

Living a Life Without Lack

By Bobby Schuller

Today's sermon is on this idea of Psalm 23, that we truly live a life without lack when we live in the kingdom of God. And this month, I want you to see that that truly is a reality and my hope that is a shift takes place in your thinking and in our thinking as a congregation, and that from that change in thinking, it's crystallized into new behavior and to a new reality.

Psalm 23 is one of the most beloved, probably the most famous and beloved passage in the whole Bible, and we'll be meditating on it this month. And we're actually going to be also looking at a book by an old friend of mine, Dallas Willard, who was also a friend to many pastors and people in this church, kind of our generations C.S. Lewis. He passed away about five years ago, and this book was published posthumously, and it's very digestible. I recommend that you read it if you're looking for something to chew on. If you want to feel relaxed, it's a good book. And this is based on a lecture he would give to pastors on Psalm 23.

And so we're going to dive into a lot of this, and one of the things that Dallas talked about to his students and many of the people that studied him, is when you quote him, don't cite him. And so I'm basically telling people when you quote him, he requested that we literally plagiarize. So counter to my training and normally I like to cite everyone,

I'm not going to say Dallas Willard says this and Dallas Willard says that; just trust if it sounds intelligent, it's Dallas Willard and not Bobby Schuller. And a lot of what I'm going to say today is not original but per his request, I'm going to sort of talk about it in that way.

So he said if I were going to a different title for this book, I would call it do not fear, or fear not. There's a lot of fear in the world today. There's a lot of conscious fear: stuff where we can label, say we're actually afraid of, but there's a lot of unconscious fear, too. Worry, a hurry, a drive. It's not a drive of desire it's a drive of fear. It's motivated by lack, scarcity, not enough. Maybe you felt this way. You don't have enough money. You don't have money to pay my bills. I don't have enough time. I don't have enough health. I don't have enough friendship, companionship, kindness, love in my life. I don't have enough freedom. I can't make the decisions I want. I can't do the things I want to do. I can't pursue my dreams because of all those other things.

So very often when that happens to us, our life and our world begins to shrink. As we begin to focus on everything we don't have, we have this mentality that everything is scarce. It's not enough. And when that happens, we become protective of what we do have, and angry at those who don't give us what we need: love, friendship, money, pay, time, freedom, etc.

And so much of the sort of bad behavior in our world is actually not coming from a place of evil, vile, anything like that. It's coming from a

place of fear. It's coming from a place of lack, coming from a place of insufficiency.

Very often, when you yell at your spouse, it's probably because you feel like you lack something in your marriage that you need. There's all these deeper, unconscious things that drive many of our behaviors, and I believe that at the heart of that is this feeling of lack.

I remember when I got this credit card, and my mom, bless her, she said if you ever have an emergency, you just need a hamburger or something, I'll tell you what, just use this card. It came in the mail. It was a Discover card. Came to my college PO Box. It was a live card. I didn't request it or anything. It just arrived one day and all I had to do was call this number and activate it, which I did. And she said if you just need a couple bucks here and there and you don't have any cash, I don't want to you go hungry, I don't want you to run out of gas. Use it for emergencies. I said okay, mom, that's a great idea.

End of the month, I got this credit card bill. It was like \$826 dollars. And I was looking at this bill. You have to understand, when I was in college, eight hundred dollars is a lot now, but when I was in college eight hundred dollars was like more than I made in a month making cappuccinos at Barnes and Noble. And I just looked at this and I was like oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no! They were all emergencies.

So with trembling hands, I went to my mom and she graciously paid the card and graciously cut it up. Lost that privilege. But we do this

right? Our world allows us to spend money before we make it. And so we do that. And that creates a sort of a fear: will I have the money to pay the bill? And then it allows us to not have to pay the whole thing, but to pay a little bit over time.

And these types of things in our society and they sort of nurture bad behavior. And we find ourselves, very often in this place where we just don't know what we're going to do financially. Or maybe it's a health issue. You just don't know what you're going to do with your health. Or maybe you have all the money in the world and you just still feel like you lack something: purpose, meaning, time, love, family.

I remember Simon Sinek, who's a great sort of leadership thinker and writer, shared this story about a gathering he went to with some of the world's most powerful people. It was a small room, maybe 150 people were there, and there was a lecturer, I don't know who it was, he didn't say, and they asked this question: how many of you in this room have reached your financial goals? And almost every single hand in the room went up. And then the teacher said: how many of you feel successful? And he said almost every single hand went down. To me that's lack. Its insufficiency, something's missing; it's an unsatiated life.

Many of us feel that. We get that sense. So when we read in the scripture that we are invited through Jesus Christ to live in a new reality where Christ is king and where we lack nothing. And Christ invites us to live by faith and not by fear, and believe that that world actually exists

and that we're actually in it now. It's called the kingdom of God. The reign of God. The range of God's effective will. That when we live in that place, our scarcity, our insufficiency, our feelings of lack that drive so much of the things we don't like about ourselves: our addictions, our fears, our sleepless nights, a lot of those things begin to diminish if not go away entirely.

And this is at the heart of the gospel, the kingdom of God. Not just I go to heaven when I die, but that heaven is actually made available to us today if we choose to simply change the way we think and as a community turn our hearts towards God. In the kingdom of God, there is no lack. And that we live in a world that God loves us and God wants to provide for us, and that we don't have to be afraid.

Maybe you're coming here today, and you do feel worried, stressed out, anxious, and maybe you can't always put your finger on it. I want to tell you today fear not.

Every time in the Bible, almost every time when the angels are about to announce.. God's about to do something great in someone's life, you know what's the first thing they say? Fear not! It's the most common command in the Bible. Fear not! Don't be afraid so that God can come in and do something wonderful in your life.

How we think about God affects so much of how we experience life. Maybe we don't think about God. Maybe we don't believe God exists, or if we do think God exists, we think He's uninterested. We're dius, for

example. Or maybe if we think He's involved, maybe He's mad at me, or maybe He's punishing me for something I did, or my parents did, and I want you to know God isn't like any of that. That God loves us, and that God wants to change the way we think about Him.

Now put your thinking caps on because just briefly we're going to get a little philosophical. This is one of the first assertions that is often made by Dallas. I said I wasn't going to talk about Dallas but I can't help it. A person is a mind. A person is first and foremost a mind. A mind with a will. A mind that can make decisions, that can act in the world around him or her, and that when changes take place in a person's mind, then down the road other changes begin to take place in the will and then affectively in society, in churches, in schools, etc.

So the first, the source, the root of all change first happens in the mind and how we perceive the world around us. Jesus said if your eyes are good, your whole life will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. What does that mean? It has to do with the world view. The way you see the world and think about the world and think about God affects your body, it affects your soul, it affects your behavior, it affects how you engage with your spouse and your kids and the people you work with. And when we think wrongly about God, as so many pastors teach wrongly, it can cause us to have this weird thing going on in our body where we're always afraid, we

always think God's mad at us. God's not mad at you. God loves you.
God's about to do something great in your life.

So what we dwell on affects our will, but the problem in the world today is self obsession. Now I want to be careful here because there is a certain type of religious person that will deny themselves so much that they don't have a self, and that's not what I'm talking about here. You need to care for yourself, be kind to yourself. But Christianity teaches us this weird thing, it sounds a bit dark, and it's the death to self. And it's the opposite of what society teaches us today. Our society is self obsessed, and people are self obsessed. Is anyone here obsessed with yourself from time to time, raise your hand. So everybody that's not raising their hand is either a saint or a liar, including me! Don't feel guilty. Don't feel guilty that you sometimes dwell on yourself. You think about what am I missing and what am I owed, and why is my husband not acting this way, or why is my wife not acting this way, or why are my kids behaving this way and saying these things to me, and why is this happening at my job. And all of those questions have to do with yourself. What am I owed? Why hasn't this happened for me? Where am I going to go? Where is my next meal going to come from? Where is my next paycheck going to come from?

And so the more we focus on ourselves, the smaller the world gets. And many of the sort of new age type gurus and teachers today who sometimes have some very good things to say in this regard are actually

making the problem worse. Keep focusing on yourself. You are god, you are the center of the universe, you are everything that matters. And this leads to a sort of self destructive narcissism that freezes the person. The myth of narcissist itself is this idea of this guy who just stared at himself in the water for so long he froze. And so many of us are that way that we just freeze because we're so worried about our life and about what's going to happen. And although your life matters, let me tell you, God cares more about your life than you do.

Let God do the caring. Let God do the worrying for your life. Let the king who owns a cattle on a thousand hills care for His kids. He might be the king, but that makes you a prince or a princess. Don't worry, He'll provide for your needs. It'll be okay. You can take your mind off of self obsession and you can put it on things that are beautiful and glorious and good that is the Lord. Lord, first to focus on Him and His light and His goodness, and that will loosen your grip on yourself and allow you to be kind to your neighbor, even when they don't give you the things you need: to be loving, to be listening, to give peace away, to give kindness away selflessly and naturally out of who you are becoming because your mind is changing from a shrinking world and a self obsession, to an expanding world that is the kingdom of God.

And it is this thing that Jesus preaches about the most – the kingdom of God, the reign of God, the Father's world, which is so vast and hard to explain.

And so I say to you today, turn your mind first towards God and away from your problems, and watch how that begins to actually change your problems. I promise you, this will happen.

Romans chapter 1, verse 18, Paul says “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. Since what may be known about God is plain to them.” So they know God, but they suppress the truth about God. “Because God has made it plain to them.” You know what he’s saying? There’s actually people in the world that God has picked to see Him and understand Him clearly, but because of their desire for whatever, evil, they turn their back on this knowledge, and even suppress it to people who may not be as able to see spiritual things as they are. I actually believe that’s a spiritual gift – that there are some people, in this church and other places that just are born with a natural inclination towards the kingdom of heaven, towards God and the spiritual things. And many of these people become the most harmful people because they willingly, knowing deep down inside God’s power and life, abundance and love, turn their back on Him to become cruel and selfish and all these other things that we don’t want.

Verse 20: “For since the creation of the world, God’s invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen being understood from what has been made so that people are without excuse.” Do you know what He says there? It’s just plain! Paul just says

it's just plain. It's all around us. God's creation and glory. These new trees here, which I think are very nice. Thank you, Chad. God made those! They grow, you put a seed in a pot and it just grows. It's amazing.

And the world is so wonderful. Even when I was driving to church this morning after a big rain last night, the sky was clear and there's water on the road and there's like golden light coming off in front of my face. I was talking to Ernie about it. It's just beautiful. You could see the stars this morning, before I got up. It's just gorgeous. And as the psalmist says, the whole world sings of His glory.

This is the default. The default is to believe in God. Ninety percent of Americans believe in God, according to a recent Pew Research thing, but 100% of people in, for example, the African jungles, believe in God. Children believe in God until they're taught no, no, there is no. The default is to just look around and wonder, there must be a maker, a doer, creator of all of this.

And this is what Paul is saying. That there's some people it's made plain to them to know that there's a God, and even yet, because of their wickedness and the desire for selfishness, they turn their back on the Lord and on His ways, His ways of loving your enemies, caring for those who are in need, living at peace, etc., and all the things that we love about being disciples of Jesus.

One of the greatest discoveries, actually, now I'm not a scientist, right? I'm a pastor. I don't know what I'm talking about. I'm not a

physicist. But I'm going to try anyway, choir, is that okay? One of the greatest discoveries that was made by Einstein in the 20th century is that all matter is energy. That's amazing. I read one physicist who said all matter is frozen light. So the pew you're sitting in is frozen light. It's not cold, is it. So imagine you're holding in your hand the tiniest atom, you can't see it, you can't feel it, and yet you spilt that atom and think of all the power that flows, that's trapped in this one tiny thing.

All this to say this is God's world. And though, many of us, we disagree on the details, right, when it comes to faith, there's just this thing in us that sees that there's something bigger to our world. And there's an innate human desire to discover that, and that's very good. Jesus tells us "he who seeks shall find and he who knocks, the door will be opened" so keep knocking and keep seeking.

But I just believe that God is the maker of this world, that God Himself is all sufficient within Himself, all joyous, all powerful, all loving. There is no more joyful being in the whole universe than God. And God is thinking about you. He knows you by name. He knows how many hairs are on your head! I love my children. I don't care how many hairs there are on their head. God takes the time to notice these things. He's near. He's not far. He's loving. He's kind. And He has all the money, all the time, all the energy, all the power that is needed in the world. You don't have to be afraid. Fear not! God will provide all that you need. Don't be defensive, don't be protective, don't live life with closed fists trying to

protect and defend and to fight. Let go. Live life with open hands. Be generous. Trust. Give and love your neighbor. And watch how this is the way live life. You don't have to live from a place of lack, even when you have nothing, you can live in the kingdom of God, which is a reality of sufficiency and life.

A person is a mind and when the mind begins to change, behavior and will changes, and you'll see that one of the best ways to get is to give. One of the best ways to invite opportunity is to give away opportunity. One of the best ways to be loved is to love others. When we try and hold on and protect things out of a place of scarcity, we lose more. When we give it away and stop protecting and feeling defensive, we just invite a whole world of blessing. I believe God wants to open up the heavens and just pour out so much joy and friendship and kindness and life, everything that you need to lead a good life, He wants to do that for you today. So don't be afraid.

Jesus was a master of this world. He famously said "man cannot live on bread alone but on every word that flows from the mouth of God." What's the difference between bread and word? I mean when I see that, I see that bread comes from word, right? The whole universe we believe in Christianity. The whole universe came because God spoke it into being. That under everything that is made is words, energy and life, thinking; that Jesus and God can create anything out of anything for you, when you need it.

This is exactly what happened when there were five loaves and two fishes and thousands of people and everyone was hungry, it was the end of the day, and Jesus just took the little lad and He was able to make so much out of nothing that everybody had what they needed. That was a direct material manifestation that word does more than bread. So don't be afraid. God is interested in you. God loves you. God is so powerful and grand, but is so specifically interested in you that we don't have to be afraid.

And this is how we get to Psalm 23. David, when he wrote this Psalm, was living in this reality. You look at David's life and he went through a lot of hardship, but he lived every moment, I like to think, in the kingdom of God, in the sufficiency of God's provision.

And I'll just finish with this. Many of you have memorized Psalm 23. If you don't have it memorized, I want to encourage you to do it. One of the best ways to invite a new behavior, good behavior into your life is to meditate on scriptures and the best way to meditate on them is you have to memorize them first so that you can say them to yourself in a meditative way. So think about doing that, by the way, as we go into the series over the next month.

Psalm 23, many of you know it but David begins by saying something profound: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I lack nothing." Wow, imagine you can say that and believe it. How would your life change? I don't need anything. The God of the whole universe, the God that puts

the power of an atom bomb in a tiny little atom, the God that owns a cattle on a thousand hills, God that has all the time, money, health and goodness and everything in the world, He can provide for me. The Lord is my shepherd. You know Judaism and Christianity teaches that this is a God who loves the people who follow Him. David himself was willing to lay his life down for his sheep. In the pagan world, where you're supposed to kill children for the pagan gods, this is a God who lays His life down for the people who follow Him. What a loving and compassionate God.

“He makes me lie down in green pastures.” You know when sheep lie down in green pastures it's because they're full. I used to say that's like you might as well say if this is like Bobby, he lies down in a field of pizzas. I've already had my fill. A pasture is where sheep go to eat. So when sheep are lying down in soft fluff, they're relaxed, they're at ease, and they're full. He's going to fill you. He's going to meet your needs.

“He leads me beside the quiet waters.” Right? I'm not thirsty anymore. All of my insatiability and craziness and drive and sleeplessness, He's just satiating my thirst. He quenches the thirst of my soul. And that's what He said, the next thing. “He refreshes my soul.” He renews and restores my soul. Anybody here have a wounded soul? Join the wounded soul club. Right? Life is hard. When I talked about self obsession, don't feel guilty about that. Self obsession begins with pain. If you hit your thumb with a hammer, you're going to be mindful of your

thumb over the next few days. When you get hit hard by life, it's easy to become afraid and to become obsessed with yourself. But you can let go of that. You don't have to be afraid. He's going to heal your soul. He's going to heal your thumb. He's going to heal your life so that you could give and love again.

"He guides me along the right paths for His namesake." That's the natural outflow of a nourished, satiated soul that's healed. You just can't help but do the right thing to your neighbor. "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death," I like King James better there. We're just going to stick with that one. Even if death hovers over me, even if the shadow of darkness there, I'm not afraid! I have nothing to be afraid of.

"I will fear no evil." And then this you can just say it to the Lord. Why? "For you are with me. Your rod and your staff they comfort me." Rod and staff, that's what you fight with. God's going to fight your battles for you. They comfort me. "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." I'm just not afraid of those who are threatening me. I'm not afraid of those who want to harm me. "My cup overflows." It's just overflowing. Have you ever seen somebody that's so full of joy and life and abundance that they're almost annoying, like they're spilling over onto others as like.. oh that guy, that girl. This is David. In the kingdom of God, my cup is just completely overflowing. I have way more than I need, right? My cup overflows.

“He anoints my head with oil.” It’s the idea that the burden removing, yoke destroying power of God, and yes, I know I inverted accidentally. “Surely your goodness and your love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord” for a couple of years. I will forever. Forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever. God is never, ever going to let you go. You don’t understand, you’re like diamonds to Him. You’re like treasure, like rubies. You’re not trash. You’re not thrown away. You’re not worthless. You matter. You belong to Him. You almost don’t have a choice in the matter. It’s like once you were baptized and you said yes to the Lord, you became His kid. I’m not ever letting go of my kids. God’s never letting go of you. Forever and ever, as long as God is alive, you’ll be alive with Him. That’s a promise. Energy, you know matter changes, but energy can’t be destroyed.

That’s another thing we learn in the 20th century. You can’t be destroyed. And this is a great gift that God has given us is that through Jesus Christ, and through His cross and resurrection, we can know without a shadow of a doubt, not because of our behavior, but because of His good works, because of His faithfulness, because of His love, we don’t have to be afraid. And that helps our life loosen and blossom like a flower where we can just love our neighbor and live without lack. Amen?

Don’t be afraid. Don’t be afraid. You can smile today. Don’t worry. It will be okay.

But I just want to pray over you real quick. Father, we thank you that you love us. And I pray that your Holy Spirit would confirm in the hearts of everyone under the sound of my voice, everything that is true that I've said, that we'd believe it, not just in our heads but in our hearts, and begin to change, not just our mind but our will. Lord, we love you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.