Holy Spirit alone can give to us the attitudes of Christ. He alone makes it possible for us to react to aggravations and problems with calmness and quietness. In **Romans 8:1-2** – **There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.** This is plainly saying it is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus that makes us free from the law of sin and death. It is the daily anointing of God's grace upon my mind which produces in my life such personality **traits as joy, contentment, love, patience, gentleness and peace**. What a difference this is from tempers, frustration, and irritableness which pull's down the daily conduct of so many of God's people. What we need to do at any given time or situation is to simply say Lord, I can't cope or tolerate with these petty, annoying, peevish problems. Lord Jesus I ask you to apply the **oil** of Your Spirit to my mind.“ Both at the conscious and sub-conscious levels of my thought-life, **please enable me to act and react just as You would.**” **And He will.**

In the Christian life, we are mostly contaminated thru the world, by sin, by that which would defile and disease us spiritually comes through our minds. It is a case of mind meeting mind to transmit ideas, concepts and attitudes which may be damaging. Often it is when we “get our heads together” with someone else who may not necessarily have the mind of Christ, then we come away imbedded with concepts that are not Christian. Our thoughts, our ideas our emotions, our choices, our impulses, drives and desires are all shaped and molded through the exposure of our minds to other people’s minds. Young people in particular whose minds are so influential and so malleable find themselves being molded under subtle pressures and impacts made on them by television, radio, magazines, newspapers, and fellow classmates, not to even say anything about their parents and teachers. One cannot be exposed to such contacts without coming away contaminated.

There are people who seem unable to realize His control of their minds and thoughts. It is a very simple matter of faith and acceptance. Just as one ask Christ to come into the life initially to assure complete control of one’s conduct, so we need to invite the Holy Spirit to come to our conscious and subconscious mind to monitor our thought-life. Just as by faith we believe and know and accept and thank Christ for coming into our lives, simply by faith and confidence in the same Christ, we believe and know and accept with thanks the coming or **(anointing)** of His grace upon our minds. Then after we have done this we need to simply live and act and think as He directs us. The problem with this is that **some or most of us are not dead earnest about it or completely sold out to Jesus.** Just like a stubborn ole sheep we will struggle, kick and protest when the Shepard puts His hand upon us for this purpose. Even if it is for our own good, we will still rebel and refuse to have Him help us when we need it so desperately. Our Shepard always has our best

interests in mind. Because of this we are actually under obligation to be a thankful, grateful, appreciative people. The Bible tells us in the New Testament clearly that **we are to grasp the idea that the cup of our life is full and overflowing with good**, with the life of Christ Himself and with the presence of His gracious Spirit. And because of this we should be joyous and grateful. **This is the overcoming Christian life.** It is the life in which a Christian can be content with whatever come his way – even trouble **(Hebrews 13:5), Jesus said He would never leave thee or forsake thee.** The trouble is most of us don't see it this way, especially when trouble comes our way or disappointments, we are apt to feel forgotten by our Shepard, **We act as though He has fallen down on His job. But He is never slack on His part,** He is never indifferent to our well-being. Most of us are glad when things are going well, **but how many of us can give Him praise and thanks when things go wrong?** It is here that we should grasp the aspect altogether of the meaning of a cup that overflows. **There is in every life a cup of suffering.** Jesus referred to His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane and at Calvary as His cup. Had it not overflowed with His life poured out for men, we would have perished. What a picture, the very life blood of His own suffering from His overflowing cup, poured out at Calvary for us. He is there with us in every storm we go thru. He is aware and alert to every approaching disaster that threatens His people. Jesus has been through the storms of sufferings before. He has bore our sorrows and was and is very aware of our grief. No matter what storms we face, His very life and strength is poured into ours. It overflows so the cup of our life runs over with His life, so often with abundant blessings and benefits to others who see us stand up in the middle of trials and sufferings.

Surely Goodness and Mercy Shall Follow Me – Throughout the study of this Psalm we see the emphasis on the Shepard and how it has been stressed the essential welfare of the sheep and their care by the Shepard. Now we see it all summed up by the Psalmist in one simple statement: “**Surely Goodness and Mercy Shall Follow Me All the Days of My Life**”!!!! We see no matter what comes our way we always can be perfectly sure that **Goodness and Mercy** will be **in the picture**. This is what we as sheep receive from our Shepard’s loving hands. This is a somewhat bold statement, being an exclamation of confidence in the One who controls our destiny. How many people really feels this way? How many of us are really concerned that no matter what comes our way or what happens we are being followed by **Goodness and Mercy**? Sure it is easy and simple to say when everything is going well. If my health is good; my finances are in order; my family is well; it seems all my friends are fond of us it’s not hard to say goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. But what happens when one’s health diminishes or breaks down? What happens when we stand helpless watching bad things happen? What is your reaction when your job folds up and there is no money to meet bills? What happens if the children cannot make their grades in school and maybe start running with the wrong crowd? What happens when all the sudden without any reason friends turn out false and start turning against you? These times are the times that test a person’s confidence in the hands of Jesus Christ. When our world is upside down and falling apart and our ambitions start crumbling down we need to declare and speak **Surely Goodness and Mercy Shall Follow Me all the Days of My Life**, or can we? If we will just take a look back at our life and see that there have been things when it seemed like disaster; seemed like blind alleys; like there were no way possible to get through, but in the end it turned out for our

benefit and our well being. May have not understood why or what, during the times of worry, fear and being tempted to panic, may have even tempted to bail out or walk away from His care, may have even thought you could survive better on your own. Most of us have been through this. But despite this crazy behavior He will not give up on us. Get this **Goodness and Mercy** are still following us, even when we think it isn't. The only possible way was because of His own love, His care and concern for us as one of His sheep. The ones who truly belong to Jesus the Good Shepard, not one bit of difficulty can arise, not even being a disaster without good coming out of the situation. This is the **Goodness and Mercy** of the Master. This needs to become the foundation of your **Faith** and confidence in Jesus. We love him because He first loved us. His **Goodness and Mercy** are with us each and every day. **John 10:14-15 – 14) Jesus says, I am the good Shepard , and know my sheep, and am known of mine. 15) As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.** Listen He laid His life down for us!!!!

Now let's look at this which is the only real way to show our measure of appreciation for the **Goodness and Mercy** of God to us is to the extent to which we are in turn, able to show **Goodness and Mercy** to others. If we are unable to forgive fallen men and women, friends and family who hurt us, then it is quite certain we are **not** thankful of our Shepard's **Goodness and Mercy** to ourselves. But to the men and women who knows first hand about **Goodness and Mercy** of God in their own life, they will be the ones with affectionate love and **Goodness and Mercy** to others. This blesses those people, but most of all God gets blessed and the glory. Most of us forget that our Shepard is looking for some satisfaction as well. He looks on our lives in tenderness for He loves us deeply. He sees the long years during which His **Goodness and Mercy** have followed us

without being slack. He wants to see the same measure of that same goodness passed back to Him with gladness and joy. He longs for love, our love. We can only love Him, because He first loved us. Then He is happy.

I Will Dwell in the House of the Lord For Ever – The Psalmist opens this Psalm with The Lord is my Shepard, now as he closes he says that in no way will he depart from the Lord. He is simply saying “Nothing will ever make me or change my mind I will not leave my Shepard.” He has took us through green pastures and still waters, up through the mountain passes onto the high tablelands, the storms have come and with its storms, rain and sleet. During all the seasons and their hazards, dangers and disturbances it is the Shepard’s care that has brought us through it safely. That’s why we should say **“I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”** We as sheep should be so satisfied that we should not want to ever leave this flock or the house of the Lord. We need to be proud to be a Child of God, being able to look back through all we’ve been through and all the amazing ways in which He has provided for our welfare. We should be bold and testify and witness to this lost and dying world and let it show the advantage to be a member of His flock or Household. But if we don’t know Him we can’t dwell in His house and there is only one way into His house that way is through the owner of the house Jesus Christ himself, The Good Shepard. He plainly said in **John 10:9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.** Nearly everyday we are surrounded by lost people, is our light reflecting on them? Do we have a impact on their lives? Do they see in us the benefits of Himself reflecting in our conduct and character? Does our life and conversation lead them to Jesus the Good Shepard and therefore into life everlasting? If so we may be made sure that some of them will also desire to dwell in the

house of the Lord forever. There is no reason why this cannot happen if they come under His proper ownership. It is the Shepard's guarantee that there will be no lack of any sort; there will be abundance of green pastures; there will be still clean waters and there will be new paths into fresh fields; there will be freedom from fear and there will be quietness and contentment. We need to live very aware of God's presence. We need to listen for Him to speak to us and be responsive to that voice. If we do this it can be richly rewarding throughout our lives being obedient and cooperative with Him. We can really discover that life is abundant and worthwhile as we live in this manner. Let's end, speaking this to ourselves, **I will live surrounded by His presence, I am an open person, an open individual, living life open to His will, knowing He is conscious of every circumstance I encounter in my life, He comes to me with care and concern because I belong to Him, saying this I will continue serving Him through eternity, "I will Dwell in the House of the Lord Forever."**

May each and every person that reads this get understanding of The Good Shepard and His Grace, I hope you are all Blessed through these words in The name of Jesus,

For my Love in Jesus Christ,
Bro.Mike Nappier