

DAVID . . . and his apple of gold in a picture of silver
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(PSALM 23:4)

King Solomon once said, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov. 25:11). Probably he had access to his father's writings, and Psalm 23 :4 appeared to him as the greatest of all words fitly spoken. As apples of gold in a silver setting, so seemed this great verse amid the magnificent grandeur of the entire psalm.

How Deliberate His Steps . . . "Yea, though I walk"

David realized that the end of his earthly journey was quickly approaching, and that soon he would be required to tread the pilgrim path into a new world. Others in a similar position might have become a prey to panic. Fear would have destroyed their confidence and peace. Yet the man of God looked calmly along the road to see the termination of life's long journey. Unruffled, he proceeded one step at a time. His footsteps did not drag; neither did he hasten with false emotionalism. The man who had walked with God for many years continued to do so until the end.

How Discerning His Sight . . . "through the valley of the shadow.

A small window may become a lookout to an entire world. And this proposition is a window through which we are able to see the extent of the psalmist's vision. He did not speak of walking in the valley, or even of walking to the valley. He said, "Yea, though I walk through the valley." His destination lay beyond it, and his was a pilgrim's path. Death was not a termination on life's journey; it was more like a junction where the traveller changed from mortality to immortality in order to continue the journey into higher and grander scenery.

How Decided His Soul . . . "the valley of the shadow of death."

Shadows are harmless. They may appear to be very frightening, and many nervous people may shrink in dread before them. Yet the fact remains that a shadow will not hurt anyone. The shadow of a dog will not bite, nor will the shadow of a tree hurt any upon whom it is cast. David realized that he would not be passing through the clutches of the monster called death; his pathway merely ran through its shadow. Shadows are not possible unless a light is shining somewhere, and this shadow was cast across the valley by the Light of the World, who was waiting to welcome the homecoming pilgrim.

How Delivered His Spirit . . . " I will fear no evil"

"Perfect love casteth out fear," and David loved the Lord with all his heart. Oppression was unknown in his spirit, for communion had transformed his outlook. There had been days when he had been forced to cry, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him" (Psa. 42 : 5). But now, all such experiences belonged to the past. A perfect peace had settled upon his soul; a calm had banished unrest from his mind: all was well.

How Dependable His Saviour for thou art with me."

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David's history had been rather chequered. His best friends had failed him, and on two occasions members of his own family had threatened his life. Yet in spite of these distressing events, he had continually known the companionship of his God. In all the changing scenes of life, the Lord had been true to His covenant promises; and now that death was near, the psalmist had no doubt that God would be with him in the valley.

How Delightful, His Song thy rod and thy staff they
comfort me.

And so, once again, David remembered the days of his childhood, when as a shepherd boy he had owned both rod and staff. Resolutely he had protected his flock; gently he had reproved the obstinate of his sheep; and every day he had led them to new pastures and sparkling waters. He smiled as he wrote, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." Eternal love had been manifested in all God's dealings. As David had cared for his flock, so the great Shepherd loved every human sheep. The psalmist meditated upon these sublime facts, and as comfort flooded his soul he exclaimed, "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."

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