

*Psalm 22* is commonly called “the psalm of the cross” as it typifies and foretells of the obedience and suffering unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God’s elect people. It begins with one of the seven sayings of Christ on the cross - “*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*” (*Psalm 22:1; cf. Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34*). It presents the Lord as the crimson worm that shed His blood as the complete payment for all the sins of God’s people imputed to Him (*Psalm 22:6; cf. Isa. 1:18; Eph. 1:6-7; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 7:14*). It concludes by showing the success of our Savior’s suffering unto death - a righteousness by which God has justified His people and from which God gives all of them spiritual life, the resurrection life of Christ - “*A seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done this*” (*Psalm 22:30-31*). That is exactly what *Psalm 23* sets forth.

**(Psalm 23:1)** - “*The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want*” - If the Lord is YOURS and MY Shepherd, this means we belong to Him. We were given to Him before the foundation of this world by God the Father in eternal, electing love and grace (*Eph. 1:3-7*). Having been given to Him by the Father, He was made our Surety, and, therefore, He had to purchase with His own blood the sheep of whom He is their Shepherd (*John 10:14-18*). This means that our sins were imputed to Him, and He died, not for all without exception, but for us, His sheep (*John 10:11*). Why did God the Father forsake His dear Son? It was because Christ was “*made sin*” because God did not impute our sins to us but to Him (*2 Cor. 5:19; cf. Rom. 8:33*). This means that His righteousness has been imputed to His sheep (*2 Cor. 5:19; cf. Psalm 32:1-2; Rom. 4:1-8*). This means that because of HIM, and as we stand before God in HIM, Who is our Shepherd, we “*shall not want,*” i.e. in and by our Shepherd, we have everything the God requires and everything that we need to be saved unto final glory (*Eph. 1:3; Heb. 7:25; 10:14*). The salvation of His sheep was all conditioned on Him, and He alone fulfilled all conditions to secure their salvation. Not one of His sheep can ever perish (*John 10:27-30; 17:1-5; Rom. 8:32; Col. 2:9-10*).

**(Psalm 23:2)** - “*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters*” - Christ our Shepherd knows all of His sheep by name, and He calls us to Himself and causes us to lie down in the green pastures and beside the still waters of His Word in the Gospel. This is His call to the sheep in the power of the Holy Spirit as, in the new birth, He gives us spiritual life, knowledge, eyes and ears, to hear His voice by which He brings us to Himself (*John 10:16,27-30*). Does this mean that He forces us against our wills? NO! He changes our wills and makes us willing to rest in Him for all salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory. He keeps us feeding upon and drinking from His Word as the Spirit leads us to feed upon Him, the Bread of life, and drink from Him, the fountain of life. We continually rest in Him Who is our good Shepherd, our great Shepherd of the sheep (*Heb. 13:20*), and our chief Shepherd (*1 Peter 5:4*). Our Shepherd is our eternal rest (*Matt. 11:28-29; Heb. 4:1-11*).

**(Psalm 23:3)** - “*He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake*” - Our good and great Shepherd restores our souls initially in the new birth by raising us from spiritual death unto spiritual life. He continues to restore us as we walk by the grace and power of God in our walk of faith when we grow weary and would quit if He did not preserve us unto glory. It is not in our nature to know and follow the path of righteousness. All we know by nature is seeking to establish our own righteousness which is a

complete failure. Christ, our Shepherd, is the fulfilling and perfection of the law for righteousness to all who believe. He leads and guides us in the way of righteousness which is walking by God-given faith in the assurance of His righteousness imputed by which God has justified us, continually looking unto Him, the Author and Finisher of our faith, and walking according to His Word as we strive against the flesh realizing that our victory is secured in and by Him. It is all for His name's sake, i.e. for His glory (*Matt. 5:16*).

**(Psalm 23:4)** - *“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”* - As we walk through this dying world, as we face the reality of physical death, we do not have to fear because of the gracious, saving, justifying, and powerful presence of our good, great, and chief Shepherd. No sin can be charged to our account, no condemnation shall come upon us, and nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (*Rom. 8:28-39*). We are secure in His righteousness imputed to us, and we are sealed by His Spirit Who will never forsake us and because of Whom we can never forsake Him (*1 John 3:9*). His rod and staff refer to His Word and His power. By these and in the power of His sovereign purpose working all things after the counsel of His own will (*Eph. 1:11; cf. Rom. 8:28*), He controls and manages all things for His glory and our eternal good. By these, He rules and directs us, defends us, and comforts us.

**(Psalm 23:5)** - *“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over”* - It is the nature of the Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ to present to sinners a salvation that is fully and freely furnished and provided by the work and power of God. It is a table that is fully prepared and leaves no room for sinners to bring their own works. Because of the glorious Person and finished work of the Shepherd, the sheep shall not want for provisions even in the presence of their enemies. Their Shepherd shall supply all their needs (*Php. 4:19*), and it is an affront to His glory for anyone to bring their own merits and works to His table. This is why all who come before God pleading their works or their decisions as making any difference in their salvation are rejected (*John 1:11-13; Rom. 3:19-20; 9:15-16*). And we must realize that as HIS sheep, His enemies are our enemies (*John 3:19-20; 15:18-16:3; Eph. 6:12*). Our enemies are the world, the flesh, and the devil, but as Christ is our Shepherd, we do not have to fear, and we sit down with our Lord and feast as though the enemy did not even exist (*Isa. 26:3-4*).

**(Psalm 23:6)** - *“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”* - This is the grand conclusion for all of Christ's sheep. They cannot fail to be eternally blessed of God because the Shepherd cannot fail. They are HIS sheep who are saved, preserved, protected, and finally glorified in Him. Their eternal dwelling in the household and family of God forever was never, and has never been, conditioned on their power, goodness, faithfulness, or works. Their security is in and due to the Shepherd of the sheep (*Lam. 3:22-23; Mal. 3:6; Jude 24-25*). The sheep are in continual need of God's goodness and His mercy in Christ, and according to God's promise, this will follow them all the days of their lives. We must each ask ourselves, “Am I one of HIS sheep?” We can only answer and be properly assured based on God's Word. Do I hear HIS voice in the preaching of the true Gospel of God's grace wherein the righteousness of God is revealed, the imputed righteousness of Christ? Have I been reconciled to God based upon the merits of HIS obedience unto death? All who have been brought into the sheepfold of Christ realize that HE alone is their righteousness before God, and they forsake all else as dead works and idolatry (*Php. 3:7-9*).