

Four Promises

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Date: 06 April 2014

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- [0 : 00] My strength is high, my child certainly, as I might like to draw my breath.
My love is singing through my tongue, who lift me into the dust of death.
I love those and roses, that the world of peace is complete.
I am the strength of evil, and it affuse my hands and feet.
I found the number of my own, where the glory lies the people's fear.
- [1 : 34] They hold the dice to get my hope. Among them shall my close days share.
Come quickly, rescue me, my strength. To your glory are all we, O Lord.
Save me from our all evil, Lord. My precious life, from who else more?
Could you turn with me this morning to Psalm 23 and verse 5. Psalm 23 and verse 5,
where David writes, You prepared a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. Have you ever had a meal with Jesus?
- [3 : 11] The Gospels are filled with stories of people who had a meal with Jesus. Many of the most
memorable episodes in the life of our Savior take place around a meal.
For example, it was at the wedding meal in Cana of Galilee, where Jesus transformed
water into wine, which according to John chapter 2 verse 11, first revealed the glory of
Jesus.
Jesus spoke the parables of the lost sheep, and the lost coin, and the lost son around a
table. These parables of the irresistible grace of God.
In John chapter 21, it was over breakfast that the risen Lord reinstated Peter. Remember?
Simon, Peter, do you love me?
Great things can happen when we have a meal with Jesus. You see his glory. You
experience his grace.
- [4 : 19] You hear his call and commission. None of us were present at these meals. And yet the
question remains. Have you ever had a meal with Jesus?
Of course, by now I would hope you would recognize I'm speaking of the Lord's Supper.
The communion meal. Every time we come together in this way, we're eating a meal with
Jesus.
By his spirit and through faith in him, the most amazing things can happen when in his
presence we eat bread and drink wine.
I'm sure that when he wrote Psalm 23 verse 5, David did not really have the Lord's table at
the front of his mind. And yet by the Holy Spirit, he was saying way more than he knew.
For all the wonderful truths in this verse can become ours today as we together eat this
meal with Jesus.
- [5 : 23] The David who has so recently reflected, as we thought about yesterday, on the courage
God's presence can give him in the valley of the shadow of death. Now writes, you
prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. And so then this morning as we share this meal with Jesus, we want to reflect on four promises which Jesus is making to us through this verse.

Promises which become ours as we eat this bread and drink this wine. Promises which change the world for us. First, he provides for me.

Second, he triumphs for me. Third, he commissions me. And last, he satisfies me.

Perhaps you've been going through a period of stagnancy in your Christian faith. You've been struggling with doubts or with your own personal circumstances.

[6 : 33] And yet you so desperately want to follow Christ more closely. And live for him more passionately. You want, like those first disciples who ate meals with Jesus, to see his glory afresh.

To experience his grace afresh. And to hear his call afresh. Let these promises today become yours. As together we eat this meal with Jesus.

First of all then, he provides for me. He provides for me. You prepare a table for me. For me.

Psalm 23 means so much to all of us. We often read our own experiences. And we interpret our own circumstances.

In its verses. In its sentiments. And its word. In our minds. In our minds. It finds its genesis in David. The shepherd boy. Sitting in a field.

[7 : 35] And contemplating life. The universe. And general. As you do. But it seems to me. That the backdrop and context of this psalm. Isn't so much fields filled with sheep.

It is the exodus of God's people from Egypt. And their subsequent wanderings through the wilderness. On their way from Egypt. To the promised land of Canaan.

David speaks. In an individual. As an individual. In the way he thinks about God. But he is also speaking on behalf. Of Israel. Wandering Israel.

The Israel who had received the shepherding. Guiding. Protecting. Restoring. Hand of God. Through those 40 years. Of wilderness journey.

And in this verse. David is thinking of all those experiences. Which Israel had in the wilderness. And in particular. In this first clause.

[8 : 33] You prepare a table for me. Of the way in which. In the heart of the barrenness of a desert. God provided. With this. God provided.

The wandering Israelites. All those millions of Israelites. With manna. Quail. And water. Food which is. Later described in psalm 78 verse 25.

As the bread of angels. in the barrenness of the desert God provided a banqueting table for his people a thousand years later the Lord Jesus would provide food for 5,000 people in the wilderness and miraculously 12 baskets of bread were gathered up afterwards with just 5 loaves and 2 fish, all ate, all were satisfied the picture here is of a God who provides for his people in the most inauspicious places in the most unpromising ways he provides a banqueting table for us as his people the Christian church has always understood the Christian having been redeemed from bondage to sin on a lifelong journey through this wilderness of the world's hostility and barrenness and difficulty making his journey to that promised land of heaven was that not what inspired John Bunyan's famous book

Pilgrim's Progress and we know only too well in our own lives how desert-like this world can be how difficult it is sometimes to maintain any sense of spiritual vibrancy and hope and life and yet it's in this very place the wilderness sometimes with still waters and green pastures and sometimes with valleys of the shadow of death it's in this place God provides a table for us as his people it's in this desert he provides for us well what is it he has provided for us?

well in the words of Simeon in Luke chapter 2 verse 30 in his famous Naqdimatis where he holds the baby Christ in his arms he goes on to say sovereign Lord as you have promised you may now dismiss your servant in peace for my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the sight of all nations this baby Jesus he's the provision of God the table God has prepared is a table of salvation in and through Jesus Christ all the blessings of salvation through the coming and the living and the dying and the rising and the enthroning of the cross of Jesus Christ laid out on this table they're like the courses of a meal the blessings of assurance and adoption grace in all our weaknesses the hope of life eternal comfort in all our pain meaning in all our darkness they're like courses on a table provided by God the Father in his love applied by God the Holy Spirit in his work secured for us by God the Son on the cross and God says take them every one of these courses this is the banqueting table of the Lord they're all for you a new eating craze has hit Glasgow

[12 : 27] I'm not sure if it'll ever reach a point it's called a Brazilian steak house it's a living walking meat fest where waiters come sit at a table and just waiters come every couple of minutes with new joints of deliciously roasted meat and you can eat as much as you like or as you can after all it's quite expensive to go to one of these Brazilian steakhouses you eat beef and then a couple of minutes later the waiter comes and he's got once a lamb and he's got chicken and then he'll go back to a different cut of beef and then lamb and you get the idea until finally you sit back in your chair either hyper satisfied or feeling just a little bit queasy there are two of these Brazilian steakhouses within 400 metres of the back door of Glasgow City Prechurch so it's quite amazing that I'm so thin with you isn't it the waiters just keep on coming with more and more meat until you can't eat another mouthful and here in Psalm 23 verse 5 we've got a similar picture

God brings us blessing after blessing and assures us it's yours every one of these blessings it's yours take it it's for you but unlike my Brazilian steak joint you don't have to pay for these blessings the tab has already been picked up by Christ on the cross he's paid the price of the table at which you eat he has bought all these benefits for you it's all yours for the wilderness journey think of your minister quite a fetching image really as being one of these waiters in this Brazilian steakhouse every Lord's day he comes out and he brings a new blessing of salvation to our attention through the faithful preaching of the word receive it from him as you would receive it from God himself and spend the week chewing on the truth and experiencing the blessing let me apply this in one way by pointing back to the way in which the Israelites so often complained and grumbled there's no water this manna stuff is boring wouldn't we be better off back in Egypt discontent in our Christian lives is often brought about by refusing to accept from God or to realize that we have already access to all the benefits of Christ's salvation of us grumbling and complaining and discontent are often directly linked into our lack of understanding and experience of all we have in Christ do you have a discontented grumbling spirit unhappy with your lot in life with where God has put you with whom

God has put you let me encourage you to range your mind today over all the features and the range and the scope of God's blessing for you in Christ Jesus study them not just in order to understand but to become content in God's provision for you because our discontent however it is manifested whether against the church or whether against our jobs or whether against our spouses it says more about how little we understand the blessings of Christ than it does of those things we grumble of so study and pray so that we will know the light in and experiencing experience the Christ bought blood banquet he has prepared for us in the wilderness as we go to the table in a few minutes make this your prayer

Lord show me just how many blessings are mine through faith in Jesus Christ and assure me that as I eat the bread and as I drink the wine every one of these blessings is mine he provides for me second he triumphs for me he triumphs for me you prepared a table for me in the sight of my enemies in the sight of my enemies the wandering Israelites did not merely have to contend with the barrenness of the wilderness in which they walked they walked it's lack of food it's lack of water it's danger from wild animals and snakes they also had to deal with hostile peoples intent on their destruction the history of God's wandering people is the history of their conflict with the surrounding nations and yet and yet God provided for them in the face of their enemies their enemies must have wondered how it was possible for so many million Israelites to survive in such a barren place as the desert and yet survive they did and not merely survive they thrived and multiplied their enemies must have wondered how no matter how hard they tried they could not defeat the Israelites in battle most every time the Israelites would win especially when that leader Moses would stand on top of a mountain with his hands up into the air yes the history of the wandering people of Israel is the history of conflict with their enemies but it's one of victory and triumph won by the Lord

God was not merely supplying his people's needs in the wilderness he was parading their triumph in the face of their enemies and there is here a most profound contrast between Psalm 23 verse 4 and Psalm 23 verse 5 whereas once the people of God are walking in the valley of the shadow of death now the triumph of God is being paraded in the sight of their enemies they have faced real difficulties their own weaknesses and fears and certainties but through it all God has triumphed it reminds us of what God did to the Egyptian army in the Red Sea and its impact upon the surrounding nations we read of that triumph in the face of their enemies we read of how it impacted the foreign nations in the song of Moses and Miriam in Exodus 15 verses 14 through 15 the nations will hear they'll hear of Pharaohs being crushed in the Red Sea the nations will hear and tremble anguish will seize the chiefs of Philistia the chiefs of Edom will be terrified the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling the people of Canaan will melt away terror and dread will fall upon them the triumph of God by preparing a banqueting table for his people in the wilderness and fighting for his people in the wilderness will be paraded in the sight of all their enemies and as a sense today you know in which as we gather around the

[20 : 21] Lord's table the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ over all our enemies is being thrown in their faces and the triumph of Jesus Christ on the cross is being proclaimed after all we face so many enemies as Christians think of our own fear of what are you afraid today what is your valley of the shadow of death whatever it is Jesus has triumphed over that valley by being the great and dawning light to himself having experienced the darkness of death removes its sting think of our own spiritual failures that accusatory list which Satan throws up in our faces and uses to try and drive us to despair you can't possibly be a Christian because look at what you've done Jesus triumphed over it by nailing it to the cross and paying the price of all our sins

Satan has nothing now with which he can accuse us think of the militant atheism with which we are assaulted at every turn in our society Jesus has triumphed over it by his declaration of the victory of God over the world on the cross and in his supernatural resurrection from the dead at the height of the Roman Empire victorious generals would be given the privilege and honor of a Roman victory procession at the head of their armies they would parade through the streets of Rome to receive the praise and adulation of Rome's peoples before him he would parade his captured enemies chained and manacled to be presented to the emperor as spoils of war the victory of God through the death and resurrection of Christ is something of a Roman victory procession where along with him we ride in triumph before him and before us chained and manacled he parades our enemies in great shame the fear of death the list of sins which is against us the temptations of Satan the godlessness of our society the hopelessness of secularism and so on they're chained and manacled to be presented to his father as spoils of war he parades in triumph and he invites us to sit with him on his golden chariot at the head of the procession except his chariot is shaped like a table at which we eat bread and drink wine this communion table at which the lord's people sit this is the chariot of the victory of Christ and as we sit here together we triumph in Jesus and by Jesus through his cross you do not hear the cheering of crowds but if we had ears to hear it we would hear the exultant songs of the angels rejoicing in Christ's salvation of us perhaps today you're daunted by your own weaknesses and failures perhaps today you're scared of the secularism of our society and its impact upon your children perhaps you're still afraid of the darkness of death and of the valley of the shadow of death these seemingly dark providences of life let this triumphant parade of the communion when sitting at the table in the chariot of the victorious lord Jesus

Christ you proclaim his triumph until he comes again his victory over all your enemies let this give you the assurance and confidence to live for Christ in your homes and in your workplaces and in your schools and in universities and in your neighborhoods let his victory dominate your life do not choose to walk in the valley of despair rather as week by week you hear of new aspects of the victory of Christ applied choose to live in his triumph adopt the aid of someone who is more than a conqueror through Christ Jesus let that choice begin now with a conscious decision to sit at the lord's table together with the prayer we make lord show me how victorious christ is and let me live in his victory every day he provides for me he triumphs for me thirdly he commissions me he commissions me you anoint my head with oil you anoint my head with oil now let's bear in mind the backdrop of psalm 23 it's the exodus of god's people from egypt it's their wandering on their way to canaan here is a picture which is taken from the world of the old testament priest according to the laws of the priests of israel priests were anointed with oil oil was poured out over their heads to signify god's commissioning of them and equipping of them to serve him later on to the baptism of jesus and then through what happened on the day of pentecost we learn that the oil is a picture of the holy spirit being poured out upon god's people to empower them for service and worship and mission this is what god does for all those whose faith is in christ he baptizes us with he anoints us with the holy spirit to empower us for holiness obedience and service we believe in the priesthood of all believers for all who follow christ are anointed with the holy spirit of power not just a selected few the point is god provides us with all we need not just the blessings of being in christ and of enjoying christ service he prepares a table for us but at this table is the empowerment we need in order that we may live for him and serve him during our wilderness journey one of the things young christians are taken up with perhaps you are taken up with this if you are a young christian today is the question of what god wants you to do in life perhaps this is something you are thinking about at this very moment does god want me to become a teacher does god want me to become a homemaker does god want me to become a scientist does god want me to become a minister or a missionary is this what god will anoint me with the holy spirit to do well it seems to me that more important than the question of what god wants me to do is what god wants me to be not what god wants me to do but what god wants me to be to be holy to be christ like to be obedient in who i am from day to day there is the primary area in which god empowers us by his spirit he anoints our heads with oil so that we

may be his children and live as his children that this commissioning equipping and empowering presence of god the holy spirit he comes to us so that we may be holy in all we do so that we may live for christ in our homes and in our schools and in our universities and in our neighborhoods and this is another function of the lord's table you see this becomes the place where god through his spirit strengthens us as we by faith eat this bread and drink this wine together so that we may grow in holiness and christ likeness in thought word and deed there are some who think that in order to come to the table they need to be holy the truth is it's at the table that god empowers us for holiness so be determined therefore today to eat and drink with a purpose to the equipping and empowerment of who you are be determined to pursue holiness in every area of your life i had the privilege of leading 20 years of free church youth camps and one camp stands out way above the others for me the senior football camp 2005 when we got our camp kicked through from edinburgh in a big old cricket bag we checked it out and we discovered that we had been given the following for a senior football camp two cricket bats four tennis balls a unihawk set and a badminton racket not a lot of use for a senior football camp we weren't given the right equipment for the task we had been set imagine a football camp where rather than footballs we were kicking badminton rackets around the football pitch but god doesn't commission us to be holy as he is holy without giving us the equipment we need the holy spirit who empowers us that we may say no to sin and yes to righteousness to hate lukewarmness in our lives and to be zealous for christ the lord's table is this place a strengthening recharging renewing ordinance of god where the spirit comes upon us once again in power to empower us for holiness he anoints our heads with oil he pours out his holy spirit upon us so that we may be the people of god in glasgow or in garavust so that we may live holy consecrated christ-like lives glorifying and enjoying him let's use this lord's table then as a spur toward personal and communal holiness toward a more disciplined self-controlled and passionate walk with jesus and let's use this as a spur to our communal holiness toward a more loving compassionate united self-giving attitude toward each other we are the priests of the living god let us therefore be holy unto him and let our prayer as we come to the table in a moment be lord take away my lukewarmness anoint me afresh with your spirit that i may live in holiness and total consecration for you he provides for me he triumphs for me he commissions me and lastly he satisfies me he satisfies me my cup

overflows my cup overflows what is it that you are really looking for when you come here to the lord's table today perhaps this goes back to the first point are you looking for assurance of faith are you looking for strength for the journey are you looking for forgiveness for what lies behind what are you looking for and what are you hoping to gain through bread and wine today perhaps you're not looking for anything and if you're not looking for anything that's a very worrying state of affairs because we're meant to come to the table hungry and thirsty to come looking for something be eager to receive from god let me encourage you to pray that god would give us a deeper knowledge of him through bread and wine because this is after all christ's table the bread is his body the wine is his blood if you want to find me then you will find me at the table i eat with my family in glasgow if you want to find christ and all the blessings that are in christ then you'll find him eating with his family at his table but as we close let me give you two reasons why you should be looking for christ and why we should be looking for his blessings as we sit together at the lord's table and why if we do so we will find our cup overflowing that we'll find our hearts running over with the fullness and satisfaction that is which can only be found in christ the first is this jesus drank the cup of god's curse empty so that you can drink the cup of god's blessing full jesus drank the cup of god's curse empty so you can drink the cup of god's blessing full on the night of his betrayal jesus went into the garden of gethsemane and he prayed most earnestly didn't he that the cup would pass from him this cup to which he referred was the cup of god's curse the cup which is spoken of in the old testament as the wrath of god against all human sin on the next day jesus was going to die on the cross as our atoning sacrifice paying the penalty of our sin and bearing the full wrath of god against our sin all the wrong things that ever we had done all the wrong thoughts that ever we would have jesus paid the price for them on the cross he drained that cup of the wrath of god to its very dregs he paid the penalty in full and in this bread and in this wine we have his body and his blood physical manifestations of his sacrifice for us and how he drained the cup of god's curse empty on the cross through his tortured body and his shed blood when in a few moments we remember how he emptied that cup of god's curse which should have been ours we remember that he drank the poison of the wrath that was due to us but the cross was not only jesus emptying of the gods of god's curse for us he was also filling that cup having emptied it with god's blessings blessings and offering it to us filling it with the blessings of forgiveness righteousness assurance hope love peace meaning fulfillment filling the cup with all the glorious perfections of who he is and what he has done

[36 : 17] through the gospel offering it to us and saying it's for you drink it when we eat and drink at this table we are not drinking and eating the judgment of sin unto ourself rather we are eating and drinking the blessings which christ has prepared for us all all those blessings we listed in the first point of our sermon today drink and eat there isn't one drop of condemnation in this cup left for you there is no poison in this cup for you it is only the sweetness of the syrup of christ's cross but lesson for you as we go to this table today let's pray lord jesus fill me with gratitude for how you drank my death and how you have offered me your life through the gospel jesus drank the cup of god's curse empty so that you can drink the cup of god's blessing full the second thing that causes our hearts to overflow satisfies us is that jesus offers a cup overflowing with the blessings of knowing him jesus offers us a cup overflowing with the blessings of knowing him through the gospel jesus does not merely give us a cup filled with his blessings he gives us a cup which overflows a cup you can never empty but every time you take a sip you find that he's filled the void and then more again as paul says in ephesians 1 verse 3 praise be to the god and father of our lord jesus christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in christ he has withheld nothing from us in christ god has opened the treasure houses of heaven and he says to us take it all as much as you can take and then take more it's all yours every sip of gospel blessing satisfies but there isn't just a sip in his cup it overflows to us every golden coin of the treasure house of blessings in christ jesus makes us richer than the world could ever know every golden coin and his treasure house is endless compare that with what we might have in the world john d rockefella was one of the world's richest men in his day and he was once asked mr rockefella how much money is enough money to which he answered just a little bit more the cup of our economic prosperity may overflow and yet we are utterly empty on the inside always looking for just a little bit more there is nothing this world can offer you which comes even close to the heart joy of knowing jesus and his blessings that's the piety of the psalms that's the piety of the whole bible that's what drove the first christians to martyrdom in order that they may tell a lost world of god's saving love to them for the gospel of jesus christ no amount of money is enough but jesus is enough and when you have jesus your cup overflows this great

picture of joy and contentment and peace in him and this is something that we can know right now through the gospel this is something we can experience in an even greater way as we come together to the lord's table to eat his body and drink the blood of his new covenant but because by coming here you're making a statement that you find deeper more lasting satisfaction in knowing jesus and in living for jesus than you could ever find or did ever find in what the world can offer you find an overflowing joy in the cup of christ and his salvation so now as we come we come with this prayer lord jesus in this wine i'm going to drink and in this bread i'm going to eat show me just how much i have in you and how much better knowing you than anything else let's sing now in psalm 78 psalm 78 this is from sing psalms so you'll find it on page number 102 page 102 psalm 78 we're going to sing from verse 18 to verse 28 in the desert god they challenged can he satisfy our taste when he struck the rock it opens down the crag the water's race now our thirst is satisfied can he food for us provide psalm 78 from verse 18 to verse 28 god's praise in the desert god they challenged and we challenged by our taste when he struck the rock in open down the rock the water's race now our heart is loud in light happy fruit for us provide when the to the what tu is the life just side

In your day, I'm with saving power denied.

To the shyly give the order, heaven's glory, old and white.

My kingdom for his people, pray all heaven be supplied.

[44 : 26] In your day, God, and me, may I walk in through thee.

From the heavy loosey east wind, let us out with corporate power.

Be quiet, I'll be raised upon them, first I run upon the shore.

In thy house, yea, God, I will, all our other tents like you.

So, we come now to that stage in our service we traditionally refer to as the fencing of the table. That is the invitation to those who will eat and drink to come forward and receive from Jesus.

[45 : 49] Who should come? The answer is this. If you want what Christ has to offer. If you want him to provide for you here because you know how much you need him.

If you want him to be your triumph and your victory because without him you know you will only experience failure and defeat. If you want to live in holiness like Christ and you know that in order to live this way you need a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

If you want to experience his all satisfying infilling because you have found this world's offerings to be nothing but broken cisterns which can hold no water.

If you want to experience your glory, you should come if you want these things for yourself. Notice I'm stressing that you need to want these things because you know your need of these things.

Because the Lord's table is for those who are hungry for more of Jesus. Those who are hungry to know more of his blessings in their day-to-day lives.

[47 : 04] And if this is you, then come.