

## Fear Nothing- Psalm 23

*In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God. Amen.*

- 1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
- 2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters.
- 3 He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.
- 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.
- 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies: you anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.
- 6 Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

### Overview

Sitting under a spreading tree, with his flock around him, we picture David singing this song with a heart as full of gladness as it could hold.

The position of this psalm is worthy of notice. It follows the twenty-second, which is the Psalm of the Cross. There are no green pastures, no still waters on the other side of the twenty-second psalm. It is only after we have read, "My God, my God, why has you forsaken me?" that we come to "The Lord is my Shepherd." We must, by experience, know the value of blood shedding, and see the sword awakened against the Shepherd, before we shall be able truly to know the Sweetness of the good Shepherd's care.

### Verse 1

*The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want.*

*The Lord is my shepherd.*

- What disdain is this? That the infinite Lord assumes towards His people the office and character of a Shepherd! It should be the subject of grateful admiration that the great God allows himself to be compared to anything which will set forth his great love and care for his own people.
- David had himself been a keeper of sheep, and understood both the needs of the sheep and the many cares of a shepherd. He compares himself to a creature weak, defenseless and foolish, and he takes God to be his Provider, Preserver, Director, and, his everything.

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- A sheep is an object of property, not a wild animal; its owner sets great store by it, and frequently it is bought with a great price. It is well to know, as certainly David did, that we belong to the Lord. There is a noble tone of confidence about this sentence. There is no "if" nor "but," nor even "I hope so;" but he says, "The Lord IS my shepherd." We must cultivate the spirit of assured dependence upon our heavenly Father. The sweetest word of the whole is that monosyllable, "My." He does not say, "The Lord is the shepherd of the world at large" but "The Lord is my shepherd". If He be a Shepherd to no one else, he is a Shepherd to me; he cares for me, watches over me, and preserves me. The words are in the present tense.

*I shall not want.*

- I might want otherwise, but when the Lord is my Shepherd he is able to supply my needs, and he is certainly willing to do so, for his heart is full of love, and therefore "I shall not want." I shall not lack for temporal things. Does he not feed the ravens, and cause the lilies to grow? How, then, can he leave his children to starve?
- I may not possess all that I wish for, but "I shall not want." Others, far wealthier and wiser than I, may want, but "I shall not."
- I have everything I need and more; not because I have money in the bank, not because I have skill, but because "The Lord is my shepherd." The wicked always want, but the righteous never; a sinner's heart is far from satisfaction, but a gracious spirit dwells in the palace of content.

### Verse 2

*He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.*

- What are these "green pastures" that the Bible is talking about? Sweet and full are the doctrines of the gospel; fit food for souls, as tender grass is natural nutriment for sheep.
- When by faith we are enabled to find rest in the promises, we are like the sheep that lie down in the midst of the pasture; we find at the same moment peace, rest and refreshment, serenity and satisfaction.
- But note: "He makes me to lie down." He is the Lord who graciously enables us to perceive the preciousness of his truth, and to feed upon it. How grateful we ought to be for this!
- There are some distracted souls who would give worlds if they could to do this. They know the blessedness of it, but they cannot say that this blessedness is theirs. They know the "green pastures," but they are not made to "lie down" in them.

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- What are these "still waters" but the influences and graces of His Spirit? Still waters run deep. Its silence is golden → where God meets us.
- Our Lord leads us beside these "still waters;" we cannot go there by ourselves; we need His guidance. He does not drive us. Moses drove us by the law, but Jesus led us by His example, and the gentleness of His love.

### Verse 3

*He restores my soul: he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

*He restores my soul*

- When our soul grows sorrowful, He revives it; when it is sinful, He sanctifies it; when it is weak, He strengthens it. "He" does it. His ministers could not do it if He did not. "He restores my soul." Are any of us low in grace? Do we feel that our spirituality is at its lowest? He who turns the dry patch into a flood can restore our soul.
- We must pray to Him and ask Him to 'Restore our souls'.

*He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.*

- The true Christian is happy to be obedient, but it is the obedience of love, to which he is constrained by the example of his Master. "He leads me."
- The Christian is not obedient to some commandments and neglectful of others; he does not pick and choose, but yields to all.
- Note that the plural is used "the *paths* of righteousness." Whatever God may give us to do we would do it, led by his love.
- If we could be saved from wrath, and yet remain unregenerate, impenitent sinners, we should not be saved as we desire, for we mainly and chiefly pant to be saved from sin and led in the way of holiness. All this is done out of pure free grace; "for his name's sake." It is to the honour of our great Shepherd that we should be a holy people, walking in the narrow way of righteousness.
- If we are led and guided we must not fail to adore our heavenly Shepherd's care.

### Verse 4

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me.*

- This verse has helped to make the dark valley bright for many.

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- "Yea, though I walk," as if the believer did not quicken his pace when he came to die, but still calmly walked with God. To walk indicates the steady advance of a soul which knows its road, knows its end, resolves to follow the path, feels quite safe, and is therefore perfectly calm and composed.
- The dying saint is not in a flurry, he does not run as though he were alarmed, nor stand still as though he would go no further, he is not confounded nor ashamed, and therefore keeps to his old pace.
- Note that it is not walking in the valley, but through the valley. We go through the dark tunnel of death and emerge into the light of immortality. We do not die, we do but sleep to wake in glory. Death is not the house but the porch, not the goal but the passage to it. The dying article is called a valley.
- It is not "the valley of death," but "the valley of the shadow of death," because death in its substance has been removed, and only the shadow of it, remains.
- When there is a shadow, there must be light somewhere. Death stands by the side of the highway in which we have to travel, and the light of heaven shining upon him throws a shadow across our path; let us then rejoice that there is a light beyond. Nobody is afraid of a shadow, for a shadow cannot stop a man's pathway even for a moment. The shadow of a dog cannot bite; the shadow of a sword cannot kill; the shadow of death cannot destroy us. Let us not, therefore, be afraid. "I will fear no evil." He does not say there shall not be any evil, but knew that Jesus had put all evil away → "I will fear no evil."
- The worst evils of life are those which do not exist except in our imagination. We feel a thousand deaths in fearing one, but the psalmist was cured of the disease of fearing. "I will fear no evil," not even the Evil One himself; I will not dread the last enemy, I will look upon him as a conquered foe, an enemy to be destroyed, "For thou art with me." This is the joy of the true Christian! "Thou art with me." The little child out at sea in the storm is not frightened like all the other passengers on board the vessel, it sleeps in its mother's bosom; it is enough for it that its mother is with it; and it should be enough for the believer to know that Christ is with him.
- "Thy rod and thy staff," by which you govern and rule your flock, "they comfort me."
- Let us be of Paul's mind when he said that "To die is gain," and think of "departing to be with Christ, which is far better."

### Verse 5

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.*

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.*

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- The good man has his enemies. He would not be like his Lord if he didn't. If we didn't have enemies, we should be concerned about not being God's friends because the having a strong friendship with the world means that we are enemies with God.
- When a soldier is in the presence of his enemies, if he eats at all he snatches a hasty meal, and away he hurries to the fight. But note, "You prepare a table," just as a servant does when she unfolds and displays the ornaments of the feast on an ordinary peaceful occasion. Nothing is hurried, there is no confusion, no disturbance, the enemy is at the door, and yet God prepares a table, and the Christian sits down and eats as if everything were in perfect peace → God can provide peace to us even in the middle of the most difficult circumstances.

*You anoint my head with oil.*

- God provides us with many gifts through His Holy Spirit.

*My cup runs over.*

- He had not only enough, but more than enough, a cup which overflowed. A poor man may say this as well as those in higher circumstances. "What, all this, and Jesus Christ too?" said a poor cottager as she broke a piece of bread and filled a glass with cold water.
- A person could be very wealthy, but if he is discontent, his cup can't overflow → it is cracked and leaks.

### Verse 6

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of The Lord forever.*

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.*

- This is a fact as indisputable as it is encouraging. Just as when great princes go abroad, they don't go unattended, so it is with the believer.
- Goodness and mercy follow him always "all the days of his life" the black days as well as the bright days, the days of fasting as well as the days of feasting, the dreary days of winter as well as the bright days of summer.
- Goodness supplies our needs, and mercy blots out our sins. "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." While I am here I will be a child at home with my God; the whole world shall be his house to me; and when I ascend into the upper chamber, I shall not change my company, nor even change the house; I shall only go to dwell in the upper storey of the house of the Lord for ever.