

Lesson VII.

DAVID'S TRUST IN GOD

November 15, 1903

Ps. 23. Commit to memory vs. 1-6.

1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.
 3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth 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 thou art

with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth 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 for ever.

Revised Version—1 guideth; 2 hast anointed.

EXPLANATION

Connection—We cannot connect this Psalm with any special event in the life of David. It comes chiefly out of the experiences or the recollections of his shepherd life and expresses,

in language and imagery of matchless tenderness and beauty, his trust in the care of God. The first part of the Psalm represents God as a Shepherd tending and protecting His sheep, and the second as a host entertaining His guests.



An Eastern Shepherd

ers are often compared to shepherds, a most natural comparison in a country such as Palestine, where so many of the people were keepers of sheep. (See 2 Sam. 5: 2; 7: 7.) So David, the shepherd king, thinks of the Lord as the Shepherd of Israel. (Compare Ps. 79: 13; 80: 1.) **I shall not want.** His gracious Lord had not allowed him to want in the past, and he was sure that his needs would be supplied in the future, Ps. 34: 10; 34: 11. **Lie down;** giving rest from toil and trouble, as the shepherd finds a shady place for his flock in the heat of the noontide. **Green pastures;** where there is abundance of food—a picture of the provision which the Lord makes for our souls. **He leadeth me.** The Eastern shepherd never drives his sheep, but goes before them. The words point to the gentleness of God, Ps. 18: 35. **Still waters;** gently flowing amid green fields—waters where rest and refreshment can be found. Water is very precious in Eastern countries with their hot and dry climate. It frequently

stands for the blessings of salvation, John 4: 14; 7: 37.

3, 4. Restoreth my soul; gives new strength and vigor as the flock is refreshed by food and rest. **Leadeth me.** God is often said to guide his people, both as a whole (Ex. 15: 13; Deut. 32: 12), and as individuals, Ps. 5: 8; 27: 11. **Paths of righteousness.** Life is not all rest. Sheep must walk on the hot and dusty road, and man must work. The Lord will keep us in the right way. **For his name's sake;** so that He may show himself to be what he has said that He is, Ex. 34: 5-7. **The shadow of death.** There was danger to the sheep. In the deep, dark ravines lurked many a wild beast. From these the shepherd must defend them, 1 Sam. 17: 34, 35. Death is such a gloomy canyon, through which we must pass. **Fear no evil.** There are reasons for fear, but trust in God conquers terror. **Thou art with me;** the true secret of strength and comfort, Gen. 28: 15; Josh. 1: 5. **Rod and staff;** two names for the shepherd's crook used to direct the sheep and to beat off wild animals. The flock follows without fear when the shepherd goes in front to guide and defend them. We can calmly face even death when God is with us. **Comfort me;** give me confidence. "Comfort" means much more than to console. It means to strengthen and encourage."

5, 6. Preparest a table. The Lord is now represented as a host entertaining a guest at His table and lodging him in His house. Oriental kings so entertained those to whom they wished to show special favor, Gen. 43: 16; 2 Sam. 9: 7, 13; 10: 33. **Mine enemies.** The verse is illustrated by 2 Sam. 17: 27-29. The Christian has many enemies (Eph. 6: 12), but like Elisha at Dothan (2 Kings 6: 17) he is safe in God's protection. **Anointest my head;** as the heads of guests were anointed at a feast, Ps. 45: 7; 92: 10; Amos 6: 6. This is a sign of the joy which the Lord gives. **Runneth over.** The Lord's supplies are always abundant. **Surely.** The Hebrew word more often means "only"; only goodness and mercy, nothing else. **These shall follow the righteous.** Contrast with this the lot of the wicked, Ps. 35: 6; 140: 11. **In the house;** in the presence of. **For ever;** literally, "for length of days." Our whole life here may be spent in fellowship with God: and in the world to come, we shall see Him "face to face." "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. . . It is the pure utterance of personal trust in Jehovah, darkened by no fears or complaints." (Maclaren.)