

Psalms - Commentaries by William (Bill) Warr

The Christian Shepherd: 1998, Meditations on Psalm 23: 6 (23:6)

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life" (vs. 6).

"Surely." There is no word like this out there in the whole world; it only belongs to us believers. It underlies our entire path, putting a smile on our lips in the midst of trials and difficulties. Among the greater lessons learned in the path of faith is that of the Spirit of God giving us to say and sing "surely." Nothing past, present or future can change this certainty to faith, nor is there anything that can dampen the assurance that it gives.

Goodness and mercy have been likened to the sheepdogs that the shepherd uses. When a sheep wanders away, the shepherd sends one out to drive it back to himself. Our Shepherd has two sheepdogs, and He uses them to bring us back to Himself. His sheepdogs are goodness and mercy, though they are often cloaked as trials and afflictions.

Our lives here, being tried in this place where sin is, are very precious to the Lord. He does not lump them up into a bundle. He divides our path into days, and He values and delights in every one of them. Soon, at His feet, we'll review each one with Him. Each day of the path will afford new occasions of communion with Him in eternity (2 Cor. 4:17).

"And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

We will dwell in the house of the Lord as familiar friends, not as visitors or servants, but as sons. He has made His house our house forever. Here, for us Christians, we have more than the kingdom in view. Where the queen dwells in the kingdom, there will we be with Him. But without Him neither the house nor the kingdom nor all the glory of eternity would delight our hearts.

Here is the end and aim of the psalm: we enjoying Him as He enjoys us. All the pathway is to this end.

B. Warr

The Christian Shepherd: 1998, Meditations on Psalm 23: 5 (23:5)

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies" (vs. 5).

The table of the Lord is in the valley of the shadow of death. His table is found where all that the flesh is, and can be, is relegated to the place of death. Likewise, we indicate that His table could be elsewhere when something of the flesh is resurrected and valued among us as acceptable before Him.

Communion with Him in the presence of my enemies would bring to mind the twelve spies sent into the enemy's land by Moses, carrying the cluster of grapes between two men on a staff (Num. 13:23). The added burden would have exposed them to greater danger, but they valued the treasure and brought it all the way back for the benefit of their brethren.

"Thou anointest my head with oil."

Here there is power to walk in intelligent joy. There is something extra needed to enjoy His table in the presence of our enemies, and He provides it. To the church at Philadelphia the Lord not only says, "Hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches," but also, "Hold that fast which thou hast" something extra (Rev. 3). May this distinction be a warning to us who by His grace are gathered unto His name.

"My cup runneth over."

There is a joy overflowing that cannot be contained a heart intelligently at His table, trusting Him as to the enemies, enjoying Him there. One has described us as often "half full, trying to run over." Only the Spirit of God can correct this. Only He can fill to overflowing can pour in more than can be contained. This He does where He has liberty to direct the heart to Christ. Every thought of Christ fills to overflowing.

B. Warr

The Christian Shepherd: 1998, Meditations on Psalm 23: 4 (23:4)

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death" (vs. 4).

The path of righteousness leads through the valley of the shadow of death. "Valley" speaks of a low place, where we learn to look above the ominous, surrounding mountains unto the Lord for everything (Psa. 121). The "shadow" of death is that exposure to death which is the

ultimate, needed trial for the flesh. "For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. 4:11).

The flesh in us intrudes into the Lord's things when we are not even aware of it. He righteously deals with its intrusion and triumphs over it, working blessings through His dealings. "I die daily," says the Apostle Paul as he stood in jeopardy every hour, but he was encouraged by the blessings that the Lord wrought through his sufferings even the Corinthian believers (1 Cor. 15:31).

"I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me" (vs. 4).

Walking with Him in the valley we have no fear. "Thou art with me" is the sustaining comfort for our poor hearts. Before, we have spoken of Him ("The Lord is my shepherd"), but here we need to speak to Him ("Thou art with me"). Personal communion with Himself is the only thing that supports the heart in the valley of the shadow of death. It is for this that He leads us there, so that He can be everything to us and we can enjoy Him as He is enjoying us. Here we do not read of deliverance from the valley but of sustenance in it from Him who comforts us in all our tribulations.

"Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me" (vs. 4).

Thy rod: discipline. Thy staff: help, encouragement. Both are a comfort. Both are a token of His personal attention to each of His own. Satan wanted to try all of the disciples, but the Lord Jesus only granted him Peter (Luke 22:31-32), and He prayed that Peter's faith would not fail even before it began.

W. Warr

The Christian Shepherd: 1998, Meditations on Psalm 23: 3 (23:3)

"He restoreth my soul."

I shall not want restoration! Forgetting His love and all that HE is for us, I sin and need restoration of soul: This we have in Him. Untiring, never-failing faithfulness at a time when we need it most, when we have sinned. He will never let us go. We are His forever.

"He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

Never wearying, He leads, restores and leads again. Yet He never changes; He is never other than what He is. His love and care for us are according to righteousness. His name is on us and He will be glorified in us as He leads us through this place where sin is.

B. Warr

The Christian Shepherd: 1998, Meditations on Psalm 23: 1-2 (23:1-2)

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (vs. 1).

The first verse of this psalm gives us the all-sufficiency of Christ. No matter what the need or pressure, spiritual or physical, He is enough. We are learning this day by day. In Luke 22:35 He "said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing." In that coming day of glory, when we are in His presence, I believe He will ask us the same, "Lacked ye anything?" Our answer will be the overflow of our hearts as we exclaim, "Nothing!" As He sent the disciples in Luke, at times He sends us "without purse, and scrip, and shoes" so that He can show us His own fullness and love for us.

And it is more than "I do not want"; it is, "I shall not want." This is His personal commitment to us for the path of faith! This gives rest from every fear, worry and "fret" (Psa. 37).

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures" (vs. 2).

Conquered by His divine love, confident of His divine, never-failing supply, all our searching and wanderings are over. Mary who sat at the blessed Saviour's feet (Luke 10:39) had found what she sought for. She was a captive of His love. The pastures are His, what He chooses, and thus all is well. It is not the green pastures that meet my need; it is Himself. We need not to seek to do anything to make ourselves happy. The Lord will do (and He alone can) that for us.

"He leadeth me beside the still waters" (vs. 2).

The sheep, thus happy and confident, is "led." There is no question of "Where are we going?" only, "Who is leading?" Abraham went out "not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11:8). The Lord Jesus says that Abraham "rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56). We, too, will see and be glad! "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

(to be continued)

W. M. Warr

