

## PSALMS

# Our Great Shepherd: Feeding and Leading (Psalm 23:2)

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All sheep need a shepherd--a sheep without a shepherd is lost and exposed to constant dangers. Sheep have no sense of direction. They have no ability to care for themselves. They are easily frightened by the slightest disturbance. They are constantly dependent upon a shepherd to meet their every need.

Similarly, we are like sheep in need of a shepherd, the LORD Himself. We need Him to make us lie down in green pastures. Otherwise, we will be restless and

empty. We need Him to lead us beside still waters. If not, we will be stressed and weary.

In this psalm, David explains what God is doing in his life. He writes, "He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters" (verse 2). This psalm is written in Hebrew poetry and uses a literary device known as parallelism. This is where the two lines of a verse are to be understood as containing one unit of thought. It is where the second line builds on the first line. Each of these two lines reveals a key aspect of what God is presently doing in David's life—and in ours.

## He Makes Me Lie Down

First, David says, "He makes me lie down in green pastures" (verse 2). He confesses that in the midst of the hectic pace of life, with all its pressures and stresses, God causes him to lie down in green pastures--the choicest place where sheep can graze. But God must make him do so.

These "green pastures" can be understood to represent the word of God. Much like grass, the Scripture is full of life-giving nutrients and nourishment for our soul. These lush meadows of biblical truth are always vibrant, never withered or wilted. It is this spiritual food that gives David the inward strength and satisfaction that he needs.

How is God making David to lie down in green pastures? The LORD is accomplishing this with two forces in his life--one is internal and the other is external.

## He Creates My Hunger

First, internally within David's soul, God is creating a spiritual hunger for the sustenance of His Word. Only

God can generate an appetite for this soul food. Moses recorded, "Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD" (Deuteronomy 8:3). We must feed on the Scripture daily. Do you sense this hunger within you for the word of God?

How sweet is the Scripture to the believer. Concerning the precepts of the LORD, David writes, "They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb" (Psalm 19:10). He can never have enough of the word. Likewise, God puts the Holy Spirit within all believers in the new birth, who "causes" us to crave and keep His statutes (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

If you are a true believer--if you are one of His sheep--then God is presently at work in your life, weaning you off of the bare husks of this world. He is causing you to lie down in the green pastures of His Word.

David describes these "green pastures" in the plural. It is not just one green pasture in which He leads this flock. Instead, it is a vast expanse of many pastures. Such an abundant supply pictures the sufficiency of the word of God to meet our spiritual needs. Here is the rich reservoir of truth contained in Scripture that is able to satisfy every hunger within us. There is far more food in these lush grasslands than His sheep will be able to consume.

## He Feeds Me His Word

Second, there are external forces that God uses to cause us to lie down in green pastures. These are divinely-ordained times of trials and tribulations that He uses to humble us and bring us to our knees. In such weakening times, we turn to His word and cling to

His promises to sustain us. These storms of life force us to lie down in the green pastures of His word.

In Psalm 119, the psalmist testifies how his trials were causing him to cling to the law of the Lord. "My soul weeps because of grief; strengthen me according to your word" (verse 28). Only the word could sustain him and bring him through his difficulties. Again, he writes, "This is my comfort in my affliction, that Your word has revived me" (verse 50). The only comfort for his troubled heart was in the replenishing word of God.

Do you see the good Shepherd working in your life to create a greater hunger in you for His word? Is He using a present time of adversity? In His word, you will find rest for your soul.

## He Is Leading Me

In the second line, David says, "He leads me beside quiet waters" (verse 2). As country streams flow through pastures, there are narrow places where the rocks cause the flow of water to back up—and be still and "quiet." That is where the shepherd would lead His flock. He does not guide them where the swift currents make the sheep to be fearful. They will not drink or be able to rest there. Instead, he ushers his flock to places where the waters are peaceful and calming.

By this analogy, David states that God is leading him into His perfect peace. Even when the circumstances around him were raging, he possessed a God-given tranquility of heart that only He can give. Jesus promises, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful'" (John 14:27). Jesus, our good shepherd, leads us to

experience His supernatural peace, something this world cannot give.

## He Gives Me Peace

David certainly experienced this perfect peace. It was much like what Paul describes, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7). This peace comes to our hearts as we commit our concerns to God in prayer.

On the outside, our turbulent circumstances may be like a raging storm. But on the inside, we may know the peace that surpasses all human understanding. This is what we experience as we follow the Lord and nourish our soul upon His Word.

## Two Important Questions

I have two questions to ask you. These are important for you to pause and give careful thought.

First, *are you feeding on the Word of God?* This psalm urges us to lie down in green pastures. Make time in the busyness of your day to be in the Scripture. Hunger for it. Read it. Study it. Memorize it. Meditate upon it. Chew on it. Devour it. And it will satisfy and strengthen you as nothing else will.

Second, *are you following the leading of God?* Never stray away from your Shepherd. Stay close beside Him. The most repeated invitations that Jesus gave was, "Follow me." He called to Matthew, "Follow me" (Matthew 9:9). He summoned Philip, "Follow me" (John 1:43). He said to Peter, "Follow me" (John 21:19). To His disciples, Jesus pressed, "Follow me"

(Matthew 16:24). He is always calling us in the same way.

The Lord is leading you into green pastures where He will feed you an abundance of nourishment in His Word. He will lead us beside still waters to give us His peace in the midst of trying and difficult days. No sheep ever had a better shepherd than who we have in the LORD.

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