

Restoration and Righteousness

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside quiet waters.
He restores my soul;

**He guides me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.**

There is a sweet and refreshing sound to the idea of restoration. When friends drift apart or there is friction in a relationship, how wonderful the occasion when the relationship is restored.

Two college friends are reacquainted after 20 years. There are warm embraces and the reminiscence of old times. They share stories of family, career, old friends and new, twenty years of life. They are each thrilled to share past accomplishments but also the sorrow and pain of life's trials. They laugh 'til they cry as one remembers their own childish immaturity or an almost forgotten embarrassment. With a heavy sigh they part company, compelled only by time or circumstances...and they both agree, "We can't let another twenty years pass! We must stay in touch."

This last statement illustrates the well-known fact that the *restoration* is truly a new beginning. Realizing this same truth, David begs God to go beyond the beginning of the restoration of his soul:

**Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And sustain me with a willing spirit.** (Psalm 51)

David realized that a *clean heart* was only the beginning, so also *restored salvation*. He needed something that would sustain him beyond an initial cleansing. He needed continued assistance.

The shepherd king affirms one way in which God insures assistance beyond restoration. In the 23rd Psalm David writes:

He guides me in the paths of righteousness.

The Great Shepherd understands the human dilemma. He understands that a one-time cleansing is insufficient. So, he leads us on a path that will keep our relationship with him pure.

From the beginning of time it was God's intent that mankind walk in righteousness. In simple terms, righteousness is *doing what is right*. Yet it is a reflection of the very character of God. That is to say that God is, in himself, altogether righteous.

For God to expect or demand righteousness on the part of man is nothing less than a call for man to be like him. As a part of his nature God does not ponder over the meaning of righteousness. He does not try to be righteous. By his own character, he is the essence of righteousness.

As the Great Shepherd leads us in the paths of righteousness, he is leading us in such a way that we will mature into his nature. Ultimately, we will, by nature, do that which is good and right fulfilling the goal of the restoration.

He does this for His name's sake. The simple idea is this: If God did not restore souls; if God did not lead us in paths of righteousness; then the accusation could be made that he did not care for his sheep. Yet that contradicts his nature: God is love.

For His name's sake indicates that His actions have truly preserved His name and His character. He is right in showing grace and mercy, because He is the very essence and definition of love.

People may ponder or wonder about the wrath of God, eternal punishment, the existence of Hell. But no one can possibly accuse God of being anything less than a compassionate and loving God, because...

**He restores my soul;
He guides me in the paths of righteousness.**

Mark Stinnett