

Psalm 23

Lesson 5

He Restores My Soul

Leader Guide

A Bible Study to Accompany
“A Shepherd Looks At Psalm 23”
by Phillip Keller

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Lesson 5, Psalm 23, A Psalm of David He Restores My Soul

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. *Psalm 42:5-6*

Luther's Morning Prayer

Thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Read, Psalm 23, A Psalm of David. The LORD Is My Shepherd

¹ The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

³ He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Discuss

A soul that is restored is a soul that was downcast, burdened, and in need of restoration. Can a Christian whose faith is sure and salvation secure feel downcast? Yes, we can all feel dejected, frustrated, succumb to temptation, and feel hopelessly defeated. Our soul is downcast and needs restoration. David knew defeat, succumbing to temptation, bitterness and hopelessness. Despite his spiritual defeat, he turned to the LORD with repentance and found consolation and forgiveness.

“Cast” is an Old English word for a sheep that has rolled over on its back and cannot get up. Any sheep can become cast. Weak sheep or heavily pregnant ewes might become cast every few days and must be turned over and placed back on their feet, or they soon die. But even the strongest sheep can become cast. They find a little dusty hollow to relax and roll on their side, only to lose their balance. They end up on their back because their long fleece has become too

heavy or the sheep is too fat. A cast sheep is in a perilous state. Gas builds in its rumen, making it unable to move; it loses the blood circulation in its legs and can die within hours or helplessly succumb to predators.

A shepherd continually looks out for his cast sheep. He counts his sheep, watches for circling buzzards, and quickly searches for lost cast sheep. When the shepherd finds a cast sheep, he gently talks to it to calm it; he holds it up, sets it back on its legs, and begins gently massaging its legs to restore the lost circulation until the sheep can return to the flock. Cast sheep are pathetic creatures and survive and thrive only by the diligent work of the shepherd.

1. How does the shepherd feel when he finds his cast sheep and can return it to the flock?
2. The perilous state of the cast sheep is a good picture of a child of God who feels helpless, has succumbed to temptation, and needs rescue. How do you think God sees us in our pathetic state: angry, fed up, disgusted?

Like the shepherd rescuing the cast sheep, God sees us with concern, compassion, and is eager to save and restore us.

3. In the story of the cast sheep, the soft hollow is a picture of a comfortable life without hardship or the need for endurance and self-discipline. How might a life without hardship present a threat to our spiritual well-being?

Martin Luther said the most perilous time for the church is when it is not being persecuted. The church thrives in persecution. Faith thrives in persecution and is strengthened by adversity and suffering.

4. How would you compare your spiritual growth during significant struggles and hardship versus times of peace and comfort?
5. While imprisoned in Rome and facing his death, the Apostle Peter addressed the hardship and suffering in the early church. We don't know if he was referring to the persecution by the Roman emperor, Jewish leaders, Gentile leaders, or the famines and natural disasters of the time. Read 1 Peter 1:3-7 and consider the purpose of trials and suffering.

^{1Pe 1:3} Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ^{1Pe 1:4} and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade —kept in heaven for you, ^{1Pe 1:5} who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

^{1Pe 1:6} In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

^{1Pe 1:7} These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

- a. 3-Regardless of the cause of the trial, what does Peter say is God's purpose for them in 1 Peter 1:6-7?

The purpose of trials is to refine our faith.

- b. Peter assured believers that God was their shield during the trials they experienced. Read verses 1:3-5 and discuss how God was their shield.

We might like to say that we will not experience trials and suffering with God as our shield, but this was not the reality facing the early church. Peter would soon be martyred, and many in the early church would also suffer brutal deaths at the hands of Rome. Peter was not referring to a vain hope that he would be spared hardship or death. God was Peter's shield by holding him securely in his eternal inheritance of a new eternal life in Christ that could never perish, spoil or fade. It was not a hope he would be spared suffering.

- c. How does Peter say Christians should view suffering and trials in their life as God's punishment or something different?

^{1Pe 4:12} Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.

^{1Pe 4:13} But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

Suffering, especially for Christ, is cause for rejoicing.

6. The sheep whose wool has grown too thick is clogged with manure, mud, briars, sticks, and ticks. It illustrates the tyranny of possessions, the accumulation of things, and our old self clinging to worldly values and ideas. Read the following warnings against materialism and the danger it poses to Christians.

- a. The seeds among the thorns in the parable of the sower, Mark 4:18-19

^{Mk 4:18} Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; ¹⁹ but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.

Worries of this life choke out the word and fruitfulness of a Christian.

b. Storing up treasures in heaven, Matthew 6:19-21

Mt 6:19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

c. Paul's instruction to Timothy

1Ti 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

1Ti 6:7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.

1Ti 6:8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

1Ti 6:9 People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

1Ti 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

d. Treasure in heaven

Mt 25:33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Mt 25:34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom^y prepared for you since the creation of the world.

Mt 25:35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,

Mt 25:36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

Mt 25:37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?

Mt 25:38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?

Mt 25:39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

Mt 25:40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Treasure in heaven, acts of love, kindness, and charity.

7. The shepherd shears the thick wool of the cast sheep so that its long wool no longer threatens its life. What would the Good Shepherd do to guard you from the dangers of materialism?

The Good Shepherd would shear off our focus on the accumulation of possessions. Perhaps he would use circumstances to remove wealth from us so that we could see that he is still faithful in providing for our needs. Or perhaps he would use the Holy Spirit to

transform our thinking toward materialism and create opportunities for us to learn how stewardship, charity, extravagant giving, and joyful giving can change the lives of others.

8. In the account of the cast sheep, a sheep that became too fat and could not get up is analogous to Christians who have lost sight of their calling, distracted by world. They have become like the Revelation church in Laodicea who were just going through the motions of worship and living for Christ, neither hot or cold. Jesus warned in Revelation 3:17, **"You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked."** Review the following verses and discuss what our calling in Christ is.

a. 1 Peter 2:9-10, Our calling in Christ is **to declare God's praises.**

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1 Peter 2:9-10

b. 1 Peter 3:15-16, Our calling in Christ is to **tell others of our hope in Christ.**

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

c. 1 Peter 4:10-11, Our calling in Christ is to use our **gifts to serve others.**

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

d. Matthew 22:36-40, Our calling in Christ is to **love God and our neighbor. God, the creator of the universe, has called us to be part of his work to bring justice and kindness to his creation. What a joy and privilege!**

Mt 22:36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

Mt 22:37 Jesus replied: **"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."**³⁸ **This is the first and greatest commandment.**³⁹ **And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.**⁴⁰ **All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."**

e. Mark 16:15, Our calling in Christ is to **preach the gospel to all creation.**

He said to them, **“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”**

Closing, The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.