

The Lord is my Shepherd, I Shall Not Want

Psalm 23:1

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This is David's famous Psalm that we should learn when we are little. We learn to memorize scripture from our parent and also at Sunday School and other places. This is perhaps one of the most beloved chapters in the whole bible and maybe the most beloved Psalm. It captures all that God has promised to be to his children, and it tells us how we are to think of God in our minds. So let us read the 23rd Psalm, the Psalm of David, and begin our study of it this morning.

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear not evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou does prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; Thou has anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

How simply these things are put, but they are our entire life. As we begin this study of the 23rd Psalm, it is a metaphor or a picture about God and about His people. It is very clear that God is the shepherd and we are His sheep. That picture at the very beginning is a humbling one to the sheep, because it admits that we are not God and that we depend upon Him for everything as a sheep depends upon a shepherd. Goats may wonder throughout barren places and live, eating whatever comes along, even the thorns and the brambles that sheep will not eat. But sheep cannot get along by themselves, they need a shepherd to lead them to their feed, to waters, to protect them from their enemies, and care for them every day. We know from having received the entire bible that in John chapter ten the Lord Jesus Christ said, "I am the good shepherd," and when He said that, He had Psalm 23 on His mind. The Jews and His disciples understood and had memorized Psalm 23 when they were little from parents and synagogue school.

So, when He came forth with this statement, "I am the good shepherd," He was actually saying: I am David's shepherd. I am the shepherd that David spoke of, prayed to, and depended upon; that He himself is God. We don't know exactly when the 23rd Psalm was written by David. Some people have theorized that it was written when he was a shepherd boy tending sheep and he looked out upon the sheep and thought of these ideas of God as his shepherd. But many more look upon this as a Psalm that he wrote and a song that he sang when he was old; when many things had happened in his life and he had walked through the valley of the shadow of death; that he was a seasoned believer who suffered many things and there are a few that believe that it was written during the rebellion of his son Adonijah who we will study this Sunday evening in 1 Kings: how his son Adonijah rebelled against him and tried to make himself king. While David was going through all of these sorrows of his family where he had seen his son Absalom trying to make himself king, now Adonijah is trying to make himself king, that it was during this time that David wrote this Psalm.

It is a psalm of faith by one who understands who God is and what He is like and how much He oversees and cares for his children, his sheep. So we have, I believe, the mature reflections inspired by God of King David who found God worthy of trusting in his life. It is interesting that this Psalm is between Psalm 22, which is a picture of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ; (this psalm begins with: "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" and it is quoted in the new testament as it describes the sufferings of Jesus: his beatings, his afflictions, his enemies, their cursing, even the soldiers gambling for his

clothing at the foot of the cross while the Son of God suffered) and between Psalm 24, which is the psalm of His glory, where the Lord Jesus Christ is pictured as entering into the heavenly kingdom victorious over sin and Satan and death. It is the psalm that Handel used as part of the Messiah: “Lift up your head, O ye gates, and be lifted up, O ye everlasting doors that the King of glory may come in:” Christ ascending victorious into the eternal kingdom because of His effectual work upon the cross and His faithfulness to His God.

Here we have in the middle of His death and His victory the heart of Christ. He is first and foremost to us a shepherd; a pastor who knows each one of His own: his sheep; who knows each one by name; who calls each one to Himself and cherishes them, feeds them, cares for them and protects them, because He knows His own.

I want us to focus this morning on the first verse of this passage: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” Every time you hear the word shepherd you should understand that Jesus Christ is ultimately the one we are talking about; David’s shepherd. Jay Alexander, a great Hebrew scholar, said that this first verse is actually the theme of the psalm and it is the sum of the psalm and the other parts of the psalm explains the first verse: how God is our shepherd, how it is that we do not want, and that He provides all that is true.

If this is true, then we have a psalm that we need to study like we would study the Lord’s Prayer as a model of how we should pray. Not just to pray in our memory, but Jesus said, “Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name...” Pray like that. “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done...” Pray like that. If we look at Psalm 23 in that manner: that it is a great summarization that all that God does for sinners to bless them, to care for them, to protect and provide for them, then with each verse and with each phrase we learn more about God’s faithfulness to His people.

Now in this psalm this morning, in the first verse, I want us to look into what it means to have Jesus Christ as your shepherd and secondly, I want us to consider what it means when David says, “I shall not want.” I think a lot of people misunderstand what that means.

So, first of all, what does it mean to have Christ as your shepherd? It means that He is Lord and that He is God. It is interesting when you look up the word shepherd and follow it throughout the Old Testament into the New Testament—many times it is used to describe God. God told Israel that when He brought them out of Egypt and through this rough wilderness into the promise land, he led them out of Egypt as a shepherd who cares for his sheep. God was the shepherd of Israel in the wilderness and into the promise land. When He appointed David to be the king of Israel, he appointed a shepherd. I believe to help the people understand what God is like as He cares for His people.

He is a shepherd, and David always looked upon God as his shepherd and mentions Him in several other psalms that the Lord is his shepherd. Then after David, that shepherd king of Israel, knowing the prophecy that God promised him a son and a continued throne and an eternal kingdom, that there will be coming from him a great king. In the prophets of Isaiah and Jeremiah they are always promising the son of David to come and be a shepherd over Israel again. Of course we know that the fulfillment of that prophecy was when Jesus Christ came: When he said, “I am the good shepherd,” he was identifying himself to be the shepherd God of David, the shepherd God of the prophets, the king shepherd, and the chief shepherd who would come for a new people of God.

And so when we say, “The Lord is my shepherd,” we need to be thinking about the Lord Jesus Christ who fulfilled all those prophecies and came and as He said: laid down His life for the sheep. The

people would not accept Jesus as the good shepherd, because they understood that it was not just the Messiah who was the son of David who would be shepherd, but Jesus claimed himself to be God; and so they said, in the last week of his life on earth, “We will not have this man to rule over us,” and they rejected Him from being their shepherd God.

We need to keep before us, I believe, this respect and honor and awe that a sheep should have for his shepherd. The Lord Jesus Christ would have us look upon Him as our bridegroom and brother and friend, but we must never forget that He is also God the Son. In the churches in America today, Jesus is preached more as a fishing buddy, a golfing buddy, or a person that you can finally talk to and say anything to. In a sense those things are sort of true, but we do not approach Him as an equal. We should approach Him as the eternal Son of God who spoke at the Father’s command and created this entire universe out of nothing with the power of His word so that it says in scripture: The things that we see that were made, were made out of nothing, nothing but God’s voice. We see the Lord Jesus Christ and the tenderness that He had with the disciples and the patience that He had with sinners while He was upon earth. We should believe that He is approachable and that He cares for sinners, but we must never forget who we approach: one who made us in our mother’s wombs, one who speaks and holds all things together in His hands, one who has willingly given himself for those who are undeserving to bring them into His great presence; and know the grace and kindness of His person and to see His power with all and thanksgiving. When we worship the living God through the Lord Jesus Christ, we rejoice with trembling at whose presence we are in; as a sheep does with shepherds.

The words of verse one have no verb in them in the Hebrew. It actually is an exclamation: The Lord! My shepherd! And we provide in italics the *is* in our English language to make it read more smoothly so we can understand what is being said, but we must not overlook the amazement that David had that these words would come out of his mouth; that he could say as a sinner, and certainly in many ways a great sinner by the end of his life (saved by grace), the Lord, shepherd of mine, my shepherd. It is a statement of amazement that the great God who had guided David all his life and protected him through many trials, provided his needs even against many enemies, the one who enabled him to slay the giant, Goliath, to defeat the Philistines; to endure, even after his own sinfulness and failures, to have his kingship still in place; to be able to carry him through the rebellion of his own sons against him; he could still say: the Lord is my shepherd. It amazed him to be able to say that.

We need to get back to that kind of amazement today: about the Lord Jesus Christ. So many of the churches in America have made the error of looking on the Lord Jesus Christ as someone that was made for them instead of them being made for Him; someone to do something for you. And certainly in His great salvation He does many things for us, but He saved us for himself, for His glory, for His honor, to show the magnitude of God’s kindness and mercy and grace to those that are undeserving; and certainly to bless us, but for himself He saved us to be His people. For we are His people, the psalm says and the sheep of His pasture. Therefore enter His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise. He made us to come and know Him and to worship Him and to be blessed by His goodness as well.

We need to remember what Peter said at the close of his sermon on the day of Pentecost when he preached the gospel to that multitude of Jews at the temple square. He talked about the Lord Jesus Christ who was delivered up by the hands of godless men according to the predestined will of God. He talked about the resurrection from the dead, and even quoted from David’s psalms, that He would not

allow His holy One to undergo decay. He preached that this One that they had killed is alive, that He rose and conquered the greatest enemy: death. As a result, this was his call to them; it was *not*, as so many put it today: “Come to Jesus for all He can do for you,” a man centered and self centered appeal. There is no question that he does wonderful things for those who come to Him. He will not cast us out. He will forgive us of sins. He will cause His Spirit to dwell in us. He will help us, but this was the close of Peter’s sermon, “Know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ; this Jesus whom you crucify.”

He would not let them forget who it was that died upon the cross: the Lord of glory, the Son of God, and the one whom we have offended with our sins. He is the one, who out of the love and grace of His heart, died there in our place. It is this Christ that we come to when we come to salvation: a Lord that we bow to, a shepherd who is God. The shepherd is Lord, and it is this concept of Him as our great Lord and King and Shepherd, the greatest personage of the entire universe who fills all things, that should amaze us; that such a one would welcome us. It is this humility of faith that gives us a heart to love Him and keep His commandments in our life; to be thankful every time we bow our heads and say, “Our Father who art in heaven...” It is this amazement of who He is and what He has done for us in spite of who we are that make us say with amazement: “The Lord, my shepherd...”

We need to regain that. There is a second thing that this phrase, “The Lord is my shepherd...” implies, and that is: if the Lord is your shepherd, you have to be a sheep. That image, that figure or metaphor of the sheep, has many things that it bring to mind. I have not been around a lot of sheep in my life, but I have been around a lot of God’s sheep. They are a lot alike, and so am I like that. Spurgeon said, “No man has a right to consider himself the Lord’s sheep unless his nature has been renewed.” For the scriptural description of the unconverted man does not picture them as sheep but as wolves or goats.

Sheep are not wild animals. They are not like goats and lions and deer that can exist alone in the wilderness, they are domesticated animals, they are conquered animals that have to be cared for by others, and they have to willing to trust and obey and follow their shepherd in order to survive. That is what we are. “All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned each one to our own way.” And the amazing truth of scripture is that the Lord has caused all our iniquity to fall upon Him; upon Christ, to gather His sheep back to His bosom, for them to know His care and love again, and not to be left to themselves to wonder.

A sheep does not think this way: “I don’t care what God thinks or anybody else. This is what I am going to do.” A sheep does not think: “Well, you know, I need to get my life back in shape with God one day, but it is not the right time.” It doesn’t say, “I know I ought to turn to the Lord. This is just the way I am. I can’t help it,” and continues to go its own way. You know, sheep know the voice of their shepherd, and they follow Him. Something has happened to them to wake them up.

In John 10 when Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. I lay down my life for the sheep.” He describes some ways to tell if you are a sheep. He says, “My sheep hear my voice.” That means that they are looking to the shepherd and listening to His voice. They want to follow Him. They look upon His voice as a safe place where they can gather around and be provided for and protected. They hear His voice. They listen to His words.

In Ezekiel 33, before Ezekiel 34 where God describes Israel as sheep that has gone astray, God says that He would provide true shepherds for them one day and one great shepherd to rule over them

all, but immediately before that he told Ezekiel: “My people love to come and hear you preach. And they say: “How beautiful your voice; how amazing these things, but when they go away they do their own thing.”

Sheep are not like that. Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice.” They listen to His word. They submit to His word when He utters that sound that only shepherds in Israel can utter; that is distinct from any other shepherd. They recognize which one is their shepherd and they follow him, because they know their life depends upon it; and they know that he has proven himself faithful and good to provide what they need; and he said about sheep: “I know them. They hear my voice and I know them.”

There is a sense that the sheep have that He is risen indeed, that He is alive, and He knows them. They may have trouble with their own struggles in life and physical body and its trials and their spirit and the warfare that sometimes is in their minds as they seek to love Him and overcome sin and keep His commandments and build a godly life; these voices all around them sometimes may bring confusion about their sense of His presence, but He says, “I know them,” and they believe that. They live with this understanding that the incredible Son of God who created the worlds and their life in their mother’s womb, is alive; and twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week His eye is upon each of His own and He knows them. He knows what they are thinking. He knows what they are going through. He knows what they need and He gives that even before they ask.

“I know my own,” he says, “and my own know me, and they follow me. They come after me where I lead and where I speak.” As a shepherd leads his flock through the wilderness of Judea and up and down hills and rocky places and finding water where they can, He talks to His sheep so they can hear His voice. Sometimes he sings to them as he goes: the psalms of God, but they hear his voice and they follow him. They want to do what he says. It is in them to follow him. That is one way you know you are a sheep.

Jesus said, “If you love me you will keep my commandments.” And in the great commition that we love to quote about going out into the world and sending missionaries to bring the gospel to others, “Go. Make disciples and make disciples of all the nations...” we say. Go and start churches. Go and take the gospel to your neighbor and family. Make disciples. It is too easy that the church has forgotten, but He also said, “...baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit teaching them to do all that I commanded you.” A life that is built upon Jesus’ words and commandments is the life that brings glory to God; and even in the book of Revelations where Christians are described standing before God and heaven, it says things like this: “They keep their faith in Jesus and they keep His commandments.”

The simplicity of the Christian life is to trust the shepherd more than yourself, more than your own thoughts, more than your own feelings, and more than your limited wisdom can tell you what you really need. You trust Him as the living God who knows you better than you know yourself and knows what you need better than you think. So you follow Him. You live a life that trusts Him and you seek to build a life of obedience and faithfulness to Him and trust Him to provide what you really need instead of manipulating your life and trying to fix this and trying to fix that—get this dish whirling over here and another dish whirling over there and trying to keep them all running to make your life work. No, you focus and live for Jesus Christ a life of love and grace; loving God with all your heart and loving your neighbor as yourself.

The amazing truth is that God promises to care for His sheep. “The Lord is my shepherd” means that you have to be a sheep. You have to come to Him and admit that you cannot run your own life;

that you are not capable of providing your needs; that you don't know what is really best. You come to Him not only for mercy and eternal life, but for truth and guidance and submit your will to Him as Lord. That is what faith is: you trust Him.

Christ's sheep commit their lives to follow their shepherd who laid down His life for them and rose again to help them live for Him. If David wrote this psalm later in his life, as I believe, God had led him through many trials in the wilderness: family problems, personal sins of the greatest magnitude, rebellion of his own family, betrayal of his own friends, defeats, victories, and God's discipline for his adulteries with Bathsheba, (and the bible clearly says that is the reason that God took that child's life: as a discipline of the Lord). That is hard, but David's sin was great and God's love was greater; for David had to learn to trust in the Lord and not himself. That is what sheep do.

So, after looking back on his life and seeing all the things that God had brought him through, there were times that he prayed for his life before God as Saul pursued him, there were times that he wept in grief over what he experienced from his children, and when he finally recognized the terrible sins he committed against God he prayed, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me," and God didn't. After all of this he could look back on his life and say with confidence, "The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want."

Do you think of God this way? Not someone that periodically checks in with you and sees if you have enough water to drink and enough grass to eat, and makes sure every once in a while that no lion is stalking you, but one who is here; one who is here with His sheep, by His Spirit, dwelling with you and in you, always with His eye toward you, always thinking about you, always caring for you in ways that you are too blind and ignorant to see. This is the shepherd of Israel. This is the One so great, so lovely, that laid down His life for such sheep. He can be trusted.

But what does it mean, secondly this morning, when it says, "The Lord is my shepherd, *I shall not want?*" Well, there is a promise here. In fact, it is a statement. It is a declaration. It can be translated in the Hebrew, not with a future, but with a present, because sometimes it is fuzzy in that language. "The Lord is my shepherd, *I do not want.*" The old English *want* is not the kind of translation that communicates to us today what they use to understand it to mean. The word *want* does not mean: the Lord is my shepherd I do not desire anything. In other words, I will not desire anything or that God will fulfill all the desires of my heart. There are times that this verse is actually taught that way, but that is not what the word means. The word actually means: lack, be without, or decrease. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not lack. The Lord is my shepherd. I do not lack. I have never lacked anything, I do not lack and I shall not lack anything.

It is hard to believe that today, because the whole world is telling us that we lack everything. The whole basis of marketing that drives our magazines, our newspapers, our TV's, and even our music, is that we lack something. I have good news. I got what you lack. Buy it. You need it. That is not the thinking of a Christian, because the Christian has realized something: they have everything in the face of Jesus Christ. They have a God who is reconciled from our sins; who has forgiven us and washed away our sins and removed them as far as the east is from the west; a God who has chosen to bring justice upon our heads and by putting it upon His Son's head instead, that we might receive the adoption as sons and all the blessing and inheritance that that entails.

We do not lack. Part of coming to faith in Christ is to believe that. David had been in times of hunger. He had been in times of cold. He had been in times when his enemies surrounded him and

looked as if they would fall upon his head, but he says after it all: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not lack.” This word is not used to describe what you want. It is a confession of faith: that because God is my shepherd I do not and I shall not lack anything that I really need. It is a promise—a promise to believe; especially of those times, as we have been studying through Philippians, we are tempted to be discontented with God’s providence or going through a trial that seems too difficult and we are tempted to cry out to God: I need, I need. He tells us to bring before Him all our petitions, but he says, “Bring them this way: do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God.”

It is a prayer of thanksgiving, recognizing God’s faithfulness in what He has already provided; that God is wise to know what we really need. Faith believes that our Shepherd is so good that we do not lack and shall not lack anything that God deems is good for us now or in the future. To believe that is a great comfort to the heart, and it helps us to examine our minds that what we want may not be what we need; what we desire may not be God’s will for us, and that the greatest need we have is to love Him and follow Him and trust Him. We don’t follow God who leads us to still waters and look at the waters and say, “Well, I would rather have that pond over there.”

We don’t follow God, and He says, “Eat in these green pastures here,” and you look across the fence (because the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence) and say, “No! I want to go on the other side!”

To be a sheep means that you trust the shepherd to provide everything you really need, and that trust of faith is what brings comfort to our hearts, acceptance of God’s will in our lives, and trust in the future. Who is it that defines for the Christian what he really needs, whether he or she is lacking or not? The answer of the bible is: God does. David understood that and could say, “The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not lack. I shall not be in want of anything.”

Many Christians have faced the rod and the beating and the afflictions that Paul himself had: the rejections of friends and family, persecutions at work and at school, and sometimes within the organized church. And when you hear their statements as they are tied to a stack of wood about to be burnt for the name of Christ, their answer is: I do not lack.

We have studied for months and months Philippians, and the whole background of that book is that Paul’s in jail when he wrote it, but he did not lack. He said, “I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances that I am in. I know how to get along with prosperity and be humble. I know how to go without and be rich in Christ. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, because for me to live is Christ.” This is what David is saying in the first verse of this psalm: The Lord is my shepherd. I do not and I shall not lack, because He is my shepherd.

David knew and experienced the things that would happen to him as a believer in this psalm; not only does God lead us beside quiet waters in the paths of righteousness, but the believer also walks through the valley of the shadow of death—and that is probably not death itself, it is the shadow of the valley of death; when all is dark and one cannot see and no way out is seen. No light is seen upon the path. Great trials surround you, yet the Lord is your shepherd—Enemies may surround the believer. David prepares you for them in this psalm, but God the shepherd somehow prepares a table in the presence of mine enemies.

The saints of old and many today around this world are being persecuted for the name of Jesus Christ. Some are being imprisoned: in Afghanistan, even in Iraq, in Syria, in Africa, in India, in China—

they are being put in the same jail cell that Paul lived in with their life in danger and separated from their friends. What do they say to us? They get on their knees and they begin their prayers: “The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not lack,” because their greatest treasure and their greatest joy is the Son of God who loved them and gave himself up for them. It is when the Lord allows all these things we depend upon to be stripped away that we begin to see the beauty of His love and the incredible, undeservedness of His forgiveness, and the awfulness of the suffering of the Son of God upon the cross where He could cry, “My God my God, why has thou forsaken me?”

The answer is: “For them, for your sheep, to bring them into eternal blessings.”

Paul could pray to his shepherd three times for the healing of his body and each time the Shepherd said no, and then He said to Paul: “My grace is enough for you.”

For power is made perfect in weakness; and so Paul said, “I rejoice in my weaknesses, because out of my weaknesses then I am made strong.” He understood the cycle of how God makes us strong and that the Shepherd will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape that we may be able to endure; and in that trial that he will allow to only go so far his purifying our faith, stripping us of false idols and false dependence and greed, and enabling us to see what it means to have the love of Jesus Christ for your soul.

“The Lord is my shepherd. I will not lack,” said David. There are a number of hymns that have been written on the Lord’s Prayer. This one is not written on the Lord’s Prayer, but I believe it carries the intention of the first verse: “Praise to the Lord who over all things does wonderfully reigneth, shelters me under his wings, yea so gently sustaineth. Hast thou not seen how thy desires have been granted in what He ordaineth?”

How many Christians would stand up here today and say, “There were times when I did not think I could take another step, breath another breath, go another day, and now they look back on those times and they say, “God is good and doeth good. The things that I went through that God ordained for me seemed so difficult in the midst, but now, He was answering my prayers. I prayed for increased faith and He gave me trials to purify my faith. I prayed for patience and He gave me people I had to forgive. I prayed for a strong faith and sickness came that He would not take away.”

Has thou not seen how thy desires ere have been granted in what He ordaineth? We would stand in this place today and say, “Yes, I do see.” Therefore, there is not fear for the present nor the future for the believer. The Lord my shepherd, I shall not lack. That enables you to live today contented, hopeful, faithful, trusting, loving the shepherd of your soul.

The Lord is my shepherd means at least three things: the Lord is my shepherd. That is enough. Christ is enough. Christ crucified, Christ forgiving, Christ rising, Christ preparing a place for me, Christ coming, Christ’s Spirit within me and with me, Christ’s wisdom, Christ’s goodness, Christ’s will and wisdom over all of my life causing all things to work together for good. This is enough. This is enough. Though He slays me, yet will I trust Him.

It means secondly, because Christ is our shepherd, the Lord is our shepherd; everything I face in this life is what I really need and I can trust Him. I have what I need today, because that is what God has provided. When tomorrow comes I will have what I need in God’s great wisdom and goodness and plan for my life to make me like Christ. He who delivered His son up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? He doesn’t forgive us and give us Christ’s death and forgiveness and then curse us and harm us. His death is the pledge and the promise that nothing can touch our heads without his

permission and purpose, and that no matter what is happening to us now or in the future He will cause all these things to work together for good for those who love Him; for them, not just for Himself, but for them as well.

The third thing it means is that if Christ is our shepherd, the Lord is our shepherd; we need to hear His voice and follow Him. We need to learn His ways. We need to learn His voice. He said, "Abide in my words. Let my words abide in you, and then you will know the truth and the truth will make you free. Abide in my words and you will truly be my disciples and bare much fruit." The sheep of Christ don't have to keep testing and proving the goodness of their shepherd, because they have a place to go and never doubt again about His care of their souls, of His provision for their needs, of His promise to never miss-guide them or miss-lead them; and it is upon the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ that we see the extent of the love of the shepherd for the sheep, and how far He will go to provide what they really need even when they don't know what they need, which is Him.

"If you love me," he said, "if I am your shepherd, keep my commandments" out of love because of what is received. Believe, believe it all; believe that in him being your shepherd you shall not lack, and therefore, each day, and even when tomorrow comes, believe that your shepherd is leading you.

Paul had a principle that he taught throughout his epistles. Jesus taught the same thing: "If you love me you will keep my commandments."

Paul said it this way: "Having received mercy we do not lose heart." Our shepherd, our good shepherd has laid down His life for the sheep and proven enough that He can be trusted. Having received mercy I do not lose heart.

I pray that if you sit here this morning without Jesus Christ as Lord you can bow the knee to Him and say, "I bow to you good shepherd, receive me as your sheep and I will follow you." You can come to Him this morning and do that. For without Him you are just one of those wondering in the wilderness hoping something will happen that is good, but with Him and His love and His mercy and His guidance you have every reason to believe that He will lead you by still waters and to green pastures, because He is the one who restores our souls to God. We can trust Him with everything in us.

Is it so with you? If you are a follower of Christ and pray this prayer, "The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want," make sure you understand what you are praying: that you trust Him to provide everything you really need; and therefore, you will follow Him through veil, and valley and thorns and thistles, on mountains and rugged terrains; because the shepherd knows where He is leading you. And every day, He causes us to look unto Him: the author and finisher of our faith and trust Him.