



Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – September 2, 2023

The Lord be with you.

The day I was driving in my car, when a warning light on the dashboard lit up, and the warning like told me that I was about out of gas. I had not been paying attention, I'd gotten distracted and I did not realize I was seriously running on empty. I mean I didn't have far to go. Well, I wonder about you today, are there any warning lights on the dashboard of your life, is there anything telling you that you might be running on empty?

Well, if you're feeling close to empty today, if you're feeling worn out bruised by life, then you're in good company, and I have a Bible verse for you, and for me. This verse is in that beloved shepherd psalm, Psalm 23, where David tells us how the Lord fills him up when he's on empty. David tells how he has a shepherd who picks him up and gets him going. Now, when David was still yet a young Shepherd, David discovered that the Lord was his shepherd, and Psalm 23 is David's testimony to how the Lord cares for him, and he cares for you and me, but there was just one part of one verse that I want to fine focus on today.

And it's there in verse 3, where David testifies that, his shepherd, He restores my soul. And in this David is telling us that there are days when he's worn out by life, days when he's down for the count, when the pressures of life are too much for him, people are draining the life out of him, he feels burned out, beaten up and he says, The Lord restores my soul. Keep in mind when David says that He restores my soul, David is... He's not talking about his back sliding, he's not talking about as a wandering from God, rather David is talking about what can happen to any one of us in the course of just living life. Those days when we feel the life drained out of us, we are wearied, we are troubled, we're worn down with care. It happens to me. It probably happens to you. And David says, when that happens, that his Shepherd, the Lord, restores my soul.

The Hebrew word David uses for soul is the word "nephesh". And the root meaning of "nephesh" is breathe. I breathe. I am alive. I am a breathing person. That's the idea is for the ancient Hebrews, the soul, "nephesh", it's your whole life, your mind, will, emotions, body all wrapped into one so that it's a very wholistic view of the person. It's not like the Greeks who split us off into parts, rather... For the Hebrews, the soul is not a part of me, the soul is all of me. It's who I am. It's who you are. So feel the force of what David is saying here, he says, The Lord restores my soul. Literally, he causes my life to return.



water from rock

I like how the Amplified Bible translates it. It says, He refreshes and restores my life when we're down for the count, when we're beaten up and bruised by life, The Lord revives us, he re-invigorates us when we're exhausted and weary.

This is what the prophet Isaiah has in mind in Chapter 40, Verses 29 and following, he says, The Lord gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless. Even youth will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted, but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, and they shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Phillip Keller was once a shepherd who has written the book, A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23. And Philip Keller writes about how a sheep has a need for a shepherd, some time to restore it to get it going. And Keller says that sheep are built in such a way, and that if they ever follow over under their backs that it's very difficult for them to get up again. Keller writes, I read The sheep lying on its back, its feet in the air, it flails away frantically struggling to stand up without success, sometimes it will bleed a little for help, but generally it lies there lashing about in frightened frustration if the shepherd does not arrive on the scene within a reasonably short time, the sheep will die. When the center of gravity in the body of a sheep shifts and its feet no longer touched the ground, it becomes helpless, it cannot bring itself back to its feet.

Now, David knows about that from working with sheep, and David knows that something like that happens to him in life. Just read the Old Testament books of Samuel and Kings, and you will see how again and again, the Lord restores David's soul. I mean, you can't understand David's life, you won't understand what makes them tick except that again and again, the Lord reinvigorates him. Give some new life.

I want to add here, I do want to add here that again and again, The Lord has restored my soul, and the shepherd keeps me going, and I know that he will keep me going. As I get older, I'm experiencing what the Apostle Paul writes about in 2 Corinthians 4:16, where he says, even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. That's what David writes about in another Psalm, Psalm 103:5, The Lord satisfies you with good as long as you live, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.

I really like it when David says, The Lord restores my soul. That tells me that we will often be in need of restoration, we will often need God to come and pick up the pieces and get us going and give us a new start, and he will... That is the life of faith, that is the Christian life, that is the Holy Spirit breathing new life into you and me. That's a David's story. And it's my story too. And I'm sticking to it. Yes, the Lord restores my soul. And he will yours.

I'm Tim Smith, a fellow traveler on the pilgrim way. Thanks for listening. Until next time.