

**THE PSALM OF THE GOOD
SHEPHERD; TWENTY-THIRD
SPIRITUALLY EXPLAINED;
PP.4-75**

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The Psalm of the Good Shepherd; twenty-third spiritually explained; pp.4-75 by James Speirs

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JAMES SPEIRS

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THE PSALM OF THE
GOOD SHEPHERD

Psalm Twenty-Third Spiritually
Explained

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1885

4 **"The Lord is my Shepherd."**

of meaning, "The Lord is my shepherd;" and reciprocally the Lord can say, and say of us, "I am the good Shepherd, and My sheep know My voice, and follow Me." It is our duty—accepting the teaching of this statement—to acknowledge the Lord; to turn a willing ear to the Word in which He addresses us; and then to follow Him by applying it in all the acts of our daily life.

II.

“I shall not want.”

I SHALL not want.” Why shall we not want? On what grounds can we make this confident avowal? *Because* THE LORD is my Shepherd. “The Lord is my shepherd—I shall not want.” This then, is the cause, and this is the consequence.

Most of us are unable to reach that state of implicit trust in our Divine Father in which we can feel that we shall never want. For it is not merely a statement of the lips, it is still more, a confession of the heart and of the life. Though we repeat a hundred times a day the statement, “I shall not want, because the Lord

is my keeper," if we do not acknowledge it to be true, not on the intellectual side of our being only, but in the affectional part of it as well; if it does not go to the very root of our natures and permeate our whole soul,—it is no true, no thorough expression of faith in the Goodness which is all good, the Mercy which is all merciful, and the Power which is omnipotence.

"I shall not want" is not merely an expression of individual trust; it belongs to humanity. It is meant to utter the feelings of all the sons of men. For, as God is the creator of all "in heaven above and on the earth beneath," so it is meant that all should acknowledge Him to be their shepherd, and say with heart-felt belief, "I therefore shall not want."

But if the affirmation of trust rests on the feeling of trust, the feeling of trust is based largely on experience. And few there are who cannot, in looking at their past lives, feel with the certainty of conviction, that in many of the

incidents which have befallen them they have been wonderfully guided for the best. Providence is only seen in the past, "in the hinder parts;" but from those things which we can see, and from first principles, we learn to trust it in all things, and to acknowledge deeply, and say adoringly, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

"I shall not want!" What are those things which we shall not lack? How must we complete the sentence? Does it need completion? Would not any addition limit the limitless, and narrow the acknowledgment from a universal form, to one of our mere personal necessities? As it stands, it is the grandest expression of trust that a finite creature can accord to his Heavenly Father: "I shall not want." But may we not express our wants in our daily prayers? Yes, certainly; but only in that broad and comprehensive manner in which the Lord has Himself, through His penman the Psalmist, expressed it for us. "We shall not

want," for everything shall be supplied. And yet we must not imagine that all who live in affluence around us are examples of this Divine, and at the same time most human statement. We must look at it with eyes illuminated by the light of heaven, and remembering that man is, above all, a spiritual being. When we do so, we shall find that this cry of confidence, "I shall not want," is true to its fullest extent."

In an orderly state our soul "crieth out for the living God:" it is not content without eating of His Divine body, and drinking of His Divine blood? without appropriating, according to our capacity for receiving them, of the goodness and the truth which constitute His presence in us. Our longings for whatever is in order can be, and therefore shall be, satisfied. We should not wish for more, and Omnipotence can give no less.

But what is the application of these words to this world? Do they apply to the wants of our body as of our soul? Assuredly; so far as

the gratification of the former does not interfere with the well-being of the latter. But when, as to our souls, we can truly say, in perfect trust and confidence, "I shall not want," our wants with respect to this world will not be unreasonable; nay, we shall rather be contented with less for ourselves, in order that more may be devoted to the service of the Lord's Church.

We may expect, with every confidence, to make the best of both worlds; to have the Lord's care extended from the inmost to the outermost of our wants, from heaven to earth. But when of the soul's wants it can be said, "I shall not want," the temporal wants will assume their real proportion and consequence; and that is, in relation to the spiritual, of the very smallest—in fact, mainly to serve as a ground and basis and ultimatum of the spiritual.

Of the earthly, as of the heavenly, we can therefore hope to receive whatever is best; though that will be the gratification of our natural necessities only in conjunction with,