

## Robert Seklemian - The Shepherd Psalm

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Prowled in the darkness, waiting for the opportunity to snatch a lamb. So the shepherd kept vigilant watch at night. Do you remember the account of the time of Jesus birth? And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. The sheep couldn't always see the shepherd in the darkness, but they knew that he was there watching.

So they felt completely secure. So with us, just knowing that the Lord is our shepherd, that he is there watching over us in this dark night of sin and death, is such a comfort to us, and this is what David described in Psalm 120 he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper.

The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil he shall preserve thy soul. Sometimes a wind arose in the night, and the sheep became restless from the strange sound. Then the shepherd spoke to them, and his voice reassured them. So when we hear the winds of strange doctrines rise up, which Paul warned us against in Ephesians 4:14, let us too hear the voice of our shepherd. Let us consider his words.

And instead of being frightened and tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, let us rest securely in the truths that we have. As we Read in John 10:3, 5, the sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out, and when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice, and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers.

I shall not want, David wrote. The thought here is, I shall have no lack, and this is literally true. The child of God shall not want for the temporal necessities of the present life. He shall not want for light along his pathway, for instruction in the narrow way.

He shall not want for care and discipline he shall not want for consolation and grace, nor for fellowship and sympathy. He shall not want for the Holy Spirit, as he makes room in his heart to receive more and more of it, as David expressed it in Psalm 84:11 no good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly. No good thing. This is a stupendously bountiful promise, and Paul echoed the same thought in Philippians 4:19 but my God shall supply all your needs, according to his riches and glory.

And by Christ Jesus, David had cared well for his flock and he had seen that while his sheep lacked nothing, the wild beasts of the Field who had no shepherd, often went hungry and he related this thought to the Lord's provision for his people in Psalm 34, 8, 10o taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing, and as David sometimes stumbled and yet clung to the Lord and his overruling providences, he was able to write out of the richness of his experience in Psalm 37:23:35 the steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord, and he delighteth in his way Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.

I have been young and now am old yet have I not seen the righteous partaken, nor his seed begging bread.

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He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. The sheep is a ruminating animal. After grazing in the rich green pastures, it must lie down and chew its cud, and the shepherd encourages it to do so, since it cannot properly digest its food unless it ruminates, and in English usage, the word ruminates also means to meditate. Applying this to us, it emphasizes the importance of meditation in our lives.

It is only in this way that spiritual food can be properly appropriated to ourselves and become a part of our spiritual makeup, our characters, what we really are. There must be periods of pause and quietness when we may turn our thoughts to our great heavenly Father and his holy word, his great plan, and remember and recount to ourselves all his leadings and providences in our lives, and thus ascertain what his will is for us individually. It has been said, when we pray, we talk to God. When we meditate, God talks to us. David said in Psalm 119:97, O how I love thy law.

It is my meditation all the day, and he also said in Psalm 63, 5, 6 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. So David meditated upon the Lord and his goodness at every opportunity all the day, and in the night watches. In other words, day and night, and his meditations were acceptable to the Lord.

God loved him for it. His prayer in Psalm 19:14 was, Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight. O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer. Let us consider some ways we can have our meditations acceptable in God's sight and worthy of his love for us. For example, when our eyes open in the morning after a night's sleep, we can think of the promise.

Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

We can be glad that we are alive and thankful for the measure of health we enjoy. These are gifts of God. Perhaps we will think of Psalm 118:24 this is the day which the Lord hath made we will rejoice and be glad in it, and should the sun stream through the window, or the rain beat against it, we will meditate on the unfathomable mercies of God, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Matthew 5:45 throughout the day we will meditate, particularly on the day of Manatext and his comments.

The Lord has mightily used these for the benefit of his people. So many have testified that he has spoken to them, directed them, and touched their hearts. By this means then the newspaper headlines of Ward will remind us of Psalm 46:9 10 he maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder he burneth the chariot and the fire. Be still, and know that I am God, and we will be still for a few moments and meditate on this sure promise of peace in the world.

When we read the reports of all the numerous varieties of violence and cruelty and destruction, destruction and ignorance, we will long for the time prophesied in Isaiah 60:18 violence shall no more be heard in thy land, and we will meditate on the wonderful millennial promise they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountains for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Isaiah 11:9 if things seem to go wrong in our affairs, and we experience disappointments in our earthly pursuits during the day we will think of the words of in the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

And we will meditate on the overruling providences of the Lord, and recall the many times he has led us in the past, the many times when seeming calamities have turned out to be blessings for us,

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and we will realize that this thing also will prove to be for our good. So whether things go well with us or seem to go wrong, we will always know that all things work together for good to them that love God to them who are the called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28 Every day of our lives somewhere we will encounter or hear of grief and pain, loved ones snatched away by the great enemy, death. Babies from their mothers arms, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, aged ones leaning on one another, depending on one another, suddenly parted by death, bringing sorrow and crying to the lonely survivor.

How appropriate for us, who know the plan of God, who know the reason for it all, to close our eyes and meditate for a moment on that glorious day now near at hand, when God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are cast away.

And whenever we see the lame, the halt and the blind, those with physical deformities and diseases, which Jesus described in Luke 13:16 as those whom Satan hath bound, we can fervently breathe the prayer, thy kingdom come, knowing that this is the answer to all earth's problems. Perhaps this will lead us to meditate upon the glorious prospect before us, if we are faithful, that we will have a part in healing the nations. Think of it. How often have you seen sickness, suffering, and deformity, and you have longed to have the power to relieve it, to be able to say, take up thy bed and walk. You will have that power, if faithful, and much more than that, to grant not only physical healing and perfection, but everlasting life to the obedient.

Now that is something to meditate over, is it not? Of course, we will not every minute of the day think only of these things. Attention must be given to our earthly occupations, in fulfilling our obligations to our employers or to the care of our families. But the mind of the new creature will so love the things of the Lord that when it is not otherwise occupied, it will naturally and automatically, as the compass needle turns to the north, swing over to godly meditations, and I think this is what Paul meant when he wrote in 2 Corinthians 10:5 bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, every thought.

And is not this the antidote for the poisons of the world, the deadly venomous concepts and ideas abroad in the earth? It's a simple matter of displacement, really. If our minds are full of good things, there will be no room for the unprofitable or evil things, and persistence in good meditations will bring about a change in us, a real change that will be noticed by people. As Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:15 Meditate upon these things.

Give yourself wholly to them that thy profiting may appear to all it will show, and when the day is over and it is time to rest, we are told in Proverbs 3:24, when thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. To which David adds in Psalm 104:34, thy meditation of him shall be sweet. I will be glad in the Lord.

He leadeth me beside the still waters Sheep will not drink from rapidly flowing or turbulent waters. Gurgling, noisy waterfalls and streams with rushing cross currents frighten them. So the shepherd must lead them to a place where a deep pool has been formed, where the water is quiet, soft, flowing, pure and clean. Only then will the sheep satisfy their thirst. All this is full of meaning for us.

Our shepherd has led us to waters for the understanding of doctrines which satisfies our longings as nothing else can do. It has imbued us with a deep calm, a peace that passeth all understanding. We know we have the truth. Our shepherd has led us away from the troubled and muddy streams, which Isaiah 57:20 says, cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt the vileness of doctrines

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of devils, such as eternal torment. There are some of a society who once enjoyed the still waters as we do, the calm, clean, clear doctrines of the divine plan of the ages, as expounded by a faithful and wise servant of the Lord.

But what happened? They decided the waters were too still, that the kingdom was not progressing quickly enough. The waters are getting stagnant, they said. They are too quiet, too still. We must continually, with each issue of our magazine, have something new to tickle our ears.

So they began to agitate and trouble the waters, to push things along more rapidly, to create cross currents and waves, and much gurgling noise, first pushing the water one way and then the other, always changing motion, changing direction, changing doctrine, churning about. The water began to get muddy. It soon became unfit for the Lord's true sheep to drink, and the sheep thirsting for the clean, clear still waters, turned away from it. Thank God our great good shepherd still leads his feet beside the still waters, or, as the margin says, waters of quietness, and we have the strength of confidence in our shepherds, as Isaiah 30:15 says, in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.

He restoreth my soul. David sang. Of course the primary meaning here is our justification to life by faith. A complete restitution or restoration of soul is granted to each member of the little sou, that he might have something to offer in sacrifice to the Lord. A living sacrifice, something holy, acceptable unto God.

But there is another meaning here too. The souls of men have shrunk and shriveled under the reign of sin and death. Generous and unselfish impulses have been ruthlessly exploited so that they are suppressed. Those having such impulses hold them back. Those of gentle nature have been rudely pushed aside.

The peaceful soul has been beaten down. Men do not dare show friendliness to their neighbors for fear of being misunderstood and rebut. Men fear to express the truth because of the vicious opposition of entrance to error. Every good and loving tendency is curbed until it withers and dies. This is how it is under Satan's reign.

So the living soul that man was created, with all its beauty of thought and tenderness, of emotion and heart of love, has under Satan's rule been degraded and debased and brutalized. But what happens when one comes into the truth, when one is drawn to Jesus, becomes enlightened by the word of God, Consecrates is justified, becomes filled with the Holy Spirit. What does a good shepherd do for such a one who thus becomes one of his chiefs? He restoreth my soul. The shrunken and shriveled and withered and brutalized and fear filled soul is transformed.

It returns to God's original design. It blooms like a flower. It enlarges and expands and grows in love and becomes once again the image of God. It is restored. But there is still more meaning to this part of the psalm.

It is a continuing process, an ever repeating experience. Every time we lie down in the green pastures of meditation on the precepts of God, every time we are led beside the still waters of truth, daily, hourly, we experience a wonderful restoration of soul. We gain strength in the Lord, we become strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Ephesians 6:10 as we read in Isaiah 40:31, they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles.

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They shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint, and in Psalm 27:14, wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord. What is this waiting on the Lord, from which such restoration can be gained? Psalm 24:3 4 tells us, Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed.

Show me thy ways, O Lord, teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me for thou art the God of my salvation. On thee do I wait all the day. So when we wait on the Lord, he shows us his ways, teaches us his paths, and leads us into his truth.

Then David said, he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. The shepherd does not simply strike out across country with his flock, not knowing what the terrain is like before him, what pitfalls there may be, or what dens of wild animals he may a kind counter on the way. No, he does not risk his sheep. He follows carefully laid out paths, tested, tried and true paths. Paths that take the sheep to the green pastures and the still waters.

Right paths, paths of righteousness. But sometimes the sheep tend to wander off the path. They turn a little to the right hand or to the left. As soon as the shepherd sees this tendency, he calls to them. He calls them back to the right path because he knows that if the sheep continue to stray even a little to the right or to the left, they will be eventually separated from the flock.

They will be lost in unfamiliar terrain and be at the mercy of wolves and the lion that walketh about seeking whom he may devour.

And when the sheep hear the voice of their beloved shepherd, whose voice they know, they instantly obey and return to walk in the right path, and that is the way it is with the sheep of the Lord's flock. The scriptures that bring this out is Isaiah 30:21 and thine ear shall hear a voice behind thee, saying, this is the way. Walk ye in it when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left, thine eyes shall hear, thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee. Note carefully that it is not a voice before thee, modern voices of so called new light, of human philosophies, but a voice behind thee.

The old theology, with all its old and blessed doctrines of hope. Christ our Redeemer, our ransom, our teacher, our example, our leader. It is a voice of the Lord uttered through his inspired apostles and prophets from two to 4,000 years ago. A voice behind us revised and re echoed by that servant who brought to our attention and renewed the old faith, the faith of the early church, the faith once delivered unto the saints. Today the voices of false shepherds may be heard from all sorts of directions.

But the Lord's true people will hear and obey only the voice behind them that directs and holds them in the right way, the narrow way, the way of sacrifice, of suffering with Christ, that we may be also glorified together.

David said, he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake, not because of our own sakes or our own worthiness, not because we amount to anything but through the Lord's grace, because we are his, because we trust in his name, in his spirit, the merit of his sacrifice.

Yea, though I walk to the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. The whole world is walking in the valley of the shadow of death. The world fears death, fearful of what might be in store for them beyond the grave. We were all born in this valley, and we shall all die in it. Adam entered this valley 6,000 years ago when he disobeyed God.

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And all his children have been brought forth here in sorrow in the shadow of death. As soon as he is born, a child begins to die. He is under condemnation. Death overshadows him. This is the valley of Satan, the devil who has the power of death.

But Jesus became a ransom for Adam and his race, and he will lift the shadow of death in due time, as we read in Hebrews 2:14. Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that hath the power of death, that is the devil, and this merit of Jesus sacrifice is applied to the little flock. Now, as Romans 6:4 expresses it, we walk in newness of life.

And Romans 8:1 says, There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. So.