

Psalm 23

The Shepherd King of a shepherd king

Introduction: Alexander Maclaren, "the world could spare many a large book better than this sunny little psalm. It has dried many tears and supplied the mould into which many hearts have poured their peaceful faith."

The context: Its context in the Bible: The theme of the LORD as the Shepherd runs through Genesis to Revelation.

He was the shepherd of Jacob (Gen. 48); He tends his flock like a **shepherd** ... Isa 40:10ff; 'He ... will watch over his flock like a **shepherd**.' Jeremiah 31:9ff; He will stand and **shepherd** his flock... Micah 5:3ff; "I am the good **shepherd**... John 10:10ff; ...our Lord Jesus, that great **Shepherd** of the sheep (Heb 13:19ff); ... the **Shepherd** and Overseer of your souls. 1 Peter 2:24f; the Chief **Shepherd** (1 Peter 5);... the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their **shepherd**; Rev 7:16b

Its immediate context: Ps. 22 The cross of the Lord – *Why have you forsaken me?* Is the title of the psalm; Ps. 24: The dwelling place of the glorified Lord; the future dwelling place of Christians. Psalm 23 is for those who have trusted the Lord of Pss 22 and 24.

The Lord Jesus in the Psalm: Any reader of the 23rd psalm would call this shepherd 'good' or 'great'. The Good shepherd (Jn. 10); the great shepherd (Heb. 13)

The gospel in the psalm: Contentment of life can be found only when we are assured that we have Jesus as our master and God and that we have been found by Him.

David, the **author**, begins by saying, "The LORD is my shepherd". On this basis he can apply three things:

1. I SHALL NOT BE IN WANT (1 TO 3)

Reasons: To make a sheep to *lie down* is a big deal; *He restores souls* – not a one time encounter; *He guides through paths of righteousness* – not paths of success in this world; *for his name's sake* – He keeps up with his nature of faithfulness to his covenant love.

2. I WILL FEAR NO EVIL (4)

The reasons are in vv 4 & 5. *Christians walk through the valley* not *stuck* in the valley. *Shadow of death* is a reality for all Christians. *You are with me* – impossible in the OT, the LORD here is 'Jehovah' who came down on Mt. Sinai. The *rod* wards off the enemy; the *staff* guides or pulls up the way warding sheep. The enemy of Christians and indiscipline in Christians are reality yet we are comforted not judged or condemned and this will continue till we walk past through the valley.

3. I WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER (5 & 6)

You prepare a table before me. Not just a Sunday lunch but a feast of victory as marked by the *presence of enemies*. *You anoint my head with oil* – a sign of hospitality shown to the guest. *My cup overflows* – wine of joy. *Goodness or grace* – receiving what we don't deserve. *Mercy* – not receiving what we deserve. We don't deserve heaven; we deserve to be condemned.

TO BE INVITED FOR A FEAST IN A PALACE IS ONE THING BUT
TO LIVE IN IT FOREVER IS ANOTHER.

In this psalm David, at any point, did not give any hint of him or us to do something to benefit this. The LORD did everything on our behalf.