

A Study in Psalm 23

Lesson 3: Restoration – God’s Gift of Forgiveness (verse 3)

I. The Shepherd restores my soul...

A. A look at the Hebrew words:

1. “Restores” – To return, to cause to return, to restore to a former condition.
2. My “soul” – Very common Old Testament word, used 780 times and translated in the King James Version 28 different ways: The animal life or principle by which every animal according to its kind lives. It’s the seat of feelings, affections, emotion of various kinds, the essence of life. In the Hebrew mind, it is not a body or soul issue. They saw “inner self” vs. the “outer self” (which is our “name” or reputation).

B. The restoration can take on one of 3 meanings:

1. As a straying sheep is brought back – Isaiah 49:5, Psalm 60:1 (repent, be converted)
2. Referring to spiritual renewal (Psalm 19:7)
3. Referring to physical and/or psychological restoration (Isaiah 58:12, Proverbs 25:13)

C. Restores from being “cast down” (take heed lest you fall – 1 Cor. 10:12)

The sheep gets turned on his back and can’t get up himself. That’s one of the reasons the shepherd counts his sheep so regularly (Matt. 18:11-13). The gasses build up in the body and cut off the blood supply to the limbs. The shepherd lifts the sheep up, holds the sheep erect between his legs, rubbing the sheep’s limbs to restore circulation.

Why do sheep fall or get “cast down”?

1. When looking for a soft spot...we’re looking for a life of no demands, no hardships, with no self-discipline required.

Remember: God will not give us more than we can stand – 1 Cor. 10:13.

2. Sometimes, they have too much wool. Wool gets long and matted. Wool is a picture in the scripture of old self-life – no priest could wear wool when he entered the Holy of Holies, the clinging accumulation of things, possessions, worldly ideas – things that begin to weigh me down. Look at Heb. 12:1-2.
3. If a sheep was just too fat – not healthy or productive. Rev. 3:17 – The church was just too rich. Being over-indulged – What I see I want! If it feels good, do it!

II. When we get “cast down” one or more of the above reasons apply and the result is always guilt...2 Cor. 7:8-10

- A. There are 2 kinds of guilt (appropriate or inappropriate): (See 2 Cor. 7:10)
- B. The Bible emphasizes constructive sorrow, and the promise of divine forgiveness: See 1 John 1:9.

Person in primary focus	Psychological Guilt Yourself	Constructive Sorrow God or others
Attitudes or actions in primary focus	Past misdeeds	Damage done to other or futures to correct deeds
Motivation for change (if any)	To avoid feeling bad (guilt feelings)	To help others, to promote our growth, or to do God's will (love feelings)
Attitude toward oneself	Anger and frustration	Love and respects combined with concern
Result:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External change (for improper motivations) • Stagnation due to paralyzing effect of guilt • Further rebellion 	Repentance and change based on an attitude of love and mutual respect (John 8:1-11)

III. Restoration is God's Gift of Forgiveness – See Ps. 42:11 and Gal. 6:1

IV. "He guides (leads) me in the paths of righteousness."

- A. Sheep are notorious creatures of habit. They will travel the same path over and over again, creating ruts. They will graze a pasture, eating even the roots of the grass, until it's desert waste. They will pollute the ground until it is full of disease and parasites. Many of the world's finest sheep ranges in Spain, Greece, North Africa, New Zealand and Australia are now barren wastelands!
- B. The flock needs to be deliberately and carefully rotated from pasture to pasture. The sheep are not capable of choosing their own way. Look at Isaiah 53:6, Proverbs 14:12, Romans 3:9-23.
- C. Sheep love fresh pasture. They will kick up their heels and jump for joy at the sight and smell of fresh grass. They delight themselves in the choice of their loving shepherd. Look at Psalm 37:3-4.

V. "For His Name's Sake"

- A. The reputation of the shepherd depends on how effectively he keeps his charges moving on to wholesome new, fresh grass.
- B. The flock follows the voice of the Shepherd. Look at John 10:14, 16, 27.
- C. God places great value on His name. Look at Ezekiel 36:22-23 – My Holy Name (Exodus 20:7)
- D. The moral choices of man either vindicate or defame His Holy Name.

VI. So what? Learning to follow Jesus involves a significant change in attitude. (Not just our actions – look at Matt. 5:21 – 48).

- A. Instead of insisting on my own rights, I am willing to forego them in favor of others. Not “Top Ram” but “Tail Ender.”
 - 1. The spiritual perspective: Matt. 5:38-42
 - a) Turn the other cheek
 - b) Give me your coat
 - c) Go two miles
 - d) Be a lender
 - 2. The practical thought: “You can get everything in life you want if you help enough other people get what they want.” (Zig Ziglar)
 - 3. The rewards ahead: Matt. 23:12, 20:16
- B. Instead of being just one of a crowd, I am willing to be singled out...to follow when I am called. Contrast Peter’s attitude in John 21:20-21 and Joshua’s attitude in Josh. 24:15. As for me and my house.
- C. Instead of finding fault and asking “Why me?” I am willing to accept things in an attitude of gratitude. Look at Phil. 4:6, 11; 2 Cor. 12:10.
- D. Look at Job’s attitude in Job 2:10 – good and adversity from the same hand – and the attitude of the three Hebrew children in Daniel 3:16-18.