

Psalm 23 (NIV)

1 A psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, 3 he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4 Even 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 overflows. 6 Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Psalm 23 is one of the most beloved Psalms in all of Scripture; for good reason. There are not many places where we can find a better overall picture of comfort than in the picture of our Good Shepherd, as David portrays him by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, here in Psalm 23. Psalm 23 can be divided into three sections. Section one, a portrait of Christ as our Good Shepherd. Section two, a conversation with our Good Shepherd. Section three, a confession of faith in our Good Shepherd.

The first section is a portrait of Christ as our Good Shepherd. Because he is our Shepherd, there is nothing that we lack. He guides me to the green pastures of his Word and Sacrament. He leads to the water of life. He provides for all of my physical and spiritual needs. Because he guides my life, I am content in all circumstances. He is the giver of every good and perfect gift and he always will be. He restores my wearied soul from slavery to sin to peace in salvation.

The second section now addresses our Good Shepherd himself. David, our Psalmist, is quite aware that the path of righteousness, the path to heaven winds through some very dark and deadly valleys. But even in these places, I don't have to fear because I know that you, Dear Savior are with me. I trust in your promises to never leave me or forsake me. You are with me wherever I go. You use the rod and staff of your Holy Word to keep me on the straight and narrow path to heaven. Even your enemies and mine are around me wherever I look, you still bless me beyond comprehension. You anoint my head with the oil of joy and my cup overflows with your grace. Grace overflowing each time I come in contact with your Word and Sacraments!

The third section is a bold confession of faith in our Good Shepherd. Lord, your promises are so sure and certain that there is no doubt in my mind that my life will be full of your goodness and love. Nothing can separate me from you! You are walking in front of me, beside me, and behind me all the way to heaven. Nothing can harm me all the days of my life. And Lord, when you decide that my time of grace here on this earth is over, I will dwell in your house, your heavenly kingdom forever! So no matter what my circumstances, in life or in death, Lord you have provided for me, protected me and guided me. You are indeed my Good Shepherd!