

# THE POTTER AND THE SHEPHERD

by Jc Brumfield

---

*Brumfield's exposition on the biblical imagery of God as both Potter and Shepherd, examining how these metaphors reveal God's sovereign authority in shaping His people and His tender care in guiding and protecting them.*

4 Chapters

## Table of Contents

1. 0.3 - Introduction
2. 0.4 - Preface
3. 1 - The Potter and the Clay
4. 2 - The 23rd Psalm

## 0.3 - Introduction

---

J. C. Brumfield

Born September 1, 1907, the son of a Baptist minister and converted when nine years old, the author felt a definite call to the gospel ministry. He began preaching when nineteen years old and after his college training he was a pastor for ten years, serving three different churches. He was married in 1932 and after four years of evangelistic work with his wife he became director of the "Back to the Bible" broadcast.

Later as director of Child Evangelism in Nebraska he became overwhelmed with the conviction that the time to reach people with the gospel is in early childhood. He felt called to full-time Child Evangelism and "Radio Kids Bible Club" was organized in 1943. Their two children, Betty Darlene and Bobby, are the "Susie" and "Johnny" of Radio Kids Bible Club fame. As Vice Director of the International Child Evangelism Fellowship and Vice President of the Board of Directors, Mr. Brumfield made a round-the-world trip in the interest of the organization in 1950, visiting many of the mission fields of the world.

Mr. Brumfield is author of numerous other books, outstanding among them are the "Susie" books, known around the world. *The Potter and the Shepherd* by

J. C. Brumfield

There are two messages in this book- "The Potter and the Clay," and "The Twenty-third Psalm." In the first the author discusses in detail the account of Jeremiah in the potter's house, the broken vessel and the new one, and the lessons which apply to the Christian life. In the second portion of the book, the author emphasizes many truths from this universally known portion of scripture that are of benefit and blessing to men and women in all walks of life. A magnificent devotional work.

Van Kampen Press

Inc.

Wheaton, Illinois

## 0.4 - Preface

---

PREFACE In His infinite wisdom and love the Lord has deemed it necessary to take human vessels which have been marred by sin and has made from the new creatures in Christ Jesus. Then by His equally infinite tenderness and patience He daily leads His sheep in the “paths of righteousness.” Nowhere are these attributes of the heavenly Father more clearly portrayed than in Jeremiah 18:1-6 and Psalms 23:1-6. The author of these two expositions is widely known for his evangelistic work among the children of the land wherever his radio broadcasts are heard. Since these expository messages carry such vital interpretation and application to the Christian life it was found advisable to give them wide circulation. This was done with very encouraging results. Now to further increase their effectiveness and publishers have produced them in this new form, under one cover, praying that God’s richest blessing will rest upon the for a greater usefulness in the building up of Christian believers.

-The Publishers.

## 1 - The Potter and the Clay

---

### THE POTTER GOD'S ORDERS

"The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel" (Jeremiah 18:1-8).

It is evident from a careful study of this passage, that God told Jeremiah to go to a certain place at a certain time to teach him a certain lesson. It is important that we obey God's orders, if we are going to learn God's lessons for us.

"Go down to the potter's house." God sent Jeremiah to the potter's house, not to preach a sermon, but to receive a sermon, ready prepared. God has to talk to us before we can effectively talk to others. And we must talk to God for others before we can talk to others for God.

"There I will cause thee to hear my words." Notice the word "there". There was a certain thing Jeremiah never could have learned anywhere else. God would teach us that every move in the life of a Spirit-led Christian is for a purpose. He has something to show us and to teach us in everything He orders. Oh, the blessedness of a Spirit-filled and Spirit-led life! We see here the reward of obedience. We sometimes miss God's richest lessons by disobedience. We see also the economy of God's guidance. There was no wasted time. Jeremiah arrived just in time to find the potter molding a vessel, and to see it marred, and made again. A self-willed life leads to waste. How much of our lives are really wasted by resisting God's guidance! We spend weeks on the sick-bed, months in the hospital, years laid on the self - just because God said, "Go, there," and we chose some other place. He says, "Go," at a certain time, and we choose another time; He reveals His will, and we have a will of our own. God's Word warns us to beware that thus after "we have preached to others, we become a castaway."

I read a story not long ago of one of the greatest Bible teachers in America, who was for years a "castaway," because he had sinned against the revealed will of God.

I like this about Jeremiah. God said, "Go," and there was no delay, no resistance. There was no waiting, Jeremiah went. Suppose he had never gone?

It is not necessary for us to know why God says, "Go," but it is well to keep in mind that God always has a reason. Philip was in a great revival in Samaria

(Acts 8:1-40). He was preaching the Word, souls were being saved, miracles were being wrought, unclean spirits were being cast out, the lame were healed, and "there was great joy" in that city. Then right in the midst of that revival, God said, (Acts 8:26) "Philip, arise and go... down... unto

Gaza, which is desert.” Now, Philip did not argue with God. He did not say, “Why, Lord, I am in the middle of a big revival here, where could I go to do more good than I am doing right here? Why can’t I stay here a little longer?” No, God said, “Go,” and ... “he arose and went” (Acts 8:27). Suppose he had said, “Tomorrow I will go.” He would have missed the eunuch, the hungry soul that God had waiting for him. Remember, God always has a purpose when He says, “Go.”

Waiting on the Lord is not wasting time. We sometimes learn slowly, but “there” is the place of God’s will for us, and He is teaching us, molding us, and getting us ready to be used. Moses spent forty years in one place to learn one lesson. A pastor often spends a number of years on a hard field, and sometimes it seems that he sees nothing accomplished, but God is teaching him, and preparing him for a greater service in the future. A Sunday-school teacher spends years teaching the Word, sometimes without seeing a great deal accomplished, as spiritual giants grow slowly, and the lives of boys and girls do not develop overnight. A mother spends years molding the lives of boys and girls, and sometimes it seems that the task is tedious, but “there” is the place in which God has put her, and “there” is where He wants to use her. Those who would know God’s mind must keep God’s appointments.

“I will cause thee to hear My Words.” God reveals His will through His Word. His Word is sometimes illustrated by providential experience. It becomes practical by our practice of it. God never gives a command that is contradictory to His will, which is revealed in His Word. Always test your impressions by the plain teaching of the Word of God. If your apparent “leading” contradicts God’s Word, then you can be sure that it is not His GUIDANCE.

“Go down to the potter’s house.” There are some things that we never learn until we “go down.” We must “go down” before we can be “lifted up.” Humility is before exaltation. He that “exalteth himself shall be abased.”

Here the humble potter teaches a great prophet. Some of the most precious lessons may be learned from a poor washerwoman or a humble street-sweeper.

One of the world’s greatest preachers had to go to the humble home of an invalid to learn how to pray. Spiritual growth is not always “up.” We are always reaching “up” and sometimes miss the lessons that God has all around us. We should constantly seek spiritual truths from our everyday experiences. I have often wondered how many of the disciples passed by the little boy with the loaves and fishes in his hand. It remained for humble Andrew to look “down” and see the little boy with lunch in his hand. **THE POTTER’S WHEEL**

“Behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.” Have you ever seen an old-fashioned potter’s wheel? Perhaps not, but you have seen an old-fashioned backyard grindstone. Well, a potter’s wheel is similar to a grindstone, only instead of being mounted in a perpendicular position; it is mounted as a table and rest upon the shaft. When the potter treads the pedal, the wheel spins round and round.

It has been my privilege a number of times to visit an old-fashioned pottery in the Ozarks. And I was amazed at the rapidity with which the potter turned off one vessel after another. The potter takes the clay, which is already prepared for the wheel (that will be dealt with in another chapter) and he places it on the wheel and begins to tread the pedal. As the wheel turns round and round, the clay spins through his fingers. He inserts his thumb in the middle of it, and as the clay passes

between the thumb and the fingers of his two hands, he merely describes the outer shape of a vessel, similar to the way you draw it on a piece of paper. The vessel gets its cylindrical shape from the spinning of the wheel, and “behold” (quicker than it is taking me to tell you about it) - he turns out one vessel after another, and if he so desires, each one looks exactly like the one preceding it and the one following it. The skill of the potter is amazing, and the yielding of the clay to the will of the potter is one of the lessons God would have us learn.

It is apparent from this that God has your life and mine on the wheel and there He means for it to stay. God will never be through with your life and mine until one day it is shaped into the likeness of His own glorious Son. But the important thing is what happened on the wheel in the shaping of the vessel. A MARRED VESSEL

“And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter.” What does it mean? Did the vessel crumble and fall to pieces? Was it a lop-sided vessel? Was it spoiled and unfit for the market? Was it out of shape in some way? All of these things are possible, and yet it is not necessarily what is meant here.

I asked an old potter to tell me the meaning of this passage, and he said “As I look at a piece of clay on the wheel, I do not see it as you do; but there flashes into my mind immediately a picture of the finished vessel. As long as the vessel on the wheel does not perfectly correspond to the image in my mind, it is a marred vessel.” The literal meaning here is that it was a disappointment to Him. It was not the vessel that he intended that particular piece of clay to be. When I was a boy my mother told me upon one occasion, “Go, tell your father what you have done.” Now, I was not afraid of physical violence from my father, but there was nothing I more dreaded to do than to confess what an unworthy son I had been. I went very humbly, with downcast countenance, through the dining room and the parlor, and stood for some time looking through the French door into Daddy’s study. There he was, with his open Bible on the table, preparing a sermon for the coming Sunday. I tapped lightly on the door, almost hoping that he would not hear it, but to my dismay, he said, “Come in.” I “shied” up to the side of his desk and stammered out my confession. He laid down his pencil, pushed back his Bible, and with an injured look on his face, looked down on me and said, “I am disappointed in you, Son.” Then he picked up his pencil and began to write again. I stood there for what seemed to be an Eternity, only; of course, it must have been just a few minutes. Suddenly he looked up and said, “Did you want something, Son?” I said, “No, didn’t you?” And he said, “If it is just the same with you, I would rather be alone.”

Well, I went tripping out of that study as if I were walking on air. He didn’t scold me, he didn’t punish me, he didn’t whip me, he didn’t -. What did he do? “I am disappointed in you, Son.” Those words stuck in my heart like a dagger. I stopped in the middle of the parlor floor and the words stung more and more. My Daddy! -of all the people in the world that I wanted to please and whose respect and good pleasure I coveted, my Daddy was disappointed in me. It nearly broke my heart, and as I look back upon this, it was one of the hardest whippings I ever had. I will never forget how I climbed up in the barn loft and wept until the fountain of my tears seemed to be dried. Finally, Mother came out on the back porch at supper time and called my name. Very meekly I slipped into the kitchen door, and sat down at the dining table. No one said anything to me, and I would steal an occasional glance at my Daddy, wondering “Is he still disappointed in me? What can I do so he won’t be disappointed in me anymore?”

Now, I suppose my father dismissed that from his mind, and I am sure that he did not hold it against me. But many times through the years that followed, I wondered, "What does Daddy think about me now?" Never did he say anything that contradicted that statement made in the study years before. When I was a big boy in high school, I was rather severely injured and sent off to a hospital. Daddy was away from home at the time, but soon there came a message from him, "I am proud of you, Son, and praying for you to get well." I burst into tears of joy. Now, my father did not think of it, but immediately I connected this statement with the words in the study, "I am disappointed in you." I could not keep the tears back. My Daddy wasn't disappointed in me any more!

Oh, how we covet the good pleasure of those we love, and admire, and respect in this world! Much more ten should we desire to be pleasing to Him, the Divine Potter, the Heavenly Father! As God looks down on your life today, would He have to say, "I am disappointed in you, child. You're just not the child I wanted you to be. I tried to use you, and you weren't usable. I tried to mold your life, and you resisted my molding. I tried to get you to follow my guidance, and you had a will of your own. I'm disappointed in you, Son. I'm disappointed in you, Daughter." Oh, what a tragedy! There are many of God's children who have not gone down into deep sin; the vessel of their life has not been crushed or marred by vice; it has not crumbled in the molding process, but it is just not the vessel God intended it to be. Yes, God has a plan for your life. He does not see us perhaps as we see ourselves, but as the potter looks at the clay; and "it does not yet appear what we shall be." But be sure that every stroke of the potter, though sometimes painful for the clay, has a place in the plan of the potter in bringing the vessel to completion. THE POTTER'S CHOICE

What can the potter do with a marred vessel? I asked this question of the old potter in the Ozarks. I learned that there are three possible things which might be done with a vessel that is "marred" in the hands of the potter.

1. He might throw it on the scrap pile. The old potter said to me, with a twinkle in his eye, as he pointed through a little glassless window above his workbench, "Do you see that clay splattered all over the side of that dome-shaped oven out there?" I saw that one side of the oven was splattered with clay, and that there was quite a pile of clay beside it. He said, "That's what happens to some clay." I immediately saw what he meant and could get a mental picture of the potter who had tried vainly to mold a vessel out of a certain piece of clay. Repeatedly, his efforts were frustrated. Finally, in disgust, he grabbed the clay in his hand and threw it out the window onto the potter's scrap pile.

Suppose, my Christian friend, that when we have been a disappointment to God, He would say, "All right, I have tried to make a worthy vessel out of you, I tried to mold you, and you would not let me. I had a plan for you, and you had ideas of your own. So, get out! Begone!" Aren't you glad He does not so deal with us?

Throughout the Scriptures, we are reminded that the Potter has that power, and He often does so. In Psalms 2:9 we read, "Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." He warns in Revelation 2:27, "As the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers." Again we read in Isaiah 30:14, "And he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel that is broken in pieces." Thank God that the Divine Potter has not so dealt with you and me.

2. He could “do nothing.” The second thing that the potter might do with a “marred” vessel is to just set it aside in its imperfect form. It would go, in that case, from the potter’s wheel to the drying rack, and from there into the oven, to be forever fixed in its shape - destined to always be a disappointment to the potter who made it. In other words, the potter might say, “I had other plans for you. I wanted you to be a different vessel, but you have chosen this way, so just have your own way.”

Aren’t you glad, after all, that God does not do that? Sometimes in the crushing and remolding process, we feel like crying out to God, “Oh, it is just too much. Let me have my way.” But, I am glad that in His grace and love, tenderness and mercy, I can say, “God’s way is the best way.” No, the potter was satisfied only when he had brought it into its highest possibilities. So:

3. “He made it again.” Thank God for His grace! He does not cast us aside. He does not leave us in our own misshapen, warped, unusable form; but in tenderness and grace He “makes us again.” Oh, what love! Are you a marred vessel today? Has self-will, sin, resistance, and rebellion marred the work of God, as He has had your life on the wheel? Take courage, my friend. Come to Him in repentance and confession, and be assured that by His loving grace, He will “make you again.” Someone may read these words who says, “It’s hopeless, I have ruined my life, it’s too late, there’s no hope.” My friend, there is. “He made it again.” Bring that marred, bruised, and broken life to Him, and “He will make it again.”

We are but clay. True, but who can tell what the Master Potter might fashion out of that marred spoiled mass material? You see, not only the quality of the clay must be considered, but the skill of the Potter. Every Christian is but clay in the process of formation into some designated result. For a time the will of the Potter may have been frustrated. But, take courage, “He made it again.”

God is wise regarding each vessel. The meanest vessel that the Potter might make is an improvement over its condition before it was fashioned by Him. Some of the best clay sometimes comes from deepest in the earth. Do not believe the Devil’s lie that your life cannot be molded by this Master Potter, and that He cannot make a vessel fit for service out of you. Why not try His skill? Why not submit to His will? Why not ask Him to “make you again?”

#### “ANOTHER VESSEL”

Notice how he “made it again.” “He made it again another vessel.” Oh, there is a solemn warning here. It seems to be an established tradition among potters that when a vessel has been “marred in the hand of the potter,” he will never make out of that particular piece of clay the same vessel he had intended it to be, but he always makes “another vessel.” For instance, he may be making a run of flower vases, each vase looking exactly like all the others that come from his wheel. Then, suddenly he stops the wheel. Before him is a marred vessel, a vessel that is a disappointment to him, one that is not the vessel that he wanted it to be. He raises his hand and brings it down on that vessel and smashes it to “nothingness,” Then, he spins the wheel again and makes it “again,” but “another vessel.” No, this is not the vessel of his original intention. He may fashion out of it some little piece of “bric-a-brac” to be set upon a “what-not shelf,” maybe having no practical use at all - just “another vessel.”

Oh, how many of God’s children I have seen throughout the length and breadth of this land who have become “another vessel.” I am thinking now of a dear lady who came to the altar in one of my

campaigns. She was broken-hearted and with tears streaming down her face, after having heard a message on "The Potter and the Clay," she said, "The vessel of my life has certainly been 'marred in the hands of the Potter.'" Then she told how God had spoken to her heart as a young lady and called her to the mission field. She resisted His call, having what would seem to the world a "good excuse." God has been using her life in a limited way but she realized then that the vessel was "marred" and she was a disappointment to the Potter. She fell on her face before God at the altar and confessed her sins and asked Him to forgive her and there God, in His matchless grace "made her again" but alas, it was "another vessel." Yes she could never be the missionary God intended her to be; she is too old now and no mission board in the land will accept her. Though not rich in this world's goods, she said, "The least I can do is to send another missionary in my place. And now, of her humble salary as a school teacher, she has her own missionary in Africa. But she will never have the joy, personally, of seeing multitudes of Africans turn from darkness to light. She will never have the joy of kneeling by the side of an African mother and pointing her to "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." She will never have the joy of hearing hundreds of African voices lifted to God in praise to the Redeemer. No, she has to get all her blessings "second hand," through the labor of someone else; she is "another vessel."

I remember now the old, gray-haired deacon in a church in Iowa where I held an evangelistic campaign. He came to the altar with tears running freely down his face. His confession was similar. God had called him to be a preacher of the gospel when he was a young man; he resisted God's will, turned a deaf ear to His call and set out to "make money." He was successful in this endeavor but was a "marred" vessel. Yes, God forgave him and "made him again" but he was "another vessel." He will never have the joy of preaching the unsearchable riches of God's grace; he will never have the joy of serving some church as a faithful pastor; he will never have the joy of leading great numbers to the Saviour. God is using him, true, but in a lesser degree and he has to content himself with his present capacity of serving in the church as a Sunday-school teacher and a deacon; when God wanted him to be a flaming evangel of the gospel.

Take warning, my friend, "another vessel" is always a lesser vessel. You could never improve upon His plan for your life. You could never choose for yourself a better place than a loving Father could choose for you. In the words, "He made it again," we see the marvel of His grace. In the words, "another vessel," we see the penalty of resistance. "Oh," you say, "I can get out of His will and resist His plan and He will still be merciful to me; He will always make me again." Yes, perhaps so, but remember, it will be "another vessel" and then I will warn you also that to be "made again" is always a painful process. The vessel must first be broken and crushed before it can be made again. This is not in wrath but of necessity. The marred vessel must be crushed before the potter can fashion "another vessel" of the clay.

## GOD'S SECOND BEST

God has a first choice for our lives, and if we resist, then we have to take His second best. If we are not "a vessel of honor," we become "a vessel of dishonor." I am sure that God's choice for you would be far better than your highest ideas. Why not trust Him, His loving will and perfect wisdom? Self-will and self-seeking implies a lack of confidence in His loving purpose a mistrust of the Potter.

Never imagine that "it is all the same" to a man who sins against the will of God. You have the choice between being His vessel of honor and "another" vessel, between being God's first choice

and His second best. I plead with you to come back to Him now, yield to Him now, submit to His molding hand now. Why not open your heart to God, and pray earnestly from the depths. Of your soul, "Have Thine own way Lord, have Thine own way; Thou art the Potter, I am the clay: Mold me and make me after Thy will, while I am waiting, yielded and still."

You have tried your own way, you have tried the road of resistance, and you have tried the road of rebellion and self-will. Why not yield to Him Now? I am sure that you will find that:

GOD'S WAY IS THE BEST WAY God's way is the best way, tho' I may not see Why sorrow's and trials oft gather 'round me;

He ever is seeking my gold to refine, So humbly I trust Him, my Saviour Divine.

God's way is the best way, my path He hath planned, I'll trust in Him always while holding His hand. In shadow or sunshine He ever is near, With Him for my refuge, I never need fear.

God's way shall be my way, He knoweth the best, And leaning upon Him, sweet, sweet is my rest. No harm can befall me, safe, safe shall I be.

I'll cling to Him ever, so precious is He.

God's way is the best way, God's way is the right way, I'll trust in Him always, He knoweth the best.

-L.S. Leech THE CLAY

Remember this: When the vessel was marred in the hand of the potter, it was not the potter who made a mistake in his molding, but, the trouble was with the clay itself. There are three possible things that might have been wrong with the clay which caused it to be marred in the potter's hand.

1. Self-will. It will be that the clay is too stubborn and stiff in its structure, and will not yield to the molding of his hands. It is too stiff and coarse to take the shape the potter desires. The will of the clay must be broken before the potter can mold it; there must be no resistance, no self-will.

Bucking Bronchos When I was a boy, we lived for a number of years in Oklahoma, near the famous "101 Ranch," where Buffalo Bill's Wild West Circus had its winter headquarters. We spent many Saturdays out there on the ranch, and we never tired of looking at the various animals that belonged to the circus. The thing, however, that fascinated me the most was to watch the Indian cowpunchers break bronchos. We, with many other spectators, would sit on the corral fence. A number of husky athletic youths would lasso a wild broncho and throw him to the ground. Then they would gather around him, and one fellow would loop a rope around his lower jaw, and at a given signal, the others would turn him loose, and the broncho would jump to his feet. Now as he did so, the "broncho buster" gracefully threw his legs across his back and determinedly sat there. My! How that broncho would buck, and kick, and scream! Every muscle in his body was taut, his ears were laying straight back, he was quivering, and every ounce of his strength was centered in one determined purpose, to unseat the cowboy.

Round and round he would run and buck until he was in a lather. Then he would stop, and with his sides heaving violently, would catch his breath, and you could imagine him saying to himself, "You just wait until I get my second wind. I'll show who's boss. I'll throw you off yet." And then the same

performance would start all over again - the bucking, the screaming, and kicking. Time and again this would be repeated until finally, all at once - it happened. He relaxed, his bucking and quivering ceased, his ears stood up, and his tail was limp. A shout went up in the air, and hats flew high - he was "broke". Then, at a command from his "master" who was on his back, the horse ran around the corral fence. The cowboy would pull the rope one way, and he would respond; he would pull the rope the other way, and he would turn. To show that he was completely "broke," the cowpuncher would throw the rope over his neck, and with his arms folded, ride around the corral. He would lean his body one way, and the horse would turn, and then he would lean the other way, and the horse would turn that way. Yes, he was "broke."

Now, what was "broke" about that horse? Not his legs, nor his back, nor his neck, but his will. He realized he had a master, and that henceforth he was not his own boss and that he would now come and go at the bidding of another.

Oh, how many of us are like bucking bronchos! We have fought, and kicked, and rebelled, and time and time again have made new resolutions to have our own way. God has not been able to use us because our wills have not been broken. This may be where you, my friend, have failed. You have set your will against God's will, when things in your life have not been as you would have them. You have ceased to seek His will, but you have tried to get His approval of your own will. You no longer seek His guidance, but determinedly go your own way, and "the vessel was marred in the hand of the Potter."

What a solemn thought! - that mere clay can for a little while mar and frustrate the Divine Potter's plan. Then the vessel has to be taken down from the place of honor the Potter intended, until the will of the clay has been broken. This is true of nations (Israel, for example), of churches (where God has had to remove the candlestick), and of individuals (who have had to be "broken" so that the Potter could "make them again.") The Price of Resistance But alas the process of making again is terrible and painful. Consider again the nation of Israel who rejected her King, rebelled against God's plan, and became a "marred vessel." They have been scattered to the four winds, they have suffered, have been hated and despised and slaughtered by thousands and the process is not yet complete. Oh, how Israel suffers today! She is being, indeed, trampled under foot "as the potter treadeth the clay" (Isaiah 41:25). She will never be made again "another vessel" until she at last has had her will completely broken, has submitted to the will of the Potter and crowned her King who at last shall "sit on the throne of His Father David."

Dear friend, has it not been hard for you to "kick against the pricks?" Has the way you have chosen for yourself not been, after all, a hard way? By obedience, we are furthering the work He has been doing in us or by disobedience we are hindering His plan. Think! We have in our hands the power to mar the work of God but remember that God will stop at nothing to break our will and bring us to surrender. You set your will against God's Will and He will break you if He has to break your back, your health, your home or your heart. You say, "I won't do a certain thing" and God will make you do that very thing before you ever have peace with Him again. Why? The only clay that God can mold is that which is submissive to His Will. Have you resisted? It might be that you have wronged some brother or that someone "has aught against you." God's command is to go to that one, confess it, ask his forgiveness, have a prayer meeting together about it and have renewed fellowship in the family of God. But you say, "I won't do that" and the vessel will be marred and you

will have to be broken before God can ever mold you again.

It may be that some disappointing or heartbreaking experience has come into your life that you have argued with the divine Potter about it and rebelled against His providence. Or it may be that God wanted to use you in one place and you have resisted and have chosen for yourself another.

You have observed children playing, and usually find an "it" child among every group. Someone says, "Let's play hide and seek" - he cries out, "I'm it!" and he will either be "it" or they won't play. They suggest playing baseball and he will say, "I'm pitcher!" and he will be pitcher or he will take his ball and bat and go home. Little girls will say, "Let's play doctor and nurse." One girl says, "I'm the nurse!" and she will be or she will take her dolls and go home.

Now, Paul said, "When I become a man I put away childish things"; how sad that many of God's children have not done that. We are going to have our way or we will frustrate the entire plan of God in our lives. Yes, there are some who insist on being an ornamental flower pot when God may have wanted to make a common wash basin out of that particular piece of clay. After all, the important thing is not what I am doing and who sees what I am doing, but it is, am I in the place where He wants me to be? When I was a child, we used to have fables in our school books and I shall never forget some of the lessons we learned from them. One I recall at this time is that of a flower garden. When the gardener went out one morning, all the flowers in the garden were grumbling and complaining. Every one of them seemed to have some cause for being "out of sorts." One of them complained that he was not as tall and stately as the pine; another was weeping because its foliage was not as beautiful as its companion plant; another flower complained that its perfume was not as fragrant as the rose. Each one had some cause for complaint. The gardener went among the plants saying, "I wonder if there is any flower that is content." Finally, he discovered a homely little flower, overshadowed by the more stately ones, but trying to peep up at the sunlight through those above and was smiling contentedly. The gardener said to this little flower known as the "Heartsease," "Why is it you are so happy and content and all the other flowers in the garden seem to have cause for complaint?" The little Heartsease then said, "I supposed that when you planted me you wanted a Heartsease or you wouldn't have planted me; Therefore, I just determined to be the best little Heartsease I knew how to be." Don't you see, it is not so much a matter of prominence of the position we hold as it is a question of what He wants you to be?

2. Consistency. It might be that the clay has too little consistency. In the first case, the vessel would not take the shape the potter wishes and in this case, having easily taken the proper form it would not retain it. There are so many who desire to do His will, and intend to let Him have His way but we just need a little more "stick-to-itiveness."

King Heaters In the Ozarks they have a heating stove that is known as "The King Heater." It is a clumsy sort of stove usually an oval-shaped framework with some sheet metal around it. It heats up ever so quickly; in fact, you can nearly run a person out of the house by burning a bulky newspaper, but it cools off just as quickly.

One cold winter night I called in a home to see some friends as I was passing through an Ozark town. I discovered that the people had retired for the night and since the house had grown cold I said, "We will not stay tonight. The fire has gone out and the house is cold-"; but the man said,

“Don’t you worry about that.” He was gone just a few minutes and when he came in, I was standing by the stove with my overcoat opened, trying to absorb the warmth that might still remain in that little King Heater. He came in with an oil-soaked corn cob in one hand and a pine knot in the other, and threw them in the stove. Soon that little stove began to roar like a furnace. I took off my overcoat, then moved back my chair; the stove grew a rusty red, then red, then white and in a few moments’ time, I was leaning my chair against the opposite wall. Then after a few minutes, the stove died down to a rusty red color, then to black, and began to pop and crackle; and I moved closer and closer and in a few moments was standing next to the stove again vainly trying to keep warm. The man noticed my discomfort and brought in another pine knot and the stove began to dance and roar again; I again moved back, back, back, until finally I was leaning against the wall once more and was mopping my brow. It again cooled off and I moved closer. In the time we stayed there, I journeyed back and forth across that room a half-dozen times. You see, it would warm up so quickly and cool off just as rapidly.

My, how many Christians I have seen that way - regular “King Heater” Christians. They can be stirred so easily; their emotions are on the surface. The first few nights of a revival campaign they are conspicuous by their absence. Then they sit on the back seats and as the spiritual temperature increases, they move closer until before it is over, they are sitting in the “Amen Corner,” apparently “on fire” with zeal. The next week they are in prayer meeting, they never miss a service. Then, alas, they are absent from prayer meeting, from evening service, then irregular in the mornings and the first thing you know they are “all out of shape again.” Someone may have hurt their feelings, the sermon was too pointed, someone failed to shake hands with them and they have “climbed up mifftree.”

Lightning Bugs Did you ever catch lightning bugs? I did. When we were boys we would get a fruit jar, punch holes in the lid and set out to catch enough bugs to make a lantern. You see, since each bug only shines for just a moment at a time, we worked on the theory that if we had enough bugs in one jar, we would have a little light all the time. I guess that is why we have to have four hundred members on a church roll to have a handful at prayer meeting - just a few with their lights burning, and if you are going to use people like that, you have to catch them while their lights are on.

Well, we would go out in the dust of the evening and get our jar all ready and at the twinkle of a bug, we would reach up and grab it. Many times we were just certain that we had it and would cautiously move our hand over the jar, only to find that we had missed it. Again and again we would grab until finally we would catch a bug and slip it into the jar. You see, you have to catch them while their light is on, like so many professing Christians. I suppose, like Paul, that I too could “put away childish things” when I became a man but I have been running all over this country for many years still “catching lightning bugs.”

I have seen it happen in a revival campaign so many times. The pastor rejoices over someone who seems to be revived. He says, “My, I’m so glad about so-and-so; he has been living a worldly life and now I am sure we can make him a teacher of that boy’s class that has caused us so much trouble,” but as he makes the futile gesture to “catch him” his light has gone - he is back to the picture show again.

Here is a lady who has been pouting and out of her customary place in the choir, now she seems to be revived and the pastor and friends rejoice but, too bad, someone hurt her feelings and she

pouts again - her light has gone out. Have you been a "lightning bug" Christian? Sometimes up and sometimes down; sometimes on the mountain and then in the valley? Sometimes happy and rejoicing but more likely pouting and grumbling? Oh, won't you pray that God will temper the clay - that He will give you the grace to yield once and for all and completely to His will and be willing to be what He wants you to be? - say what He wants you to say, do what He wants you to do, go where He wants you to go, and be just the vessel He desires you to be?

Moses taught us that it is better to be a slave in the will of God than a King on the throne, out of His will. The Center of God's Will

I used to hear people pray, "Lord, keep me in the center of your will." As a child, I confess, I didn't understand what it meant but when I was leading in public prayer I would add it to my other "vain repetitions," until one day I began to meditate upon those words. Just what does it mean to be "in the center of His will?" Now, suppose we draw a circle. Somewhere in that circle is a spot that represents the exact center of the circle. Now, we may get outside of the circle of God's will and will there experience the chastening hand of God, for "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Hebrews 12:6). Or I might move just inside the circle of God's will and be in the permissive will of God where the chastening hand of God is withheld and He may permit me to remain there. I may have comparative joy and be used in a limited degree. But as I move nearer the center of the circle, the more He is able to bless and use me. Oh, the joy of being in the absolute center of the circle. There I bear not "fruit" or "more fruit," but "much fruit." There I am a "perfect vessel," filled with His spirit, anointed by His power and used for His glory. God's Word speaks of the "good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2). The "acceptable" will of God is just inside the circle, the "good" will of God is closer to the center, and the "perfect will of God" is the absolute center of His will. Where are you now?

3. A hidden stone. There is a third possible thing which might be wrong with the clay and cause the vessel to be "marred in the hands of the potter." That is, hidden in the clay, there may be a little pebble or stone, a piece of stick or some foreign substance. As the vessel spins on the wheel in the hands of the potter, it will take a perfect shape up to a certain point, but sooner or later the molding hands of the potter come in contact with that hidden stone and the vessel is marred in the potter's hands. Is there in your life a hidden stone? Some secret sin, some "hangover" from the old life, some unforgiven grudge, a bit of the world that has not been forsaken, some wrong attitude that has been smouldering in your heart for weeks or years? The divine Potter can mold your life to perfection up to that certain point, but sooner or later the molding Hands of the Master come in contact with that one unyielded, unforgiven, unconfessed something; that hidden stone, and the vessel is marred in His hands. Is there one thing that you lack in full surrender; is there one thing between you and complete submission? You may forsake everything else, that hidden stone may not be obvious to the eyes of others, you may compare favorably with other Christians but the plan of the Father is frustrated in molding your life and shaping it as a vessel "unto honor" by that hidden stone.

It is important to notice that the "stone" may not be discovered until the clay is being molded in the potter's hand. As long as the clay lies dormant, no one will ever discover the defect but let it be placed on the potter's wheel, and the potter's hands begin to form that clay to shape a vessel, then the hidden stone is revealed. So it is that sin may not be discovered or exposed in your life as long

as you are just a “nominal Christian” but when God tries to mold you and use you, it is then that the vessel is marred. You can be just a lump of clay in the church and have a hidden stone in your life and it may never be discovered but if you are going to be molded and used and shaped by the Potter, it is then that the stone is revealed.

There was a time when your life was rising into a lovely shape, fashioned by the will of the Father Himself, but then came that hidden stone, that uncrushed lump, and “the vessel was marred.” The Potter could work on the clay as He would until He always came to that certain point - the flaw in the clay, and His work was “marred.” Is there a stone in your life? What is it? Where is it? Dig it out and cast it from you this minute. Oh, it doesn’t have to be a big sin, just “one thing” that you lack being fully yielded to His will. Won’t you claim His glorious promise in 1 John 1:9, “If we (my little children) confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” He will forgive and cleanse and “make it again” - what the potter did for the clay, God can do for you if you will only let Him.

“He Made it Again”

There was an old potter, who had been a skilled workman in his day, but his eyes had grown dim and his hands trembled. At the close of the day he would survey his work with a sigh, “My best days are gone,” and, with heavy tread, he would go upstairs with an aching heart. His son was an unrivaled artist in his day. After the father had retired, his boy would slip into the shop and take the work of his father that had the marks of failure on it, and with his wonderful touch and skilled hands, “make it again.” The next morning the old man would come down, his eyes were clear in the morning light. Proudly he would view the work and exclaim, “Why, I can do as well as I ever did!” That is just what God can bring to pass in your life. Why not yield that crumbled, marred vessel to Him? That ruined clay may yet be shaped into a vessel fit for the Master’s use. “Made again!”- A second change! Not after death, but new. It is never too late in this life to return to the Father and be “made again.” The invitation is to you” ...return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him (you); and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:7) IN HIS HAND

Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye IN MY HAND.” Think of your position! “Ye are in My hand” - what a thrilling place to be!

1. In His hand there is assurance. If we are now in His hand then he is now working and the vessel of your life is now being molded. “All things work (are now working) together for good” (Romans 8:28). God is “now working” on the vessel that it might some day “be conformed to the image of his son” (Romans 8:29).

Oh, let it get hold of your heart, let it thrill you and fill you, satisfy you and melt you. “I am in His hands.”

I AM IN THE FATHER’S KEEPING When the early morning’s breaking, slumber from my eyelids shaking, Comes the blessed tho’t with waking, I am in His keeping.

Day advances, labor bringing, Care, her mantle ‘round me flinging, Yet midst all my soul keeps singing, I am in His care.

Sometimes dark clouds hang o’er me, not one step I see before me, Still, my Saviour, I adore Thee, I am in His keeping.

I can trust His hand to guide me, 'Neath His wings He'll safely hide me, And no harm can e'er betide me. I am in His care.

Gentle eventide is nearing, Light from Heaven disappearing, Still the blessed tho't so cheering, I am in His keeping.

Now night's curtains gather 'round me, yet its dangers have not found me, For His angel guards surround me, I am in His care.

I am in my Father's keeping, I am in His tender care;

Whether waking, whether sleeping, I am in his care.

-Mrs. C.H. Morris

Isn't it wonderful to be in His care? Now, with the realization of our position "in His hands" search your hearts with these words, "Cannot I do with you as this potter?" saith the Lord. Can He? Are you "as clay in His hand"; yielded, pliable, refined, pure, unresisting and undefiled? Can He mold your life or is there self-will there that hinders His plan? Can He do with you "as this potter" or is the clay too inconsistent? Can He mold you as the potter molds the clay or is there a hidden stone that mars the vessel?

Don't let the Devil take this precious assurance from you. Don't let him get your eyes fixed upon your surroundings, rather than your position. Satan sometimes points to the breaking, molding, and shaping experience of our lives and injects a doubt, "If you are His, then why does this happen?" Don't be deceived by Satan's subtle lie. You ARE His and "in His hand," else He would not break you and make you again. The very fact that He thus deals with you is proof of your position "in His Hand." He is now molding the vessel; He is now shaping it "after His will." He is now adding beauty to the vessel. The potter sometimes holds a "comb" or a knife in his hand and as the vessel spins between his fingers he holds this knife against the clay. It cuts, it digs, it "hurts," but look, he stops the wheel, beautiful designs have been carved in the clay. That vessel that was just a homely piece of clay has become adorned with beauty that only a skilled potter could give it. So as you are "in His hand" He holds the knife, but don't flinch; the carving, the cutting, and the bruising is His own way of adding beauty.

2. In His hand there is safety. In what better place could you be? Our names are graven in the palms of His hands (Isaiah 49:16). Who is there among demons and men with power enough to remove our names from such a safe hiding place? "The Lord upholdeth him with his hand" (Psalms 37:24). "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand ... and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand' (John 10:27-29).

Ah, trembling soul, just rest in the safety and security of "His hand." Turn the battle over to Him. You are as safe as He is mighty.

3. In His hand there is promise. Sometimes we view our lives and have cause for discouragement. But dear one, the work is incomplete; we are still "in His hand." The Potter is still molding and patiently working and shaping the clay. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we

shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

Think of His purpose! Eventually the Maker's will will be done! His plan will be complete! We shall "be like Him." It takes much molding, many crushings, many times the vessel will be marred and it must be "made again." But what an incentive for holy living. "And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3).

Now, knowing His loving purpose for you, why don't you yield to Him? Why can't you trust Him? Why not submit? Think of your possibilities if you let Him have His way. It is the skill of the Potter that counts. His motive is love; He wants the highest possibilities for that bit of clay He holds "in His hand."

Trust Him A group of scientists were in the mountains on a search for rare plant life. Through the telescope they discovered a very rare flower high on the ledge of a mountain, too high to reach from below and too far to reach from the top of the cliff. The flower was priceless to them and they were determined somehow to have it. After exhausting every other plan, they were about to give up when a little mountain boy passed nearby. They offered him a substantial reward if he would permit them to tie a rope around him and lower him over the cliff. He was small enough that in this way he could easily pluck the flower and then they would pull him up again. The plan was quite simple but the boy refused every offer of money to allow them to let him down on the rope. At last, after much persuasion, he said, "I'll do it on one condition." They said, "We'll do anything; what's your condition?" "If you'll let my father hold the rope." They remonstrated, the father was several miles away. Hours of precious time would be wasted. There were three of them - they were stronger than the father. But all arguments failed. Finally the boy was sent and in due time returned with his father. Without any fear, the boy allowed the father to tie the rope around his waist and lower him over the cliff. The rare flower was plucked carefully according to instructions and at the given signal the boy was pulled back to the top of the cliff again.

It was not the father's size or strength that the boy trusted, but the father's love. He knew the father loved him and would protect his life with his very own. Can we not trust our Heavenly Father's love; trust His wisdom and His purpose for us. Knowing that His purpose is to make the best possible use of the clay that He has in His hand? Won't you yield to "the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Peter 5:10).

Why not get down on your knees before God right now, ask for forgiveness for your self-will, stubbornness, resisting of His plan, and earnestly pray from the depths of your heart - Have Thine own way, Lord, have Thine own way Thou art the Potter, I am the clay Mold me and make me after Thy will While I am waiting, yielded and still. A LUMP OF CLAY

"As the clay is in the potter's hands, so are ye in my hands" (Jeremiah 18:6). Now let us take a trip to the house of the potter in Palestine. It is a crude house, with mud walls and low roof; shelves line the walls on which the work of his hands is displayed. On the outside is his dome-shaped kiln, where the finished vessel is baked. We stand by transfixed, as we see him work. "The wheel," or to be more exact, "wheels" (Jeremiah 18:3) are fitted on a square wooden or iron shaft about three feet long. The lower disc is about twenty inches in diameter and the upper one about ten or twelve inches. The lower end of the shaft is pointed and fits into a stone socket or bearing in which it

rotates. A second bearing, just below the upper wheel is so arranged that the shaft inclines slightly away from the potter. The potter leans against a slanting seat, bracing himself with one foot so that he will not slide off, and with the other foot, he kicks the upper surface of the lower wheel, thus making the whole machine rotate. The lower wheel is often of stone to give momentum. With marvelous dexterity, which a novice tries in vain to imitate, he gives the piece of clay any shape he desires.

Stand there beside the potter's wheel. See how he shapes the clay and molds the vessel "as seems good to the potter to make it." Lift up your eyes in awe and wonderment as ye hear Him say, "as clay is in the potter's hands, so are ye in my hands."

There are several processes the potter puts the clay through before it can become a finished vessel.

HE SELECTS THE CLAY This is the first step of the potter and a very important one, as just the proper clay must be used. Usually on the Syrian coast, a mixture of several earths is used, which the potters have learned by experience gives the right consistency. As we have seen in the previous chapter, some clay is too coarse in its structure, some too crumbly, other clay is too light and some too heavy. It seems there are few clays which are just right and can be shaped according to the will of the potter. The quality of the clay is determined by that which would yield to the working of his hand. Only clay that is pliable in the potter's hands can be used in making a vessel. THE POTTER I walk in the streets of Cairo in the sun  
And slow my steps before an old bazaar;  
The colors - how I count them one by one  
On finished bowl and flaming alter jar!  
With bare, brawn feet a potter turns his disc,  
His throwing-wheel revolves to move the clay;

It answers in his hands, the simple tools,  
That shape the water jug I take away.

I wait - and feel another Potter there. Is tools are love and life - and I, the clay;  
Will all His toil bring beauty in the sun - Or only chaff that potters throw away

-Clara Hood Rugel When God has a task to perform He is just as cautious in selecting His material.

#### Submission

God can not use some material - In fact, some of the most talented, learned and able people are unusable. The quality God looks for is submission. Our wills must be in harmony with His will and our hearts must beat with His heart. Amazing as it may seem, God may take the most unlikely material, if it has only this one qualification and make a vessel of beauty from that despised clay." But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world and things that are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).

Notice, if you will, what God chooses to work with - "foolish things, weak things, base things, despised things and non-existent things." Yes, dear friend, you may be "foolish" in the eyes of the world, you may be "weak" and unable to do much in your own strength, you may be "base" and "despised" in the eyes of man, yet if you will only yield yourself completely and unreservedly to Him, letting Him shape your life into the vessel that He desires, our skilled Potter will shape from

that worthless lump of clay, a vessel to be filled with His glory. God is not seeking high and mighty men who can boast of their accomplishments, but He looks for humble souls who will yield themselves to Him “that no flesh should glory in His presence” (1 Corinthians 1:29). When God wanted a man to lead His people out of bondage, He chose Moses, who himself, had chosen “to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” But God could not have used Moses in the height of his fame in Pharaoh’s household; he had to first spend forty years in the wilderness. He had to be stripped of everything but a shepherd’s rod. Then, mellow, submissive and yielding, God took his life and shaped it into a glorious vessel. When God needed an apostle in the most trying time of Christianity, and one to fearlessly declare the gospel of truth in face of death, one to influence the world for Christ, He chose one who had been a very wicked man, one who had slaughtered Christians by the hundreds, but one who, when he saw the light, fell down in the road on his face and said, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). Paul from that moment became as “clay in the Potter’s hands,” and no man perhaps, save Christ himself, has so influenced the world. God gives His truly great tasks to those who realize their own weakness and depend upon God’s greatness.

Each one of us is yielding our life either to God, to do His will, or to the Devil to do his bidding. God has no tongue to tell the gospel story except yours and mine, God has no feet to carry the message of salvation except we yield ours to Him, God has no hands to do His will, no mind to fill with holy thoughts, and no heart in which to dwell except you and I yield ourselves to Him. It is not that God could not choose other methods but He has chosen to thus honor us.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1). On the other hand, the Devil has no way to do his work except through human lives, he has no hands to steal, to slaughter, to murder, except that some man yields his member to him: he has no tongue to curse, slander and gossip except yours and mine; in fact, Satan is entirely dependent upon men and women, boys and girls to do his work. We have a choice to make, for none of us can “serve two masters.”

Perhaps you have wondered why God has not entrusted you with a greater place of responsibility in His Kingdom’s work. Remember this, my friend, God can not trust us to mold the lives of others unless we trust Him to mold our lives. To be used of God, what a marvelous thought! My friend, God is anxious to use you. Regardless of the failures of the past, the scars of sin and your present weakness; only surrender to Him and the rest is dependent upon the skill of the Potter. The Cost To be used by the Heavenly Potter is not without its cost. It means that all the beauty, fragrance, the fruit and the glory of your life belongs to Him. He is “all and in all.” Self must die, you are lost in Him. He will draw you into a life of true consecration and humility and put upon you such demands of obedience that He will not allow you to follow other Christians; in many ways He will seem to let other people do things which you cannot do.

Others may brag of themselves and their works, their successes, their writings, their singing and preachings; but He will not allow you to do such things, and if you begin it, He will lead you into some deep humiliation that will make you despise yourself and all your good works. The clay gets no glory; the praise belongs to the Potter who made it. “That no flesh should glory in His presence.”

Others may be allowed to succeed in making money, but it is likely God will keep you poor because He wants you to have something far better than gold, and that is a helpless dependence upon Him. He wants to have the privilege of supplying your needs day by day out of His unseen treasure. The Lord will let others be honored and put forward and He may keep you hid away in obscurity; you get no praise for what you do. He wants you to produce some choice fruit for His glory which can only be produced in the shade.

God may let others be great but keep you small. He may let others do a work for Him and get credit for it but He will make you work and toil without knowing how much you are doing and then to make your work even more precious, He will let others get credit for the work which you have done. The Potter is sovereign over the clay and has a right to do as He pleases with His own, He will not explain to you a thousand things which puzzle you regarding His dealings. But, dear one, your reward will be ten times greater when He comes. Never doubt His loving motive, never fear His eternal plan but rejoice in the constant assurance that you are in His hand; He is molding the clay and your time of glory is yet to come.

#### HE PREPARES THE CLAY

Clay as drilled from the ground is unfit for use in the hands of the potter. "Painful" is the process of hammering, softening, weathering, breaking and purifying, before it is fit to come to the potter's wheel. It is dug out of the ground, brought into the vicinity of the pottery, "the potter's field" (Matthew 27:7), and allowed to weather for weeks. The dry material is dumped into a trough and covered with water. It is stirred in the water until the lumps have all softened, they have disintegrated and a thin, slimy mud or "slip" has been formed. The "slip" is drawn off into settling tanks. All stones and lumps remain behind. When the clay has settled, the water is drawn off and the plastic material is worked by treading with the feet (Isaiah 41:25). The prepared clay is finally packed away and allowed to stand for another six months before using. During this time the quality, especially the plasticity, is improved. Even after going through this long process, when the clay finally reaches the potter's bench, he breaks it, kneads it, and works it in his hand much like a woman kneads her bread dough. The Ozark potter, to whom I referred in the previous chapter, had two strands of wire stretched across his table. He took the lump of clay and broke it over the wire, worked it in his hands and broke it again and again. In this way all of the impurities, sticks, lumps and pieces of grit that may have still remained in the clay were separated, and the very structure of the clay, itself, was broken and it was pliable in the potter's hands.

Likewise, when we, as redeemed sinners, come from the hands of Satan we are unfit for the Master's use. A child of God must go through a long process, sometimes painful, sometimes discouraging, and even heartbreaking - a process of softening, mellowing, weathering, even breaking and at last, making. Every Christian God has used in an outstanding way has first been broken. He breaks us before He uses us.

#### Broken Things

There is no making without breaking. So, dear heart, if you are in the process of being broken today, look up, take courage - He is getting ready to use you.

Before the farmer can have a harvest, he must "break" the ground. "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns" (Jeremiah 4:3). "Fallow ground" is ground that is permitted to lie idle

and uncultivated. Instead of grain, it produces weeds and thorns. But when the ground has been broken and seed has been planted, then we look for a harvest. In God's dealings with us, "broken" things are useful things in the hands of God. Though they may seem to us to be tragedies, it is only such "broken" things which God can use. Every "broken" thing is the assurance that God is making something. When the pitchers were "broken" (Judges 7:18-20) the lights of Gideon's faithful three hundred shone forth in the darkness of the night and sent panic in the ranks of the enemy. It was only the breaking of the pitchers that let the light of the flaming torches they concealed, shine forth. Every child of God has Christ, who is Himself the Light, dwelling within, and yet many of us are not letting the Light shine forth in the dark world about us. Oh, how many of God's children there are who have had to be broken, the pitchers of their life shattered before the light could shine forth. It is not enough to have the "Light" within; the "Light" must shine out. To "shine" we must be broken.

Before the four men could get their paralyzed friend to Jesus, the roof had to be broken. The "broken" roof let the man down at the Saviour's feet and he heard His blessed words, "thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mark 2:5). Everything that separates the needy sinner from the healing Christ must be broken down. Every barrier must be removed. When Jesus stood before the tomb of Lazarus He commanded, "Take ye away the stone" (John 11:39). The seal of the tomb was "broken" and the barrier between Christ and Lazarus was removed. The loaves were "broken" by the Sea of Galilee and the multitude was fed. The ship was "broken" on the way to Rome and the lives were saved "on broken pieces of the ship" (Acts 2:44). The alabaster box was "broken" and Jesus was anointed for His burial. Without the "broken" body of the Lord Jesus, we could never be made whole. "This is my body, which is broken for you" (1 Corinthians 11:24). Life through death, healing through crushing and making through breaking! Are you discouraged, my friend, at a world of "broken things"? Maybe today your health is "broken," your home is "broken," your family is "broken," your plans have been "broken", your hopes have been shattered, your dreams have vanished into thin air, all foundations for the future have crumbled around you and your heart is "broken." Ah, my friend, God is getting ready to use that clay. Just let these "broken things" be a means and a process of separation, that God may lay His hand upon one more thing and that is your WILL. When this, too, is "broken," that lump of clay is ready for the Potter's wheel. It is not in wrath that you have thus been broken but God in His love and grace must prepare the clay for the Potter's wheel. The will of the clay must be broken, the impurities and sins of the world must be separated and the clay purified before it is pliable in the molding hands of the Potter.

Jeremiah would never have understood God's dealings with his people or with himself until he "went down to the potter's house." There he saw the potter mold the vessel on the wheel, the vessel was "marred in the hands of the potter" and he broke that marred vessel and "made it again." He had to go through this breaking experience to understand. "Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, Oh house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter?" It was only "then" after he had seen the broken vessel "made again" that Jeremiah could have understood the plan of God in breaking and molding. For from this broken vessel was a new vessel rising out of the shapeless mass of broken clay.

Fit for the Potter's Wheel

Perhaps before you were saved you had wandered far away from God and had gone “deep down” in sin. And now Satan drags this “ghost of the past” before you in hellish accusation and his rattling chains of memory strike terror to your heart, bind you and trouble you. Dear one, God has said, “I will remember them against you no more forever.” Some of the best clay was buried the deepest in the earth. I am not glorifying sin but magnifying God’s forgiveness. There are three outstanding qualifications that make the clay “fit for the potter’s wheel.”

1. It Must be Submissive. Potters tell us that clay that has been dug from the lowest depths has a more pliable quality than that which has been on the surface. Its lumps are broken and its structure more pliable. Often that is the case of one who has gone far on the road of sin; you realize your failure, your own unworthiness and helplessness in meeting your adversary alone. You have learned in a bitter way the sad lesson that “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” You have learned the hard way that “there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Romans 3:12). You have discovered by personal experience that you are powerless against the temptations of Satan. Now, dear friend, if you only profit by these tragic lessons and realize that if you have victory it must be, not through your own strength, but through His ever present grace, He can even use this tragic past and can make the clay more submissive to His plan for you. Bury the past in the sea of God’s forgetfulness. He has “blotted it out.” Now be submissive today and let Him mold that clay as a vessel to His honor.

2. It Must be Pure. “As the potter treadeth the clay” (Isaiah 41:25). The Palestine potter works the clay by “treading it with his feet” as he prepares it for the wheel. In this way the impurities are separated, the lumps broken and the clay purified. Only pure clay is fit for the potter’s wheel.

#### God Cannot Use Dirty Christians

Clay fit for the Master’s use must be constantly cleansed and God’s promise is, “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth (continually cleanses) us from all sin.” If we are leading lives of submission, separation from the world and yielded to Him, as we constantly confess our sins and failures, He constantly cleanses. Be sure, my friend, of one thing - If God is not using you, there is a reason. Every vessel fit for use will be a vessel used. You may go through the mechanics of religious service of the highest type but will lack the power of God and be fruitless. You may be a Christian without living a separated life, but you will never be a usable Christian. What a tragedy! So many of God’s children are content to merely be “average,” and if most professing Christians engage in a given worldly amusement or “pleasure” we think it is a justifiable excuse for us to engage in the same. What a pity to be “unfit” for use.

Satan’s favorite device for spoiling Christians for the Potter’s hands is the use of so-called “little sins.” He knows that he could not tempt you to commit some grave, terrible sin such as murder, robbery or adultery. Be he accomplishes the same purpose, defeats your life and spoils your vessel by “little sins.” The movies, the dance, cigarettes, gossip, malice, jealousy, unforgiveness and temper have rendered more clay unfit for the Potter’s use than graver sins. Oh, my friend, do not be deceived by “Satan’s subtle devices.” You have not gotten victory over these things because you have not wanted victory. You have not confessed them as sins, but have tried to justify them by popular opinion God cannot use the “average Christian” today because he is not willing to call his sin, “sin.” But I beg you, friend, for the glory of our blessed Lord, that you let God “have is way with you,” crush you, break you, tread you, purify you, season and mode you, fill you

and use you for His own glory. I repeat, if God is not using you, there is a reason and for the answer, you must examine the clay, for the Potter is looking for material that is fit for the Potter's wheel.

3. It Must be Seasoned. Many is the young Christian who has been discouraged and defeated because God has not put him in some great place of responsibility and leadership immediately after his salvation. To be sure, there is much service even "a babe in Christ" might render the Saviour. The greatest joy we can have is that of winning precious souls to the Lord Jesus and the most effective soul-winning is often done by those in whom the "first love" is still aglow. But there are many things that come only to those more seasoned and mature in Christian experience.

After clay has gone through all the other processes of preparation, it is allowed to stand for many months before coming to the potter's wheel. There are important chemical changes wrought in the clay by this weathering process which add much to its indestructibility after coming from the potter's wheel and being exposed to weather, fire and service. Do not forget the time element in the preparation of the clay. Many a young minister has come from the theological classroom, with sheepskin under his arm, his head full of Greek, the world "at his feet" and with a zeal for Christ in his heart, expecting God to set him on a pinnacle and put him in some place of leadership immediately. He wanted to be used, he wanted to do things for Christ, and this is commendable, but when things did not happen just like he had planned, he was perplexed, defeated, dismayed and mystified. My young friend, there are some things to be learned in the hard school of experience, in the weathering process of trial, and the seasoning of pain, heartache, want and testing, which cannot be obtained in any other way. On the other hand, there are young Christians who have climbed rapidly to the "top." Early in their experience they have had places of honor, have held large churches and high offices, sometimes to their later regret and sorrow. For they have had to "go down to the Potter's house" to be broken and crushed in order to learn lessons they should have learned years before. My friend, yield yourself completely, unreservedly and entirely to the Lord. He knows the desires of your heart; He knows the love, the zeal and the ambitions that you have for the glory of His name. Be willing to be used or abused, advanced or delayed, seen or unseen, praised or accused. You can trust Him, that when the clay is ready for use, He will mold the vessel.

Alone

Such a life of "waiting on the Lord" means that often you will have to stand alone. Clay is neglected, unseen, unsightly and apparently worthless in those months it is waiting to get to the potter's wheel. Remember, it is human to stand with the crowd! It is Divine to stand alone. It is manlike to drift with the crowd; it is Godlike to "stem the tide." It is natural to compromise, to follow the social and religious fashions of the day for the sake of gain and pleasure; it is divine to sacrifice both gain and pleasure on the altar of Truth. Paul said, describing his first appearance before Nero, "No man stood with me, but all men forsook me" (2 Timothy 4:16). "Truth has been out of fashion ever since Adam and Eve changed their robes of fadeless light for a garment of faded leaves." Noah built and voyaged alone, Abraham wandered and worshipped alone, Daniel dined and prayed alone, Elijah sacrificed and witnessed alone, Jeremiah prophesied and wept alone and Jesus loved and died ALONE.

Think it not strange if you are called upon to stand alone for the truth sometimes, to remain alone "in the wilderness," unseen and unused while others climb to great heights of fame. Think it not hard if "all men forsake" you and people think you are "queer." You are in the process of seasoning now, hard lumps of self-will are softening, selfish plans are melting by the weathering of His grace and sometime the clay will be ready for the Potter's Wheel. Do not be turned aside from God's plan for you by the counsel of misguided, well-meaning friends. There are multitudes today, both in the church and in the world, who applaud the courage and the fortitude of the prophets, apostles and martyrs of the early church, but condemn as "stubbornness" and "foolishness," similar faithfulness on the part of Christians today. Rest assured, if God has called you, He will also prepare you and provide the means and the grace for you to perform and to finish the work to which He has called you, in His own good time. Then, with great joy, you will be a vessel molded unto his glory.

## HE MOLDS THE CLAY

Let us go again to the potter's house. We see that heap of clay which has been prepared for his wheel, and a pot of water on a bench by his side. Look, he takes a lump of clay in his hand and places it on top of the wheel, which revolves horizontally. He now smoothes it into a low cone and trusts his thumb into the top of it. See him as he opens a hole down through the center and this he constantly widens by pressing the edges of the revolving cone between his hands. As the vessel is enlarged, it becomes thinner and the potter gives it whatever shape he pleases with the utmost ease and dexterity. Remember, he has a plan for that piece of clay and does not see it on the wheel, as you or I, but he sees in his mind's eye the finished vessel. It will remain on the wheel until it is finished in the shape he has chosen for it.

### Sovereignty

He deals with each piece of clay "as seemed good to the potter to make it" (Jeremiah 18:4). Here we see the absolute sovereignty of God. "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonor" (Romans 9:21). The next two verses impress this question. What if God had chosen to reveal His wrath and power, as He has you "in His hand"? No, He has chosen to "make known the riches of His glory on the vessel of mercy." Job cries out in his anguish that God has made him as the clay and has power to bring him to dust again (Job 10:9). Never ask "why hast thou made me thus?" but thank God that He has been pleased to make you.

We cannot dictate to God just the kind of vessels we are going to be or just what our place of service is to be. He may want you to go abroad, He may want you to stay at home; He may want you to stand in the pulpit or to sit in the pew; to teach or to be taught; to go or to send; to work or to pay those who do work. It is enough to know that we are the work of His hand.

Maybe you do not know now just what your life work for the Master will be, but you can have the full joy now by yielding your life and will completely to Him, knowing that He will guide and will make a vessel "as seemed good to the potter to make it." I am sure that the result will be a better vessel than had it been "as seems good to the vessel to be made."

Variety The skill of the potter is revealed in the variety of vessels he is able to make. He could, no doubt, make every vessel of exact proportion, design and usefulness if He chose, but this is not

His method.

Remember that the Potter has a variety of vessels. Do not be an imitator of some other vessel. Maybe you have said, "I wish I could sing like -----," or "preach like -----," or "teach like -----." This, my friend, may not be the vessel God wants you to be. Be faithful in the place He has put you, whether it be "a vessel unto honour" (to be praised and honoured by men) or "unto dishonor" (a vessel never seen or praised by men). There is no difference between the two vessels in God's sight; it is the vessel He desires it to be.

Perhaps you wonder why God has not given you a bigger task, a more "worthy" job, or a more prominent position. The question, though, is - "Have you been faithful in the place he has put you?" God will never give you a bigger job until you have done that which He has already given you to do. Get your eyes off men, quit imitating other vessels, and determine by His grace that you will be the vessel of His choice. "Let Him have His way with you." The plan of the Potter is a personal plan. He has a plan for you, a place for you to fill, and no one else can fill it. Many of us have missed the joy of being the vessel He wanted us to be in our vain efforts to be the vessel He chose someone else to be.

#### Patience

Here we also see the patience of God. No matter how many times the clay frustrates His plan; the Potter usually with sad patience "makes it again." When I look back on the dealings of God in my own life, and see how many times I have hindered His plan for me, and how many times I have resisted His molding and got out of His will, I marvel at His patience, grace, and mercy. What a loving Father we have! Thank God He has not dealt with us according to our merits and our worthiness, but according to His constant patience and never-dying grace! We are so slow to learn, so prone to wander, and so apt to resist. We are quick to harden, and slow to soften.

#### Grace

Thank God that He does not deal with the clay according to its merits. Who but the skilled Potter could see in a shapeless piece of worthless clay a thing of beauty? Who but a loving God could see in a sin-filled, wasted life a vessel fit for His own glory? The clay has no right of its own, and except for the grace of the Potter in taking it in His hands and making a useful vessel out of it, it is destined always to remain a useless bit of clay to be trampled under foot by men. Truly, the most lowly vessel is far better than all the clay could ever hope to be in itself. We are powerless to make a useful vessel out of this lump of clay of which we are made. Shall the clay say unto Him who fashioned it, "What makest thou?" ... "He hath no hands" (Isaiah 45:9). The clay has "no hands" of its own wit which it could fashion a vessel.

Just as truly as we are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8-10), it is also true that God's using us is the choice of His grace. God does not have to use you, but oh, He so longs to.

Since His using us is an act of His grace, then the glory all belongs to Him. "As the potter's clay: shall the work way of him that made it, 'He made me not?'" ("I did it all myself; look what I did") or "shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, 'He had no understanding?'" (Isaiah 29:16). Beware of the one who boasts of his accomplishments in the realm of Christian service. "But now, O Lord, thou are our father; ... and we all are the work of thy hand" (Isaiah 64:8).

Anything you are, you are by His grace; anything you accomplish, you accomplish by His grace; anything you gain, you gain by His grace; for all you are and all you accomplish and all you gain, the glory belongs to Him. For “we all are the work of thy hand.” What a sin for “the thing is made” to steal the glory of “Him that made it”! Never boast of what you did, but praise Him for what He did through you, a helpless lump of clay.

He desires out of piece of clay the greatest glory for Himself and the greatest usefulness for the clay. Our usefulness is measured in the terms of the glory He receives through us. We are useful only as He is glorified. THE POTTER’S HOUSE To the potter’s house I went down one day, And watched him while molding the vessel of clay, And many a wonderful lesson I drew, As I noticed the process the clay went through, Trampled and broken, down trodden and rolled, To make it more plastic and fit for the mold.

How like the clay that is human, I thought When in heavenly hands to perfection brought For self must be cast as dust at His feet Before it is ready for service made meet And pride must be broken, self-will lost - All laid on the alter, whatever the cost, But lo! By and by, a delicate vase, Of wonderful beauty and exquisite grace. Was it once the vile clay? Ah, yes, yet how strange The potter has wrought so marvelous a change! Not a trace of the earth, nor mark of the clay, The fires of the furnace have burned them away.

Wonderful skill of the potter - the praise is his due In whose hands to perfection and beauty it grew; Thus with souls lying still, content in God’s hand, That do not His power of working withstand, They are molded and fitted, a treasure to hold, Vile clay now transformed into purest of gold.

-Selected HE BAKES THE CLAY The clay may have yielded readily to the molding hands of the potter, and now the vessel is finished and is placed in the kiln with the other vessels. The door is sealed shut, and the fire is kindled. But with the first blast of heat, inferior clay will warp, or will buckle and crumble into a twisted, misshapen vessel, unfit for the market. Many Christians have been submissive to the shaping hand of God and have readily responded to His call, but alas they seem to have thought that the call was to a life of ease. With the first blast of God’s trying, testing fire of temptation and affliction, the vessel is spoiled.

It is not the fire that causes the defect, but rather, the fire reveals the defect that already existed. The true character of a man is not revealed when everything is going easy, but the crisis proves the man.

#### Defective Clay Breaks Under the Heat

Victory consists of more than being willing to let God mold our lives and put us in the place where He desires us to serve. It demands a willingness to stay where He has placed us, in spite of fire, and trial, and opposition. Many vessels of clay have seemed, even to the skilled potter’s eye, to be perfect, until they are stacked in the great pots in the potter’s oven and the heat is applied. When the fire has died down and the vessels are removed from the kiln, some of them, alas, have broken under the test.

Maybe you today are broken down under the heat of God’s trying, testing fires. You are at the place where you say, “What’s the use? I give up” or “This is more than I can bear.” My friend, God has not sent the trial to break you, but to “make you,” and GOD IS WITH YOU IN THE FIRE.

“When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isaiah 43:2). The Hebrew children who were thrown into the fiery furnace were not deserted by the Lord; those who looked into the furnace saw a fourth person with them, who was “like the Son of God” (Daniel 3:25). Nowhere is the presence of the Lord sweeter than in the furnace of affliction.

Here is a beautiful thing, the potter does not expose the newly made vessel to the flames themselves, else they would be scarred or burned, but he places each vessel in a larger vessel and stacks them, one on top of another in the kiln. When the fire is applied, it comes up around this protecting vessel and no flame touches the vessel itself. You see, he desires heat, but not flames to reach the vessel when he puts it into the furnace. God’s purpose is not to destroy His precious vessels, but the heat does something to the vessel that will forever ‘work together for good.’”

You are not in the fire alone, and you are not in the fire in vain. The Potter so stacks his ware in the kiln that if one vessel crumbles it will often spoil many. Never is a Christian’s dependence upon the Lord more vital than when the fires of temptation are applied. What an opportunity to bear witness of the Christ who is sufficient, of the grace that is abundant, and of the Presence that is real. If you are in the furnace today, there are those who watch you now as never before. If you fail, other lives may be spoiled and souls may be lost, in sin. You have been praying for some precious soul, and now is the time for you to reveal to that dear one the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I would sound a note of caution here. The Potter has an apprentice, a young helper, who is learning the trade. Sometimes this helper is not as careful as he might be, and many good vessels in which there was no defect at all may be ruined by improper handling. They are not properly placed in the kiln and the vessel is ruined when it falls. Oh, how sad! Many sincere, consecrated Christians have been handled wrongly by their fellow men, and have had their testimony ruined, and their lives wrecked, and their hearts broken. We must be careful lest we spoil some vessel that belongs to God. “Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm” (Psalms 105:15). Why criticize your faithful pastor, why hinder the work of some faithful servant of God, why pass judgment upon his motives? He is a vessel of God, and “the work of His hands.” You will have to give an account unto God if you “do him harm.” Whether it be innocent or deliberate, the result is the same, and the consequences tragic.

You say, “What is the purpose of this trial by fire, if it is not to reveal defective clay and to destroy weak vessels?” There are several things that place in the oven which are glorious to consider. THE VALLEY OF WEeping I have been through the Valley of weeping, The Valley of sorrow and pain; But the God of all comfort was with me, At hand to uphold and sustain. As the earth needs the clouds and sunshine, Our souls need both sorrow and joy; So e places us oft in the furnace, The dross from the gold to destroy. When e leads thro’ some Valley of trouble, His Omnipotent hand we trace; For the trials and sorrows He sends us, Are part of His lessons in grace.

Oft we shrink from the purging and pruning, Forgetting the Husbandman knows That the deeper the cutting and paring, The richer the cluster that grows.

Well He knows that affliction is needed;

He has a wise purpose in view, And in the dark Valley He whispers, "Hereafter thou'lt know what I do." As we travel thro' life's shadow'd Valley Fires springs of His love ever use; And we learn that our sorrows and losses, Are blessings just sent in disguise. So we'll follow wherever He leadeth, Let the path be dreary or bright; For we've proved that our God can give comfort;

Our God can give songs in the night -Selected "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, Whose passing through the Valley of weeping, make It a well" (Psalms 84:5-6). The Vessel Is "Fixed"

Good material is not injured, but becomes hardened and fixed in its shape. It goes into the oven a perfect vessel, molded by the hand of the potter, and pleasing to the one who has made it; but it is still soft and pliable, and would readily crumble if you would attempt to use it in any way. But after the fire; my, what a change! It is fixed, and hardened, and settled in the will of the potter, which can now never be changed without destroying the vessel itself.

### Beauty

Another result of the fire is the very appearance of the clay. Before it is put in the oven, it is dipped in a "slip," and it is still dull in its appearance. But the fire has worked a change. As it comes out, that "slip" has hardened and given it a gloss and shine that is beautiful to behold. The Christian who has stood the testing of God assumes a Christ-like gloss that cannot be obtained in any other way - he is a polished product of God. The sweetest characters I have known are those who have suffered the most. They have been through the furnace of trial, testing, temptation, and affliction. This has not marred their beauty, but the very glory of God shines on their faces. The Imprint of the Maker

Another result of the experience in the oven is that the finished vessel bears forever the imprint of its maker. When the potter has finished his work on the wheel, he puts his stamp, trademark, or name on the bottom of the vessel. The clay is still soft and the name could easily be rubbed off and no one would know who had made the vessel. However, when it is taken from the oven, the clay is hardened, and it will forever bear the name of the potter who made it.

So, with the Christian life, "All things" (even the hard, testing trials, and the unpleasant things, the bitter things, the heart-breaking things) "work together for good" (Romans 8:28). You say, "For what good?" That we might "be conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29).

Every trial that God sends your way, every test that He permits you to endure, every heart-break that you experience, and every fire that is applied, is for your good and God's glory - that you might be fixed in His will and bear His testimony in this world to the glory of the Potter, who is your Maker.

"For I reckoned that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). "Gut the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever" (1 Peter 5:10-11). Suffer A WHILE - glory FOREVER." But rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's suffering; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:13). "Yet if any man suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed: but let him glorify God on his behalf" (1

Peter 4:16). The suffering is now, the glory is to come. The suffering is present, the glory is future. The suffering is temporal, the glory eternal. "Suffer a while - Glory Forever."

ONLY GLORY BY AND BY There may be tears to shed as we travel home, There may be weary hours, dreary days and lone, But there'll be no more heartaches round the heav'nly throne.

Only glory, wondrous glory by and by.

There may be disappointments we must sweetly bear.

There may be anxious moments, doubts, and despair. But There'll be glory waiting for us over there, Only glory, wondrous glory by and by.

Then travel on with patience - Jesus holds thy hand;

Some day we'll know the mysteries hard to understand, And then as conqu'rors enter that fair promised land And the glory, wondrous glory by and by.

Only glory by and by, Only glory by and by, When we've crossed the river to our home on high;

Only glory by and by, Only glory by and by, Ev'ry heartache gone forever - Only glory by and by.

-Avis B. Christiansen \* \* \* I am saved; but is self buried? Is my one and only aim Just to honour Christ my Saviour, Just to glorify HIS Name?

I am saved; but could I gladly Give up all and follow Thee?

If Thou callest, can I answer, "Here am I. Send me, send me."

I am saved; but am I wholly Separated unto Him? From the things that may be harmless, "Not of faith," and therefore sin.

-John Booth

AFTER After the toil and the heat of the day, After my troubles are past, After the sorrows are taken away, I shall see Jesus at last.

After the heartaches and sighing shall cease, After the cold winter's blast, After the conflict comes glorious peace, I shall see Jesus at last.

After the shadows of evening shall fall After my anchor is cast, After I list to my Saviour's last call, I shall see Jesus at Last.

He will be waiting for me, Jesus so kind and true, On His beautiful throne, He will welcome me home After the day is through -N.B. Vandall THE POTTER'S FIELD

"And the chief priest took the silver pieces ... and bought with the potter's field to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called the field of blood unto this day" (Matthew 27:6-8). The priests are plotting against the Son of God. Outside the window there lurks a stealthy Judas. He listens to their hellish scheming. "How can we seize Him? Where will we find Him?" "Ah, this is my chance," says Judas, and he slips as a dark shadow into the room. There see him waving his itching palms in excited ejaculations as he "bargained with the for thirty pieces of silver." He betrayed Jesus, He was convicted. But, alas, a spear crushed his heart "when he saw that He was condemned." This

unhappy man, no doubt, expected that while he got the bribe, the Lord would miraculously escape out of his enemies' hands as He had done before. He "repented himself" but, as the issue sadly showed, it was "the sorrow of the world, which worketh death" (2 Corinthians 2:10). See him now as he hurries back to the temple and "brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priest and elders." He confesses, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." What a testimony to the purity, perfection and deity of our blessed Lord! Judas had been with Jesus for three years; his post as treasurer (John 22:6) gave him peculiar opportunities of watching the spirit, disposition and deity of our blessed Lord! Judas had been with and thievish practices would incline him to dark and suspicious, rather than frank and generous interpretations of all that He said or did, yet the testimony of the one who betrayed Him was, "innocent."

See the fear in his eyes, the horror that clutches his heart as they spurn his tainted silver. "What is that to us? See thou to that." "Guilty or innocent, that is nothing to us: we have Him now - get out." See him now, trembling with mingled rage and fear as he throws the pieces of silver on the temple floor "and departed, and went out and hanged himself. The Chief priests have another consultation; their hellish features assume a mock piety as they pull their skirts about them and piously say, "It is not lawful to put them in the treasury, because it is the price of blood." "And they bought with them the potter's field to bury strangers in." The Potter's Field The field surrounding the potter's house was strewn with potsherds (broken pieces of pottery), discarded ware, marred vessels and broken pieces. This rendered it useless for cultivation, it was a scene of desolation and ruin, an ugly heap of broken pieces of once beautiful vessels, the field was worthless, they could buy it cheap. This world is like that potter's field - a "potter's field" of human wreckage. Broken lives, broken homes, broken hearts and plans, broken fortunes, broken nations. There are tears in connection with "broken things" - a broken doll, a broken toy, a broken wagon. Sorrow's cheeks are furrowed with tears because of "broken things." The Potter's Field Purchase This scrap heap of broken vessel, of strewn wreckage, this unsightly wasteland was bought with the "price of blood," - the blood of Jesus. Some good was wrought even in the price of His betrayal. This committee of "churchmen" consulted regarding the disposal of the blood money resulting from Judas' cowardly act. Someone said, "We need a burying place for strangers." Since there were many pilgrims through Jerusalem, they needed a graveyard for strangers and paupers. No doubt, the potter is now old and his land is lying in waste, the potter's wheel is idle. Again these schemers drive a bargain, "thirty pieces of silver" and the potter's field was theirs. So that, through the blood of Christ, anyone without a cent could have a decent burial. The only hope of this world of broken pieces is in the blood of Christ. Christ came "to seek and to save that which is lost." True, He came also "to heal the broken-hearted" (Luke 4:18). All the sorrows of this world were purchased by His precious blood. In simple words His invitation is: "Cast your burden on the Lord, for he careth for thee" (Psalms 55:22). "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Jesus bought the broken vessels of this world with His own precious blood.

Jesus invites you this minute to bring your own vessel to Him - your sorrows, your individual needs, "they bought the potter's field." A few years ago a mother called me on the telephone; her heart was broken over a wayward boy. "Johnny is in trouble again. This time he's going to prison and I tried so hard to make something out of him." She tried - but that young life was broken and ruined. Life is a "potter's field" full of such broken vessels. But with Jesus' blood the potter's field was bought to be a blessing. Does it seem today that your life, your heart, your plans, your hopes

are all broken? Bring it all to Jesus.

Heartaches, take them all to Jesus.

Go to Him today, Do it now without delay, Heartaches, take them all to Jesus, He will take your heartaches all away.

- Selected

Let us now leave that ugly field of broken pottery. Several years have now passed. Et us walk beyond the gates of the city of Jerusalem, down in the valley, and there we see a beautiful cemetery. Flowers are blooming and the air is filled with their fragrant perfume. "What is this?" "It is the field of blood, formerly known as the potter's field."

My, what a transformation! All the broken pieces are removed, neat graves have been dug, flowers have been planted, the ground has been cleared, and it is a place of beauty. The potter's field transformed into a garden of roses!

Dear friend, Jesus can so transform your life.

They tell us that a chemist can take filthy rags and in a few hours' time, produce pure, white, linen paper. Jesus can take a life, a heart polluted and filthy with sin and transform it, by His grace, into God's glorious dwelling place.

These broken vessels that litter the potter's field are not broken in the process of molding; else He would have "made it again." As the vessel leaves the potter's wheel, it is a perfect vessel. He carefully places these vessels in the oven and the testing fires are kindled. When He unseals the door and removes the ware, alas, some have crumbled and broken under the heat. They did not stand the test and are thrown on the scrap pile in the potter's field. So also with broken lives and broken things that surround you now. They just could not stand the test, the testing fires of temptation, and sorrow. They are broken, crumbled, unsightly and useless.

It may seem that you are discarded forever, but ah, Jesus bought that broken vessel; He claims it now. Even the things that are broken, spoiled and irreparable God will still use for His glory if yielded to Him. Oh, what a transformation when the blood of Jesus is applied! The Potter's Field of Broken Hearts

All over this world there are hearts that are crushed, bleeding and broken. If all the sorrow represented in the lives of you who read these pages were written in one great book, what a volume it would make! And perhaps you could not read it in a lifetime.

Come with me now to the home of David. I will show you a son lying gravely ill on a cot; his friends are gathered around. His father is in mourning, clothed in sackcloth and ashes. He weeps and prays. The servant brings in news that the son is dead. David knew what to do with that broken heart and he took his sorrow to God. He comes out of mourning transformed. See him as he smiles through his tears, with his eyes fixed upon Heaven, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." He loved his son, but he knew the cure for a broken heart and "the balm of Gilead" transformed his sorrow into a "blessed hope."

I will show you another broken heart - a wife with a cruel, brutal, unkind, unsaved, un-Christian, unthoughtful husband; a child with an unsaved friend; a other wit wayward children. Look! When those with a broken heart enter the secret room of prayer, there the burden is laid before the Lord, tears are shed and the agony of the soul is poured out. Now, that trusting soul comes out of that room TRANSFORMED. "Prayer changes things." Have you learned this secret? - The potter's field was purchased and there is healing for the brokenhearted. The Potter's Field of Broken Homes

See Now that home where sin has entered - the home is torn asunder, the children are scattered, the father is a drunkard and the wife has a broken heart. Oh, how many homes there are like that in this world "potter's field." But let Jesus enter the hearts of those who dwell there and again we see a "potter's field transformed. A home once acquainted with quarreling, bitterness, cursing, hatred and reviling now echoes with gospel hymns, rejoicing and praise for Hi who "purchased with His own precious blood" the potter's field. See the loved ones of that family gather around the family altar and wit tears of joy, thank God for the transformation. The Potter's Field of Broken Lives

Lives wrecked and ruined by sin; always on a downward course, down, down in sin. But that lost, sinning soul hears the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Saviour enters that heart and life. Again the "potter's field" is transformed into a blossoming garden of joy.

Let me point out to you a crimson harlot, one taken in the act of sin. The law says she ought to be stoned; even now, the stones are in the hands of those who are eager to hurl them at her in their own self-righteousness, and superficial piety. But that poor, hopeless soul came in contact with Jesus. TRANSFORMED! Now, see her slip into the room where Jesus dines. Se breaks a box of precious ointment and bathes His feet in her tears of gratitude. Go with me now to the foot of the cross and I'll show you that faithful woman. Even though His disciples "watched afar off," she stood with the other of Jesus at the foot of the cross. What a transformation! Jesus can do the same for you. The Potter's Field of Broken Plans

Some cherished ambitions; some life-long hopes go on the rocks. Sorrow and disappointment fill the heart. The future holds nothing but dismay. But cease to plan, dear friend, and let the Lord plan for you and the strewn wreckage of your own ideas are TRANSFORMED into eternal glory. This earth is indeed "a potter's field" and what a burial place it is. He was even buried in it, Himself, but He arose and is alive evermore. The potter's field was purchased by His own precious blood.

## 2 - The 23rd Psalm

---

### PSALM 23

#### Psalms 23:1-6

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou prepares a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.” THE SHEPHERD

Perhaps of all portions of Scripture, the Twenty-third Psalm is the most universally known and loved. It is treasured in all lands where the gospel has been preached. In reality the Twenty-second, the Twenty-third, and the Twenty-fourth Psalms form an inseparable trinity. These three Psalms present our blessed Lord in a most striking manner. In Psalms 22:1-31, He is the Good Shepherd, Who gave His life for the sheep; in Psalms 23:1-6, He is the Great Shepherd, Who, in his resurrection glory, leads His sheep; and in Psalms 24:1-10, He is the Chief Shepherd, Who is coming again in glory to gather His sheep into His heavenly fold.

I am sure more able scholars have given beautiful expositions of this portion of God’s Word long before my meager endeavors were ever realized. But God in His grace has allowed me to dip my little cup into this exhaustless fountain and my own soul has been refreshed. With the humble prayer in my heart that it might prove to be a portion of the blessing to others that it has been in my own life, I send it out. The exposition was first delivered as a sermon and then presented over radio over a special mid-west and Rocky Mountain network, on the program known as the Back to Bible Broadcast. It was mimeographed in abbreviated form and was used of the Lord as a blessing to thousands. It is therefore through multiplied requests of many friends that it has been enlarged and is now put into booklet form with the earnest prayer that it might be used of God in a wider way to bring glory to our Lord and Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

Some who read these pages are in sick rooms; some are lonely; some crushed with grief and loss; others are poor; and some misunderstood. Some are rich and lured by strange voices; others are discouraged and feel that no one loves or cares. Some are young and cannot find their way; some are old and tired and way-worn - but all have need of the Shepherd’s tender care. So this book is sent forth with the sincere prayer that it might meet the particular need in the life of each one who reads it.

I am humbly grateful for the ready acceptance afforded the first edition of this little booklet, and for the fact that hundreds of lives have been blessed, hearts encouraged, and souls have been saved through its brief ministry. We earnestly pray that this enlarged and fourth edition ay be used of the Lord in even a greater way for His own glory.

There can be no doubt as to who wrote this Psalm, for David's autograph is on every verse. I have often wondered where these words were first sung. Was it as the sheep grazed on the hillside, or was it sung to the pouting king on the throne? It may have been, but personally, I believe the 23rd Psalm was written in the latter years of David's life. There is a strength, maturity, and depth in this Psalm, which must have been born of experience. These are the words of one who has suffered deeply, tasted many a bitter cup, and known a lonely life; and had often been "compassed about" with enemies. So, "David the King did not forget David, the Shepherd boy." In these words is blended the mature experience of manhood with a vivid memory of a boyhood spent among the sheep. The author regrets that he cannot personally acknowledge and thank every one who has helped in the writing of this book. Through a number of years of evangelistic work, he has had access to the libraries of many preachers of the gospel, and in every case, he has searched their volumes, seeking new thoughts on this precious Psalm. There was no thought at the time of ever publishing the message and therefore no effort was made to keep a record of the source of the material studied. The Shepherd (Psalms 23:1-6)

If I were a lawyer pleading the case of the Divine inspiration of the Bible before a court, I think I would present my case something like this: "Gentlemen of the jury, I rest my case entirely on the Twenty-third Psalm." Where is it possible to find more beautiful language, more fitting illustrations, more infinite love and more livable reality in such a few words as we have in this Psalm? You can exhaust all the adjectives in the most descriptive language spoken by men, and yet you have only touched the fringe of the contents of this Psalm. It is the gospel in miniature. Yet, it is a Psalm of only six short verses, but the very breath of God can be felt in these words:

"THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD"

These are among the first words from the Bible that we learned as little children at mother's knees, and often the last words that fall from the parched lips of a dying child of God. This is both a confession of weakness and a declaration of trust. I am weak; therefore, I need a shepherd. I am safe, because I have a shepherd. I need a shepherd, because "all we like sheep have gone astray." I have a shepherd because "we have turned every one to his own way," and God has sent His Son to "seek and to save that which is lost." He found me. I trust the Shepherd because "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "For ye were as sheep going astray but are returned unto the Shepherd."

"THE LORD is my Shepherd" My friend, you must be one of God's sheep before this is true concerning you. We read of the relationship that exists between the shepherd and the sheep in the tenth chapter of John. We notice from this chapter:

"He calleth His own sheep by name ... He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice ... They know not the voice of strangers ... I am the door of the sheep ... By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture... I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling and not the Shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth... The hireling fleeth because he is an hireling and careth not for the sheep. I am the Good Shepherd and know My sheep, and am known of mine... I lay down My life for the sheep."

We notice here that God marks His sheep. He arks them in their ears (“My sheep hear My voice”), and in their feet (“they follow Me”). You can tell to whom a sheep belongs by the shepherd it follows. Oh, what a living contradiction some of our lives have proved to be. We call ourselves “God’s sheep,” and yet are following strange voices. The eastern shepherd loved the sheep and the sheep loved the shepherd. He was usually the owner of the sheep or the son of the owner and as such had a personal interest in the sheep. The hireling fled when danger came (John 10:12), but not the shepherd. He “giveth his own life for the sheep” (John 10:11). Incidentally, the shepherd leads the sheep; (he walks before them and the sheep follow him) but a hireling drives the sheep. So you see, it makes a great difference who the shepherd is, in these times of danger, sorrow, grief and testings, what a wonderful consolation it is to know that “the LORD is the Shepherd.” He stands between e and the enemy of my soul. Your salvation and your safety does not depend upon what you are, but what He is. So, trembling heart, look up! Look away from self, and up to the Saviour! Your sorrows and troubles have been multiplied by looking at difficulties, surroundings, your enemies, and your own weakness. Now, cease from all this. Look no more at the “walled cities and giants, the dark valleys, and the enemies,” but for every look at self, take ten looks at Christ. Think of the love, might, and wisdom of your Shepherd. Meditate no ore upon your sins, your failures, and your difficulties, but rather upon the all-sufficiency of Christ. This Psalm is great because it dwells little upon man and much upon God. Read it again and emphasize each “He.” See what “He” is doing. He provides, He restores, He leads, He convoys, He comforts, He heals, He anoints, e fills, He escorts, and He leads home.

Unbelief puts circumstances between us and Christ, but faith puts Christ between us and circumstances. Unbelief fixes its gaze upon men, and things, and likelihoods, possibilities, and surroundings. Faith is not concerned with these, but is fixed steadily upon “the Lord”.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus;

Look full in His wonderful face - And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of His glory and grace.

- H. H. Lemmel

“THE Lord” - this is printed in small capital letters, and wherever that is the case, we know that it stands for the mystic word, “JEHOVAH.’ ‘JEHOVAH’ means the living One, or the self-existent Being, the “I AM,” He Who was, and Who is, and is to come. Who inhabiteth Eternity, Who hath life in Himself; all others wane, and change, and grow old; He only is unchangeably the same. The mighty being is our Shepherd! He Himself says, “I am the good Shepherd.” Now combine these two - the august word for the Everlasting God and the tender word for the Saviour; and we have a worthy title for our Lord, ‘JEHOVAH-JESUS.’ Let us read it into our Psalm, and say with a new appreciation of its meaning, “JEHOVAH-JESUS is my Shepherd.” What need can we have that cannot be met with His twofold nature? As JEHOVAH, He has all power; as JESUS, all sympathy. As JEHOVAH, He sustains all worlds, as JESUS, “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.” As JEHOVAH, he is sovereign Lord of all; as JESUS, He still treads the pathways of this world, by our side, whispering softly and sweetly in our fear not, little flock.” (Meyer). In John 10:3 we read, “He calleth His own sheep by name.” It has been demonstrated many times that the eastern shepherd actually knows the sheep by name. It is interesting to note how the sheep learn their own names. The shepherd makes a new lamb of his flock an object of his special care and attention. He carries

it in his arms, loves it, fondles it and whispers its chosen name in its ear over and over again. Then he places it on the floor of the fold and calls its name. It runs to his side and he loves it and rewards it for responding. This is repeated many times. Finally, he places it among the other sheep in the flock and then calls its name. It runs to his side and he again rewards it with a lump of sugar or a sprig of tender grass. So we learn to distinguish the voice of our Shepherd by many hours of intimate fellowship with Him, fleeting hours in the prayer closet, sweet hours of feasting on His word, and precious hours sitting at his feet listening to His voice.

There are so many voices today that would lead us astray. The only way we can remain true to our Lord is to have such close, intimate fellowship with Him that we can distinguish His voice from the other voices that call. The voice of worldly pleasure, earthly gain, popularity, amusement and self-advancement, constantly sound an appealing invitation in our ear. Oh, that we might be in such close fellowship with Him that we may not be deceived by other voices.

“The Lord IS my Shepherd”

Grasp the present tense of God’s precious Word. He is NOW my Shepherd. He is a PRESENT Saviour, a LIVING Christ, and our COMING King. “The Lord IS my Shepherd.” Is He yours? I like it when God says, “IS.” That is something for the present, something real, something to which I can hold. “Is my Shepherd” - not “was” nor “shall be” but “is.” ‘Is,’ whether I am at home or in Africa. “Is,” on Monday and on Sunday. “Is,” in April and in January. “Is,” whether rich or poor, sick or well, living or dying. “The Lord IS my Shepherd.” Regardless of the trial you face today, the burden you bear, the need you have, or the grief that crushes your heart, nothing can take away the blessed assurance, “The Lord IS my Shepherd.” We have another precious promise in the words. “My grace is sufficient for thee.” Then quit asking God for sufficient grace for your present trial or trouble and thank Him that His grace is sufficient. Open your heart and drink of the fountain of His abundant grace. We sometimes miss the blessing because we keep begging for something God has already granted. We need only the faith to claim it. Remember, my discouraged, doubting friend, that your present circumstances cannot change this blessed relationship - “The Lord is my Shepherd,” “My grace is sufficient for thee.”

I read a few years ago of a preacher whose only child was very ill. He sat by her bedside through the long, weary hours of several days and nights as she waited near death’s door. Finally the angel of death visited the little girl’s room and she was called to be with the Lord. It was Saturday afternoon when the preacher returned from the funeral with a heavy, crushed heart. There had been no opportunity for him to prepare a message for his Sunday morning service during the illness of his child. Some of his deacons came and suggested that he not attempt to preach on the morrow, but he said, “I have been preaching to you of a Saviour Who is sufficient for every trial and test, and I must prove it now myself.” Then he locked himself in his study and fell on his face before God, and with tears running down his cheeks, asked God for a message of hope and comfort to give his people the following morning. It seemed that his mind was blank; he could think only of the little darling who now rested in the arms of Jesus. Finally, in distress he began to pray, “Lord, give me sufficient grace; make Your grace sufficient, etc.” He seemed to get no answer to his prayer, and as he rose from his knees, his eyes fell on a motto that had hung for years on his wall, “My grace IS sufficient for thee.” That word “IS” stood out in bold type before him, and he fell on his knees thanking God for the grace that is sufficient. Yes, the Lord “is.” Is He your Saviour,

your Shepherd? Have you received Him into your heart and life as your own personal Saviour? If not, you cannot have the joy, assurance, comfort and blessing connected with these blessed words.

“The Lord is MY Shepherd”

He is not a shepherd, but my Shepherd. Is He YOUR Shepherd? The only way this blessed Saviour can help you is for Him to be YOUR shepherd. Is He Yours? Are you His? He may have been your mother's Shepherd, but is He your Shepherd. He may have been your father's Shepherd, but is He your Shepherd? My friend, this is in all important question, and it makes an eternity of difference what your answer is, because, The sheep of different Shepherds go to different folds. You had loved ones who died with these words on their lips: “The Lord is my Shepherd,” and they have entered into His heavenly fold. Dear friend, you will never see those precious ones again unless you belong to the same Shepherd. Thank God, you can know Him as your own Shepherd, and He wants to be your Shepherd right now. Won't you open your heart and receive Him as your Saviour, your Sin-bearer and your Shepherd? A great actor returned to the home of his childhood. On Sunday he was asked to give a recitation at the morning service. The only thing he knew that was at all appropriate for the occasion was the Twenty-third Psalm. With dignified and stately manner, he marched to the platform, and with great ability, recited this Psalm. The audience was swayed with his oratorical power, the raising and lowering of his voice, his appropriate gestures, and perfect articulation. When he had finished, it was with difficulty that they refrained from applause. Truly, it was a masterful performance. When he had been seated, the pastor also recognized another visitor in the service - an aged minister of the gospel, a true veteran of the cross. He slowly arose, and with wavering steps, walked to the platform, and in a trembling voice, he quoted the words of the same Psalm - the same words, and yet so different. There was an air of stately possession and humble finality as he said, “My Shepherd.” His tear-dimmed eyes were fixed on the “heavenlies.” He seemed to be in another realm. The audience was bathed in tears; they sat transfixed, as he slowly walked to his seat. The great actor rose to his feet, and with tears running down his cheeks, exclaimed, “I know the words, but he knows the Shepherd.” Yes, my friend, it makes a great difference if He is your Shepherd or not. These are just meaningless words to you until you have personally appropriated the personal Saviour. Is He your Shepherd? But there is also the thought of belonging here. I belong to Him. Oh, the joy, the delight, and the thrill of it! A new joy will fill your heart and a new victory will mark your life, the moment you realize divine ownership. I am His - my heart, my will, my life, my all - yes, all that is mine is His. Our personal choice is also emphasized here: “My shepherd.” Jesus waits to be appropriated. There must be a personal choice by everyone as to whom he will follow. You can follow the deceitful promptings of your own heart, the blind reasonings of ungodly men, the craftiness of Satan, who is determined upon your destruction, or you can choose “the Lord” as your Shepherd. Wonder of wonders, we choose our own shepherd; we choose whom we will follow. Take Him right now as your Shepherd. There is nothing to hinder you but your own will. Do not wait to inquire if you are worthy to be one of His sheep, but look away from yourself to Him, and see if He is not well qualified to be your Shepherd. The first cry of “mine,” and He is “yours.”

“The Lord is My SHEPHERD”

All that is His is mine - His love, His care, protection and provision. The word "Shepherd" may be translated, "my goer-forth." Yes, He goes before us. Nothing can happen to the sheep unless it happens to Him. Our Lord is not a hireling who drives us into dangerous places and then flees when danger comes, but He is our "goer-forth," and will never "leave us nor forsake us." It is the duty of the shepherd to feed, protect and guard the sheep, even with his own life, if necessary; and when night comes, to count the sheep safely into the fold. What a comfort and consolation, that all through the journey of life, we have the protecting care of the Divine Shepherd, and, when life is ended, He personally counts us into the heavenly fold. The Lord said in John 10:7, "I am the Door of the sheep." A traveler in the Holy Land was amazed at the flimsy construction of the sheep folds. He asked one of the shepherds if there were not wild animals that might harm the sheep or any enemies that might steal some of them. "Oh, yes, many of them," he said. "But there is no door to keep them out," exclaimed the amazed traveler. Perhaps unaware that he was quoting the very words of Jesus, the shepherd said, "I am the door." He then demonstrated that after all the sheep are safely in the fold, he takes the roll of blankets from his back, lays it on the ground and stretches his own body across the opening in the fence. Thus no enemy could come and devour the sheep without first over-powering the shepherd, and no sheep could stray out of the fold without trampling the shepherd under foot. What a blessed thought! The enemy of our soul would first have to overpower an almighty Christ, a Triune God, before he could harm us. We are the sheep of His fold; He is our Shepherd.

Then there is a note of tragedy here, too. Perhaps some soul will read these words who was once in the fold of fellowship with the Lord, but today has lost the joy of salvation and is far from the shepherd's companionship. My friend, there is just one way you could get out into the wilderness of sin, and that is to trample the precious Saviour, your Shepherd, underfoot. Can you continue to do that?

"I am the Door" tells us something else. By the door, we enter; and the only entrance into the heavenly fold is through Christ, the Door. All that attempt to come any other way are "thieves and robbers," and none such shall enter.

If you are a wandering sheep today, I want you to know that Jesus loves you still - he cares. In the parable of the lost sheep He makes it clear that one wandering sheep is of more concern, care and grief to the shepherd than ninety and nine who are in the fold. He is calling for you today. Won't you return?

I was told by a missionary from the Holy Land that in cases where a sheep was stubborn in its will to wander, the shepherd would sometimes break the leg of that sheep. Then he would carefully bind the broken leg and carry the injured sheep on his shoulder. He would make it a constant object of his tender care, compassion and love. Over and over again he would call its name in its ear and when at last its broken limb was mended, it had lost its desire to wander from the side of the shepherd who had so graciously loved and cared for it.

Amazing grace! I was that wandering sheep. God in His infinite mercy and love broke me. Then, broken in body, discouraged in spirit, and crushed in heart, I nestled on His shoulder and learned the sweet lessons of trust and surrender. Maybe He has so broken you. Remember, dear one, it is not in wrath but in love. Every pain you bear hurts the shepherd's heart more than yours. Every need you have is an object of His compassion. It is a stroke of divine love that you are laid aside.

You were wandering in places of danger, you were rebellious, self-sufficient and in great danger. Now you suffer, crushed and broken. Just nestle in His bosom and learn the precious lessons He would teach you there. Learn again the sound of His voice that you have long missed. Learn again His tender Shepherd care. Just rest in the Lord now, and you will never regret these days of waiting and mending.

It seems strange indeed that “my Shepherd” should be also described as “the Lamb of God.” How can the Shepherd be the Lamb? But what a fitting description of our Lord Jesus this is. Many animals were designed for sacrifice under the old Jewish ceremonial law, but chief among them was the lamb. God had a special claim on lambs and presented His Son as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” There are certain animals which are good only so long as they live, for instance, the dog. Others have practically no value while they are alive, but have value only after they are dead, such as a pig. But the lamb, or sheep, has value both dead and alive. In life it provides wool for clothing; in death it provides meat for food, its skin for parchment, and gut for music.

Now do you wonder why our Lord is referred to as “the Lamb of God”? He has provided us with the robe of righteousness to enable us to stand in the presence of a holy God. Through His death He has provided us with meat whereby we may eat and live. As His blood was poured out it provided a panacea for sin; and, when we consider the parchment, it is impossible to overlook the Word of God. The Lamb of God is also the Word of God and “my shepherd.”

“I SHALL NOT WANT”

“But why,” you ask, “shall I not want?” He is my Shepherd, I am His sheep; and I can cast all of my cares upon Him. His riches are unsearchable, His power is almighty, His faithfulness is unailing, and His love is unchanging. A sheep does not worry and fret lest it have no food and shelter, water and protection. It merely depends upon the shepherd. It may be led through barren lands and over mountain wastes; it can see no food, no rest, but it has no care. It trusts the shepherd, knowing he is leading the sheep through hard places to new grazing pastures beyond. Maybe you are in a desert place today, but you can confidently rest, knowing that “He is my Shepherd,” and “casting all my cares upon Him,” “I shall not want.” But you say, “I know He is my Shepherd, but yet I do want.” Your experiences seem to contradict this glad announcement. Perhaps, my friend, you have not by faith appropriated the supply, which He has placed at your disposal; or you may not have made your request known unto Him, with prayer and supplications; or it may be that you have misunderstood your real need, and are asking for something which would do you harm. In one of these directions, you must seek the reason for the differences between your experiences and the victory expressed in these words - “No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Psalms 84:11).

We need to trust the Shepherd’s wisdom, as well as His might. There is “no want” in the one who lives under the “Shepherd” care of God. It may be that you have been following “afar” and that you are away from His tender care, and so are deaf so His call. Return to Him now, follow close to His side, and you will experience the triumph there is in the words, “I shall not want.” The rest of this wonder Psalm can be placed under these words, “I shall not want.” He does not promise that I shall not want for any of my selfish desires, but I shall never want for that which is for my highest good and His greatest glory.

“I shall not want” for rest, for “He maketh me to lie down.” It is a troubled life in this sinful world and the only rest and peace we can find is in Jesus. In this restless age there is no truth we need to appropriate more than this. As we must have rest for the body, so we must find time for repose, spiritually.

He “maketh me.” It is a loving compulsion. The Good Shepherd says, “I will give you rest.” When He overtakes the wandering sheep He lays it on His shoulder (Luke 15:5). The Master never expects His servant to be always “on the go.” He says, “Rest a while,” and if you are heedless of this kind admonition, He will Himself call you aside a while just to rest. Don’t miss, by complaint, rebellion, bitterness, and doubt, the sweet lessons He has for you in these hours. He can now talk with you and whisper sweet assurance in your ears. Your heart and His heart are thus knit together by a bond of love that you could have in no other way. Thank God for these rich experiences when “He maketh me to lie down.”

Another lesson here. A true shepherd makes his sheep rest after eating. He gives the sheep an opportunity to chew their cud again and again, so they may get the full benefit of what they have been eating. Isn’t it true that these lives of ours are so busy as we run here and there, that we don’t take time to thoroughly masticate what we have received?

Notice where the sheep lie down - “in green pastures” - in the very food they have been eating. Our food is the Word of God, but it is necessary that we not only feed on the Word but that we “lie down in it” - digest it, masticate it. To ‘lie down’ is to rest, so to “lie down in green pastures” is to rest in God’s Word. When you have a loved one away from home, or when you are sick and in pain, rest in Psalms 91:1-16. When you have worldly needs and cares, rest in Php 4:19. When sorrow presses hard upon you, mystery surrounds you, enemies assail you, and sickness overtakes you, rest in Romans 8:28. When the wars and troubles of this mad world cause you to tremble, rest in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. When sin would defeat you, rest in Psalms 32:1-11. When in need of help, rest in Psalms 46:1-11. When traveling, rest in Psalms 121:1-8. When troubled and fearful, rest in Psalms 118:1-29. When “things look ‘blue,’” rest in Isaiah 40:1-31. When tempted to do wrong, rest in Psalms 139:1-24. If you are facing a crisis, rest in Psalms 46:1-11. When you are discouraged, rest in Psalms 23:1-6. When business is poor, rest in Psalms 37:1-40. When you are lonely or fearful, rest in Psalms 27:1-14. When you are anxious for dear ones, rest in Psalms 107:1-43. When everything seems to be going from bad to worse, rest in 2 Timothy 3:1-17. When your friends seem to go back on you, rest in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. If you have been bereaved, rest in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 and Revelation 21:1-27. When your faith is wavering, rest in Hebrews 11:1-40. When you have sinned, rest in 1 John 1:9. If you have a fear of death, rest in John 11:1-57; John 17:1-26; John 20:1-31; 2 Corinthians 4:1-18; 2 Corinthians 5:1-21; Romans 8:1-39; Revelation 7:1-17; Revelation 21:1-27 and Revelation 22:1-21. When Satan would cause you to doubt your salvation, rest in John 3:16. Lie down in green pastures. But you say, “I don’t have rest; fear clutches my heart, and uncertainty terrifies my soul, and circumstances shadow my life.” His promise is, “He maketh me to lie down” - to rest; and His promise is true, so there must be some inward, personal explanation of your lack of rest.

There are three things essential for rest:

1. Safety - The rest of the flock of sheep would be disturbed by the growl of a wild animal, the bark of a dog, or even the presence of a little child. At the least disturbance they will huddle, trembling

and timid, in a frightened group about the shepherd.

How can one rest when he feels himself constantly liable to attacks from the adversary? Who can rest when his eternal destiny lies wavering in the balance? How can a soul have rest when he has not settled the question of the saving and keeping power of the Shepherd? He Himself met the great Adversary of our souls, and has broken forever his power. The good Shepherd was no fleeing hireling, He laid down His life for His sheep, and now He ever lives to guarantee our safety. He promised, "My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (John 10:28). Rest in that guarantee of your safety. He suffered all there was to suffer, and paid all there was to pay, and lives to personally guarantee the sufficiency of His atoning work. Rest in the all-sufficiency of the eternal, living Christ, and His perfect, finished work. Lack of rest is lack of faith.

2. Satisfaction - A hungry sheep never lies down. We can never rest as long as our soul hunger is unsatisfied, and our thirst unquenched. Perhaps you lack rest, because you have tried to satisfy your hunger, as did the prodigal son, with "the husks that the swine did eat." But, dear heart, your soul cannot be satisfied on the dry husks of the world, and its sinful indulgence. Why not return to the "green pastures" and find rest and satisfaction in His precious Word - "lie down in green pastures"?

3. Submission - No shepherd can bring his flock to rest, unless the sheep will follow him, and be obedient to his voice. It is not amazing that we lose our rest, when we run here and there, following every voice that calls, submitting to the desires of our own evil, lustful hearts. We are sure to lack rest, when we substitute our plans for His guidance, when we take our lives in our hands rather than tune our ears to His call. We do not look up often enough to see which way He is going, and we do not listen enough to hear what He would have us do. Our rest is broken, and our peace is lost. Hand over to Him all that robs your heart of peace, and causes your soul to tremble, and then take from Him His own sweet rest and peace. "There is rest for the weary - There is rest for you."

Dear friend, if you have lost your rest, you have only yourself to blame. And you can get it restored when you return to the Shepherd.

#### God's Pets

It seems that in every flock of sheep there are one or two pets - maybe a pet lamb that follows constantly and persistently at the very heels of the shepherd. Because of its nearness to the shepherd, it gets more of the shepherd's care and attention, and more quiet words of affection than any other sheep in the flock. It is not that the shepherd deliberately chooses a pet, but rather that the lamb or sheep chooses that place of nearness to the shepherd.

You say, "Do you mean to insinuate that God has pets?" Not that God is partial, but the fact remains that some are getting more from their Shepherd than others - more of His tender care, more of His sweet communion, more of His daily provision. Why? They have chosen to follow closely, to obey every wish of the Shepherd, to constantly remain in His presence, and close to His side. You alone can choose whether you will walk or play about far off from the Shepherd's side, or whether you will follow lovingly at His heels. When Jesus walked on earth, He had His "pets." Of course, He could never be accused of being partial, but among the multitudes, there were the believers, and among the believers, were the twelve, and among the twelve were the three (Peter,

James, and John) who “went a little farther,” and among the three was John, who “leaned upon His bosom.” He spoke to the twelve in parables, and then explained the meaning of the parable to them when they were along with Him. They knew more of the Saviour’s mission than the world knew. He took the three with Him away from the prying eyes of the throng, and they knew more of the Saviour’s ministry and power than the rest of the twelve. But it was John who leaned on His bosom, and heard more of His gentle whispers than anyone else. It was not that Jesus chose John, but rather that John chose that place of nearness to the Saviour’s side. You alone can choose whether you will be merely one of His flock or one of His “pets.” Are you in that place of nearness where you can say:

He speaks and the sound of His voice - Is so sweet that the birds hush their singing, And the melody that He gave to me Within my heart is ringing. And He walks with me and He talks with me, And He tells me that I am His own; And the joy we share as we tarry there None other has ever known.

- C. Austin Miles

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures” FEEDING. “He leadeth me.” LEADING. Notice the order here, feeding before leading. A literal rendering of these words in John 10:4 are as follows: “When He hath put forth all His own.” The sheep are sometimes in the morning not willing to leave the fold and so He “puts” or thrusts them forth. Then the shepherd goes before them and leads them into “green pastures,” and “beside the still waters.”

“I shall not want” for satisfaction, for “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.” A sheep never lies down until its hunger is fully satisfied. This is a picture of complete satisfaction - there is food all around, an abundance of green grass, but the sheep is unable to consume any more; it is satisfied. How like our blessed Lord that is! He satisfies. “He says, He keeps, He satisfies, this wonderful Friend of mine.” How foolish it is to try to find satisfaction for your soul’s hunger by feeding on the dry husks of worldly sin and pleasure, when “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.”

“I shall not want” for companionship, for “He leadeth me.” That is, He goes before me and with me. “Thou art with me” (continually with me). Having undertaken to be my Shepherd, He will for His own glory’s sake, do all that a shepherd can. I am as safe as He is powerful.

“He leadeth me.” “He - me,” what a blessed companionship! He not only gave His life for His sheep, but He gives His life to His sheep in blessed fellowship and constant companionship. “What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms.” There are times when we feel like Peter at the Transfiguration, when he said “It is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles.” Let’s just stay here, in other words. But leading follows feeding as revealed in John 10:9, where we find that “he ... shall go in and out;” “in” for fellowship and “out” for deeding; “in” for safety and “out” for service; “in” for repose and “out” for repast. Our going “in” is to prepare us for the going “out.” We have fellowship with Him so that we can work for Him. We go in for prayer so that we can go out with boldness.

“He leadeth me.” To have a guide means not only to make sure of life, but to make the most of life. You can see more of Yellowstone Park or New York City in a day, with a competent guide, than in a week without one. So with Jesus as my guide and companion, I not only make sure of life

hereafter, but make the most of life here. "He knows the way ... He holds my hand." "He leadeth" - He does not drive like a hireling. His leading is limited only by our unwillingness to follow.

"He leadeth me" in service. Religious activity is not service unless He leads. First, "He maketh me to lie down"; then "He leadeth me." "To lie down" is to rest preparatory to His leading into service. "Lie down" in prayer, Bible study, in heart searching and in resting.

Maybe you have been made to "lie down." You are laid aside today, you toss on a bed of sickness and pain; you wait on the Lord to reveal His will. Take courage, my friend; He is preparing to lead you into new victories in service for Him, and even your lying down is in "green pastures." Why should we fear and doubt when He is leading?

It has often been said that "Everyman who God hath used has first been broken." How true! I wonder if I might say then that before God leads us He must first make us to "lie down." Is not there a testing, a period of heart searching, and a time of sifting each time before He leads us into new victory, new joys, and new triumphs in His blessed service? "He maketh me to lie down." If it is His work I can trust Him (Romans 8:28).

"He leadeth me" - He has a personal interest in each sheep, and "He calleth His own sheep by name. He has a personal, definite guidance for me. What a thrilling thought! I am not lost in the flock, I am not just one of His sheep, but He has a personal interest and a definite guidance for me. I can always find comfort from the assurance that the Shepherd is the Leader, and He is leading me to my Home. Not always is the path smooth, or the way easy, and not always does He lead in the sunlight. But sometimes the way is rough, the struggle is hard, and there are shadows across the pathway. But whichever way it is, it is the right way, for He is the Leader, and He is taking me Home. MY FATHER WATCHES OVER ME

I TRUST IN God wherever I may be, Upon the land or on the rolling sea, For, come what may, From day to day, My heavenly Father watches over me.

I trust in God, for, in the lion's den, On battlefield, or in the prison pen, Thro' praise or blame, Thro' flood or flame, My heavenly Father watches over me. The valley may be dark, the shadows deep, But O, the Shepherd guards His lonely sheep; And thro' the gloom He'll lead me home, My heavenly Father watches over me.

I trust in God, - I know He cares for me, On mountain bleak or on the stormy sea;

Tho' billows roll, He keeps my soul, My heav'nly Father watches over me.

- Rev. W. C. Martin

"I shall not want" for purity, for "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness." He leadeth me in "right ways." The right way is not always easiest but it is always best.

"I shall not want" for a motive in life, for "He leadeth me ... for His name's sake." This is literally translated "His reputation's sake." The Lord is jealous of His reputation. Everywhere we go we take His name, we are His sheep. Lest I injure His name I must not go astray, for the shepherd is judged by the conduct of his sheep. If you are a wandering sheep, you injure His name, His reputation.

The Leader, "HE." The Led, "ME." The paths, 'RIGHTEOUSNESS' (Right Paths). The Purpose, 'FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE.'

"I shall not want" for comfort, for "He leadeth me beside the still waters," or waters of peace, rest and refreshment. The waters of this world are indeed troubled, a boiling caldron; but we can find rest and peace in Him. The believer has no craving thirst, for there is a constant supply in Christ.

"Still waters" are the deepest waters. It is only through deep sorrow, heartaches, and experiences in the Christian life, that we learn the blessed quietness which He alone can give. God does not promise an easy, painless life for the Christian, but His promise is to lead us "beside the still waters." This is in fact a prophecy of hard trials and deep affliction, but His promise is "I will be with him in trouble" (Psalms 91:15). It is then that His presence is felt as at no other time, and this fellowship in "the furnace of affliction" gives a calmness, quietness and depth to the Christian life which cannot be gained in any other way.

Shallow water runs swiftly, and the shallow life often moves at a more rapid pace than the deeper life. It takes time to be spiritual; it does not just happen! "Take Time to Be Holy," was not written in this fast age, but it does take time to be holy. In fact, it takes more time than most of us are willing to spend. Abraham, alone with God, was made the father of a nation; Moses, in the quietness and stillness of the desert, received God's message at the burning bush. Most of their training was in the school of silence. We are living at such a rapid pace today that there is a sickly shallowness about most of our lives and few of us know the meaning of the quietness of God "beside the still waters." We have a false code of spiritual values; we judge the value of a man by the speed with which he works rather than the depth of the work accomplished.

Maybe you are discouraged today because you cannot see the results of your tireless efforts. It seems that you are accomplishing little, that your labours bear no fruit, and that your energy is expended in vain, but God is adding depth to your life that cannot be seen, and can only be realized in all its fruitfulness in eternity. He is preparing you now for an enlarged work tomorrow.

"I shall not want" for fellowship, for "He restoreth my soul." When fellowship is broken by sin, it is restored by repentance and confession (1 John 1:9). Yes, He revives and restores. He brings the wanderer back from "by-paths" to the "right paths." He "restores!" What a blessed assurance fills my soul as I read His precious promise, and as I notice how long He seeks the wandering sheep - "until He finds it," and "not one of them shall perish."

How is restitution effected? By the Shepherd's look: "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter, and Peter remembered the Word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, "Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:61-62). Peter could not stand that look - it broke his heart and he "wept bitterly." Oh, my friend, are you in need of restoration today? By the Shepherd's crook: "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word" (Psalms 119:67). "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Hebrews 12:6). Thank God that even His chastening is proof of His love and of our relationship to Him - "He scourgeth every son." If you are out of the fellowship today, do not charge those things that have happened to you to "bad luck." He, in His love for you, has laid on the rod because He desires your restoration.

Here again I want you to see that He does it all. A sheep is so helpless, and is unable to return of its own accord. A dog or a cat can find its way home, but not a sheep. Sheep do not know enough to remain in the fold, and they do not know enough to return to the fold after they have wandered away. Even swine know when a storm is brewing and run home, and at night will return to their trough; but a sheep can do nothing to protect itself. It is wholly dependent upon the Shepherd's care. We are just that helpless, Even after we are saved, if it were not for the tender care and keeping of the Lord, our Shepherd, there is not one of us but would have strayed from His fold forever. But it is blessed to know if we do stray, it is His business to seek until He finds us and restores us unto Himself. "He restoreth my soul." You can not do that; no one else can do it for you, but He can. He does the saving; He does the keeping; He does the leading and He does the restoring. My friend, if you have wandered away, He seeks you today. He is even now seeking you through these very words. Quit running just rest in His mercy, and "He restoreth my soul."

"I shall not want" for courage, "I will fear no evil." His presence gives confidence. In myself I tremble, in the world I am defeated, but He is my Shepherd, "I shall not want." There is no evil to fear when the Shepherd is near. "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flames kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy god, thy Saviour" - "my Shepherd" (Isaiah 43:1-3).

"I shall not want" for assurance, for "Thou art with me," and "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

"Thou art with me." The heavenly pilgrim is always in good company. Paul said, "All men forsook me... notwithstanding the Lord stood with me" (2 Timothy 4:16-17). His presence is always sufficient in all ways and at all times. A few years ago I carried my little girl home from the church while she was sleeping, and tucked her in bed in the home of some friends where we were to spend the night. We then went down stairs to spend an hour or two of fellowship with the members of the household. Suddenly we heard a faint cry from away off in the strange bedroom: "Daddy, are you there?" When I assured her of my presence she went confidently to sleep. Even though the surroundings were strange she did not fear, for her daddy was present. Oh, what a comfort to know that "Thou art with me." Right now, as you read these words, He is there.

"I shall not want" for protection, for "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me" - the rod for protection; the staff for correction.

"I shall not want" for food, for "Thou preparest a table before me." He surely supplies "all your needs." "Thou preparest" - again we are reminded that "He careth for you." "Thou preparest" - here we see His loving fore-thought in providing for His sheep. "Thou preparest a table" - a table speaks of fellowship.

"Before me" - again we are reminded of His personal care. A sheep is never lost in the flock. God knows each one by name. He is concerned about my problems and my personal needs. I am more than a sheep in His pasture, for I am a guest at His table. And more than that, I am a child of His household. All the resources of His divine provision must be exhausted before I can ever suffer want. Since it is His provision, it is always "good," and though it may not always be sweet, it is best

(Romans 8:28).

“Before me” - it is thrilling to observe that it is prepared beforehand. His promise is - “while ye are yet speaking, I will answer. He is never late in His provision. “Before me” - not only in front of us, “leading,” but ahead of me preparing. “He leadeth me” - (goes before) and now we see that He prepares before me.

“God prepares” - God is never taken by surprise. When I fell into sin, He was prepared. And “the Lamb of God was slain before the foundation of the world.” When I fell by the wayside, He was prepared and “the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us (continually cleanseth us) from all sin.” When I have needs, He is prepared, and promises to “supply all our need, according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.” And when this life is ended, He is prepared, for the Lord has gone “to prepare a place for me.” My! What a Saviour, what a Shepherd, what a Provider!

“I shall not want for victory, for He prepares a table “in the presence of mine enemies.” They are powerless against me, for He is my Shepherd.

“I shall not want” exoneration, for my enemies have to look on in annoyance at God’s provision for me. Though they would organize against me, God provides for me. “A table in the presence of mine enemies” - they may compass me about. They may surround me, as four walls that would imprison, but they cannot put a ceiling over me, and they cannot cut off supplies that come hourly from above. When God elects to feed a soul, that soul shall be fed, though all Hell attempts to stop it.

“I shall not want” for sanctification, for “Thou anointest my head with oil.” The oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit Who indwells the believer, seals us, and sets us aside as a vessel for divine service and glory. The oil is also assurance of hospitality and protection. We have to get the setting of the eastern land to understand this. The host would receive a guest into his house, wash his feet and anoint his head with olive oil which he would pour from a horn. By this act the host is literally saying, “You are welcome in this house and at my table. All the comforts and protection of this home are yours. Before any harm can come to you, it must first touch me. I will die if necessary, before an enemy can harm you. You are my guest.”

What a precious picture! I am the guest at the table. The Lord is the host. “He anointeth my head with oil,” and has thus announced that as long as I am in His house I am perfectly safe. My enemies may surround me, but they cannot touch me; they would first have to smite Christ. (Remember the words “I am the Door”?) What safety! What protection! What a Host! What a Saviour!

“I shall not want” for spiritual fullness, for “my cup runneth over.” He gives us not only life, but an abundant life; not only entrance into the kingdom, but an abundant entrance; not only satisfaction, but abounding satisfaction; not only blessings, but overflowing blessings; not only joy, but joy running over. God is not stingy with His blessings for love never considers the cost. The overflow is not waste, but it is for the salvation of others. Other lives are blessed, other hearts are touched by the overflowing blessings He bestows. The Christian life is not self-centered and self-contained; it “runneth over.” If it continually “runneth over,” there must be a continual filling. There is always a sweetness and freshness about the Christian life. There must be an inflowing if there is an out-flowing, and there must be an out-flowing if there is an in-flowing. So only as our lives “run

over” are they kept fresh and pure and renewed in the Lord. Is your cup running over? A full cup is not enough.

There is cause for humble meditation here. Some cups are very small; it does not take much to fill them. There are many Christians who have never grown in grace; they are stunted in their development and have a little “thimble” capacity. Others have had a growing experience, and enlarged capacity, a big cup. God fills each cup to overflowing when we fully yield to Him. If your cup does not have a large capacity, it is your loss and His sorrow. Not only does a small cup mean a loss in this life but even in eternity, as we read regarding the joy of heaven: “They shall be satisfied.” But some Christians have been saved for years and are still “babes in Christ.” They have never grown; they still feed on the “milk of the Word.” They have a small capacity, a little cup, and are easily ‘satisfied.” For illustration, a little baby sits on the floor and is perfectly content and satisfied with a little ten-cent baby rattle; it has a very limited capacity and understanding; it would rather have its little red rattle than a title to a mansion. You would not, however, expect to find its daddy down on the floor playing with such toys. No, he is a man; he has a great capacity for enjoyment; it takes things of real value to please him.

God grant that we may “grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord.” Then we will have a richer, fuller life and an enlarged capacity to contain the joys and blessings of heaven.

Now another lesson from these words: the larger the cup the more we can draw from His abounding fountain of grace. In medieval times in England, on Christmas morning, the poor villagers would call at the house of the lord of the manor, each one with his cup, which the lord would fill with his choicest wine. Some came with a small cut and received little; others came with a large cup and received much. He filled each cup.

What a rebuke to us! “Ye have not because ye ask not.” God give us a “hunger and thirst after righteousness”! God give us a growth in capacity, an increased faith, a large cup. May I call your attention to the order of God’s Word? “Thou anointest my head,” “my cup runneth over.” Anointing must go before the overflowing (John 7:37-38). If your cup is “empty and dry,” if you have lost the joy of His salvation, if you have lost your power in service, you need a fresh anointing, a new filling of the Holy Spirit. Every believer has been baptized by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13) and can say, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” Every believer should be filled with the Spirit, and then he could say, “My cup runneth over...” A little boy, quoting this Psalm, gave the words in this way, “The Lord is my shepherd, What more could I want?” He was not so far wrong as this is literally the meaning here, and these words may be translated, “The Lord is my shepherd, therefore, I shall lack nothing.” Why? I am His and “all I have is thine” (Luke 15:31). If I have Him, I have everything.

“I shall not want” for love, for “goodness and mercy shall follow me.” Notice here the certainty of His goodness and mercy - “surely goodness and mercy shall follow me.” “Surely” - He is God, eternal and everlasting and unchanging, and even “if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful” (2 Timothy 2:13). His gifts are never taken back. “Surely” - because He would never start something without completing it. “Surely” - because He has given His Word, His personal guarantee, and “He cannot deny himself” (2 Timothy 2:13). “Surely” - because of His love for us. The shepherd always leads his flock when on a long journey, and the sheep crowd around him, they follow him, for they know his voice. But in the background, where it is sometimes impossible for the shepherd to keep his watchful eye fixed upon all the sheep, he has made provision for their care and protection. Two

great shepherd dogs act as rear guards. They are well trained and know their duty. If any sheep would stray from following the shepherd, they bark a warning. If a sheep falls by the wayside or into a pit, their frantic barking summons the shepherd, who lifts the wounded sheep with his crook. So you see the Good Shepherd not only conducts, but convoys His sheep through the valley.

God's goodness and His mercy are indeed His "rear guard." If I would turn aside from following His voice, I am immediately faced with His goodness to me. It cries out a warning and I cannot turn back. If I would step aside from His goodness, there is God's mercy. I simply cannot trample it underfoot; I cannot ignore His love, His constant goodness and gentle mercy, and I must turn about to follow His steps and to respond to the music of His sweet voice.

I am so weak, so prone to wander, and I am sure when I step through the door of the heavenly fold I will sing with the Psalmist from the depths of my soul in eternal gratitude, "Surely goodness and mercy" have followed me "all the days of my life, and I shall (because of His goodness and mercy) dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

"I shall not want" for consolation. His promise is for "All the days of my life." God assures us, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Life is made up of days. If He was sufficient yesterday, He is sufficient for today, and if He is sufficient today, He will continue to be "all the days of my life" - from the cradle to the grave, and from the grave through eternity. We may not know what the future holds but we do know that God's goodness and mercy will follow us "all the days." - The Shepherd leading, goodness and mercy following.

"I shall not want" for a destination, for "I will dwell in the house of the Lord." Notice that even in Glory we are still the recipients of His tender care and provision. It is "the house of the Lord;" it is a house He has prepared. "He has gone to prepare a place for us." And "the Lord doeth all things well." Oh, what a Shepherd! What a glorious Saviour!

"I shall not want" in eternity, for "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." His present fellowship here is just a taste of eternity with Him. Time is but the dressing room of eternity.

Before we continue, notice the progression of this great Psalm.

"The Lord is my Shepherd." Here we have relationship.

"The Lord is my Shepherd." Here we have assurance.

"The Lord is my Shepherd." Here we have care.

"I shall not want." Here we have contentment.

"He maketh me to lie down." Here we have ownership.

"He maketh me to lie down." Here we have rest.

"In green pastures." Here we have satisfaction.

"He leadeth me." Here we have guidance.

"He leadeth me beside the still waters." Here we have refreshment.

"He restoreth my soul." Here we have fellowship.

Now notice the second blessed revelation here. We are helpless, defenseless, wandering sheep. We do nothing but enjoy His blessings. We are simply the beneficiaries.

"I was lost, but Jesus found me, Found the sheep that went astray, Threw His loving arms around me, Drew me back into His way."

Finally note the safety of God's sheep:

Beneath me, "green pastures"; beside me, "still waters"; with me, "my shepherd"; before me, "a table"; around me, "mine enemies"; after me, "goodness and mercy"; beyond me, "the house of the Lord."

"THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY"

"Of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Though "I walk." Death is an experience from which the sinner shrinks. He fears, fights, and draws back from it. He is dragged into it in great terror, and panic grips his heart. Death is the ever-lurking enemy of the natural (unsaved) man; it is inevitable, and it casts a shadow over his entire life. But death is the emancipation of the child of God. Our "citizenship is in heaven," our "treasures" are over there, and our "affections are above." But we are now imprisoned here "in this vile body of sin," and death comes as an angel of mercy to release us from our prison house of corruption. "To die is gain," "to be with Christ is far better." Of course, we do not invite death, yet when death comes we do not fear the grim reaper, but walk into death with courage and confidence. "I will fear no evil."

"Through the valley." Oh, I am so glad He pictures death as a "valley" - smooth and peaceful, not rough, rugged and steep. Notice the word, "through the valley." Thank God for that! The child of God does not remain even in the valley of the shadow of death, but we pass through. The unsaved soul passes into death. Death is for him the terrible dark door that opens into an endless eternity of darkness, blackness and death from which he shall never return. But, praise God, the redeemed soul passes through death. Death is only the open door through which, by God's grace, we pass into the glorious life beyond. It is not the end of anything save mortality. My friend, stop, consider; when your summons comes, will you pass into death or through death?

"Of the shadow of death." I am not afraid of a shadow, are you? A shadow is not a real object. A shadow cannot harm you. The Psalmist did not say, we walk through the valley of death," but through "the valley of the shadow of death." So death is not a reality, but a "shadow" to the believer; therefore "I will fear no evil." The shadow of an evil will never harm you; the shadow of a fire will not burn; the shadow of a sword will not slay; the shadow of a tomb cannot hold you, and therefore the shadow of death you need not fear.

Death having lost its "sting" becomes but a mere shadow. So the believer may exclaim, "Oh, death, where is thy sting? Oh, grave, where is thy victory?" Death answers, "I am not come as an enemy, but as a friend; not to destroy, but to conduct you into the Father's home."

Again though, I call your attention to a contrast. Death for the sinner is separation of the soul from God. It is real; it is for ever. Death for the saint is only the separation of the soul from the body and

that just for a little while - a momentary "shadow." A shadow, though, is the shade cast by a real object. "The wages of sin is death," and it is real; it must be paid. But Christ Himself received the real sting of death and paid the full penalty of our sin. My friend, if you want to see death in its terrible, horrible reality, take a trip to Calvary. See the precious Son of God bleeding, suffering, and dying for your sins. Sense the terrible blackness and hear Him cry out in His agony, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" One look at that scene and you will say, "Yes, death is real." But since Jesus paid the full penalty, the one who repents of sin and believes on Him, merely passes through the "valley of the shadow of death." Have you "received Him?" Have you trusted Him? Have you "believed in Him?" Have you appropriated His sacrificial death and His blood, shed on Calvary, as full payment for your sins? Will you face the penalty of sin, which is death, or will you pass through "the valley of the shadow of death?"

Another fact about a shadow: Behind the shadow there must be a light. You will never find a shadow where there is no light. Go down into a dark cave where no ray of light penetrates and look for a shadow; you will find none. Behind the shadow of death there is a light, the glorious light of the resurrection. Death only casts a momentary shadow, "absent from the body, present with the Lord." Just a while and even this body shall be raised "incorruptible," "immortal," and "glorified," into the light of His wonderful presence. "The shadow is temporary, the light is eternal."

"I WILL FEAR NO EVIL"

"I will fear no evil" place, the world.

"I will fear no evil" thing, the flesh.

"I will fear no evil" one, the devil. A child of God is not afraid at the moment of his passing through the shadow of death. Why? "For Thou art with me."

"Thou," the Lord Jesus Himself, makes His presence felt in a very literal and real way, as the believer passes into the shadow. Have you ever been there by the side of a bed when the Lord came to call some precious soul home? Angelic presence fills the room; there is a sweet peace, a blessed calm, and no "fear." It is as close to heaven as you will ever get in this world. When things are going well, when life is easy, and when the sun is shining, many are content with talking about the Lord; but when the sky darkens, trouble comes, and the shadows fall we want to talk to Him directly.

Afraid? Of What? To feel the spirit's glad release? To pass from pain to perfect peace? The strife and strain of life to cease?

Afraid - of that?

Afraid? Of What?

Afraid to see the Saviour's face, To hear His welcome, and to trace The glory gleam from wounds of grace?

Afraid - of that?

Afraid? Of What? A flash - a crash - a pierced heart;

Darkness - light - O heaven's art! A wound of His a counterpart;

Afraid - of that?

Afraid? Of What? To enter into Heaven's rest, And yet to serve the Master blest, From service good to service best?

Afraid - of that?

Afraid? Of What? To do by death what life could not - Baptize with death a stony plot, Till souls shall blossom from that spot?

Afraid - of that?

It is good to say, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee"; but it is far better to say, "I will trust and not be afraid."

"The translation of a Christian life from earth to heaven is but the removal of a tender plant from a cold northern garden, where it is stunted and dying, into a tropical field, where it puts out most luxuriant growths and covers itself with splendor."

"With Me" - We are "never alone," even in the valley. When He entered the valley, He was alone. "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me... And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold" (Isaiah 63:3-5). At last, upon the pitiless cross as our sins were laid upon Him, even God Himself turned from Him, and He uttered that despairing cry. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He died a few moments later with a broken heart - alone. But praise God, when we come to the valley, we will not be alone - "Thou art with me."

"Thou art with me." This is not a promise that is good only in the hour of death, but He is even now, right this minute, with me. His promise is - "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." There is victory and joy in the constant realization of His blessed presence.

NEVER ALONE I've seen the lightning flashing, And heard the thunder roll, I've felt sin's breakers dashing, Which almost conquered my soul;

I've heard the voice of my Saviour, Bidding me still to fight on;

He promised never to leave me, Never to leave me alone!

CHORUS:

No, never alone! No, never alone! He promised never to leave me, Never to leave me alone!

No, never alone! No, never alone! He promised never to leave me, Never to leave me alone! The world's fierce winds are blowing: Temptation sharp and keen;

I have a peace in knowing - My Saviour stands between - He stands to shield me from danger - When my friends are all gone;

He promised never to leave me, Never to leave me alone! When in affliction's valley I tread the road of care, My savior helps me carry the cross so heavy to bear:

Tho' all around me in darkness, Earthy joys all flown; My Saviour whispers His promise, Never to leave me alone!

He died on Calvary's mountain, For me they pierced His side, For me He opened that fountain, The crimson cleansing tide; For me He waited in glory, Seated Upon His throne;

He promised never to leave me, Never to leave me alone!

- Broadcast Music, Inc.

“THY ROD AND THY STAFF THEY COMFORT ME”

What a comfort! The Shepherd carried two instruments, the rod was a short club to protect the sheep from any beast that might attack them; the staff was for the sheep themselves. It was the shepherd's crook to guide them if they wandered from the path, and to lift them out of the pit if they fell. He sometimes rapped a disobedient sheep sharply with the staff. But even God's disciplinary dealings are among His greatest mercies. This comforts me to know that He not only loves and cares for me, but corrects and chastens me, thus proving His love. “Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.” So we see that our Shepherd keeps others from harming us and He keeps us from harming ourselves. He protects us from our enemies and He protects us from ourselves. Have you so completely turned over the responsibility of your life to Him that you find comfort from His protecting rod and chastening staff? The shepherd also uses the staff for another purpose. He stands at the door of the fold and counts the sheep into the fold as they pass under the staff. (See Leviticus 27:32). If one sheep is missing, he leaves the others safely in the fold and goes out to search for the one which is lost. How long does he search? “Until he find it” (Luke 15:4). He promises in John 10:28, “I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” My friend, if you are out of the fold today, you are of more concern to the Good Shepherd than a hundred sheep safely in the shelter of the fold. Do not grieve the shepherd any longer.

Jesus said, “They know not the voice of strangers” (they follow no one else). This is actually true. It has been demonstrated many times and in many ways.

They have in the Holy Land, even to this day, this custom: several shepherds will bring their flocks into one common fold and there leave the sheep in the care of “the porter” through the night (John 10:3). All of the sheep inside the fold mingle together as one great flock, and the stranger would ponder, “How will the shepherd ever separate the sheep?” It is very simple, however. Early on the following morning the various shepherds meet at the door of the fold. One shepherd walks off in one direction, calling his sheep by name; another shepherd walks in another direction, calling his sheep by name; another shepherd walks another way, calling his sheep. On one side of the door they mingle together as one great flock, but at the door there is a division. Every sheep knows his own shepherd's voice and the shepherd knows their names. A traveler in the Holy Land challenged a shepherd on this statement, that he knew the sheep by name, and they knew his voice. The stranger said that they were acquainted with his peculiar shepherd's garb and it was not his voice they knew but his apparel. On that, the shepherd immediately offered to exchange, clothing with the traveler. This was done, and the traveler walked among the sheep calling the name of one of the sheep which the shepherd had told him. The only result was that the sheep raised their heads and looked excitedly toward the strange voice and scattered as he approach

them. Then the shepherd in the stranger's clothing walked among the sheep and called the same sheep, whose name the traveler had called. Immediately the sheep raised its head and came running to the shepherd's side. He rewarded it with a tender sprig of grass, petted it, and returned to the flock. This was done repeatedly and the sheep seemed to pay no attention to the strange clothing but actually knew their names and knew the voice of the shepherd.

"Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." What a comfort it is, to know that He protects me all through the journey of life and when I come to the valley of the shadow of death He personally meets me there and counts me into the fold. He takes a personal interest in each sheep and His eternal promise is, "Not a one of them shall perish." A Lost Lamb

Though it is true that the sheep "know not the voice of strangers," and "a stranger will they not follow," it is likewise true that a lost lamb will follow anybody and anything. It will follow another animal, a stray dog, or leap playfully after a hopping bird. It will follow another shepherd that chances to pass by that way. Poor little lost helpless lamb.

Oh, let us win the lost lambs to Christ! What is more helpless than a lost child? He cannot reason for himself; he cannot study the Word for himself; he knows not what to believe or who to follow, and, true to the illustration of the lost lamb, he follows anything and anybody. Any false teaching that comes along the poor, innocent, trusting child will follow. Let us win the children to Christ, that they may early in life get acquainted with their shepherd's voice and learn to follow His call, and do His bidding. A Sick Sheep

There is another sad exception to this truth, and that is that a sick sheep will follow anyone. It becomes listless and inattentive and gropes it way, following any voice that calls. My friend has not that been your case, if you are a wandering sheep today? Before you went astray, did you not first become spiritually sick, and undernourished? Did you not become a victim of spiritual malnutrition? Your diet has not included the essential vitamins for the spiritual life and growth of a believer.

#### Vitamins

Vitamin "A" the Atonement. Have you not failed to meditate upon it? His shed blood, His sacrificial death, is dying love for you? Have you not ceased to praise Him daily that He was wounded for your transgressions and bruised for your iniquities?

Vitamin "B," the Blood. Have you not failed to go to Him daily for a new cleansing in His precious blood? Have you not failed to cling to His precious promise, "If we (my little children) confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Vitamin "C," the Cross. Have you not forgotten that you are not your own, but "Ye are bought with a price"? Have you not gone your way instead of His way?

Vitamin "D," Death. Have you not failed to "die daily," as Paul admonishes us to do (1 Corinthians 15:31)? Some of us have indeed tried to practice daily crucifixion of self, but we wait until the end of the day to do it. Why not die at the beginning of the day, and live the day for Him?

Vitamin “E,” Evangelism. This is the reproductive vitamin. Did you not fail to tell others of Jesus? Did you not fail to win your loved ones and friends to Christ? Did you grow cold and indifferent, self-satisfied and selfish? Oh, what a sad lack of this vitamin in the professing church today!

Vitamin “G,” Grace. Yes, you “fell from grace”; that is, you forgot that you were saved “by grace through faith,” and fell under the law, trying to keep yourself by your own works, which are all “filthy rags” in the sight of God. Are you not undernourished, underfed, hungry and thirsty? Yes, you neglected the study of His Word, His fellowship in prayer, and His service, and you neglected Him.

You deserted the “green pastures” to romp and play in the stubble fields of sin. You fled from the “still waters” to dry cisterns and stagnant pools of worldly pleasure. Your soul has been starved and your thirst is unquenched. You have turned a deaf ear to His call and now indeed His voice seems strange to you. You have gone “your own way” until His way seems so “straight and narrow.” Your soul has gone unrestored, you have not followed His leading “in the paths of righteousness,” and His name has been hurt by your living. The shadows of the valley, like grotesque fingers, reach for you. His comforting staff has become a chastening rod, and your cup of joy is dry and empty. And now you say, “I do not know whether the Lord is my Shepherd or not.” But read it again, beloved - “The Lord is my Shepherd.” Thank God, he searches for you now. He calls your name. Quit running; quit hiding; let Him find you. Nestle on His bosom and whisper your humble confession in His ear, unload your heart, and lift your voice with the Psalmist in loud acclaim, “The Lord is my Shepherd.”

“I WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER” The Home

“The house of the Lord” - This is Home. Jesus had the same thought in mind when He said, “In My Father’s House are many mansions.” What a precious word is “home,” but “home” is not made of bricks and mortar, boards, and expensive furniture; “home” for many is not much more than a hovel, but, nevertheless, it is “home.”

What is it that makes a house a home? Those who dwell there. “Home” is where our loved ones are. A few years ago I was on the way “home” to visit my mother and father on Mother’s Day. As I was driving “home,” this very thought was passing through my mind. It was not the home in which I was raised, for my father is a preacher, and we moved often, and I really had no childhood “home place.” In fact, I had been away from home many years, and my father and mother had moved to the city in which they were then living. I had never been there before, and yet I said I was going “home.” I expressed the thoughts that were then in my mind in the words of a poem, the first verse of which follows - Home again, Mother your boy will remain For a while at least, in the old home again;

‘Tis not the same house, and not the same street, Not even the city, or the old home state. But ‘tis home to me, and will always be, For I see your sweet face there, yearning for me.

- J. C. B.

Yes, it is the presence of our loved ones that makes it “home.” I read a few years ago of a dear mother who was seriously ill, and all during her sickness the neighbors took the little six-year-old girl and cared for her. At last the mother died. Desiring to save the little girl from as much grief as possible, they did not take her back home until after the funeral. Then they took the little one back

to her "home." She immediately slipped from their arms, and ran expectantly into the bedroom where she had last seen her mother, calling "Mother, Mother." With a puzzled look, she turned away from the empty bed. Then with a happy thought, she ran into the kitchen where the child no doubt thought her mother would be busy about the usual preparations in the home, but the kitchen was deserted. Her face expressed the fear that clutched her heart. After crying excitedly, "Mother, Mother," through the entire house, she ran again into the arms of the kind neighbor, and said, "Take me away, take me away." It was not home without her mother. She did not even want to be there within the confining walls that seemed now to make an empty prison. The chief attraction of "home" is the presence of our loved ones, and the chief attraction of Heaven is not the many mansions, the golden streets, pearly gates, vari-colored foundations, and the angelic choirs; but it is "home," because it is "the house of the Lord" - His dwelling place. It is "home" because we have loved ones there, and "home," because He has prepared it for us.

We used to sing so often, "Oh, think of the home over there." Then we would sing, "Oh, think of the friends over there." And then:

"My Saviour is now over there, There my kindred and friends are at rest;

Then away from my sorrow and care, Let me fly to the land of the blest.

"I'll soon be at home over there, For the end of the journey I see;

Many dear to my heart, over there, Are watching and waiting for me."

- D. W. C. Huntington The Preparation

Then my heart is thrilled again to think that it is a home that He has prepared. He has promised, "I go to prepare a place for you." Love likes to prepare for the loved. I'll never forget the joy with which I went about making the preparations in the little home for my bride. I did the best I could, but I was a struggling young preacher, and could not provide many of the comforts and luxuries that my heart desired to prepare. Many of the preparations I had made with my own hands, but with joy I went about the task, looking forward to the time that my beloved bride and I would share our little love-nest together. My! What a place I would have prepared, had I not been so limited. But, dear ones, He is unlimited. Can you imagine the splendor of the home He has gone to prepare for His bride - the redeemed? His unbounded love is not thus limited by human weakness. The Certainty My heart rejoices again, as I consider the certainty of these words, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord." It is a certain promise of the Saviour that "where I am, there shall ye be also." A few years ago, I saw a once-beautiful home which was neglected and unkept. Upon inquiring, I heard this story. A young lover built a beautiful, new home for his bride-to-be. He had it thoroughly and luxuriously furnished, and went about all the happy preparations with joyful expectation of the happy hours and years that he would have there with his precious bride. And on the wedding day she was cruelly seized by a rival lover, mutilated, and brutally murdered. The young man never again entered that house. He said, "I never want to see it again." It stood through the years, fully furnished, but deserted. But, ah! There will be no such disappointment for our Bridegroom, for "where I am there shall ye be also." His ability to guarantee our safe arrival to the Home He has prepared is no more limited than His ability to prepare the home. Satan may buffet us on the journey, and weakness may beset us, and all the powers of Hell may be combined against us, and, in ourselves, we are unfit and unworthy, but His pledge is - "there shall ye be" - A certain

promise, a certain place, a certain people. The Permanence

"I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" - Home forever! I praise Him again, as I consider the permanence of this. Nothing is certain and permanent in this world. Our dearest treasures pass away, and the strongest fortresses crumble with the unceasing pounding of the enemy. The strongest powers decay with the passing of the years, but our Eternal Home is permanent. For many years my evangelistic ministry has taken me away from my loved ones and my home a great deal of the time. Often, when I was home for a few days, the children would say as soon as I arrived, "Daddy, how long will you be home this time?" Just a few fleeting hours, and I was away again. Often it seemed that I was literally leaving my heart behind me. But, oh, what joy when at last we arrive home, never to leave again! The journey then will be ended! Traveling days gone! All that changes and decays, are things of the past! And "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." No more parting tears! No more sad farewells! No more lingering good-byes! No more disappointments!

"Home at last" on heavenly mountains, Heard the "Come and enter in;"

Saved from earthly taint and sin.

Saved by life's fair flowing fountains, Free at last from all temptation, No more need of watchful care;

Joyful in complete salvation, Given the victor's crown to wear.

"Home, sweet home," our home forever;

All the pilgrim-journey past;

Welcom'd home to wander, never, Saved through Jesus - "Home at last."

- Mrs. Maria P. A. Crozier The Person "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Heaven is a place He has prepared for me!

He is preparing it. That adds much to the joy of Heaven - to know that it is the work of His hands. A few days ago both my little girl and boy brought home from school something they had made just for me. Betty brought a little, clay candle-holder and a tallow candle, she had made with her own little hands. Bobby brought from kindergarten the first thing he had ever made with his own hands for his Daddy - a little, clay pencil-holder for my desk. There were the little finger-prints on both these treasures that had been shaped by their hands, and they had been baked and hardened. They are among my most treasured possessions, and they occupy a prominent place on my study desk, and there they shall remain. Oh, they are of little value to another, and would not bring a trifle on the market. But they made them for me, and to me they are priceless. Our heavenly home is wonderful, not only because of its splendor, magnitude, and beauty; but it is His work for me. When I was a child, we used to sing:

"For me, for me, for me, for me, There's a mansion there, for me, If anybody's going to be happy up there, It's me, me, me, me, me."

Little did I think as a child just what it meant. "For me" - the lost sheep, the one who had "gone astray," the one who had sinned, and "come short of the glory of God," the one who was a vile,

sinful, guilty, hell-deserving sinner - there is a mansion! "For me" - the one who, even since being saved, has been an "unprofitable servant" - there is a mansion! "For me" - the weak, faltering, failing stumbling, unworthy sinner, saved by His grace - there is a mansion! Just think! Heaven is my home. He is preparing it for me. So it is with no degree of pride that I look to Heaven as my home, but by His matchless grace which passeth our understanding. So, Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. Are you prepared for the place? Certainly, no works of yours would purchase such a salvation. No garments of your own self-righteousness could stand in His presence. No merit of yours could atone for your sin. Won't you right now get down on your knees before God, confess your sin to Him, and ask Him for forgiveness? Tell Him that you will here and now receive the Lord Jesus as your personal Saviour; and that by His grace, as an ever-present help, you will follow Him through the journey of life, taking Him as your Shepherd. Then at last you will be counted into the Heavenly Fold to "dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
  - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**