

Calvary Chapel of El Paso Morning Ladies' Bible Study – Psalm 23
Lesson 4: Verses 2 and 3: Green Pastures... He Restoreth My Soul – May 3, 2022

But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

– Isaiah 40:31

In *Psalm 23:1* The psalmist David says, “*I shall not want.*” This is the Lord’s doing. How does He do this? In verses 2 and 3 we will see His care of providing for our very being with Himself – to prepare us for what lies ahead.

Twice His leading of us is spoken of in these two verses. Slemming’s book took these together, which we studied last week. Shirley brought out the important principle that we must rest before we can go and do – rest in the Lord.

“He maketh me to lie down... – we will explore a little more on this.

Then we will see how the Lord restores our souls, either “drooping hearts and fainting bodies” or those who have gone astray.

Our Lord is gentle. May we respond to His gentle nudging – that look that draws us back close to Him – rather than letting things get to the place where circumstances, etc., force us back to Him – the crook that pulls us back to safety.

Green Pastures

Slemming’s sheep (more like it was in Bible days): When sheep awaken in the sheepfold, they are ready for breakfast. But after breakfast in the rich pastures, the shepherd makes them lie down. Why?

To rest – but more. They have 2 stomachs; when they eat it goes to the first stomach; later they bring it up to chew and chew – they “chew the cud,” or “ruminate”; then it can go to the second stomach for digestion.

For us, as we rest in the Lord we meditate on His Word – ruminate. Then it can truly be a part of us. (Is this like our minds taking in the Word, we chew on it, and then it can take root in our hearts?) Many times we want to just cram in a few verses and run out and do our day. May we learn to get into God’s Word and then rest in Him, even if just for a few minutes, before we head out for the day.

Then, if the sheep are thirsty, the shepherd leads them to still waters. Last week we learned about the shepherd’s careful care in providing water for his sheep.

Keller’s sheep (modern sheep herding): They were in beautiful prepared pastures; they would wake up and eat right there. Before they did anything else, the sheep man would make them lie down for a while. The dew on the grass was often enough water for them, or the sheep man would take them to still water after they rested.

Do the sheep always lie down right away? No! Sheep will not lie down unless they are: (1) free from all fear; (2) free from friction with other sheep; (3) not tormented by pests (flies, etc.); and (4) not hungry.

(1) Fear: Sheep are very timid and are easily frightened. They have little or no means of self-defense. Our only defense from Satan is Jesus. Sheep are greatly quieted by the shepherd’s presence. Let us remember that our Lord, our Shepherd, is always near. *2 Timothy 1:7*
For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.
sound mind = at peace

(2) Competition and friction: The presence of the shepherd reduces it. Let us be close to our Shepherd so we can be at peace. (If He seems far away, who moved?) Also, the “bottom sheep”

are those who are not competing, but are just staying out the way and being content. These are more at peace. We need to be content, as Paul was, with a lot or with a little. *1 Timothy 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.*

(3) Torment of pests: The shepherd controls this, much by applying oil – lots of oil. For us, the Holy Spirit is symbolized by oil. He brings healing, comfort, and relief from the irritating things in life – peace and calmness. May our Lord apply much of the oil of the Holy Spirit on us! Ask Him to take over and deal with it, whatever it is.

(4) Hunger: In “green pastures” there is plenty to eat. Sheep are usually kept in dry, semi-arid areas, so green pastures are provided by the shepherd – by clearing, ridding of dangers, and planting grasses. Then the sheep can fill up on the lush pasture, lie down to rest and ruminate, and then gain weight and strength. For us, our Shepherd provides His nutritious Word for us to eat and ruminate, thus giving us spiritual strength in Him.

“*Land flowing with milk and honey*” is actually an agricultural term describing land so rich that much milk flows from the livestock and much honey from the beehives. So for Israel and for us, this speaks of the abundant life of joy, victory, and contentment in the Lord. We move from a life of sin to a life of victory on the green pastures provided by the Lord.

Now the sheep were ready, body and soul, for what was ahead of them – even the dangerous and frightening things we will learn about in future lessons. BUT what if a sheep became “cast”? This was a dangerous thing, as both Slemming and Keller explained.

He Restoreth My Soul

When is restoration of one of God’s sheep needed? When it becomes weak or goes astray. A weak sheep is literally helpless and vulnerable to enemies. And a sheep that has wandered away is also in danger. When we sheep have strayed (backslidden), some of the signs are drifting away from the Lord, becoming restless and discontent, and neglecting God’s Word. Then our Shepherd will draw us back – by His look (as He did with Peter), or by His crook if we ignore His look. *Psalm 32:8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.*

For sheep, a shepherd would say the sheep is “cast” or “cast down.” David wrote of this about himself: *Psalm 42:11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

A sheep will look for a soft spot to lie down in that is hollowed out for comfort. Sometimes it will roll to its side and then suddenly roll onto its back. Then it is helpless; it could die or be attacked by predators if no one rolls it back onto its feet. For us, when we are down, we are vulnerable to attack from the enemy of our souls: *1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*

The shepherd is very watchful of this, and when it happens he is quick to rescue the sheep from this danger. So too is the Lord our Shepherd – He has great concern and compassion for cast men and women of His flock. *Psalm 57:13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?*

Just like sheep, it is easier than we think to become “cast” and need the Lord’s help: *1 Corinthians 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

So how can this happen?

(1) Looking for a soft spot. The remedy: the shepherd moves the sheep to a less comfortable spot.

For us – we sometimes want things to be too easy, to stay where we are. We need to get out of our “comfort zone” and let the Lord grow us in new areas.

(2) Having too much heavy wool. Wool represent the world, the old life. The remedy: the shepherd shaves the wool off, a sometimes unpleasant task, but worth it.

For us – sometimes we are weighed down by the old life in the world, and the self-life. We need to allow the Lord to rid us of the things and ideas of our old lives. “Oh the pleasure of being set free from ourselves! What a restoration!”

(3) Being too fat. The remedy: the shepherd changes the feed for the sheep, giving it less grain and/or monitoring its eating habits.

For us – getting too much of the things of this world and feeling as if we “have it made.” *1 Timothy 6:5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.* Notice that again competition is taking place – may we rather be content in the Lord and let Him promote us.

He provides what we need in far better ways than when we strive for it: *Isaiah 55:1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

The Lord’s strong desire to pull us back to Him is seen in His letter to the Laodiceans: *Revelation 3:17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: 18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*

So in the rest that God gives us, and in His restoring of our souls, we can trust our Shepherd, our Lord, because He knows what He is doing – and He truly, tenderly cares for us.

*Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.
– Psalm 51:10-12*

