



35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39)

Today's hymn is full of reverential love. It might be said with accuracy that this hymn was written by God Himself since the lyrics are a more metrical version of the 23rd Psalm. Metrical hymns were the only sung in the ancient church since they were taken directly from the Biblical text. That brings to light one of the over-riding strengths of the King James Bible (in addition to its majestic reverence and accuracy): the metrical rhythm in which the KJV is written facilitates both memorization and understanding. Why should we settle for less?

The paraphrasing of the 23rd Psalm was done by Henry Williams Baker in 1868 and the tune provided in the 1940 Hymnal is *Dominus regit me* by John Bacchus Dykes, 1823-1876. I like the lyrics of this particular version better than those contained in the old Scottish Psalter of 1650 by Francis Rous, but I believe the tune in that Psalter to be far superior: *Crimond* by Jesse Irvine. *Crimond* is far more devotional and reverential, in my opinion.

The King of Love my Shepherd Is

The King of love my shepherd is,
whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his,
and he is mine for ever.

Where streams of living water flow,
my ransomed soul he leadeth,
and where the verdant pastures grow,
with food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
but yet in love He sought me,
and on his shoulder gently laid,
and home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill
with thee, dear Lord, beside me;
thy rod and staff my comfort still,
thy cross before to guide me.

Thou spread'st a table in my sight;
thy unction grace bestoweth;
and O what transport of delight

And so through all the length of days
thy goodness faileth never:
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
within thy house for ever.

The King of love my shepherd is, whose goodness faileth never; I nothing lack if I am his, and he is mine for ever. The Kingship of Love was documented by our Lord on the cross at Golgotha. Our Lord Jesus Christ is truly the Sovereign of the Realm – the only Realm that will continue forever, and progenitor of every virtue, of LOVE. It was LOVE that moved in His Mind to Create the Heavens and the Earth; and it was LOVE that compelled Him down to us to redeem us with His own blood. He is the only One who is good, and that goodness is the means of benefit we have in our salvation. A friend of mine in Elba, Alabama, has a plaque on his wall that reads: *“He who has Jesus Christ and much wealth, has no more than He who has Christ alone.”* How true that is! If we own Christ, we own all that is GOOD for He alone is GOOD. We never lack with Christ. We may have desires that the Lord deems inappropriate, but all that we truly need, He will supply. Once we belong to Christ, we are His, and He is ours, forever. He doesn't change His mind just because we come upon hard times. *“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”* (Heb 13:5) We are secure in Jesus.

“Where streams of living water flow, my ransomed soul he leadeth, and where the verdant pastures grow, with food celestial feedeth.” The Lord knows the place of pure, flowing waters for He is the source of the Fountain of Life. *“For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.”* (Psalm 36:9) Those who are ransomed will see the River anew in the Land of the Living: *“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which*

bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” (Rev 22:1-2) All that was lost in Eden shall be regained in Heaven. Our Shepherd knows the place of verdant, green pastures whereby we may be fed and nourished. No other knows of these healthful waters and victuals. His FOOD is not the common fare of this world, but celestial FOOD – that Bread which came down from Heaven. He is our MANNA!

“Perverse and foolish oft I strayed, but yet in love He sought me, and on his shoulder gently laid, and home, rejoicing, brought me.” When a child’s puppy wanders into the danger of the street, the child usually does not get angry, but loves the puppy yet, and chases after, and brings him to safety bearing him in his bosom. We are just as foolish as a puppy. We wander where we should not, and consume things that are not healthful for us. But our Lord’s love is bigger than any episodes of disobedience or lack of wisdom on our parts. Just as He did with Abraham who often ignored much of the Lord’s counsel, He will draw us out of our self-made ditches and place our feet on Higher Ground. It was customary of the shepherds of Iran when I lived there to carry the smallest lamb on their shoulders. The larger ones who were unable to keep up were carried in the bosom of the shepherd. But our shepherd is greater than these in love and power. As often as we have failed and disappointed, He will yet carry us in our times of weakness and failure.

“In death’s dark vale I fear no ill with thee, dear Lord, beside me; thy rod and staff my comfort still, thy cross before to guide me.” Ah, yes, that old Valley of the Shadow of Death is referenced here. None living shall escape passing through that Valley. But our Lord has already passed through that Valley for us. Remember, death to the redeemed is not anything substantial, but only a mere ‘shadow.’ He is continually with us in times of plenty and in times of danger. That Shepherd’s staff serves two functions: 1) to prod and discipline, and 2) to rescue from danger. Though we have joy untold in Christ, we must not take our eyes off the cross that leads our way. The Maid of Orleans (Jean d’Arc) was an innocent young heroine who was unjustly committed to the flames of martyrdom. Being tied to the stake of burning, she uttered only one request: that a cross be held before her fevered eyes as she was dying. And so she died to the pain and miseries of this life, and opened her eyes in the Presence of the King of Love.

“Thou spread’st a table in my sight; thy unction grace bestoweth; and O what transport of delight from thy pure chalice floweth!” Quite often, the wicked people of this world wonder from whence we gather our joy and comfort in stressful times. Their eyes cannot see the Table spread by the Lord, but they see the joy in our hearts and wonder. His love is qualified by His immeasurable GRACE. Grace is not something that is ever deserved, but freely given. Yes, it is true that our cups runneth over! When hearts are filled with that Love of Christ, they cannot contain the residue. Love seeks the lowest point in the heart, but it overflows for lack of the human heart’s capacity to contain it all. The more love that is given away, the greater the residual in the heart. This fact the world can never comprehend.

“And so through all the length of days thy goodness faileth never: Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise within thy house for ever.” Yes, the goodness and mercy of the Lord shall follow His people in all places. But they may not precede us. In times of trial and temptation, we do not see those following mercies until our souls are famished for the taste of them. Even though we may not always be aware of those mercies, they are nevertheless right behind, and they never fail to catch us when we fall back. It is a privilege and honor to sing the praises of the Good Shepherd and King of our Souls. Just imagine the great joy that awaits beyond the veil of our vision! Though

our joy is very full in the present life, how much more full it shall be when we shall dwell in the House of the Lord forever!