

I Shall Not Want

#0639

Study given by W. D. Frazee—September 28, 1957

Take your Bibles and turn to the 23rd Psalm. I suppose this Psalm has been repeated and sung more than any of the 150 Psalms we have in the Bible. In all ages and among all nations it has been appreciated. This morning it sings to my heart a message I want to share with you.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the midst of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" Psalms 23.

If there is any sentiment evident in this beautiful Psalm it is that of contentment. That is exactly what the Lord wants to give everyone.

"A life centered in God is a life of completeness. Every want He has implanted, He provides to satisfy"
Education, page 41.

I would like to study Psalm 23:1 for a little while this morning.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." Psalm 23:1

Those who are acquainted with the Old English from which the Bible is translated will recognize that the word "want" spoken of here is dealing with that which might be lacking. David is saying, The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not lack anything.

It is another way of repeating that wonderful assurance that Paul gives:

"My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" Philippians 4:19.

Some days ago I began meditating on what the elemental needs of man are, what the basic requirements of man are. I do not mean to merely exist as a worm or a horse, but to live. I finally made a list of ten of them.

I started with light. We need light. The Bible says, "Truly the light is sweet." Has the Lord arranged to fill that need, to supply that light? Oh yes. That is what He put the sun for. That is why when the sun has gone down, he put the moon and the twinkling stars in the sky. The Bible says He made them to give light. He put them up there for light. The need is here. That which supplies the need is here.

I put down air. We will all agree there is a great need for air. How a person gasps for breath if there is any cutting off of the supply, either from outside or because of the ability of the body to take it in. Air is a great need. Perhaps the greatest need for life.

In harmony with our heavenly Father's wisdom and love, He has supplied in great abundance that which is needed the most, for what is nearer and more accessible than air? What is more universal than air? Light comes and goes, but air is with us always, unless we choose to shut it out.

Then I put down water. We all feel the need of that several times a day. We get thirsty. Every want that God has implanted, He provides to satisfy. From ten thousand springs we see water gushing forth to supply that need. We see the rivers coursing on their ways to supply the needs of tens of thousands in towns and cities. We see the rain coming down. What is God doing? He is arranging to satisfy the need for water.

I thought of food. I suppose at one time in my life I would have thought of food first. It is interesting when I lecture to high schools and junior high schools, and raise the question of what the body needs. What its life cells need.

Frequently the first answer is food. In the young life there seems to be a constant sense of a need along that line, and that is normal. But when we get down and think it through, we recognize we need water more urgently than we need food, and we need air more urgently than we need food.

David said in the Psalm, "Thou preparest a table before me." God has arranged to supply our need. When He led His people out in the wilderness and there was nothing out there in that bare desert for them, He gave the corn of heaven. Man ate angel's food.

God has taught us to pray in the Lord's prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." It is God who is supplying our need of food. And in this shepherd's song, food is not overlooked.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." Psalm 23:1-2

The margin says pastures of tender grass. How sheep love that tender grass. See a flock of sheep move into a meadow of tender grass. They get busy. The shepherd has brought them to the place of feeding.

God in a very literal way is providing us with these elemental needs of life. He is providing us with light, air, water and food. But I would like to go beyond that this morning. While I do not doubt that David is thinking of want basically in the sense of our requirements, I rejoice to know this morning that our Shepherd is not content merely to give us the things we have to have. He is not satisfied to give us merely the things that will keep us from dying. He tells us:

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" John 10:10.

Jesus is interested not merely in extending our life. He wants to increase it in height and depth and breadth. He wants us to live a more abundant life which is completely and increasingly satisfied. After all, to satisfy us means more than length of days.

I have often thought I would rather live one day as a man than a hundred years as a turtle. On the Gallapagos Islands some of those ancient turtles live to be more than a hundred years old. If I had my choice, give me one day as a man and I will go to sleep. Let the turtle live on. So it is not merely length of days we seek. It is an abundant life which satisfies.

There is a message I would like to have God crowd into our minds this morning until we are stuffed full, like you pack a suitcase when you are anxious to take everything along with you. The message is that God wants to completely satisfy every longing of the heart. Not merely the craving for food or the hunger for air, but every desire of the mind and soul God longs to completely, abundantly, and eternally satisfy. And He will be satisfied with nothing less.

"Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass" Psalms 37:3-5.

Ah friends, no one but God could do that. No one but God has the resources to promise such a thing and carry it out. But the greatest reason why only God can do this is because no one but God knows what the desires of your heart are. Any of you that have lived longer than a few years have gotten exactly what you thought you wanted and found out you didn't want it at all. Has anyone ever had that experience? Well, some of you are not thinking as fast as others.

Believe me friends, any man that lives very long and looks over his life record honestly, meditatively, analytically, will agree that there are some things he wanted very much in life, and when he got them he found out they weren't satisfying. I am not talking just about bad things. Certainly the world is full of disappointment that comes from people seeking after bad things. There is many a man that has set his eye on some wicked thing and found it was very bitter in the end instead of sweet. But I am not thinking so much of that. No. There are many things that may be perfectly good in themselves but lack the satisfying quality that brings the thanksgiving that Psalm 23 deals with.

God has arranged not merely to satisfy wants in general, but your individual wants. You are an individual. What you really want down inside is an individual matter. I suppose we have found that true with food. We sometimes sit at the table and hear someone raving about some dish, and we say we will try some of that. We take some, and if we are where we feel perfectly free to say exactly how we feel with no inhibitions, we would probably say, I don't see what you see in that.

It is interesting to notice the way people react to different foods. I know some people who like mangos. There are other people who say mangos are full of turpentine and don't see why anyone would want to eat them. I always thought watermelons were very good, but my mother used to say she would just as soon stir up some sugar and water and drink it. She didn't see why anyone would like watermelon.

My point is we are individuals. While we may share certain likes with others, deep down inside there is something about you that is unlike anyone else. And merely dishing out in a wholesale manner what is supposed to please the crowd might tickle your fancy, might divert your mind, might entertain you, but it can never basically, fully, deeply, and eternally satisfy your mind and soul.

You are an individual, but you are an individual with life ahead of you. If you are eighty years old, I still say life is ahead of you, very much ahead of you. And because it is ahead of you, you cannot see and you cannot know all you desire and will desire, or all that God will arrange and provide to satisfy. You can't know that. The answer of being satisfied is not in knowing it, but in knowing the Shepherd.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." Psalm 23:1

David was not merely voicing a satisfaction concerning the present, but regarding the future also. The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall never want.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Psalm 23:6

How different from that is the lament of thousands who say, Life always gives me a raw deal. I seem to get the bad pennies. I am always having a hard time. By the way, the man who wrote this Psalm had some experiences that I suppose we wouldn't choose. He had to run for his life over and over again. Once, when he was playing for the king, the king took the javelin that was in his hand and threw it right at David. For years he had to flee from place to place, living in a cave, living out in the woods, living in the deserts, and never knowing day or night, sleeping or waking, when he might be surrounded with enemies who were bent on taking his life.

No, this Psalm is not the song of one who had no difficulties, no troubles. Right in the middle of that Psalm you get the picture.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." Psalm 23:4

David walked in the valley of the shadow of death. Sometimes we think of that as coming to the end of a long life, gradually getting weaker and sinking down in slumber. But I am inclined to think that as David wrote this he was thinking of the many experiences he had when he literally had talked with death. When death was at his right hand. When death was right on him.

He says:

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Psalm 23:4

Why? Because I have a group of soldiers with me who are expert in war? No. Thou art with me. The satisfaction is in the Shepherd. And believe me dear friends, there is only one experience that can fully satisfy the want of the soul, and that is Jesus Himself. Every other need that God has arranged within us, and the satisfaction that He provides, is for the purpose to teach us.

We started out this morning with the need for light. I read the words of Jesus:

"I am the light of the world" John 8:12.

David sings:

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear?"
Psalm 27:1.

Yes, the Lord is my light. As I read that my mind goes back to one of the earliest songs I learned in Sabbath School:

"The Lord is my light, then why should I fear?
By day and by night His presence is near;
He is my salvation from sorrow and sin,
This blessed persuasion the Spirit brings in."

The Lord is my light and my salvation. What light is to this world, Jesus is to my soul.

Take this matter of water. Jesus was at the feast of Tabernacles. As the priest took that flagon of water from the brook and poured it out in the presence of the multitude, recalling to mind water from the rock in the days of Moses in their desert wanderings, Jesus catching up the figure of the moment says:

"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scriptures hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive" John 7:37-39.

So whenever you and I are thirsty and long for a cooling drink, let us remember that God is seeking to teach us that what water is to the thirsty body He

Himself is to the longing soul. Nothing but water can satisfy the one who is thirsty. Nothing but Jesus can satisfy the longing of the heart.

I think of the experience of the one who was termed the wisest man, King Solomon. He was one of the richest men this world ever saw, and blessed with a mind far above any mind we know today. In the height of his glory, he decided he would fully satisfy every longing of his heart.

You can read about it in Ecclesiastes. He tells about it in retrospect. He tells of the different things he did. He tells of the building he erected, the gardens he planned and planted. He tells of his gathering of treasure, gold and silver and precious stone. He tells of his retinues of servants, his fleets bringing spices and gold and other things from distant lands.

He tells of his interest in various phases of life, his study into botany and zoology and into every field of science.

He tells of his making of books, his writing of proverbs. He tells of his songs and his interest in music, both original and that which he got from others. He tells of his choirs and orchestras.

He tells of all the efforts he made to fully satisfy the longing of his mind and heart. And when he got through he wrote the book of Ecclesiastes saying it is all vanity. Emptiness. It does not satisfy.

Why not? I just love music. If I could have more music I think I could be satisfied.

Solomon says, No. I have had all of it.

I love to eat. If I could have all the things I want to eat I know it would satisfy me.

Solomon says, No. I have tried that. I have had everything. It doesn't satisfy.

But if I could just do things. I love to do things. If I could get out and plan developments, sub-divisions, gardens, buildings, and have the money and men to carry them out, I know that would satisfy me.

Solomon says, I have done it to the tune of millions and millions of dollars, and it doesn't satisfy.

So he wrote down in the last chapter of his book:

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth,
while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh,
when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them"
Ecclesiastes 12:1.

Oh friends, God help us to see it is not merely the wicked and abominable things of this world from which we need to be delivered. It is the human tendency to chase after things and achievements as the answer to the craving of the human soul.

There is one thing the human soul longs for. It is a fellowship with its Maker. How often that desire is not understood. The cravings are not interpreted. The enemy suggests that what we really want is something else. He suggests bad things and good things. The enemy doesn't care what we chase after just as long as it is not fellowship with Jesus which the enemy knows will abundantly satisfy us and keep us from all his allurements.

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth,
while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh,
when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."
Ecclesiastes 12:1

As I look back over the pages of history it seems to me that if there is any man to be pitied it is Solomon, the wisest of men, the richest of men, but one of the most disillusioned and frustrated and disappointed of men. I thank God I can say truthfully this morning, I wouldn't trade places with him.

God knows as I look back over my life I can see that I have made mistakes. I am sorry for them. But I can testify in my soul that God satisfies me. I have no regrets over the way my God has led me. I can say my Shepherd is a good Shepherd. He leads me to the green pastures. He makes me go by the still waters. I love Him. He satisfies. I believe that every want He has implanted He provides to satisfy.

Some of our desires are a bit perverted, a bit twisted. I notice that mechanics who know how to deal with machinery will listen to an engine and say it is a little off here, a little off there. They reach in with a wrench and make an adjustment and say it is all right now. Or they may reach in with some pliers and straighten something that has been twisted.

In a sense every sin is just a proper impulse and longing that is twisted. The devil is no creator. He never originated anything. All the Devil ever did in heaven or on earth is take something God has given and pervert it, twist it, and change it. That's all. So when you study sin you will find it is a distortion, a twisting, a perversion.

Thank God that through the Gospel we see how Jesus is in the straightening process. He is in the business of restoring to its proper place and its proper function every desire and longing of the human soul. He is not going to stifle any of them. I recognize, of course, that what we are saying this morning is far different from what the enemy says.

The devil is telling you don't get around God or He will take something away from you that you dearly love. Don't go around Him unless you want to be a monk or a nun or something like that, because the nearer you get to Him the further you will get from the pleasures and satisfying things of life.

My Bible tells me he is a liar, and I believe it. One reason I believe it is because he has lied to me so many times. I cannot have confidence in him.

The Lord is my Shepherd. Let me tell you that what we experience here of joy and satisfaction in the things of God is a fellowship of love. That is the great longing of the soul. Let me tell you that this is just the beginning of life.

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus"
Ephesians 2:4-7.

In the ages to come He is going to demonstrate His wonderful kindness and His eternal love. A million years from now our increasing desires will be increasingly satisfied. A million years from now our expanding plans will find expanding fulfillment. There the greatest enterprises will be carried forward, the largest plans launched and achieved. Every desire of the soul will be satisfied.

I read the wonderful picture of life in the earth made new:

"They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" Isaiah 65:21, 22-24

Just two weeks ago today I got the sweetest little example of this, and I believe God is pleased when we notice the little providence of His love. Don't you?

I was walking with a friend of mine in the woods near the Laurelbrook school. He had taken me out to a bluff where we could look way out over the valley. It was a marvelous view.

As we walked through the woods a thought came into my mind how nice a good cold drink of water would taste when we get back to the school. It was a warm afternoon. I hardly had time to ponder that when I saw a gurgling little spring coming out the side of a bank.

I said in my soul, Isn't this nice. The Lord lets me get thirsty, and then has the spring right there. I didn't have to wait an hour until we got back to the school.

You say, It isn't always that way. No it isn't. But God has promised me that in the kingdom of God He is going to demonstrate to me that everything was just

exactly like that, and I will say, Yes Lord, it was. Everything comes just when it is needed and just when we really would want it if we could see what God sees. God never leads his children otherwise than they would choose to be led if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him.

"The King of love my Shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am His,
And He is mine forever.

Where streams of living water flow
My ransomed soul He leadeth,
And, where the verdant pastures grow,
With food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish, oft I strayed,
But yet in love He sought me,
And on His shoulder gently laid,
And home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark veil I fear no ill
With Thee dear Lord beside me,
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
Thy cross before to guide me.

Thou spreadest a table in my sight,
Thy unction grace bestoweth,
And oh what transport of delight
From Thy pure chalice floweth.

And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd! I would sing Thy praise
Within Thy house forever."

Oh, let us all join in this confession of faith, this expression of loving trust with David this morning.

Turn to Psalm 23 and let us sing together this beautiful Psalm, these words of loving trust. Let it be the expression of every heart.

And should there be one here this morning who has never known the Shepherd's love and caring in your soul, would you not this morning choose Him as yours?

If you would this morning say, Lord I want to be yours, He will say to you, You are mine. You can say as an expression of choice this morning, The Lord is my Shepherd. He is mine.

Should there be one here this morning like that sheep Jesus told about who had wandered away, let me tell you the Shepherd is seeking you. He loves you. For your sake He would leave the ninety and nine in the fold and go after that which is lost until He finds it.

Believe me, He is near at hand. He is at your side. If you will choose Him to be yours, you will be His again.

Let us express our choice, our love, and our trust together in these beautiful words:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Psalm 23

May God add His blessing, and fill our hearts with that abundant satisfaction which it is His joy to bestow.

Precious Lord, bless these whose hearts reach out after Thee. Abundantly satisfy every longing soul. Just now may Thy good Spirit enter in and dwell. May we rejoice in the loving fellowship of the Shepherd who gave His life for His sheep. We ask it in His name. Amen.

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