

The Great Shepherd

II. - The Shepherd Who Restores Our Souls

“The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, restore you in every good thing unto the end of doing His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing before Him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever” (Hebrews 13:20,21) (Author’s translation).

The tragic beginning of God’s creatures on the earth is desolation. The grand ending is glorification. The Good Shepherd who “gave His life for the sheep,” is the Shepherd who restores the soul. The great need of a world gone mad is restoration. The restoration requires more than a set of laws. It requires death and life. It requires the crucifixion of the “Lamb of God.” It requires the resurrection of the “Lamb of God”—raised again in the energy of God and imparting the same energy to His creatures to be restored to life.

Make you perfect [restore, mend] . . . The promise which was unto life has become in some faulty translations, the sentence of death. If God is supposed to make us perfect, where does that leave us who are not perfect? It leaves us struggling for deliverance. It leaves us questioning our salvation. It leaves us wondering if indeed the power of God is adequate for our own needs. But the translation is often faulty. The word which we understand as “perfect” does not occur in the New Testament. Instead we have either *τελεω* (*teleo*) or *καταρτιζω* (*katartidzo*). *Teleo* means to bring to consummation—to fulfillment. *Katartidzo* means to mend or restore. It is used of the disciples who were found by the seaside, mending their nets. The latter is the word used here. It means “to restore.” It does not mean to “make perfect” in our ordinary usage of that word. The Spirit has “mended” us or “restored” us to be vessels useful to the Master. We are able through His restoration to contain water—in a figure, the Holy Spirit. But the exterior, though mended, is still full of its original cracks. It is useful, but not perfect. When we are rid of this imperfect clay vessel, then we shall become perfect in our eternal place with God.

The Psalmist caught the spirit of this in his famous Shepherd Psalm (23). *“The Lord [Yahweh] is my Shepherd; I do not lack. He causes me to lie down in green pastures. He brings me to the watering place and causes me to rest there. He brings back my life”* (Psalm 23) (Author’s translation). The Hebrew word *שׁוּב* (*shub*) means “to bring back” or “return.” The word *יְהוָה* (*Yahweh*), translated often by “Lord” or “Jehovah” means “the Eternally Existent One.” He is the essence of life. He returns to our spirits the life we lost in the fall.

In every good thing . . . He brings us into that process of life which is “the good.” The Greek word *αγαθος* (*agathos*) is the opposite of *πονηρος* (*poneros*)—“the evil.” We are lifted out of the process of evil instituted and presided over by Satan, into the process of good which is the realm of God. It does not mean that everything we do is good. It means that we are in the realm of the good rather than the realm of the evil. We have crossed over the line. We no longer belong to Satan’s realm.

The word “work” is not in the original text. When it is added here, it only

complicates the matter. It implies that if we are really saved, we are going to do “good works.” That is a stumbling block. No one would ever really feel that he had done enough “good works” to merit salvation.

To do His will . . . This has to do with the eternal purposes of God. It is not a matter of daily decision-making that would be regarded as “in the center of God’s will.” Again we have a stumbling block. Who would assume that he was always “in the center of God’s will”? We have been lifted from the vile purposes of Satan on earth to the grand meaning and purpose of God on the earth as well as in heaven. Jesus urges us to pray that the *“will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven.”* This is not a matter of personal pious choices—it is a matter of God’s eternal and inexorable purposes for His creatures. When we have received His Spirit, we become enmeshed in that glorious purpose.

Working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight. The Shepherd works with us the moment we have become part of His fold, to fulfill His purposes in us. Paul speaks of it as an “energizing process” in Ephesians 1:19—*“The energy with which God energized Christ when He raised Him from the dead, has energized us”* (Author’s translation). *“Being confident of this very thing that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”* (Philippians 1:6). It is not up to us in our bankrupt human nature to effect perfection or fulfillment within us. The word “well-pleasing” means, literally, His good purposes. Jesus said, *“I do always those things that please Him.”* He was not referring here to personal conduct, but rather to the fulfillment of God’s eternal purpose in Him. And so with us. We are “the called according to His purpose.” His ultimate purpose in the world includes His ultimate purpose for us, His children.

“He restores us in order that we may participate in His good purposes for the universe which He created.” In His restoration, He tends us like a Shepherd, to see to it that His power and purposes are effected in our own lives. This energizing process is effected by no less than the person of Jesus Christ, our Great Shepherd, who has given His life for us and guarantees the ultimate fulfillment of His purposes for us.

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September 1990
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