

Bible Studies

Psalm 23

Read Psalm 23

This is the best known and probably most loved of the Psalms.

The Lord is?

I am?

Whose perspective is the psalm written from?

Why is this psalm so widely loved?

When you read this psalm how does it make you feel?



Who is this psalm written for?

This psalm is often used at funerals. This psalm is only about those in relationship with God. Part of his flock. The Lord is not a shepherd or the Shepherd, He is *my* shepherd. It requires an act of faith to make it so. It is not automatic.

Why is it appropriate that it is a psalm of David? 1 Samuel 16v11-13, 2 Sam 7v8
David of course, was the shepherd king. He understood sheep. He wrote out of his own experiences.

Why do you think David wrote this from the perspective of a sheep?

David came to understand that just as his sheep relied on him, he must rely on God. I think he wants us to re-evaluate the kind of relationship we have with God and the kind of sheep we are.

Do you think he was aware of his own responsibilities as king when he wrote it?

It is interesting that when Nathan the prophet rebuked David for his sin with Bathsheba, he used a sheep metaphor. 2 Samuel 12



This is a psalm of promise.

What does it promise?

God will care and provide for us the way a shepherd cares for his flock.



This is a psalm of faith.

It is David who is talking about the promises. Therefore it is a statement of faith. David is declaring that he trusts God to care and protect him.

If this is true how should we use this psalm?



This is a psalm of rest

It describes a way of living before God, in simplicity, quietness and confidence. Of reliance on God even in the face of adversity.

A happy life, v1-3. A happy death, v4. A happy eternity, v5-6.



The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters.

What reason does David have to be confident?

What does it mean for us to have God as our shepherd?

It means He knows us, cares for us, protects us leads us etc. It is an amazing privilege.

What do green pastures and quiet waters mean?

Grass and water are not something to take for granted in Israel, they are things that need to be found. This is what a shepherd did.

Is he talking about physical or spiritual needs here?

Jesus is the bread of life and the water of life. John 4v14, 6v35



He restores my soul.

He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

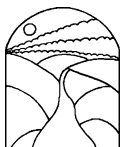
What does 'He restores my soul' mean?

How do souls get damaged?

How do souls get restored?

Forgiveness restores a soul, so does accepting God's love, waiting on Him, trusting Him, hearing from Him and letting Him minister to you. Souls are restored through closeness to God. **Read Matthew 11v28-30**

What are paths of righteousness?



This is not just the right way, the way that brings blessing. If we follow Him he will lead us into righteousness and holiness. Jesus provided a way for forgiveness.

What do we have to do to end up in paths of righteousness?

Let Him lead us. He does not drive us, He leads us.

In the way of righteousness there is life; along that path is immortality. Proverbs 12:28



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.

If the Lord is your shepherd, does that mean there is never going to be any trouble?

What is the valley of the shadow of death?

This valley is different things for all of us. Depression, disillusion, danger, disaster, illness, loss, and ultimately the reality of death. The Hebrew is graphic, the shadow of this death is already upon us and we must pass through it. **Why?**

It is the way the shepherd is leading. Note: *through* not *in*. A wise man once said, where there is a shadow there is a light.

If we don't need to fear evil, does that mean there is no evil?

David was very aware of the dangers facing sheep. *But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. 1 Samuel 17:34-35* The same dangers face us, 1 Peter 5v8-9, Acts 20v29, Matthew 10v16. When faced with these dangers, it is important to remember, that sheep don't kill wolves, shepherds do!

The fear of evil, as seen here as a greater danger than the evil itself. It is a blessing from God, not to need to fear evil, in the face of evil.

What is likely to happen when sheep are afraid?

What are the results?

How does this apply to us?

What reason for confidence does David give?



What are the rod and staff used for?

They are used to; protect, guide, rescue, discipline and incidentally, count.

The Christian life contains green pasture and valleys of the shadow of death.



You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

What do you think the table and the cup speak of?

What does the anointing of oil speak of?

David is probably thinking of his anointing to kingship despite Saul's best efforts to kill him. It is God who vindicates him, provides for him and blesses him. For us the anointing refers to our acceptance before God and the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

What does *goodness and love will follow me* mean?

Sometimes we need to slow down a bit to let them catch up! When we obey Him God's blessing will follow us. They will go where we go. We will bring them with us.

What does dwelling in the house of the Lord mean?

This is eschatological, it refers to heaven. But we start living in God's house now. To be in relationship with God, to serve and worship Him, to dwell in His house.

What does this psalm tell us about; God? Ourselves?

Read John 10v14-15

When Jesus claimed to be the good shepherd, what was He claiming?

What does this mean for us.?

My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. Ezekiel 37:v24 John 10v27-28

If you had to speak about this psalm, what points would you emphasize?

What things will we not lack if God is our Shepherd? Each verse tells us something.

The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want.

The LORD is my Guide; I shall be led by Him.

The LORD is my King; I shall be a guest in His palace.

The LORD is coming; I shall go to be with Him. (Author of Quote unknown)