

# Psalm 23:3

## Introduction

- Sheep can turn onto their back and get stuck. This condition is called “casting” . When sheep are cast they are unusually vulnerable and often need help to get back on their feet.
- A shepherd is particularly sensitive to cast sheep. He comes and helps them get their feet under them.
- In this verse we learn of the Shepherd’s ministry of restoration. It is directed to those times when our soul’s are cast, that is, we are spiritually on our back and don’t have our feet under us.
- The Shepherd gets me back on my feet and moving in the right direction again.
- He does this because His reputation is at stake in my ability to walk in a manner worthy of His calling.

“<sup>3</sup> He restores my soul; He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.”

- The Hebrew term “soul” refers to the “inner life” (the true self) in contrast to the “outer life” (name or face) that others see.
- The Hebrew term “to restore” is related to the terms “turn back” or “repent.”
- The Hebrew term “to lead” in verse three has the idea of “guide” or “drive” with authority and is different than the term used in verse two which suggests more of a tender loving care.

## 1. “<sup>3</sup> He restores my soul” This is “The Word of the Cross” in Psalm 23.

- As fallen individuals we need redemption. We are powerless to save ourselves from our dilemma. Like cast sheep we have fallen and can’t get up without the restoring work of the shepherd. The Good Shepherd set us on our feet at the cross so that we could now follow His guidance in life.
- How are we to know that we have this need? Death is God’s visual aid, reminding us that we have a problem. Relational conflicts and inner psychological pain tell us that our problems are deeper than material chemistry.

Social strife tells us that our problems are relational. It is not difficult to conclude that the spiritual dimension of life is involved at the root of our dilemma.

- Secular artists recognize these needs by drawing attention to inner longings and social aspirations for peace and justice. The problem is however, often addressed by looking for relief and salvation in the wrong places – pleasure, violence, resistance to authority, etc.

## 2. “<sup>3</sup> . . . He guides me in paths of righteousness” **Much of the Shepherd’s job is focused on keeping the sheep from straying.**

- The Shepherd uses His authority to guide the sheep.
- “Paths of righteousness” are in contrast to “crooked paths” or “the wrong way.”
- We are challenged to trust the shepherd’s leading when it might not make sense to us. A great temptation (Like Eve in the Garden- Gen.3) is to doubt the wisdom of the Shepherd and rely on our own understanding (counseled by the values of the world) in seeking life.
- Others recognize the spiritual dimension of the problem but feel it can be solved from within or else we just learn to live with the sense of isolation.
- To be reconciled with God we need to be worthy of eternal life in His Kingdom where no darkness, sin, or foolishness is permitted. We can express it in a different way – We need to be true to ourselves as image bearers of a Holy God. The problem is, we have sinned and fallen short.
- The first order of restoration has to do with peace with God. The second order of restoration has to do with our calling to walk in a manner that reflects Jesus.
- Paul talks about the renewing of the mind.
- There are really three great movements in the gospel story – the reconciliation of the Cross, the regeneration of the Spirit, and the renewal of the mind.
- The first two take place when I turn in faith to Christ as my Savior.
- The third is a constant process that is repeated over and over in life.

## 3. “<sup>3</sup> . . . for his name’s sake.” **The Shepherd’s reputation lies with the health of the sheep. Our Lord is intimately united with us so that our condition is tied to His witness in the earth.**

- We are His witnesses to this age.

## 4. **The path to restoration for the restless soul.**

1. **Position** – Our secure position before God “in Christ” is the foundation from which all healthy change takes place. We can be changed by fear or guilt but such change is not healthy. Only change motivated by grace and love bears witness to the true heart of the Shepherd.
2. **Perspective** – Mixed signals in life lead to a restless soul. We must come to embrace a perspective of life that makes sense of all our experiences. Too often we seem to be getting “mixed signals” from God. He tells us we are loved and yet circumstances suggest that God does not care or is not there.
3. **Passion** – Many of us do not change because we don’t want to. The “want to” comes from living “hope” and realistic “expectation” that we can change. This is the root of the passion that drives us to work at our walk.
4. **Plan** – The strategy to change habits, patterns, etc. comes after the first three steps. Too often we start with a plan that is destined to fail because the first three points have not been given attention.

## **Psalm 23**

### **Identifying my source.**

*Who is my shepherd?*

*What do I really want?*

<sup>1</sup> The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;

### **Relieving my restlessness.**

*Is my soul at rest?*

<sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down in green pastures  
He leads me beside quiet waters

### **Overcoming my failures.**

*Where do I find life?*

<sup>3</sup> He restores my soul;  
He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.

### **Conquering my fears.**

*Can I overcome my fears?*

<sup>4</sup> Even though I walk through the valley of shadow of death, I  
fear no evil;  
for Thou are with me;  
Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.

**Confounding my foes.**

*Can I survive my enemies?*

<sup>5</sup> Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my  
enemies.

Thou has anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.

**Securing my future.**

*What should I expect out of life?*

<sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and lovingkindness  
will follow me all the days of my life;  
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.