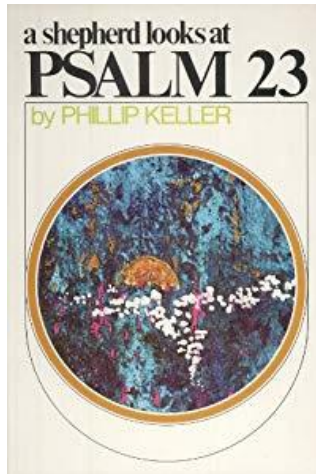


20200125 Psalm 23 He Restoreth My Soul



"He Restoreth My Soul" - A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23
(Larry Waddell- Facilitator)

In reading this Psalm, remember it is a sheep in the shepherd's care, David, that is speaking. This is a Christians claim that he belongs in the family of God. This statement seems like he is boasting or bragging if you will about the benefits of this relationship. This brings up our first topic of discussion.

Why would he then say, Restoreth my soul?

You would assume that anyone that is in the Shepherd's care, Jesus, would not have any reason to be depressed or need a renewing of the soul. But the facts are that even David knew what it felt like to be cast down and be rejected and have grief and uneasiness in his soul. Remember that David had given in to temptation and had felt the bitterness that sin brought into his life.

In Psalm 42:11 he cries out, "Why are you downcast oh my soul?" That term of being downcast is worth looking into for a moment. When a sheep is on its back (or what they used to call a downcast sheep), it cannot figure out how to right itself, and get back up. It will lie there and flail around and not be able to get back on its feet. It is totally helpless and predators can just come up and kill it. David knew that we, like those sheep, can become downcast and we are in great need for the shepherd to get us back upright or we will be "killed" (destroyed by our problems, depression, etc). In other words, we need a Shepherd to get us back on track. Always remember, as The Good Shepherd, Jesus is watching and is always available to put you and me back upright. So, what I am saying is that when you feel this unease in your soul, reach out to your shepherd in reverence and He will restore your soul. He will get you out of your fallen place. He will restore you, and He will get you up and put you back "in the game".

Does God get upset when we go astray?

The first thing a shepherd would do in the morning is take a count of his flock to see if any were missing. If so, he would go out in search of the missing ones. Sheep tend to be creatures of habit. It is usually the same ones that go astray, become downcast, and can't get up. We, like these sheep, sometimes tend to wander off and go astray. Isaiah tells us plainly, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way." When finding a lost downcast sheep, the shepherd of the flock was so delighted once he found the missing sheep, and even though this had happened before, he would care for and bring it back into the flock. This is exactly how God loves us. He NEVER gives up on us. That alone is comforting and should be enough to "restore our soul". God knows the evil of our hearts and flesh, but if we truly repent, he forgives and welcomes us back into his arms - again, and again, and again.

This is why He said David was a man of His own heart, because even though David had sinned against the father, he repented truly, and begged God's forgiveness. Like a flock of sheep, God loves each and everyone of us truly, and like a good shepherd Jesus restores us. Psalm 56:13 says, "For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life."

How do we become downcast in the first place?

The way a sheep would usually become downcast is by looking for a soft spot to lie down in. Usually this was in a ravine or lower spot in a meadow. This area, being uneven, would cause the sheep to lose its footing and wind up on its back. So it is with us as Christians, when we become comfortable and feel like we are in a softer place, we tend to kind of put God on the back burner. We get spiritually lazy when everything is going without a problem (a soft spot) That is when we are most susceptible to fall.

1 Corinthians 10:12 says, "So if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall." We must always remember that we need the good shepherd, Jesus, at all times and sometimes we need him most when we become too comfortable and are susceptible to becoming downcast.

Lastly, another way that a sheep can become cast down, is by its wool being too long and heavy. It can become entangled with mud and burrs and cause the sheep to be upended. This puts the sheep "off balance". They become unable to negotiate the ups and downs of the mountainside. This can happen to us as Christians as well. We feel we are doing well because we have had success in business, careers, finances, etc. and we lose the plot. In other words, our flesh or wool becomes too heavy. At these times we are very susceptible to becoming downcast.

Material success is no reflection of spiritual success. Revelation 3:17 says, "You say, I am rich, I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing, but you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked." Just like sheep, sometimes we need to be sheared of our comforts, lest we become complacent. When God puts us through this shearing process, it is not always comfortable, but oh the relief when it is all done and done. Remember that just like sheep, we need the guidance of the shepherd every day. It is He and ONLY He who truly can "restore our soul" to spiritual health.