

CHAPTER THREE

THE PEACE: HE MAKES ME LIE DOWN

Because the Lord is my shepherd...He makes me lie down in green pastures.

It is interesting that Psalm 23 begins by describing the rest available in the pastures of our Shepherd. The first aspect of the Lord being our shepherd is not some ministry or activity, but it is rest. We can rest spiritually because our sins are forgiven and we are able to release our burdens and cares upon the Lord. Jesus said: *"Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28).

The visual image of these pastures is of tender green grass and vegetation. The word for "pasture" comes from a root word which means "at home, pleasant, beautiful", giving the idea of a pleasant place. That is where the Shepherd makes you lie down spiritually: In lush, green pastures. There, you find peace.

The Good Shepherd wants you to experience peace *with* God through forgiveness of sin:

Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
(Romans 5:1, KJV)

After you have made peace with God, you will have the peace *of* God in your life:

And the peace of God which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7, KJV)

Peace is a gift from the Shepherd to His sheep. Jesus said:

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world gives give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.
(John 14:27, NKJV)

Jesus Christ secured the peace found in spiritual pastures through His death on the cross of Calvary: He *is* your peace:

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near...(Ephesians 2:14-17, NKJV)

Don't miss the importance of the word "makes" in this passage. If you do not come willingly to dwell in His pastures, the Shepherd loves you so much that He will orchestrate circumstances that will *make* you come!

He will get you to where you need to be in order to find essential spiritual food and rest. He wants you to experience His peace, which is defined as “a condition of quiet, calm, tranquility, and harmony--the absence of strife, anxiety, and concern.”

FREE TO LIE DOWN

When sheep are well cared for, they settle down and are content. Sheep in the natural world, as well as in the spiritual world, will lie down only if they are free from hunger, fear, friction, and pests.

Free from hunger. A good shepherd leads his sheep from barren lands to the richest pasturelands because once they are no longer hungry, they will lie down and rest. One of the Greek words for “love” used in the Bible is *agape*, which is a merging of two words and two concepts. *Ago* means “to lead like a shepherd,” and *pao* is a verb that means “to rest.” The demonstration of true love is the Shepherd leading you to a place of rest and spiritual provision.

Very often, believers settle for the junk food of the world instead of the rich spiritual provision of their Shepherd. We try to fill the emptiness of our lives with entertainment, hobbies, work, travel, etc., instead of feeding on the riches of prayer, worship, and God's Word.

Sheep are not like goats. Goats eat weeds and all kinds of junk--spiritually representative of the trash of the world. Sheep prefer tender, green grass. What are you eating spiritually? Are you a sheep or a goat? What you feed on spiritually answers this question.

Our Shepherd declares that He is the bread of life:

Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven--not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever." (John 6:53-58, NKJV)

The last verse of Psalm 23 speaks of living forever and the verse we are studying--verse 2--explains how this is possible. By believing in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross and accepting Him as Savior and Shepherd of your life, you partake of the bread of life and you will live forever!

God provided rest for the nation of Israel, but they failed to experience it because of unbelief and, as a result, they wandered for years in a barren wilderness. Your Shepherd has provided spiritual rest so that you do not have to wander the pathways of sin and live on the meager fare of the deserts of this world. The question is: Have you entered into that rest?

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them (Israel): but

the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest...There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. (Hebrews 4:1-3, 9-11, KJV)

Free from fear. In the natural world, fear of any enemy-- whether man or beast--will scatter sheep. The Word declares "*God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind*" (2 Timothy 1:7, KJV). You can dwell in green pastures spiritually without fear of the enemy because "... *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*" (1 John 4:4, NKJV).

No matter the difficulty of your circumstances, you can rest in the shepherd's care free from fear. God has declared: "*And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods*" (Ezekiel 34:25, KJV). Whether you are in a spiritual wilderness surrounded by evil beasts, or you are in the deep woods of the dark circumstances of life--God is there to protect you and give you rest.

The Good Shepherd declared: "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*" (John 14:27, NKJV). Do not fear. You can lie down in safety and rest in the green pastures of His loving care.

Free from friction with other sheep. In biblical times, a shepherd would put oil on the heads of the sheep so that they could not bash their heads together to fight. Sheep who are fighting each other cannot rest, feed, or reproduce properly. The same is true in the spiritual world. When the Lord's sheep are busy fighting each other they cannot rest, feed, or reproduce spiritually. We need the Holy Spirit, symbolized by oil in God's Word, to be continuously applied to our lives to free us from friction with other sheep.

Free from pests. In the natural world, there are different types of pests that infest the wool of sheep and cause sickness and discomfort. There are flies that attack sheep and leave eggs that hatch, then the baby flies crawl into the sheep's head and eventually cause blindness and death. The shepherd would apply oil to the flock to free them of these annoying, deadly pests.

What is pestering you today? Finances? Physical infirmity? Circumstances? Negative emotions? Apply the oil of the Holy Spirit to those "pests" so you can find rest in the green pastures of your Shepherd.

Because the Lord is your Shepherd, He makes you lie down in green pastures. He frees you from spiritual hunger, fear, friction, and pests so that you can feed on His riches and rest in Him.

Your Shepherd promised: "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled* " (Matthew 5:6).

Spiritual hunger is satisfied in the Lord's green pastures.