

Whoever we are, wherever we are and whatever our circumstances, we are assured that the Lord is ever present, totally aware, knows our current needs; foresees our future needs – acting in our best interest immediately and everlastingly.

**Psalm 23:1a: “The Lord is my shepherd....”**

- **Grammatical Usage:** “**shepherd**” or in the Hebrew, “rō·î” meaning, “ruler; guide”.
  - **Literal Interpretation:** The Lord is my ruler and consequently my guide...
  - **Contextual/Comparison:** God keeps His Word: God continually uses His Word. It is only when we know Him that the blessings of the rest of the psalm become ours.
- A. If the Lord is my Shepherd – POSSESSION – **v. 1** assures me that “I shall not be in want.”  
**V. 1** has two parts, and one cannot be divorced from the other. Possessing Christ, we possess all things. If He is mine and I am His, how can I ever be in want? (**Philippians 4:19; Colossians 2:9-10**). “I shall not be in want” – of what? “**Any good thing**” (**Psalm 34:9-10**). Notice the good things which are enumerated in the following verses: Security (**v. 1**), provision (**vv. 2, 5**), rest (**v. 2**), refreshment (**v. 2**), guidance (**vv. 2, 3**), restoration (**v. 3**), comfort (**v. 4**), protection (**vv. 4, 5**), enduement (**v. 5**), satisfaction (**v. 5**), prospect (**v. 6**). (**1 Corinthians 3:21-23**)
- B. If the Lord is my Shepherd, **v. 2** describes the POSITION into which I am brought. It is one of complete satisfaction:
1. The sheep are fully satisfied because the Shepherd provides perfect conditions for them. Green pastures and still waters. Perfect rest and refreshment! Notice that the sheep lie down, something sheep never do while hungry. Here, then, is perfect satisfaction.
  2. The sheep are fully satisfied because the Shepherd is in full control of them. “**He makes me to lie down...He leads me...**” By nature we are foolish, wandering sheep (**Isaiah 53:6**), but if the Lord is our shepherd He assumes full responsibility for us; He gently makes us to lie down and He leads us in the way of His gracious provision. This is the key to a fully satisfied life. It is not only the Shepherd’s provision that satisfies – the green pastures and the still waters – it is His presence that satisfies.
  3. If the Lord is my Shepherd, **v. 3** tells me I shall have POWER to go straight. Sheep are foolish. They wander away, fall into a ditch here or get caught in a thicket there. Then what? The shepherd goes out and restores the sheep.

But He not only restores the sheep; He gives them power to walk in straight paths – “**in paths of righteousness**”. A literal rendering of “**He restores my soul**” is “He turns back my desires”. When He restores us He takes from us the very desire to wander – the love of sinning; then gives us the power to walk in His way of holiness and love. (**Philippians 2:13**)

C. If the Lord is my Shepherd, **v. 4** assures me that I shall know the PRESENCE of the Shepherd at all times.

1. He promises to be with me in the VALLEY. The picture here is of sheep being led through a deep gorge, on either side of which are caves where lions and bears live. But the shepherd is there, with me, to comfort and protect me.

2. He is with me in the SHADOW. Death to the Christian is only a shadow; after the shadow there is sunshine forever! (**John 10:11**; **1 Corinthians 15:55-57**). We may not have to die (**1 Corinthians 15:51-52**), but if so He will be with us. No Christian ever dies alone.

3. He is greater than my FEARS. The presence of Christ is the antidote for fear (**Isaiah 43:1-2**; **Matthew 14:27**; **Hebrews 13:5-6**).

5. **V. 5** tells us of the wonderful PROTECTION He gives.

Why a table? In the east, the pastureland is so covered with insects and harmful creatures that the shepherd used to place the food for his flock on little raised “tables” to enable them to feed safely in the presence of these “enemies”. Our enemies are constantly around us, seeking to harm us, but our Shepherd protects us by raising us above them, and in that exalted position He gives us the oil of gladness and blessings that overflow (**Ephesians 1:3**).

6. **V. 6** tells me of the glorious PROSPECT that is mine.

What is this prospect? Goodness and mercy for all my days down here, and then – in the palace of the King forever! Thank God, everyone who can truly say the first five words in **v. 1** can also say the last twelve words in **v. 6**! To sum up:

1. beneath me, “**green pastures**”
2. beside me, “**quiet waters**”
3. with me, “**my shepherd**”
4. before me, “**a table**”
5. around me, “**my enemies**”
6. upon me, “**anointing**”
7. after me, “**goodness and love**”
8. beyond me, “**the house of the Lord**”

➤ **Conclusion:** Is the Lord my shepherd?