

Daily Devotional, May 5, 2020 I Shall Not Lack

In yesterday's devotion I gave a pretty detailed look at what a shepherd was in ancient times and especially how David viewed God as his shepherd. In our cultural which is roughly 3,000 years removed from that time period, I am not sure that we can have the same understanding that David had, having been a shepherd himself as a boy. This is what sets him apart from most writers in the Old Testament. It is out of this most personal belief that God is my shepherd that David is able to make the statement, "Therefore I shall not want, I shall not lack." Knowing a shepherd's ways, David can cry out in faith, believing that the Good Shepherd will do a good job providing for him. In fact, Psalm 23 is all the way through a cry of faith, a personal faith in his God.

But now, the question is: lack what? It is interesting that in Psalm 84:11 David answers this question, in Psalm 84:11 he says, "No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly." David understands that God determines what we need, what is good for us. God is committed to providing every good thing that you and I need. David understands that the Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want, I shall not lack any good thing.

Next David details the ways that our Good Shepherd provides for His sheep. Notice that all these provisions have one thing in common. They are a rich, unrestrained statement of faith in a God who provides. Every one of these is David's statement of praise and faith to God that yes, You are my shepherd and thus, I shall not want because I believe that You have, that You are, and that You will continue to provide for me. It is all straight up faith, all the way through Psalm 23.

He begins, "You make me lie down in green pastures." During the seasons of winter and spring it was generally easy to find food for the sheep, but summer and fall were more difficult, forcing the shepherds to take the sheep out looking for grassland. That is the image in David's mind of God his Shepherd going out looking for nourishment, looking not just for food, but for green, lush pastures.

Secondly, this providing God "leads me beside still waters and therefore I shall not want." Again, it is a picture of the Shepherd not going behind the sheep and beating them with sticks, but a picture of the Shepherd going before His sheep, of leading them. His sheep hear and know His voice, and they follow the Shepherd. He is not just taking them to water, but to *still* water, water that they can use to satisfy their thirst. It is a beautiful picture of God leading us and providing nourishment for us.

Third: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He restores my soul." Now, the way Hebrew poetry operates, the word "soul" here stands for more than just the spiritual dimension of who we are. It is another way of saying "me". And what David is saying is that because the Lord is my shepherd, He restores me, He revitalizes me, He strengthens me. As David's will say in verse 4, He brings me comfort. Not only to the spiritual part of my being, but to the physical part of my being, to all that I am.

When you read this, you get a sense that David's Shepherd is saying, "Slow down. Catch your breath. I am going to provide you with green pasture. I am going to provide you with still water. I am going to restore you, your soul *and* your body." This is certainly going on in I Samuel 30:9, when his men are thinking about stoning him, David turns to the Lord to be built up, to be restored, to be strengthened and comforted. We can see the same pattern whenever Jesus goes out to be restored. We see it over and over again throughout the Gospels. Jesus has a busy day of healing people, casting out demons, and teaching. What did Jesus do after a hard day of ministry? He goes home, puts his feet up on the sofa, opens a bag of chips, flips on the TV and vegs out for two hours, right? No! What does Jesus do? Jesus goes out in the wilderness, off by himself, away from the crowds and He gets away from the busyness. He gets away from ministry and spends hours praying to His Father, praying to His Lord. You see, Jesus understand the same thing that David understands, which is that God restores my soul. When you are mentally and physically spent, you need refueling, restoration.

David continues with the fourth way in which God provides. David says, "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want because He leads me in paths of righteousness." Just as the shepherd takes the sheep on the right path towards the right destination, so also God leads us towards the destination that is truly good. For God wants us to follow in God's ways which are truly the best ways for us to go. This is the moral and spiritual high ground. Tomorrow we will what God's purpose is for leading us this way.

Prayer: Lord, there is much that I feel that I lack in life, much of which I don't really need, but which I desire. Lead me to understand that the things I really need are provided by you in abundance if only I would open my eyes to what is most essential and valuable. Lead me to place righteousness as my goal and to walk in your ways each and every day. Thank you for your care, your guidance, your understanding, and your faithfulness to me. Help me in my weakness to grow in my faithfulness to you. In the name of Jesus Christ I pray, Amen.