

He Broke My Legs

I have been a Christian since 1975, about 44 years. I suspect that if you asked the people who have known me throughout this entire period, at least some of them would tell you that my walk with the Lord has been more serious during the last 20 years as compared to the first 24 years. For most of the first 24 years, I read my Bible consistently and attended church regularly. But looking back, I think that I had less peace and more anxiety during those years because I was somewhat double-minded. On the one hand, I sought the Lord and tried to follow close. But on the other hand, I had goals and ambitions that I merely assumed were acceptable to God. I think that in many cases, I relied on my own understanding rather than operate by faith. I write this to explain what happened that changed my life twenty years ago. My hope is that those who read this will be encouraged and glorify God for His wonderful works. I refer now to the 23rd Psalm:

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. ³ He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. ⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.

Volumes have been written and spoken concerning this most famous Psalm. I wish to focus on just a few things. As others have rightly pointed out, David was a shepherd and he obviously related his experience with sheep to his own relationship with the LORD. From other scriptures, we know that David was a good shepherd who put his life on the line to protect his sheep. From Psalm 23, we know that David considered the LORD to be a likeminded shepherd of His sheep. But these words reveal that to David, the LORD was the best shepherd, one in whom he could place his entire trust. There is no other shepherd who could begin to compare to the LORD. As one of His sheep, David could enjoy peace and rest no matter what was happening all around him.

During the first 24 years of my life as a Christian, I knew about Psalm 23 and even all the things I have written so far about it. In my head, I knew what David was talking about but I was not experiencing the depth of peace and contentment that David expressed in this psalm. I had a personal relationship with the LORD but it did not seem as intimate as David's relationship with Him as expressed by this psalm. But as alluded to earlier, something happened about 20 years ago that drastically changed my relationship with the Lord and from the words of this psalm, David experienced something similar.

In the 4th verse, David said that the LORD's rod and staff comforted him. Some might wonder how a rod and a staff could be comforting. A rod and staff are the shepherd's main tools for shepherding sheep. One of the uses of the rod is to ward off predators like wolves. This use of the rod might be comforting to a sheep. But from my research, there is at least one other use for the rod that might not seem all that comforting. Sheep are known for straying from the rest of the flock on occasion. Some sheep tend to stray more than others. If a sheep is continually straying, the shepherd might be forced to take drastic measures and use his rod to break the leg of the sheep who strays. Then, until the leg heals, the sheep must remain near the shepherd and rely on the shepherd to carry him and tend to his every need.

About 20 years ago, Jesus broke my legs (figuratively speaking). Jesus said that unless a man loses his life, he will not find it. Jesus orchestrated events that produced life altering trauma that drained me of my life. It was as if He pried it away from my tight grip. For almost two years, it was as if I did not even have a life anymore. But then, the Good Shepherd did something else that the psalm describes in verse 3. He restored my soul. It was as if my life was restored to me, but it was a new life. Since then, my relationship with Jesus has been more intimate. I share His desires more now than ever. Now I see the great value of the reality of these words: "*He leads me in the paths of righteousness.*"

At the time, I did not enjoy having my legs figuratively broken by the Good Shepherd. But looking back, I would not trade that experience for anything! Ever since and until this day, it is as if the Good Shepherd has been carrying me in His bosom. My figurative legs will never work as they use to work but that is fine with me because I will dwell close to Jesus until I die and forevermore. What more could a sheep want? (Nothing.)

Thomas Bear, 1/24/2019

Οὐαὶ μοὶ ἔστιν ἂν μὴ εὐαγγελίζωμαι (Προς Κορινθίους Α 9:16)