



SHIELD OF FAITH

"Take Up the Shield of Faith" - Paul

Monday September 23, 2019

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. — Psalms 23:3

Tumbled

<https://email.althahosting.com/campaigns/sg0273hjj57a8>

Someone sent me a news story on all things evil over the weekend. The article reported on recent headlines concerning the teaching of pedophilia as a good thing in colleges and baby killing by couples for the purpose of increasing the pleasure in sex. After objectively reporting on these developments the article ended, "Let's see what else 2019 can bring."

Must we? Must we see what else 2019 can bring?

As the week came to an end last week the modern world of phones and computers came crashing over me like a tsunami on a sunny afternoon at the beach. I enjoyed a relatively calm week that ended with me tumbling over and over uncontrollably. That's how I felt anyway.

And then Sunday morning my wife shows me a couple text messages from our cellular phone company. Out of the blue she received these texts saying that she had made calls and sent texts for which we'd been billed a total of \$108.00! She found the texts by accident. In the now infinite regression of scrolling screens that assault us on our "smart" phones she'd missed those two texts.

For the next hour on Sunday morning I tumbled again. And as I start my week I'm in receipt of an email asking me to make a decision about increasing the number of email messages we produce and push to folks on a list for one of my son's clients.

I know I'm not alone in the tumbling feeling. We are all being forced to come to grips with this reality. Some of us think that the problem will be solved by algorithms. A headline out of Google this week would suggest that they'll have to be quantum algos.

So, as you start your week with me, let's ponder this bucolic verse from the Psalms. "He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

My first observation is that our soul is not restored by the next Facebook like, flick of our index finger to scroll down the feed, or email/text message. The Christian's soul is restored by God. It is beyond tempting to slouch into a screen sort of mood. This started for me early in life with the overwhelmingly attractive soul food provided by the ubiquitous television in our house. Turn on the box and tune out any and all sources of anxiety or stress. Star Trek was my favorite opiate of early memory.

Continued on the back

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Screens have forever been a source of both good and evil for me. It is tempting to conclude that the screen is essentially evil. That eliminating them from my life would lead to restoration of my soul. That God doesn't have any part of the screen world. It is REALLY tempting to believe that.

But it isn't true. The screens are like all other bits of technology, albeit the most complicated assemblage of bits and bytes ever turned into a useful thing by mankind. It's not the gun that kills, it's the people. No, demonizing the tech isn't the answer.

Coming to terms with how and where it fits is the answer. The screens must be tamed. They will be tamed, unless they are indeed a piece of the puzzle that pictures the ultimate end. Since it is impossible for me to know the future I'll stick with the hope that screens will be tamed and try to serve as one of the tamers.

In other words I'm going to continue to develop good spiritual habits that bring restoration to my soul from God, and not from screens. Taming this wild animal will include each of us taking control of how we fit them into our lives. We must not allow someone else's sophisticated use of tech to manipulate our souls. Ask God to help you see the difference between the good and the evil presence of screens in your life.

The second half of the Psalm is comforting. God leads us in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. This takes a load off. Modern media is full of lies. America has become one big comfortable lie. On my show Friday morning I kept coming back to a quote that a friend sent to me. It was authored by C.S. Lewis. He wrote, "If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end; if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth only soft soap and wishful thinking to begin, and in the end, despair."

The despair that haunts our modern souls is the result of living such comfortable lives. It is not possible to live as a Christian and choose comfort over truth for a lifetime. This is the broad path to destruction. The Bible is very clear on this point. Jesus is clear. It is our duty to take up the cross every single day, and to follow Him. If we choose not to do that we will end in despair.

We trod paths of righteousness for His name's sake. He restores our soul along the way. And don't think for a minute that this means everything along the way is going to be tumble free. It means that He draws closest during the tumble.

Salvation brings eternal, not worldly, peace. Our soul's restoration is conditioned by our decision to follow His leadership in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. That path may, or may not, include screens. If your path includes modern tech be wise about your use of it. Be fully aware of the powers that flow there. Don't be controlled or comforted by them.

Amen.