

The Good Shepherd

[Part 2]

Psalms 23:1 [NIV] “... *I shall not want.*”

The Hebrew word translated “*want*” is “*châcêr*” meaning to lack, by implication to fail or cause to fail, bereave indicating receiving proper care and management.

This was **not** a strange statement from someone like David who had known intense privation, acute hardship and spiritual anguish in his life. Meditation on the psalms that he wrote will indicate this to the reader.

It is imperative that we keep a balanced view of our Christian life.

John 16:33 [NIV] “*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*”

Jesus Christ warned that to become His disciple would bring with it trouble.

Poverty and trials do not indicate a lack of blessings and care on the part of Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd.

Hebrews 12:7-11 [NIV] “*Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*”

Discipline and trials are part of our producing holiness in our character.

Revelation 3:17-19 [NIV] “*You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so that you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so that you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so that you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.*”

It was **not** riches that this group of Christians lacked, their problem was that they had wandered away from the care of the Good Shepherd.

Mark 10:21 [NIV] “*Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.*”

This young ruler was instructed to give up his riches as proof of his real desire to become a disciple of Jesus Christ.

It is only when we turn our back on the Good Shepherd and wander away from His management of our lives that we will end up in eternal want.

Matthew 6:24 [NIV] “*No-one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.*”

Satan may give us great wealth to cause us to stray from the flock managed by the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

It is who we allow to manage our lives now that will determine our welfare now but more importantly our future life and welfare.

Philippians 4:11-13 [NIV] *“I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”*

Contentment is a hallmark of a person who has put their lives into the hands of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd.

A good shepherd as owner of sheep takes a delight in his flock. For him there is no greater reward, no deeper satisfaction, than that of seeing his sheep contented, well fed, safe and flourishing under his care. This is indeed his very “*life*”. He gives all he has to it. His sheep are foremost in his mind, he literally lays down his life for his sheep. He will go to no end of trouble and labour to supply them with the finest grazing, the richest pasture, ample winter feed, and clean water. He will spare himself no pains to provide shelter from storms, protection from ruthless enemies, diseases and parasites to which the sheep are so susceptible.

2 Chronicles 16:9 [NIV] *“For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him ...”*

Repeatedly a good shepherd will cast his eyes over the flock to make sure that all is well with them.

In spite of having such a wonderful Owner and Master, some people are **not** content with Jesus Christ’s control over their lives.

Just like some sheep who seek to feed on the grass the other side of the fence that looks greener.

Some sheep are “*fence crawlers*” always looking for a way out of the control of the shepherd.

This can become an ingrained habit with some sheep, and they can influence others to follow their example.

Such sheep have to be got rid of, for the welfare of the rest of the flock.

Psalms 23:2 [NIV] *“He makes me to lie down in green pastures ...”*

Owing to their timid nature sheep refuse to lay down unless they are free from all fear.

Four major fears that can cause sheep to be disturbed:

a) **Fear of the unknown –**

The sudden appearance of a small dog, even a rabbit bounding into view, will panic the whole flock of sheep.

b) **No freedom from hunger –**

Sheep will never lay down and relax if they feel the need to search for food.

c) **No freedom from torment –**

The attack of flies and parasites can cause the whole flock to be disturbed.

d) **No freedom from rivalry –**

Friction and rivalry within the flock will disturb the whole flock.

All of these fears and tensions can be relieved by a good shepherd.

2 Timothy 1:7 [NIV] *“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”*

It is the work of Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd to relieve us, as part of His flock, of these fears.

a) **Unknown –**

Luke 12:32 [NIV] *“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”*

It is Jesus Christ’s greatest desire that we should become part of His wife in the created family of God. **[Revelation 19:7-8]**

John 16:33 [NIV] *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

If we remain in the flock of the Good Shepherd we will have total victory over Satan, the bad shepherd who is at this time ruling the world’s society. [2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19]

1 John 4:4 [NIV] *“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”*

The Holy Spirit who is active in every true Christians is far more powerful than our enemy Satan.

Hunger –

John 6:35 [NIV] *“Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”*

We have a promise from Jesus Christ if we remain within His flock we will always be fed and watered.

Torment –

1 Corinthians 10:13 [NIV] *“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”*

The Holy Spirit gives us as we allow Him to work in us the ability to bear all trials that come our way.

Galatians 5:22 [King James] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,”*

Long suffering or patience is one of the fruits of the active Holy Spirit within us.

Rivalry –

Among sheep there is what is known as *“the butting order”* to see who is dominant. **All too often this same attitude is found among “Christians” who are not applying the mind of Jesus Christ to their relationships with other human beings.**

Philippians 2:3-8 [NIV] *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross!”*

Only this attitude of mind that Jesus Christ expressed in His human life as the Son of Man will dissipate any rivalry in groups of human beings who are part of the flock of the Good Shepherd.

Psalms 23:2 [NIV] *“... He leads me beside quiet waters.”*

Peaceful water is easier for sheep to safely drink from rather than a raging torrent.

Although sheep thrive in dry, semi-arid country, they still require water to retain their vigour and strength.

If sheep are **not** led to pure water they will drink from polluted pools and pick up parasites and other diseases.

Generally speaking water for the sheep comes from three main sources:-

a) **Dew –**

Sheep by habit rise just before dawn to start to feed, or if it is moonlight they will feed at night. In the early hours the vegetation is often drenched with dew, and sheep can keep fit on the amount of water taken in with their forage when they graze just before and after dawn, such water is very clean and pure.

Is God trying to tell us something?

Read the biographies of men and women that God used in a great way and you will find that they all had their *“quiet time”* with God early in the morning.

b) **Deep wells –**

If the sheep are to be supplied needed water from deep wells they need the shepherd to draw it up for them.

John 16:13 [NIV] *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”*

The Holy Spirit will guide us into a deep understanding of God’s Word, the Christian Bible.

John 14:26 [NIV] *“But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”*

The Holy Spirit will bring to mind all of God’s Word that we have studied.

c) **Springs or streams –**

Note it says *“He leads me”*, just like some sheep, people stubbornly refuse to let God’s Holy Spirit lead them. [**Romans 8:14** a major hallmark of a true Christian]

Instead such people insist on running their own lives and are like rebellious sheep drinking polluted water instead of pure water of God’s Word, the Christian Bible.

Such a lifestyle eventually has adverse effects on their spiritual growth.