

Feasting in the Presence of Your Enemy



David Wilkerson August 31, 2015

“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over” (Psalm 23:5). Of all the wonderful promises God gives us in the 23rd Psalm, this is one of the most glorious. He is pledging to set a table for us, spread wonderful food on it and serve us a feast. And he does it all in front of our enemies!

We all need guidance for decisions in life. Yet in a world as chaotic as ours, the word for table in this verse means “spread.” God isn’t speaking of just a little plate of food but a vast, massive feast. And it is no ordinary meal. He sets before us row upon row of heavenly delights. There is only one guest at this meal: you.

To set the atmosphere, God declares this feast a time for joy: “A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry” (Ecclesiastes 10:19). As you dine on the sumptuous foods, God anoints you with gladness: “Thou anointest my head with oil” (45:7). “God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (45:7).

Meanwhile, as God prepares and serves your feast, he makes your enemies sit on the outer fringe of the scene and watch everything unfold. They see the Lord himself spreading your table with food, escorting you to your seat and waiting on you. Then they watch as you fill up your soul with heaven’s delightful fare.

Your enemies are in shock. No demon power, including the devil himself, could ever comprehend this kind of love, mercy and grace. All were sure God was going to strike you down for your failures. They were ready to gloat as you fell into despair. Now they have been ordered to watch as you feast on food served by God himself.

Christ tells us the Father does this for all of his children: “Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching...he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them” (Luke 12:37).

Who are these enemies? In biblical terms, there are two kinds of enemies: the demonic kind and the human kind. In the 23rd Psalm, David is referring to demonic enemies. These represent the devil and all his hellish principalities and powers.

Jesus tells us, “The enemy...is the devil” (Matthew 13:39). When David speaks of his “strong enemy” in Psalm 18, he is talking about demonic hordes who hate him because of his strong walk with the Lord: “He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me” (Psalm 18:17).

Yet many of our enemies are not from hell. When Jesus tells us to “love your enemies,” he is talking about people in our life who have become tools used by Satan to make us miserable. David’s fleshly enemies caused him to cry, “Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me” (Psalm 143:9).

You may have only a few human enemies because you move in a small circle. You may have an abundance of them because your sphere of influence is broader. In any case, if you have set your heart to follow Jesus, you will be an offense to many, including fleshly Christians. You will also be marked as a target by the devil. He will attack you physically and spiritually and stir up trouble for you among your human enemies.

In this sense, the Lord's supernatural feast becomes even more amazing. Both classes of enemies have to sit by and watch as the Lord serves you! On one side are the devil and his hordes, while on the other side are your earthly enemies — and all watch as the Lord pours out his oil of gladness on you.

On the demonic side, the devil rages because he thought he surely had you. On the human side, God heaps your enemies with shame. His word says of the righteous, "His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish" (Psalm 132:18). As you dig into the glorious food before you, the Lord whispers in your ear, "You don't have to worry about any of these enemies. They aren't able to do anything against you." "They intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform" (21:11).

You are able to sing, "Now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord" (27:6).

God spreads this table for you not just in your times of victory but especially in your times of failure.

The Puritans often used the phrase "surprised by sin." They meant those times when you don't expect to sin, but suddenly the enemy comes in like a flood and you are overwhelmed. Something overcomes you, an old lust or habit you thought you had conquered, and you end up falling. You grieve and sorrow over your sin, and you get down on yourself, confused and wondering, "How could I allow this to happen again?"

That's when your accuser, Satan, pounces on you like a hungry lion. He brings to mind every biblical warning about sinning against the light, whispering, "Look at how God lifted his Spirit from all of those in Scripture who fell. You've sinned in the same way. You're a phony, a hypocrite. God has removed his Spirit from your life." Satan does everything in his power to blind you to God's covenant promises. Satan wants to bring you back under the law, where your conscience will condemn you.

That is never what the Lord intends for any repentant heart. Just when you think you deserve God's wrath and chastening, the Lord calls you to a feast. And as your enemies stand ready to watch you suffer under judgment, God surprises them — and you — by feeding you from his table. That is how God treats his repentant children!

But, like Adam, we want to hide from God. We think he is angry with us and that Satan has gained a foothold in our lives. In our confusion, we fall into the rut of Romans 7: "That which I hate, I did. And that which I hoped to do, I failed to carry out." That is the very moment the Lord beckons us, "Come, sit down and taste of my mercy. I want you feasting at my table in the presence of your enemies."

What is God's attitude toward us when we are overtaken by sin?

Jesus answers this question in the parable of the prodigal son. The runaway young man was overcome by sin and spent all his resources on his lusts. He ended up in virtual bondage, having to eat swine's food. He thought, "I've sinned so badly I can never be accepted by my father as before. Surely I have to pay for this somehow."

The prodigal's fears kept him from returning to his father. Yet, in truth, his father was never angry with him. That godly man simply yearned for his son's return. Finally, when the prodigal was in the pit of despair, feeling the full impact of his failure, he thought of the abundance of his father's house. In desperation he returned home.

What was the father's response? He ran out to meet his son, embracing him, kissing his neck and forgiving him, with no questions asked. Scripture tells us, "The father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry" (Luke 15:22-23).

Here, in Jesus' own words, we see the heavenly Father's attitude toward his children. Immediately after we fail, our Lord serves us a feast and anoints us with the oil of gladness. The very moment he hears our heart cry out for forgiveness, he spreads the table before us saying, "Don't run from me. And don't remain in the devil's pigpen listening to his lies about you. I love you. Come and see what I have prepared for you."

The first blessing you will find on your plate is immediate and unconditional forgiveness. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). As soon as we repent, God ends the whole matter of our sin. He casts our transgression out of his sight completely.

Furthermore, he doesn’t want to hear any more about our sin. He says, in essence, “I’m over it. Now you get over it. Rejoice in my salvation, mercy and grace. Be glad in it all!” “Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee” (Psalm 86:5). “Great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell” (verse 13).

Once we have accepted the Father’s forgiveness, he invites us to feast on every item on his menu: grace, mercy, kindness, tenderheartedness, compassion, unmerited love, peace, rest, joy, happiness. Fresh springs of Holy Ghost renewal sweep over our soul, and tears of rejoicing wash away all our guilt, fears and anxieties. As this incredible blessing takes place, our enemies are forced to watch, utterly defeated. Finally they whisper, “He has learned the secret. He’s trusting in God’s promises. Let’s move on.”

What does it mean to feast in the presence of our human enemies? The Lord also wants us to feast even before those people who have become tools of Satan to harass us. Maybe you are enduring a stressful situation on your job. Perhaps your coworkers have betrayed you, gossiping about you to your boss. You grieve over the cruel ways they have hurt you.

I tell you, Jesus is calling you to feast in the presence of your enemies. He is reminding you that even in the worst situation you can run to God’s covenant promise, “No weapon formed against you will prosper.” Your Father is already spreading a table for you, wanting to fill you up with his grace and compassion.

Do you feel burdened down, living one day at a time, ever fearful, never truly enjoying your walk with the Lord? Do you ever say to yourself, “I know Jesus saved me and that I’ve been changed. Why don’t I enjoy his feast? Where is my oil of gladness?”

Do not stagger at God’s promises to you. Lay hold of them; be fully persuaded that what he has promised he is able to perform. The Holy Ghost responds only to faith. He does not respond to your river of tears or your promises to do better. Only faith brings the Lord’s response. Faith moves him to action, bringing to your life his very glory.

Accept your Father’s love and forgiveness. You have a right to the feast, and no demon in hell can rob you of it. Believe God’s Word to you — and let him seat you at his heavenly table.

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