

The Lord Is My Shepherd
Psalm 23:1
Charlie Brackett

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." The opening words of the 23rd Psalm steal into our souls and wrap around our hearts, capturing our emotions. It is hard to imagine a thought more comforting, more filled with promise. *"I shall not want."*

The world is filled with want. To live in this world is to want, to desire, to long for something more, something future, something better. The primary focus of the worldly view is *me*, what *I* want, how *I* feel. In the midst of the selfishness of this world the Psalmist boldly states, *"I shall not want!"* and intimates by the very utterance of the thought that any who have the Lord as their Shepherd shall enjoy the same state of being filled, of being satisfied.

Like all promises of the Bible this delightful promise of being freed from want is conditional. The Lord *must* be the Shepherd. *My* shepherd is the one I chose to associate with, the one I follow. And, there are many would-be shepherds in this world. Some appeal to our intellects, some our desire for pleasure, or power or wealth. Some appeal to our apathy and some to our religious zeal. But, if I would be without want, if I would truly be filled, it must be the Lord who is my shepherd.

There are many ways in which the one who follows the Lord shall be freed from want. Of course, the one who listens to the Lord's voice and follows His lead will have an eternal home in heaven free from all worldly care and pain and suffering, free from all want. The Lord said in John 10:27 and 28, *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me; And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."* But even in this life, the Lord as our Shepherd *"makes us to lie down in green pastures"* and *"leads us beside quiet waters"*. He blesses us richly with all we truly need in this life. Did He not promise in Matthew 6:33 that if we seek first the Father's kingdom, all of our physical needs of this life would be taken care of?

Sound too simple? Perhaps it is, if you think of it in worldly terms. We have become accustomed to wanting many things, to thinking that what we want is what we need. Someone says, "Wait a minute. The Psalmist said, *'I shall not want'*, he did not say, *'I shall not need!'*" That's true but, the key to understanding this lies in the nature of our desires. When the Lord is my shepherd I listen to His voice, I obey His commands, I follow where He leads and He leads in paths of righteousness. His voice reshapes my thinking, and submitting to His commands changes the selfish "me" into an unselfish servant of others. My personal wants are minimized and my desires center on spiritual things not on material things, not on things of this world.

How about you, my friend? Who is your shepherd? To whose voice do you listen?