

Psalm 23:1b

"...I shall not want."

WOW! That sounds like a promise to hold on to. Let's see----I want a new car (with no payments, of course), new clothes, enough money in savings to be able to retire just on the interest.....and the list goes on and on. Wait a minute, though! Is this really what God is promising us through this psalm? No, indeed. So, let's look at it to see.

"I"----a personal pronoun. Self. Me. So, I can put my name in place of "I". Try it. " _____ " shall not want. This is a personal statement that I am about to make.

"shall"----a couple of the meanings given to this word are: 'is determined to', or 'must', 'used to express a command or exhortation'. Remember when you were in English class and were listening (hopefully) to the teacher talk about imperative words? These were the ones that designated a mood used in commands. So, it sounds like this word is commanding me to be (or not to be) something. The next word reinforces that.

"not"----a word used to express refusal, or negation. Again, it seems to be almost a command. So, what is it that I am not supposed to do?

"want"----this seems to be the part of the verse where we get tangled in our thinking. The word 'want' means 'to be deficient in', 'to be lacking'. So, if I shall not want----then what am I NOT supposed to be deficient in, or lacking in. The Hebrew word for 'want' is *chacer* (pronounced khaw-sare') implying to fail, lessen, be abated, decrease, lack, fall. While many do not like any version of the Bible except the King James Version (and perhaps we can have a lesson on the versions, soon), I enjoy some of the other versions, too (although not all of them). But, the Amplified Bible states Psalm 23:1 in this way: The Lord is my shepherd [to feed, guide and shield me]; I shall not lack. Now, that is a statement that I can stand on!!

When we think of the verse with an attitude of gratitude instead of an attitude of "give-me-tude", we realize that God's blessing to us are too numerous to count. Many, many times in the Scripture we are told how God provided for His people. Let's look at a few.

Deuteronomy 2:7----to get the full meaning for God's blessings in this verse, we would need to look back at how God led His children and provided for them during their wilderness wanderings. We won't take the time to do that in this lesson. But, the verse ends with "...these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee; thou has lacked nothing."

I Kings 17:6, 16. In verse 6, we see that God sent ravens to bring bread and meat to Elijah. In verse 16, we see that when the widow thought that all hope was gone, she still obeyed God and

provided for the prophet Elijah----and as a result her small amount of meal 'wasted not', and the cruse of oil did not 'fail'.

II Kings 4:6. In this chapter we see that a widow needed money to pay debts. Elisha asked her 'what hast thou', and she said she only had a pot of oil. She sent her sons to borrow vessels as instructed by the prophet, and when she had filled all of those vessels, she was able to sell the oil and pay the debt. I have heard some ministers state that the woman and her sons show a lack of faith because they did not get more vessels, and therefore could have sold more oil, and had some 'money left over'. However, I do not look at her in this way. God promised to provide for her needs----and the vessels that she had were enough for that. God only promises to satisfy our needs, not our greeds.

Matthew 14:20. Jesus provided food for the multitude from five loaves and two fishes. He blessed the small amount of food, and at the end of the meal 5000 men (plus women and children) had enough to eat, and the scraps filled 12 baskets. Have you ever wondered why 12 baskets, not 11 or 13? Could it have been for a message to the 12 disciples that God is able to provide liberally for His children? Food for thought.

If God provided for these (and there are many more examples in the Scripture), won't He do the same for us? Think about it. Have we read I Timothy 6:7,8 recently? "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content." So if we have food, clothing, and a shelter (often included with raiment), we should be content. But, hasn't God blessed us with so much more. Most of us have a bank account, at least one car, a home (which may belong to us and the bank, but it still is a roof over our head), electricity, running water and indoor plumbing, heating and air (in the home and the car), a bed on which to rest, and the list could go on and on. So, it would seem that the Lord is our shepherd----and we lack not. May our prayer be, "Lord, the next time I begin to dwell on my have-nots, please remind me again of all of those things which I do have-----the best of which is knowing You as my shepherd. Amen."

I hope that you will continue to read Psalm 23, and take note of many of the blessing and provisions that David mentions. Verse 2: resting in green pastures, still waters from which to drink. Verse 3: restoration for my soul, paths of righteousness for my feet. Verse 4: lack of fear even if going through the valley of the shadow of death (a quick note: remember that without light there can be no shadow), the comfort of His leadership with His rod and staff. Verse 5: a bountiful table prepared for me in the presence of my enemies, anointing for my head, and a cup that is not just partially filled, but is running over! Verse 6: His goodness and mercy following me on my path, and finally a dwelling place in His house.

At a later date, I hope to be able to place further emphasis on some of these verses. But, for now, may I leave you with a request. Let us always be thankful!! For God is good!!