

Confidence in God's grace and care.

23rd Psalm

to ? to ?The Lord is my shepherd. to ? In these words, the believer is taught to express his satisfaction in the care of the great Pastor of the universe, the Redeemer and Preserver of men. With joy he reflects that he has a shepherd, and that shepherd is Jehovah. A flock of sheep, gentle and harmless, feeding in verdant pastures, under the care of a skilful, watchful, and tender shepherd, forms an emblem of believers brought back to the Shepherd of their souls.

The greatest abundance is but a dry pasture to a wicked man, who relishes in it only what pleases the senses; but to a godly man, who by faith tastes the goodness of God in all his enjoyments, though he has but little of the world, it is a green pasture. The Lord gives quiet and contentment in the mind, whatever the lot is. Are we blessed with the green pastures of the ordinances, let us not think it enough to pass through them, but let us abide in them.

The consolations of the Holy Spirit are the still waters by which the saints are led; the streams which flow from the Fountain of living waters. Those only are led by the still waters of comfort, who walk in the paths of righteousness. The way of duty is the truly pleasant way. The work of righteousness in peace. In these paths we cannot walk, unless. God lead us into them, and lead us on in them. Discontent and distrust proceed from unbelief; an unsteady walk is the consequence: let us then simply trust our Shepherd's care, and hearken to his voice.

The valley of the shadow of death may denote the most severe and terrible affliction, or dark dispensation of providence, that the psalmist ever could come under. Between the part of the flock on earth and that which is gone to heaven, death lies like a dark valley that must be passed in going from one to the other. But even in this there are words which lessen the terror. It is but the shadow of death: the shadow of a serpent will not sting, nor the shadow of a sword kill. It is a valley, deep indeed, and dark, and miry; but valleys are often fruitful, and so is death itself fruitful of comforts to God's people. It is a walk through it: they shall not be lost in this valley, but get safe to the mountain on the other side. Death is a king of terrors, but not to the sheep of Christ. When they come to die, God will rebuke the enemy; he will guide them with his rod, and sustain them with his staff.

There is enough in the gospel to comfort the saints when dying, and underneath them are the everlasting arms. The Lord's people feast at his table, upon the provisions of his love. Satan and wicked men are not able to destroy their comforts, while they are anointed with the Holy Spirit, and drink of the cup of salvation which is ever full. Past experience teaches believers to trust that the goodness and mercy of God will follow them all the days of their lives, and it is their desire and determination, to seek their happiness in the service of God here, and they hope to enjoy his love for ever in heaven.

While here, the Lord can make any situation pleasant, by the anointing of his Spirit and the joys of his salvation. But those that would be satisfied with the blessings of his house, must keep close to the duties of it.

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