

the other side of the valley, and be conducted to plains of greater beauty, and to pastures of greater luxuriance, and to streams of greater stillness and clearness, than those which they left behind.

But the Psalmist employs another figure to express to us the extent of his spiritual blessings. He not only says that the *Lord is his Shepherd*, but he says, moreover, that he treats him as a kind friend does the guest whom he wishes to entertain. He provides for him a generous banquet—and, although there are enemies at hand, still his friend is beside the table he has spread. He is jealous for the safety of the guest whom he entertains. His enemies therefore dare not trouble him, and so the Psalmist sits down to the feast, and eats out of the abundance of his Lord's hospitality with none to disturb him or make him afraid.

But the Lord is not only likened to one who provides a repast for his friend, and keeps watch over him while he is under his roof, but he is so pleased with the guest he entertains, that he wishes to honor him and treat him with the greatest liberality. He accordingly brings forth the most precious ointment and he pours it upon his head, and he fills up his wine cup until it overflows. And so anticipating the permanence, yea the everlasting duration of all this bliss, he says: "*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*"

Such is the testimony given by the Psalmist to God's faithfulness and kindness towards him, and the confidence of his enjoying glory hereafter.

The language of this Psalm, I need hardly say, refers to spiritual blessings. It is most true indeed, that God's care in providing food and raiment for his people, while in this world, may with truth be compared to a shepherd's care of his sheep, or to a friend's kindness to his guest. But this application of the Psalm does not exhaust all the blessings to which the Psalmist refers. It has a reference to blessings of a higher kind—even to those which concern man as a being destined to live in another world; as the Psalmist testifies that death which removes from the enjoyments of the present life shall bring no evil to him—yea, shall add to his happiness by ushering him into the glory of God's house in heaven.

But this portion of scripture is not confined to the case of the Psalmist. It forms part of the inspired volume, whose blessings are the common property of believers in every genera-

tion and age. It may not therefore be unfitting to illustrate this Psalm in its application to the privileges enjoyed by Christians in the present age. And I remark that God is the shepherd and friend of his people—because he takes care to provide the means of grace to fit them for his fold in heaven, and defends them from danger while in the way.

He has given them for this end the record of his will, disclosing the mystery of redemption which had been hid from ages and generations, so that they may read in their own language the manifold wisdom of God. By means of the scriptures they have freedom in their houses to meditate on God's works of mercy—and in a land of peace, with none to disturb them, they can by faith appropriate every promise which the scriptures contain. Through the pure medium of God's word, they hold converse with himself, and grow in that wisdom which makes wise unto salvation. This therefore, is a large provision for their spiritual wants—yea, it is sufficient of itself to guide them on the way of life.

The servants of God accordingly in all ages have set a high value on the written word: "*Oh, how I love thy law,*" says one of them. "*It is my meditation all the day.*" And again, "*It is more to be desired than gold; yea, than much fine gold—sweeter also than honey and the honey comb.*" Such is the manner in which the ancients appreciated the blessing of God's written word,—and it is to be feared that we in modern times, from our familiarity with this blessing, are forgetful of its value—but it ought not so to be. The possession of the lively oracles of God—the access which we thus have to the standards of all wisdom and truth—the capacity they impart of enabling us sinners to be conformed to the image of God—and beholding there, as in a glass, his glory fitting us for his service now and hereafter. All these things give a value to the scriptures, to which no earthly blessing can be compared. Surely then, my friends, when we contemplate so gracious a privilege; and when we look to the whole amount of blessedness which the prayerful reading of the scriptures and meditation thereon confers, and is still more abundantly to confer hereafter—we shall confess that truly in seeking out such rich spiritual food, from which we may eat to the full, the Lord has dealt with us as a good shepherd, who causes his sheep to lie down in green pastures.

But I would remark in the second place, that God has not only provided for our spiritual