

Lesson III.

THE SHEPHERD PSALM

April 18, 1915

LESSON SETTING—"This is a shepherd's song in praise of his Shepherd." It was written by David, who, as a boy, kept his father's flocks upon the hills of Bethlehem.

GOLDEN TEXT—The Lord is my shepherd.—Psalm 23 : 1.

Memorize Psalm 23. THE LESSON PASSAGE—Psalm 23.

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 ¹leadeth 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 ²anointest 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—¹guideth ; ²hast anointed.

*HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

M.—The Shepherd Psalm, Ps. 23.

T.—The Good Shepherd, John 10 : 7-16.

W.—God's wonderful provision, Ps. 107 : 31-43.

Th.—"They shall dwell safely," Ezek. 34 : 22-31.

F.—In safe keeping, John 10 : 22-29.

S.—"Whom shall I fear ?" Ps. 27 : 1-9.

Sunday—"The Lord is thy keeper," Ps. 121.

THE LESSON EXPLAINED

I. GOD AS SHEPHERD.—1. The Lord is my shepherd. It was natural for David, the king who had been a shepherd and who lived in a country of shepherds, to think of God in this way. (Compare Ps. 77 : 20 ; 80 : 1.) It was a land of sudden torrents, of wolves and robbers, of parching thirst and scanty streams. What a shepherd does for his sheep in such a country, pictures what God does for His people. The psalmist says "my" shepherd, gladly believing that the Lord knows and cares for him personally. So Jesus, the Good Shepherd, knows each of His sheep and is known of them (see John 10 : 3, 14). I shall not want ; "I have no want ;"—it is a matter of present daily experience that God gives everything that His people can possibly need, for body and soul, for this life and the life to come.



2, 3a. **Maketh me to lie down ;** as the Eastern shepherd makes his flock lie down in the noontide heat (compare Jer. 33 : 12). So Jesus promises us rest for our souls, Matt. 11 : 29. **In green pastures ;** pastures where there would be plenty of sweet and tender grass. So the Good Shepherd provides abundantly for those who follow Him, John 10 : 9. **He leadeth me.** The shepherd, in the East, goes before his flock and they follow him, instead of being driven, as in the West. Beside the still waters ; literally "waters of rest," water from cool, deep wells. The "waters" are not merely drinking water, but choice water, not only satisfying thirst, but giving refreshment. In the East the sheep requires water daily, owing to the heat and dryness of the climate. The blessings which Jesus

brings for the soul, are beautifully represented by the clear, sparkling, thirst-quenching, life-giving water. **Restoreth my soul ;** or "my life." The Lord revives, strengthens, restores to full activity and enjoyment.

II. GOD AS GUIDE.—3b. **He guideth me** (Rev. Ver.) ; as on a journey, in which it is easy to stray from the pathway. We need a guide, and God is our guide. **In the paths of righteousness ;** "in right tracks ;" those that lead directly and safely to the place which God would have me reach, as distinguished from wrong paths which would lead astray. **For his name's sake ;** to prove that He is the loving and faithful Lord whom He has declared Himself to be (see Ex. 34 : 5-7). "The divine name or honor is involved in guiding rightly." The guidance of God is "not of my deserving, but out of His own goodness, for the manifestation of His own glory, and the furtherance of His kingdom upon earth."

4. **Valley of the shadow of death ;** Rev. Ver. Margin, "valley of deep darkness." The psalmist has in mind one of those many precipitous ravines or wadis common in the hill country of Palestine, difficult to ascend and descend, dark, gloomy and abounding in caves, the abode of wild beasts and robbers. Such dark places are found in life, and at last there will be the gloom of death. **I will fear no evil.** Evils cannot be avoided, but of none will the psalmist be in terror. **Thou art with me ;** and those under God's guidance may be hurt but cannot be harmed. Through the darkest way He will lead them out into the light of victory and joy. **Thy rod ;** a short oaken club, stout enough to brain a wild beast. **Staff ;** a long crook used in climbing or to lean upon. Eastern shepherds still carry both. **Comfort me ;** strengthen, calm, steady me with the assurance of protection and safe arrival at my destination.

III. GOD AS HOST.—5. **Preparest a table before me.** God the host welcomes His guest to a feast made ready for him. **In the presence of mine enemies ;** from whom the host, according to Eastern customs, is bound to protect the guest at all costs. **Anointed my head with oil.** It was the Eastern custom thus to honor a guest on entering the banquet room. Neglect

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