

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PROPITIATION: HE RESTORES MY SOUL

Because the Lord is my shepherd...He restores my soul.

Sheep need restoration when they become cast down because a downed sheep is easy prey for predators. They cannot help themselves and need to be restored by the Shepherd. So, what does “restoration” mean spiritually in terms of the shepherd and the sheep? There are important spiritual parallels between believers and sheep as to how one becomes cast down.

Sheep become cast down when they are at ease. Sheep often look for an easier way other than the path in which the Shepherd is leading. When they get into a nice green pasture of their choice and are happy and contented, they roll over on their back, kick their legs in pleasure--and all of a sudden discover that they cannot get up again and have become easy prey for the enemy.

In the spiritual world, believers sometimes settle down in ease. They get involved with the pleasures and riches of the world. They become comfortable, complacent, and unconcerned about God, His Kingdom, and lost sheep that need rescuing. When you take your own route because it appears easier than the way the Shepherd has designated, you will eventually become bogged down in the quick sands of life.

Sheep become cast down when they have too much wool. When the woolly fur of a sheep has grown too long, brambles and thorns start clinging to it and the animal is weighed down with these things, becoming an easy target for predators. To help this "cast down" sheep, the shepherd cuts off the trash entangled in the wool. While he is doing it, the sheep howls, struggles, and kicks. The animal does not like the process, but it is necessary for their restoration.

Believers sometimes become weighed down with "cares of this world" and the "sins that so easily beset" them (Luke 21:34; Hebrews 12:1). When you become weighed down with negative things that cling to you such as the cares of the world, anger, bitterness, and unforgiveness, then you will become cast down. To avoid this, you should cast all your cares, problems, and negative emotions on the Lord (1 Peter 5:7). Casting everything on Him is far better than becoming cast down. The things that weigh you down spiritually must be

eliminated. Your spiritual Shepherd takes the cutting edge of the Word of God and applies it to your life:

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12, NKJV)

You may be tempted to kick, struggle, and howl but the process is necessary. Don't struggle. Don't fight it. The Shepherd must cut away the things that weigh you down and make you an easy target for the enemy.

Sheep become cast down when they fall. The lamb doesn't see the peril, and down they go. Spiritually, no one is beyond being cast down. Great Christian leaders have fallen in times past, and they will continue to do so in the future. The Bible warns: "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12, NKJV).

The good news is that if you belong to the Good Shepherd's flock, He will seek you, find you, and restore you when you fall:

What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance. (Luke 15:4-7, NKJV)

Note that the lamb which was lost had been part of the fold. When he strayed, the Good Shepherd didn't just write him off as a loss, but He left the flock to search for the one who had strayed into sin. The one who had fallen. The lamb that was cast down. When the Shepherd found His lost lamb, He returned it to the fold rejoicing that it was restored.

As a little lamb in your Shepherd's care, you can be assured that..."The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholds him with his hand" (Psalm 37:23-24, NKJV).

Sheep become cast down when they are too fat. Just because you are doing well materially does not mean you are a healthy believer. The fattest sheep are not always the healthiest or the most productive. The same is sometimes true of the largest churches or the richest believers.

Review the messages to the churches in Revelation chapters 3-4. Some of these churches were large and prosperous, but they had lost the fervency and intensity of their love for God. They had allowed false doctrines and compromise in order to grow their congregations. They had a “good name” but were dead spiritually. They boasted of their riches, but they were spiritually malnourished, so the Lord called them to repentance and restoration.

HE RESTORES YOUR SOUL

The phrase "restores" literally means to "bring back". The Good Shepherd restores or brings back one who is cast down. He restores you from death to life, from the wide road that leads to destruction to the narrow way that will enable you to dwell in His house forever.

The word “soul” literally means “a breathing creature”, and can be understood as “life”. The restoration of your soul comes through salvation and subsequently resting in His divine provisions as the Shepherd and Saviour of your soul. By grace and mercy, the Shepherd restores you to His original plan for your life. He restores your dreams, your visions, your family, your finances--all that has been lost, He will restore.

So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, The crawling locust, The consuming locust, And the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you. You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, And praise the name of the Lord your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; And My people shall never be put to shame. Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: I am the Lord your God And there is no other. My people shall never be put to shame. (Joel 2:25-27, NKJV)

This concept of restoring the soul of one who is cast down is portrayed in Psalm 18 where the psalmist declared:

He reached down from on high and took hold of me; He pulled me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy and from those who hated me,

for they were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my distress, but the Lord was my support. He brought me out to a wide- open place; He rescued me because He delighted in me. (Psalm 18:16-19, NIV)

When you are mired in sin, the Shepherd restores your soul with forgiveness. When you are sorrowing, He restores your soul with comfort. When you are sick, He restores your health.

The Good Shepherd is the only one who can restore your soul because He was the propitiation for your sins, meaning that He made atonement for your sins through His death on the cross. He died in order that your soul could be restored to fellowship with God. He restores you from the penalties of sin in the past, from the power of sin in the present, and He will deliver you from the presence of sin as you enter eternity.

The Biblical concept of restoration is to return someone or something to the original state. When Peter was restored after denying the Lord three times, He was immediately told to feed the sheep of the Lord's pasture. He was not only restored as a disciple, but he was ordained to be a leader in the early church.

You may think you have lost it all because of a fall, but the Shepherd stands ready to restore it all: Your soul. Your vision. Your ministry. Your relationships. He wants to restore you to the original plan for your life. The Lord promised His people:

"...Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day...I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountain...there they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture...I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down," says the Lord God. "I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick..." (Portions of Ezekiel 34:11-16, NKJV)

Note the "I will" statements of restoration in this passage:

-I will search for my sheep.

-I will deliver them from where they are scattered.

- I will feed them in good, rich pastures.**
- I will make them lie down.**
- I will seek what was lost.**
- I will bring back what was driven away.**
- I will bind up the broken.**
- I will strengthen the sick.**

After you are restored, you are ready to travel to the next spiritual destination on your journey, the pathway of righteousness. Time to move on again. Stay close to the Shepherd.