

The Lord is my comforter

When the Bible talks about sheep and a shepherd it's referring to domestic sheep that are dependent on the care of a shepherd. Sheep are naturally fearful and alert to danger, causing them to flock together in the presence of danger. However it is the presence of the shepherd that really reassures them. That comforts them knowing that he will fight for them. However rest that the Lord gives is more than an abstinence of danger, it is the presence of the Lord Himself.

Psalms 23: 2 – 3a The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. **He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul.**

1) The Lord gives us rest

- He makes me lie down in green pastures.
 - To make lie down doesn't mean that the Lord forces us to lie down but causes us to lie down in green pastures for our benefit.
- The whole of Ezekiel 34 is about the Lord as Israel's Shepherd.
 - Ezekiel 34: 14 – 15 I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There **they will lie down** in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will tend my sheep and **have them lie down**, declares the Sovereign LORD.
- Isaiah talks about an unusual relationship between the flock and their natural predators. Something that only the Lord would be able to do.
 - Isaiah 11: 6 – 7 The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard **will lie down** with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young **will lie down** together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
- It is only the Lord who can give us true rest in the midst of adversity, fear and turmoil.
 - Our situations might differ vastly and we may not have any sense of insecurity overall. However we might have insecure aspects in our lives such as finances, children's future, concern over the future of the country, that cause us distress.
 - How often we fret about things that haven't happened or may never happen?
 - There's a lot of fearmongering that takes place on social media giving the worst case scenario setting off a sense of panic.
 - We have enough to face in life without the wolves ravaging our hearts and minds with such negativity, albeit true. All that is doing is focusing on the situations rather than on the Lord.
- A good Shepherd always gets between his sheep and the danger.
 - At the time of Jesus shepherds would gather their sheep into their pens at night and lie across the gateway to protect the sheep.
 - Jesus declared that He himself was that gate protecting His sheep.
 - John 10: 1 – 2 Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.
 - John 10: 7 – 10 Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.
- Knowing that the Lord is our shepherd who makes Himself put between us and everything that would put our minds and hearts into turmoil is a comforting thought. It puts us at ease.
 - We can lie down in green pastures – a place of tranquillity knowing His presence comforts us
 - Lying down in green pastures gives us an idea of safety and security.
 - But how do we get there?

2) The Lord lead's us into rest.

- The Lord Himself leads us into that place of rest.
- Sheep don't have to worry about how to get to their destination. They merely have to follow the shepherd.
 - Set our eyes on Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and He'll lead us into the place of rest.
- He doesn't harshly push us to where we have to be but leads us gently.
 - Isaiah 40: 11 He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he **gently leads** those that have young.
- The Shepherd doesn't only lead his sheep but also guides them.
 - Isaiah 49: 9 – 10 They will feed beside the roads and find pasture on every barren hill. They will neither hunger nor thirst, nor will the desert heat or the sun beat down on them. He who has compassion on them will **guide** them and lead them beside springs of water.
- The Lord **leads** us into rest
 - This means that the Lord goes ahead of us to face anything that would confront us in our lives.
 - I always love the scene in a Narnia movie where the little girl Lucy stands at the end of a bridge just holding a very small knife with an opposing fully armed army coming across the bridge from the other side. Lucy doesn't budge and stands her ground. Then the reason for her confidence appears – Aslan the lion appears and confronts the army.
 - The Lord goes ahead of us and comforts us by going ahead of us into every situation that we face in life.
- We saw this when the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land.
 - Deuteronomy 31: 8 The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

3) The Lord refreshes us

- The word refreshes means to restore to what it should be. A returning of good to the rightful owner. A recover of health when someone has been sick.
- The Lord, our Shepherd, does this for us.
 - He refreshes us with His presence and with His Word.
 - The sheep still have a responsibility to drink from the living waters that He gives.
 - He doesn't force restoration onto us.
 - If we are broken because of alcohol or drugs He will lead us to a place of restoration but we have to also decide to leave that which caused our brokenness.
- He refreshes us with His Word
 - Psalm 19 7 The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul.
- He refreshes us with His presence
 - Matthew 11: 28 Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
- The Lord is our comforter as He gives us rest, leads us into a place of rest and a place of restoration.
 - True comfort isn't a pat on the back saying that everything will work out ok.
 - True comfort is the way the Lord walks the journey of life to full restoration with us.