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# I Shall Not Want

Radio Message by Dwight Porter, D.D.

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WHAT a marvelous Psalm is the twenty-third. Its entire content is verifying the statement, I SHALL NOT WANT, "Jehovah is my shepherd." This Psalm is a song that comes to us out of the night. Within the deepest darkness the hope of a bright dawn is established. The shadow of death flees. The table is prepared with the cups overflowing with heaven's bountiful supply. "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." What a wonderful final assurance is this magnificent declaration. My only response can be, "I will fear no evil" and "I shall not want."

## Identity of the Shepherd

Of course, the Good Shepherd is the Lord Jesus Christ. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Hebrews 13:20). Being our Resurrection and Life, He is Victor over death and the grave and is the Risen One to lead His sheep through the valley of the shadow of death.

"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). "And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Peter 5:4). David had a real need so He claimed the Lord as his Shepherd! How thrilling to see the personal appropriation of the Lord for Himself. "The Lord is MY rock, and MY fortress, and MY deliverer; MY God, MY strength, in whom I will trust; MY shield, and the horn of MY salvation, and MY high tower" (Psalm 18:2).

The Lord's people are classified as His sheep. "But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock" (Psalm 78:52). "So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks forever; we will show forth thy praise to all generations" (Psalm 79:13). "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27).

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It is impossible for the sheep of Christ's pasture to ever be in want through any lack or limitation on the part of the Shepherd. "For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9). "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing" (Psalm 34:10).

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." Pastures are for rest and food. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). We are to rest and feed upon the Word of God. This is the opportunity open to every child of God.

"He leadeth me beside still waters." Sheep will not drink in troubled or rippling waters. It is the shepherd's responsibility to find adequate nourishment for his sheep. Still waters signify confidence and quietness. "For thus saith

the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not" (Isaiah 30:15). Living waters are a symbol of the Holy Spirit. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:37-39). What glorious refreshment the Lord has provided for His own. "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied" (Acts 9:31). "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit" (I Thess. 1:6).

"He restoreth my soul." Restore means "to turn back." When the sheep go astray, the shepherd must turn them back into the right way. Remember, sheep have no sense of direction and cannot see but a short distance. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). "I have gone astray like a lost sheep. Seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments" (Psalm 119:176).

"He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness." We are a people to be guided by our Lord. "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide with mine eye" (Psalm 32:8). "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:24).

His motivation for such leadership is His name's sake. "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright" (Psalm 11:7). "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments" (Psalm 119:137). To be sheep of his pasture means we will not walk in forbidden paths, but will turn our feet away from all unrighteousness and follow the Lord in paths of righteousness and peace.

## Going through the Valley

In the Hebrew, this shadow signifies a shade or an illusion. There is no substance in it. Death is only a shadow, not an actual fact. The child of God *never* dies. "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:26). Our life is hid with Christ in God. Our great Shepherd has made His own life the guarantee for the continuance of those who believe in Him. "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19).

Do not despair in the valley, for there must be a mountain top on the other side, for it takes two ranges to produce a valley. "Though I walk through the valley." This journey is after the valley of the shadow has been entered. It is the process of death. It is a complete denial of unconsciousness in death, and a demonstration of conscious reality.

"I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." Here you will notice that the sheep is talking to the shepherd. It is always evil that produces fear. Its source never comes from God. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of the power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (II Timothy 1:7). Fear produces torment (I John 4:18). The Presence of the

Lord dispels this horrible possession. THOU ART WITH ME. "But straightway Jesus spoke unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid" (Matthew 14:27).

### **The Rod and Staff**

It is a rod on one end and on the other a crook. The rod is used to hit the sheep on the nose for correction and to beat back the wild animal. The staff is to help lift the sheep when it has fallen on a ledge of danger. This instrument depicts the strength and defense power of the Spirit. We need both. "And now, saith the Lord which formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious, in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength" (Isaiah 49:5). "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, the Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt" (Jeremiah 16:14).

### **A Prepared Table**

The rich nourishment needed by the sheep is the shepherd's responsibility. God supplies our every need. "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips" (Psalm 63:5).

Before reclining at a feast, the guest is anointed with oil. This oil is the symbol of the Holy Spirit. "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (I John 2:27). The overflowing cup is the symbol of abundance. "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6). "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (II Corinthians 4:5).

Notice His abundance in grace: "And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 1:14). God's abundant mercy is provided for His own. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I Peter 1:3). "Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, Our Savior" (Titus 3:6).

In His Son, God has given us all things. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32)

### **Two Followers**

All of our life two provisions follow us. They are identified with the Good Shepherd - GOODNESS and MERCY.

They could be identified as the two sheep dogs who care for the flock. "Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? The goodness of God endureth continually" (Psalm 52:1). "Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts; we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple" (Psalm 65:4). "And I will fill to the full the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 31:14). "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about" (Psalm 32:10).

"I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." It must be our eternal abode in heaven. "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

This is the prepared city the patriarchs were looking forward to. "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:10,16). We are moving toward the great resurrection when our body shall be fashioned like unto His. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Psalm 17:15).

Within this one Psalm, we move from the shadow of the valley of death into the house of the Lord to dwell forever. This means we must accept the gift of eternal life while on our earthly sojourn. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord" (Romans 6:23). We acknowledge our personal sin. In repentance, we turn to the only sacrifice acceptable to God for our sins. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Are you going to perish in your sin or possess eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you willing to get down on your knees and tell the Lord that which He already knows about your sin? Will you trust in the finished work of Christ in your eternal behalf? If so, you no longer possess fear; for the Lord is with you. With David you can say in conclusion, "I SHALL NOT WANT."

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