

## 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 hear of great accomplishments and also feel the sorrow and sadness from 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 only a new beginning.

Realizing this same truth about his own soul, David begs God to go beyond restoration:

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 51:10, 12

David realized that a *clean heart* was only the beginning, so also the *restored salvation*. He needed something that would sustain him beyond that initial cleansing. He needed continued assistance so that he could maintain that renewed relationship which had been lost.

The shepherd king affirms one way in which God insures that he provides for us beyond our restoration. In the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm he writes:

He guides me in the paths of righteousness.

Our Great Shepherd understands the human dilemma. He understands that a one-time cleansing is not enough; that due to our own frailty we need a continual cleansing. Even then, we need help in doing right. So, he leads us on a path that will keep our relationship secure.

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 important to understand that righteousness describes 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 to be like him. As a part of his nature God does not ponder over the meaning of righteousness. He does not make an effort to be righteous. By his own attitudes and actions, he is the meaning 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 would contradict his nature: God is love.

The restoration of the souls of men and the guidance in paths of righteousness ultimately draws attention to God. It glorifies his name and demonstrates to all mankind his nature.

*For his name's sake* indicates that his action has 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.