

THE GOOD LIFE

A STUDY OF THE 23RD PSALM

PART 4 – I SHALL NOT WANT OR THOU SHALT NOT WANT?

REVIEW

One thing that you sure won't learn from religion is that God has a better life planned for us on this earth than we can possibly ask, think, or imagine. Yes, if you honestly study the Scriptures, it becomes apparent that God's plan for our short, physical lives is a GOOD plan!

For example, a verse that we like to quote is **Jeremiah 29:11**, which says, *"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."* The Living Bible puts it this way – *"For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."*

No, God's plan for our life is not a life of struggling and going through hardship after hardship. It's a life of good, not evil. It's a life of peace, not turmoil. It's a life of blessing, not cursing! Not that we don't ever have things to resist & overcome, but we have the promise that we will always walk in victory and experience what David said in Psalm 27:13 – seeing God's goodness in the land of the living.

Again, **Psalm 27:13** says, *"I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."*

Now the phrase "I would have lost heart" was not in the original Hebrew. The translators evidently just felt it was implied and helped us to understand what was being conveyed by David. But I believe there is a good lesson in this – While it is certainly true that if we don't believe that we will see God's goodness, we will tend to lose heart, the losing heart, becoming discouraged, and fainting along the way is not what is in view here. No, it's all about focusing on the faith that we will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Amen?

You see, I think we get too focused on ourselves at times. We look at how we feel, what we are experiencing, and try our best to get self-help. But the problem with all that is we are still focusing on self. In other words, we are looking at ourselves and not unto Him. I believe the LORD would say to us today – "Get your eyes off the problem and onto the solution, and that's ME!"

David went on in **verse 14** to say, *"Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!"*

The word used for "wait" in these verses does not mean what we commonly use the word "wait" like today, like we are waiting till we all get to heaven to see this goodness of God. When we say that we are "waiting," it might mean that we are just enduring and passively letting the time pass by, but this word meant something else in their day. It meant to earnestly expect something to happen to where we are looking for

it and desiring it. In other words, it is not a passive kind of waiting; it is a neck-stretched out, looking for something kind of waiting. Amen.

But on top of that – this concept of waiting/hoping on the LORD is describing putting all of one's expectations on Him.

You see, the flesh's tendency is to put its hope in everything else but God. It likes to put its expectations on other people to make it happy. It likes to put its attention on itself. But the truth is – we are supposed to be putting all of our hope / our expectation on the LORD, not flesh.

So, in context, what David was encouraging all of God's people to do was EXPECT the Lord's goodness right now in this life! Look for it, earnestly desire it, and believe for it in the land of the living, not wait for it to happen in the next life. And definitely don't look for it in other people or things.

So what we have been doing is looking at what might be considered one of the most popular passages of Scripture in the Bible – the 23rd Psalm – and learning through it about the good life that God has prearranged for us to live.

We spent a couple of weeks looking at the first phrase of this Psalm – The Lord is my Shepherd! And we saw how this is one of the Names of God given to us in the Old Testament – Jehovah Rohi – which teaches us that the first step into the good life that God has for us is to "hallow" His name.

You see, it is one thing to know what the LORD's names are, but it's another thing to learn how to apply who He is to our lives. And the key that I've found to applying His Name into our lives is to properly "hallow" them.

We recalled how the Lord Jesus taught His disciples to pray in His "model prayer" when He said, "Hallowed be Your Name." And we learned that when we "hallow" something, we are "setting (it) apart, consecrating (it), or making (it) holy." So what this means is that we are magnifying His name and glorifying it the way we ought to.

This is important because the tendency is to not do this. We like to hallow our own name. No, we don't do this intentionally, but we do it nonetheless. For example, many Christians enter into their prayer times saying things like— "Oh God, I know I have not talked to you all day or that I missed it in this area and in that area and that I am an unworthy little worm, but..." This is praying in our own name, which is the wrong way to enter into God's presence! Instead of us approaching Him talking about all that we are, why not approach Him declaring all that He is!?!

You see, we need to enter into God's presence through "hallowing His name", not "hallowing our name." And we do this through giving Him thanks, praise, and worship! Yes, even if we feel like we are "good for nothing" then we should praise Him that He loves us despite our inadequacies. The bottom line is we need to stop magnifying our weaknesses and start magnifying His goodness! That is why Psalm 100:4 tells us to enter into His gates with thanksgiving because we magnify Him with thanksgiving (Psalm 69:30). And the result of us magnifying Him is our faith will soar!

So what we saw is that evidently approaching God by setting apart and consecrating His name is important for our prayer lives and thus, our lives in general. Do you think that this might be the reason why David's

23rd Psalm might begin with declaring this Name of God? Perhaps he was privy to the truth that Jesus would reveal that we are to always start our prayers by "hallowing" God's name.

So we then looked at this description of the LORD's nature & character a little deeper in John chapter 10 when Jesus said that He is our Shepherd. But when Jesus reveals Himself as the Shepherd He described in this parable, He doesn't just say He is any old shepherd – rather He says, "I am the good shepherd!"

Now one of the things that we learned that make the Lord a "Good" Shepherd is how Jesus said in John 10:10 that He came that we may have life and life more abundantly. We looked at how some other translations expound upon this verse saying, "I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance [to the full, till it overflows]" (The Amplified Bible). The Message Bible describes this life as a "more and better life than they ever dreamed of."

But we learned also that because the LORD is our Shepherd and because Jesus is that Good Shepherd, there are certain things that His sheep do to enter into those greener "gooder" pastures:

- a) They hear His voice.
- b) They are called by name.
- c) And they are led by Him.

Walking in these three things are absolute necessities in order to walk in the good life that Jesus came to provide for us – a point we will see later in today's teaching ...

WHEN SHALL I NOT WANT?

Now, let's move on to the second half of **Psalm 23:1** where David said, *"... I shall not want!"*

So, what he is basically saying here is, "Because the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want!" In other words, both the LORD being David's Shepherd and David knowing that the LORD is His Shepherd was the factor in him being able to make such a concrete statement like this. (We will get more into this at the end of today's teaching ...)

Now there is a large group of Christians out there who believe truths like this that say, "I shall not want," but automatically attribute these promises to spiritual things. And it is certainly true that we lack nothing and want for nothing with spiritual things. For, He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3) and He has given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness and has made us partakers of the divine nature (Second Peter 1:3-4). However, notice that this Psalm is not titled, "A psalm of David when he was singing about spiritual things ..." In fact, when David wrote this psalm, he wasn't thinking about Ephesians 1:3 and Second Peter 1:3&4! No, He was thinking about natural things just as he was not talking about a "spiritual bear" and a "lion demon" when he referred to God delivering Him from these things in First Samuel 17:34-36. No, David was referring to how the Lord, His Shepherd, would never leave him hanging in any area of his life, which included the financial arena.

You see, the Jews didn't believe like much of the church does today – that all of God's promises are referring to spiritual, heavenly things. They actually believed God desires to bless them in this life, and guess what? As a general rule, they are blessed in this life! Even today, God's blessing is upon the Jewish community, and they are generally successful people according to the world's standards. And I believe one of the reasons for that is because, yes, God's blessing is upon His original chosen people – which would reinforce

the truth that God wants His covenant people to be blessed financially. But I also believe another reason that the Jewish community walks in this blessing is because of the way they think (i.e. their mindset) ...

You see, they believe it's okay to have wealth. Yes, their hearts don't reject the truth that God wants us to prosper. Therefore, because they don't have the thing in their heart that might make one think that it's wrong to have things as a follower of God, they aren't repelling God's prosperity.

But the church tends to make the mistake of separating these things and only applying God's promises to eternity, while God cares about the whole man, not just our spirit. In fact, the Lord cares about your body, to where He has made provision for its redemption and glorification in the end. And I got news for you – He cares about your body now too! Yes, He always made sure that the Hebrews temple was sufficiently provided for and, in many cases, was extremely beautified. Therefore, our bodies, which are called the temples of the Holy Spirit, are meant to be provided for.

So as we enter into today's message, I encourage you to check your heart on this one truth because, in my experience, there are those out there who, when they hear promises just like this, will give you the traditional "Yeah, but ..." In other words, there are a lot of Christians out there who will give you all the reasons why this is *not* true all the time, giving a laundry list of "Yeah, but ..." to try and explain how this is not God's will for all of our lives.

Church, our experiences do not dictate the truth and validity of God's Word. Indeed, let God be true and every man (and experience of man) a liar (Romans 3:4)! Our prayer today should be, "Lord, elevate our experiences to match the standard of your truth rather than us watering down your truth to match our experiences." And everyone said, "Amen!"

You see, when it comes to some "believers," you would think that Psalm 23:1 said, "Thou shalt not want!" rather than "I shall not want." In other words, these Christians don't believe that we ever need to desire or want things. And while we certainly are forbidden to be covetous, that does not mean that we are in error if we are believing God for His prosperity.

These people also like to say things like, "Yeah, but we are all going to struggle at times!" Yet we shall boldly say, "I SHALL NOT WANT!" They also will say, "Yeah, but what about Job?" Again, I will say of the Lord, "I SHALL NOT WANT!" They even say, "I believe God might do it for some, but He won't do it for all." One more time – Our confession is, "I SHALL NOT WANT."

I encourage you, church – get on God's side by lining up your belief system with God's Word! Dare to believe that His Word *is* indeed true! This is getting out on the limb where the best fruit is! Amen.

DEFINING "WANT"

Now, this word translated "want" here comes from the Hebrew word *haser* which literally means this – "to lack, to be without, to have a need, to diminish or decrease."

Therefore, we can translate this verse – "I shall not *lack*" ... "I shall not *be without*" ... "I shall not *have a need*" ... "I shall not *diminish*" ... or "I shall not *decrease*." Amen to that!

Now it is important for us to recognize *why* the Lord is against us lacking and wanting for anything. Sure, he wants you to have the desires of your heart and He cares about your own individual needs. However,

the biggest reason the Lord wants you to prosper in natural things is so that you can be a blessing to others and that He might establish His covenant on the earth through you.

We've all heard those people who say, "Well, I'm alright. I don't need any more." Well, that's selfish thinking because they are only worried about having enough for themselves. If you are okay with your current financial condition, praise the Lord! But believe God for all that He has for you so that you can have it to give to others who are in need! Amen?

I'm of the persuasion that when we start thinking that way – how we can be a blessing into His kingdom and how we can be used to give more to His cause – then we are positioned to have the seed to do so. But just as the Holy Spirit said through the apostle Paul, "He supplies seed to the sower," (Second Corinthians 9:10) if we do not have seed to sow, then one possible reason for that might be that God doesn't see us as a sower. Amen or "oh, me"!

Again, this Hebrew word for "want" is translated various ways – such as to "lack, fail, have need, and decrease." It is used this latter way in the Book of Genesis to describe how the water "decreased" after the Flood. (It is interesting to note that as the waters of judgment arose the Lord also caused those same waters to lift up the ark. In Genesis 7:17, it says, "The waters increased and lifted up the ark, and it rose high above the earth")

Did you know that we serve a God who believes in INCREASE? **Psalm 115:14-15** says, *"May the Lord give you increase more and more, you and your children. May you be blessed by the Lord, who made heaven and earth."*

Now the context of this verse is the blessing that is upon the LORD's people. You see, this is what the blessing does: it increases people and things – ultimately making that blessed object the head and not the tail, above only and not beneath, etc. The blessing of the Lord always takes us higher, further etc. It always will eventually increase that blessed person or thing!

For example, in Isaiah 9:7, the Lord describes to us that His kingdom is an ever-increasing kingdom. Jesus taught us this throughout His parables – that the kingdom of God is growing, increasing and abounding. In First Corinthians 3:7, we are told that neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but God who gives the increase. In other words, people are not our source for growth; God is. But so many people fail to understand this. I thank God for men and women who have contributed to my growth, but we must keep a sober opinion that if we are growing, it is God who is giving the increase. Amen?

Now somebody might say, "Yeah, but what about John the Baptist? Didn't he say that he must decrease and Christ must increase?" Sure, he did, but that decrease was a specific part of God's plan for Jesus' ministry to gain more influence. On top of that, we should all strive to have Jesus increase in and through our lives: more of Him and less of us. So, we are not talking about increasing just for the sake of having "more for our four and our store." No, we are talking about increasing for the glory of God and that Jesus might be made known in and through our lives.

Another word that we saw for the meaning of this word "want" is "to diminish."

You know, in the world, everything seems to diminish. Our new car will lose that new car smell and new car shine. Our new home will eventually grow old and lose its excitement. Everything seems to diminish. But not in the kingdom; in the kingdom of God, things don't diminish; they grow, enlarge, or expand.

Proverbs 4:18 says, *"But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day."* This verse is describing the rising of the sun: As it rises, everything gets brighter and brighter, and then when it gets to a certain point, we have the "perfect day" (i.e. the full light of day). This is to be the life of the righteous and the blessed. Things get brighter and brighter to us – not gloomier and gloomier! Therefore, we ought not say things like, "If I didn't have bad luck, I'd have no luck at all." Rather, we should say, "Why do I need luck when I am blessed!?! I shall not diminish nor decrease because I am blessed! My path grows brighter and brighter!"

NOT LACKING ANYTHING

Finally, we see this word for "want" means "to lack." In fact, not only does the Hebrew word David used mean this, but it was also translated "lack" in other places too.

For example, it was used this way in **Psalms 34:8-10** where David said, *"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him! Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing."*

Notice that in verse 8 he begins by encouraging us to taste and see that the Lord is good. It is important to keep verses 9&10 in this context of the goodness of God because the not lacking here is a product of God being good.

Now when he said that there is no want (or lack) to those who fear Him, this fear of the Lord being described here is not the being afraid of God kind of fear. We are told that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). So, the fear of the Lord is an integral part of not lacking because it is the foundation of wisdom, and wisdom is certainly a big part of not lacking.

When David described the young lions lacking and becoming hungry, he was not referring to baby lions; this is a reference to lions that are in their prime. In other words, even these young lions that are at their peak of strength and can hunt better than at any other point of their lives can go without. They can have days where they don't catch their prey and eat. What this should teach us is that we need to guard against that subtle deception that if I just have it all together naturally speaking that I will not lack. No, we live in a world – in an economy – that even if you make all the right investments and are the perfect steward of your money, you can still lose everything.

This is why we are told in verse 9 that the "fear of the Lord" leads us away from lack. Why? Because respecting God's way of doing things and trusting Him in this area is what will guard us from experiencing the lack and suffering hunger that even the "young lions" of this world will suffer. Amen?

However, we are told in the latter half of verse 10 that those who seek the Lord – those who put their full confidence and trust in the Lord – will not lack any good thing. Again, we see the word "good." Not lacking any good thing is a promise from God for all of His children as we put Him first, reverencing and seeking Him first.

This word for "want & lack" is also used in Exodus chapter 16 to describe how when God rained manna down from heaven that everyone had exactly what they needed. The ones who gathered much had nothing left over and the ones who gathered little had no *lack* (**Exodus 16:18**). It was also used in **Deuteronomy**

2:7 & 8:9 to both describe how the children of Israel “lacked nothing” during their 40 years in the wilderness and how the land of promise was a land where they will lack nothing.

So, what this teaches us is that there are varying degrees to “I shall not want”: There is the not lacking *in the wilderness* to where they always had just enough manna and where they were certainly sustained, their clothes not wearing out and their feet not swelling (See Nehemiah 9:21).

But mind you now – the wilderness was not where God intended for them to live for those 40 years. In fact, their walking around the same mountain for that long was a result of unbelief, disobedience, etc. However, they still saw the miraculous provision of God and had their basic needs met consistently. Tell me that our God is not a merciful and gracious God!

But there is also the not lacking *in the promised land* which is where there was not just enough provision, but where there was more than enough provision! This is the land of the blessing, where the increase abounds and where God intends for us all to live.

You know, if I were to ask you if you wanted to experience either miracles or blessings in your life, which one would you choose? Most Spirit-filled believers would likely vote for miracles, and why? It is because miracles seem more fun and they sound better. But did you know that the majority of the miracles that the children of Israel experienced were while they were in Egypt and the wilderness. In other words, miracles were experienced the most in adverse, unpleasant circumstances. My point is – miracles usually come on the heels of crisis’. So, if you are praying for more miracles in your life, just be prepared to have some alarming situations that require miracles. No, saints, the best place to live is in the blessing because, while miracles bail us out of tough situations, the blessing will prevent tough situations.

Sure, living in this cursed & fallen world, we will have tribulations. Sure, we have the god of this world still here to deal with (i.e. the devil & his kingdom of darkness). There’s no way around these things. But God’s blessing can bring us through many of the natural & spiritual things that this world and the devil will throw at us.

Yes, God wants us to live in the blessing of the Promised Land, not the miracles of the Wilderness. Sure, there will be times when we will need miracles and where it seems as though we are in a wilderness, but that is not where we are intended to live. The miracles of the wilderness were not God’s best then, nor are they now. He wants us to abide in the blessing of Canaan! Amen!

And just because we are looking at mainly Old Testament examples, do not make the mistake of thinking it was different under the New Covenant ...

Many do. There are lots of people who are under the deception that Jesus was poor and, therefore, wants us poor. But that’s not true. How many poor people do you see having their clothes auctioned off? How many broke people do you see having a treasurer? No, in fact, in **Luke 22:35**, Jesus asked His disciples, “*When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?*” Their response was - “*Nothing.*”

So, Jesus’ disciples never lacked! And why? Because the Lord Jesus was their Good Shepherd. Therefore, they did not lack any good thing! Amen!

BECAUSE THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

And that is a point I want to leave you with today: Our not lacking is always on the heels of Him being our Shepherd! In other words, if the Lord is not truly our Shepherd – that is, if we are not hearing His voice, being led by Him, etc. – then we won't see the fullness of His provision. Yes, we are responsible to hear and know His voice and also to be led by Him as His sheep, because if we refuse to heed His instructions and follow Him, we are the problem, not God.

Let me give you a few Scriptures that verify this:

The first is found in a passage of Scripture that we looked at last week – **Luke chapter 12**. Here, Jesus made a promise to assure His disciples that they never need worry, but that God will always care for them.

In verses 22-30, Jesus exhorts us, His disciples, not to worry about what we should eat or how we will be clothed, etc. He tells us not to have an anxious mind about these things because our Heavenly Father knows what our needs are. Then, in **verse 31**, He says, *“But seek the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added to you.”*

Now Matthew's account of this says to seek **first** the kingdom of God and His righteousness: This is important to bring out because it is not as lucrative for us to seek the kingdom seventh, fifth or even second. No, we are commanded to seek the kingdom and His righteousness **first**. And as much as most Christians would like to think they are already doing this, I can assure you that most are not seeking first the kingdom of God. Yes, they might seek the kingdom of God to some degree, but the vast majority of Christians do not seek His kingdom **first** - that is, above their own basic necessities, their own desires, etc.

Now, as we've made the point of already, God does care about your needs and He wants to give you the desires of your heart, but He has called us to care more about His kingdom's cause than any other thing.

Now we are still talking about living the good life because how many of you know that experiencing the good life comes by laying our lives down for the greater good of the kingdom. This all needs to be said because experiencing God's best is greatly determined by seeking first His stuff above our own. Amen?

Then Jesus went on to say in **verse 32**, *“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”* Here, Jesus was establishing our hearts in a very important truth – that the reason we do not need to fear or worry about our needs being met is because it is our Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom!”

So, again, our belief system of understanding the goodness and grace of God is super important in receiving from Him. And this Scripture teaches us that He doesn't want to give us just enough; he wants to give us His kingdom – the very kingdom that He told us to seek. So, what the Lord was saying here is seek first the kingdom because the kingdom holds all the things that you need and desire anyway.

Many miss this because they think seeking the things is how they obtain them; No, Jesus taught us to seek His kingdom and we will obtain them! Why? Because every need and desire are found in His kingdom to start with. Amen!

Now a very important point here is how He referred to us as His “little flock.” Little flock of what? Of His sheep, of course! Now a flock of sheep was not a band of pets. You realize that, right? Back then a flock was a business! So, we are God’s business, and God will take care of us! Amen.

King David said in **Psalm 37:25**, *“I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.”* Hallelujah, this means that you can live to a ripe old age, and you will not see the righteous forsaken by the Lord or that righteous person’s children begging for bread!

Now someone might be thinking, “I think I have seen this, pastor.” Well, let’s define who’s the righteous. It is worth noting that **verse 26** goes on to say that he is ever merciful and lends; and his descendants are blessed. So, here David is assuming the righteous deeds accompanying the righteous man or woman. But my point is that this person is a GIVER, being ever merciful and lending.

You see, in my experience, it’s the people who act like they don’t want that don’t want. In other words, those who live their lives like they aren’t living in lack are the ones who don’t lack. What do I mean by that? I mean they aren’t living their life getting everything they can, canning everything they got and then sitting on the can. No, they are generous. They tithe and give offerings. They don’t live with that poverty mindset, but rather they see themselves as blessed to be a blessing. Those are the ones who don’t lack.

You see, this is what makes **Philippians 4:19** a reality in our lives ...

Most of us are familiar with this verse which says, *“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* However, people like to just claim that promise, but many fail to understand the context. What is the first word in that verse? It’s “And,” right? “And” is a conjunction, correct? Well, the premise for God supplying all our need is what? Us seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness based on Matthew 6:33 but is also based on this verse, because the church of Philippi gave generously to Paul in his need (see Philippians 4:13-18). But when we DO claim this promise and ARE walking in generosity, we are blessed “according to His riches in glory,” which is in proportion to how amazingly rich God is!

Saints, we need to live our lives seeking to be a blessing to God’s kingdom with everything – including our finances. And one thing I can assure of is when you do this – you cannot out-give God! He will bless the work of your hands and your seed sown! You shall not lack! And why? Because you have made the Lord your Shepherd! Amen!