

Psalm 23

Lesson 2

I Shall Not Want

Leader Guide

A Bible Study to Accompany
“A Shepherd Looks At Psalm 23”
by Phillip Keller

Leader Guide Bible Studies

David R. Steele

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Lesson 2, Psalm 23, A Psalm of David I Shall Not Want

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. *2 Corinthians 9:8*

Prayers

Luther's Morning Prayer

Thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Read

¹ The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.

³ He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴ Even 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 overflows.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Discussion

"I shall not want" is a bold statement! It can only be made by someone who is content with their life and does not crave anything more. David was completely satisfied with God as his owner, manager, and provider. But what did David mean when he wrote, "I shall not want"? Was he talking about the material comfort he enjoyed as King of Israel, or was he reflecting on God's care and provision when he was hounded and hunted by Saul or his own son, Absalom? In this lesson, we will discuss Chapter 2 in "A

Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23" and the themes of God as our Father-Provider, prosperity, and contentment.

1. The welfare of a flock of sheep is dependent on their shepherd. In "A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23," Pastor Keller contrasted the care provided by a good shepherd to the indifference of the tenant sheep man as an illustration of God and Satan. Compare the well-being of the tenant sheepman's flock to the good shepherd's flock. List the qualities of both shepherds and how the flock's condition reveals each shepherd's character.
 - a. What was the character of the tenant shepherd?

Indifferent

- b. What was the condition of the Tenant's flock?
 - a. **Starving, weak, and thin**
 - b. **Restless**
 - c. **Diseased, parasitic**
 - d. **Suffering through drought and winter storms**
 - e. **Wounded**
- c. What was the condition of the Tenant's land?
 - a. **Neglected**
 - b. **Overgrazed, without pastures**
 - c. **Bare and rocky**
 - d. **Without hay or grain for the winter**
 - e. **Water Polluted**
- d. What is the character of a good shepherd?

The good shepherd cares and loves his flock. He wants what is best for them, cares for their needs, and prepares their pastures so they can flourish.

- e. What is the condition of a good shepherd's flock?

The sheep are healthy, well fed, secure, and at rest.

- f. The condition of a good shepherd's land

The land also flourishes under the proper management of the good shepherd. The sheep do not overgraze the pastures. Pastures are fertile, sown with grain and legumes in addition to grass, and streams and springs are dammed to make shallow pools for the sheep to drink.

2. Review several Bible verses that illustrate God's character you listed in question 2 as time permits. Here are a few you probably thought of:

1) God is love.

1 John 4:16, And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

Romans 5:8, "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

2) God is merciful, gracious, kind, and faithful

^{Eph 2:4} But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ^{Eph 2:5} made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions —it is by grace you have been saved.

^{Eph 2:6} And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ^{Eph 2:7} in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

^{Eph 2:8} For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith —and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—

^{Ex 34:6} And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness

3) God is forgiving.

^{1Jn 1:9} If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Psalm 103:11-12, For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

4) God is our guide.

Proverbs 3:5-6, Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Psalm 32:8, I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.

5) God is our protector and comforter.

Psalm 23:4, Even 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.

6) God is ever present and will never forsake us.

Romans 8:38-39, For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

3. Does the analogy of God as the Good Shepherd mean that all Christians should expect to receive rich material blessings? Why, or why not?

Paster Keller discussed the saints' impoverishment and suffering to illustrate why we should not expect rich material blessings. The saints included David's suffering and humble life as a shepherd, Jesus, Paul, David Livingstone and others.

4. God as our Provider: in Jesus' day (same as today), material prosperity was viewed as a mark of God's blessing and favor. Jesus' disciples were astonished when Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the kingdom of God," they replied, "Who then can be saved?" (Mark 10:25-26). A popular view in Christianity today is that God desires to reward faithful Christians with well-being, physical health, and economic prosperity - even to the point of extravagance. In contrast, poverty and illness are seen as curses of spiritual corruption. Is extravagant material wealth what David is referring to when he writes, "I shall not want?" Review the following verses and discuss the Bible's principles about provision and prosperity.

1. Principle 1: God is our **good and loving father who provides for his children.**

2 Corinthians 6:16b, 18 – "I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people... and I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

James 1:16-18 – "Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers: all good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no alteration or shadow caused by change. He willed to give us birth by the word of truth that we may be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

Luke 12:32 – "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Luke 11:13 What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

2. Principle 2: Do not be **anxious about anything** because God **provides for our needs.**

Philippians 4:6, Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ESV

Philippians 4:19 And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ESV

3. Principle 3: God equips us with **talents and work.**

Deuteronomy 8:18, You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. ESV

Psalms 128:2, You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you. ESV

Colossians 3:17,23-27, And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ." ESV

2 Thessalonians 3:10, For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. ESV

5. God equips believers with diverse gifts to build up the body of believers and impact the world. The ability to produce wealth is one of the gifts of God. What does God require of those he gives the gift of wealth?

1) 1 John 3:17: **Share with his brother in need.**

1 John 3:17, But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? (ESV)

2) 1 Timothy 6:17: **Use wealth to do good works and be generous.**

1 Timothy 6:17, As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. (ESV)

3) Hebrews 13:16: **To do good and to share.**

Hebrews 13:16, Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. (ESV)

4) James 2:15-16: **Share with the needy and hungry.**

James 2:15-16, If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? (ESV)

5) Luke 6:30: **Give to beggars!**

Luke 6:30, Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. (ESV)

6. Christian giving is an act of stewardship, charity, and sharing. It is one of God's means to provide for his church and the needs of others. What are some guidelines you use to decide how to give?

1) 2 Corinthians 8:1-2, Giving should be **generous**.

^{2Co 8:1} And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ^{2Co 8:2} Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ^{2Co 8:3} For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.

2) 2 Corinthians 8:4, Giving should be **voluntary**.

^{2Co 8:4} Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

3) 2 Corinthians 9:7, Giving should be **cheerful**.

^{2Co 9:7} Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

4) 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, Giving should be **planned** and **proportionate to your income**.

^{1Co 16:1} Now about the collection for God's people [in Jerusalem]: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. ^{1Co 16:2} On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

5) 2 Corinthians 9:12 Giving is an act of **thanks to God**.

^{2Co 9:12} This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.

7. David's words of "I shall not want" are interpreted by some churches to mean that God will provide material possessions, physical well-being, and abundant success due to faithful tithes and offerings, positive confession, and prayerful visualization. Compare the following verses cited supporting materialism to those warning against materialism and discuss how you understand God's provision.

God's material provision

Luke 6:38, Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you." (ESV)

2 Corinthians 9:8, And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. (ESV)

Philippians 4:19 And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (ESV)

Malachi 3:10, Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. (NIV)

Warnings against materialism

Luke 12:15, And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." ESV

Hebrews 13:5, Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (ESV)

Matthew 6:19-21, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (ESV)

Matthew 6:33, But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (ESV)

1 Timothy 6:9-11, But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. (ESV)

James 5:1-6, [James writing to the rich in the Jerusalem church who turned their back on their starving brothers during famine and exploited their labor without paying them] Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. (ESV)

Your thoughts:

8. Pastor Keller illustrated living with an attitude of "I shall not want" by his delightful visit to a parishioner's humble home, yet they were rich in spirit, gracious, joy, serene, and confident of God's control and provision in their life. Contentment and entrusting themselves to God is the hallmark of their life.

1) When have you encountered this type of contentment in others?

- 2) Consider Paul's life and his comments on learning contentment and discuss how can you build this type of contentment in your life?

^{Phil 4:10} I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ^{Phil 4:11} I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ^{Phil 4:12} I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want

^{1Ti 6:6} But godliness with contentment is great gain.

^{1Ti 6:7} For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.

^{1Ti 6:8} But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

^{1Ti 6:9} People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

^{Heb 13:5} Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

Closing, The Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:9-13.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.