

# My Cup Overflows

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Date: 26 August 2015

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[ 0 : 00 ]     guide us this evening. Turn back with me to the book of Psalms and Psalm 23. And I would like us this evening to take for a text the words of verse 5.

Psalm 23, verse 5. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. I'm sure the words of the 23rd Psalm are a favorite to many of us up there, perhaps equaled with the words of John 3.16. But when it comes to the setting of the 23rd Psalm, and I mean the setting within the book of Psalms rather than the setting of where it was written, within the book of Psalms you'll know that the Psalms are not randomly put together.

They are put together in a certain order. And within that order we can see patterns and we can see themes. We had that this evening already with Psalm 128. Alongside Psalm 127 these Psalms go together.

They form a pattern. One talks of building a house and the other talks of the occupants of that house. And that is quite common within the book of Psalms. You have that with Psalm 1 and 2. These two Psalms go together. And in the reading of them you see a pattern running throughout them. And it is the same with the 23rd Psalm. It sits within a middle of a pattern. A pattern that begins in Psalm 20. If you turn to Psalm 20 and you look through the 20th Psalm you'll see a continual refrain that says, May the Lord answer. May the name of the God of Jacob protect you. May he. May he. And this continues on. And the real setting of the Psalm is that the people are praying to God about the king. So the 20th Psalm is all about the king. And the people are asking God to bless him. And asking God the petitions of their heart in order to protect the king and in order to show blessing towards him.

And then in Psalm 21 that theme is continued. And you have the same king again. But in this time the people are praising the Lord for what the Lord has done for the king. And so throughout the 21st Psalm you see time and time again the people praising God for the fact of for what the Lord has done for the king. And that continues into Psalm 22. And again you have the person of the king. But this time all the people aren't there. This is specifically between the king and the Lord. And there is this relationship. There is this conversation between the king crying out to God. And then into the 23rd Psalm you find the king again. This time he's represented by the figure of a shepherd in the Old Testament.

[ 3 : 24 ]     A shepherd was very closely related to the person of a king. Seen of course in the life of David himself. The shepherd king. And then going on. Psalm 23 you see the king leading his people. Shepherding his people.

And then on into Psalm 24 where the pattern finds its conclusion. When the king returns to the palace. And you have the gatekeepers there saying who is this that is coming. And the answer of course it is none other than the king of glory. And so as we work through these Psalms we see a consistent theme about the king. But we also must see when we realize as we have been saying that all of these Psalms inspired by the Holy Spirit can take on another form. And the other form that they all take on is although they all relate to the king at the time on which these Psalms were written. They also refer to the king who was to come. And we all know that to be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. And so when we reread Psalm 20 we have it that the people are asking for the king to come. And they're looking for the Messiah who was to come. And their petitions are all about this Messiah figure. And then Psalm 21.

That great triumphant Psalm about the king rejoicing in the Lord's strength. This king who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. And then we move on into Psalm 22. And I don't need to tell you tonight that Psalm 22 is all about Jesus Christ. These are words of course that he used himself.

On the cross of Calvary. My God. My God. Why have you forsaken me? And then after the difficulty and the turmoil both bodily and spiritually of the 22nd Psalm. You then followed into Psalm 23. And who is the Lord of Psalm 23?

Who is the good shepherd of the 23rd Psalm? It is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. And then you finally take that to Psalm 24. And you see the resurrection glory of Jesus as he returns back to heaven. And to that great palace there. And the gatekeepers of heaven. And the gatekeepers of heaven announcing who is this that is coming. It is none other than the Lord of glory. The King of Kings. It is none other than Jesus Christ. Now the reason I draw your attention to that this evening is because when we come to study the 23rd Psalm. We must always remember that it comes directly after the 22nd Psalm. And the reason I say that is in order for any of us to say the Lord is my shepherd.

[ 6 : 30 ] We must know the Lord. We must know the Lord of the 22nd Psalm. We must know the King who went through the turmoil and the difficulty bodily, physically and spiritually of the 22nd Psalm. The Christ who cried, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? We must know that Jesus before we can ever say the Lord is my shepherd. If tonight you cannot honestly say truthfully that the Lord is your shepherd, I would direct you to the 22nd Psalm. And I would say go there and read that account. Read it in parallel to the account of the life of Christ and see what he went through. See what he endured. If only you'll believe he paid for your sins and mine. And then each and every one of us who believe and trust on what he has done for us in Psalm 22 can then come into the 23rd Psalm and say with David, the Lord is my shepherd. He is mine because of what he has done for me. And I see that and I know that and I believe that to be true. And so I can say the Lord is my shepherd.

And in the 23rd Psalm, of course, familiar to us all, we see the great leading and guiding of our life. It's a psalm which really speaks so personally. Is it not about Christian experience? The Lord who wants we come to know is the Lord who leads us by green pastures and still waters, leads us to the good times in our life spiritually.

But he is also the Lord who promises to carry us through death's dark veil, the valley of the shadow of death. He will be with us there. But then in verse 5, I believe the picture changes. I believe that because the Hebrew grammar changes in verse 5. But for other reasons also, I believe the image changes from being the image of a shepherd to being the image of a host. And in verse 5, we see the Lord as the host of a feast. A host who prepares a table for David and his fellow Israelites in the wilderness.

And I want us this evening to see more of why I believe that's the host. But in so doing, I want us to come to this verse and to see how it is so similar to what is going on in our experience, our Christian experience this weekend. As we come in this wilderness journey to a table that the Lord has prepared. And this evening, I want us to come to the fifth verse of Psalm 23 and see five things that the Lord has done there that were true for David, but are also true for you and for I this weekend.

The first thing I want us to see is that the table was prepared. Verse 5, you prepare a table before me, David says. He comes to this table and everything has been done. The host of the feast has done everything.

[10:13] David does not come and he says, I had to help. I had to help make the food for the table. I had to help with the meal. No, no. David says, I came and the Lord had done everything.

I didn't need to help out. If you like, this wasn't a self-catering table. This was a table in which the host of the feast had done everything. The Lord had prepared everything, David says.

And you know, I can't help but see the similarities there to what happens in our experience this weekend. You see, we're going to a table, God willing, on the Lord's day and it's the Lord's table. It is not our table and we do not have to prepare it. The table has already been prepared. The work for that table has already been done. Christ has already died and we are not coming this weekend to re-sacrifice him and to redo the work. We are coming this weekend to remember him. We are coming to remember something that has already taken place. So what I'm saying this evening is that we do not have to do anything in the physical work. It's already been prepared. Is that not what the writer to the Hebrews has in mind in chapter 10? This was a once for all sacrifice. It is not something you redo. We do not re-sacrifice

Jesus for our sins. No, we come to a table that has already been prepared. Christ has already died.

We come only to remember. But while I'm saying that, I believe there is a preparation on the part of the person who comes. You see, the picture that David makes is coming to the feast of the king. And if we can take that and apply it to ourselves, if we were going to a feast with the queen that the queen had prepared for us, we would take nothing in doing the work for the meal. I'm quite sure Buckingham Palace would have that covered. But whilst saying that, there is a preparation on the part of each of us as guests. I'm quite sure that if you or I were invited to a feast in Buckingham Palace, we would not go with five minutes to spare and grab whatever we can find on the way out and arrange travel on the way there. No, if we were invited to a feast with the queen, we would have everything prepared. We would know what we were wearing well in advance. We would pick out our best clothes. We would make sure that our travel arrangements were done to the very last moment and leave in plenty of time. What I'm saying is if we were going for a feast with the queen, we would do everything in our power to prepare ourselves for that meal. And I believe the same is true when we come to the table this weekend. We must prepare, not the table. We must prepare ourselves. Is that not what Paul has in mind? Let a man examine himself.

[13:50] So the question remains, how do we? How do we prepare ourselves? How do we examine ourselves to come to this meal? My answer may be too simple, but I believe the way that we should prepare ourselves is following the advice that Jesus gives us when we're there in the first place. When we're there, Jesus says, remember me. Remember my death until I come. That is what we should be doing when we're there.

And that is what I think best prepares us for going there. Or you might say, I need to do away with this sin and that sin. Absolutely. But how do we do that? And what shines the best light on our lives in order for us to examine it properly? It is by remembering his death and remembering that that is the only reason that we're there.

You know, you know, you know, if we were to say, I'm not going to go until I get rid of this sin. I'm not going to go until I, I properly am ready or I'm worthy. Then my friends, I ask you, when will you be there?

If it's a case of you getting yourself ready and getting yourself worthy to eat of it, that is not why we go. We go to remember his death. And so in going, we should remember his death and the light of that death and the truth of that death will shine its light into our hearts and best give us the way of truly examining our hearts. This table is prepared for us and we must prepare ourselves for it. Secondly, I want us to see the presence of the enemies. Verse five goes on, you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. Now, I don't know much about military combat, but I can't think of another commander in chief who in the middle of battle prepares a meal for his army. And yet that's the picture that David has for us here. He says that the Lord, the great King prepared a meal for me in the middle of battle in the presence of my enemies. I had this meal and the enemies were all around me.

And you know, I can't help but see the similarities there with what we're doing this weekend. We come to this table in the presence of our enemies. You know, the communion weekend does not take place in a parallel universe. At times we might feel that it's completely out of this world, the time that we spend over the weekend in God's word. And that's a good truth to have. And yet the table takes place in the world. And we are still in this world. And we go to the table in the presence of our enemies. And perhaps this evening, that's your reason for not going.

[ 17 : 16 ] Perhaps tonight you're saying, I can't go to the table. Six months ago, it was all different. I was doing well. Those whom I lived with and work with, they would have seen a good witness coming from me.

I was doing better six months ago. But now, now the enemies are getting the better of me. Now my witness is poor. Oh, they see me doing things that I shouldn't be doing. And I'm not good enough to go to the table because the witness that I'm giving to the enemies is not good enough.

And they're seeing me and they're getting the better of me. So this time I'll sit it out. Oh, don't you see what Psalm 23 says? The table is in the presence of the enemies. And that's exactly when we should go. And you know, the Lord has this meal for two reasons for his people. First of all, to protect them. The Lord knows that this is in the presence of the enemies. But Israel was never safer than when they were near to the Lord. When they were far away from the Lord, they were at danger.

But when they were close to the Lord, they were never safer. And so the Lord has this meal in order to protect his people. And it's the same for you and me. We go to this table and we're never safer than when we're near to the Lord. We're never safer as Christians when we're close to him. And so if you feel the presence of the enemies and the enemy around you, then this is a time when you go, do go to the table because there you find protection from the great king. But there's another reason too.

The other reason is that this table, this meal gives strength. The Lord knows the enemies are around.

[ 19 : 14 ] But he gives this meal to his children in order to give them the strength to go on. The journey is long and difficult. The warfare is hard. But the good king knows what his people need. And they need a meal in the wilderness. And you know, you and I, when we come to the table, it's the same for us. It is a meal in order to give us strength to go on. In acknowledging that our enemies are close, that the great enemy is never far away, that the journey is hard. But the great king knows what we need. And he sustains us and he protects us. And he gives us the opportunity to come to this table for exactly that reason.

Exactly because the enemies are around us. But you know, there will be enemies present at our meal too. Perhaps tonight we've already said, you might not be able to say the Lord is my shepherd.

And if we follow that through to the words of Jesus, when he says, those who are not for me are against me. Then tonight, I call you an enemy of Jesus. And you might tell me, I don't want that.

That's a great thing to say. And that is enough to tell you that you don't want to be there anymore. And you want to be able to say the Lord is my shepherd. Then go to Psalm 22. And go and see what Christ has done for you. And go and rest your all upon him. So that no longer are you an enemy.

You will be the Lord's friend. But you know, there's other enemies who will be there looking on. And for those who will be eating the meal, it is an opportunity for us to again witness.

[ 21 : 14 ] How are we witnessing? By showing forth the Lord's death until he comes. Because each and every one of us there are saying, the Lord is my shepherd.

And never take away from the witness that a life that confesses that to be true can be in the lives of those who look on. But you know, there's one other category of enemy. There's those who will be sitting with the enemy who shouldn't be. Those who are sitting saying, professing the Lord is not my shepherd when actually he is. My friend, if that's you tonight, I bid you to come and to confess that the Lord is your shepherd. Don't sit with those who are the enemies of Christ when you are a friend of him.

It will only hurt you to sit and watch the others when you know that you should be there with them. Why? Not because of anything you've done.

But because the Lord is your shepherd. We've seen the preparation of the table. We've seen the presence of the enemy. Thirdly, the pouring of the oil.

Verse 5 goes on, you anoint my head with oil. Now this is one of my reasons for believing that the scene in verse 5 has changed from the figure of a shepherd to the figure of a host. Because in ancient Near Eastern culture, when people would come to a house, welcome guests would have oil anointed, sprinkled on their head to show that they were welcome guests in the house of the host.

[ 23 : 10 ] And so that is the picture we have here. But it's a biblical image too. In Luke 7, verse 46, Jesus, when he's in the house of Simon the Pharisee, he says to him, you did not anoint my head with oil.

And he is, of course, they're referring to the culture of the day that welcome guests had oil anointed on their head. But you know what's interesting about that too? Is that oil throughout the Bible is used symbolically to point towards the work of the Holy Spirit.

What do I mean by that? Well, when David was anointed, you remember 1 Samuel 16, when Samuel comes to anoint him as the king, he pours oil upon his head.

And the moment he does, the biblical narrator says, the spirit of the Lord rushed upon him. And you see the two go side by side.

Whenever oil was used for anointing, it was symbolic of the anointing of God's spirit. And that is what happens to everyone who comes and who believes in God.

[ 24 : 22 ] That's what Paul says, Ephesians 1, 13, in him, you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

When you become a Christian, you are sealed with God's spirit. And so it means this, that everybody who goes to the Lord's table is someone who has been anointed with the Lord's oil.

Someone who has been sealed with the Lord's Holy Spirit. And that has two great benefits. Firstly, it means that you are united to Christ.

You know, when we go to the table, we do not merely look at the elements, but we actually partake of them. We eat of them.

And it is to show that we are united with Christ. To follow the words of Paul again in Galatians 2, verse 20, I have been crucified with Christ.

[ 25 : 28 ] It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. How? Because of the spirit indwelling him. There is union between Paul and Jesus.

And in the same way, when we go to the table, because of the spirit sealed within us, we are united to our Savior. And so when we come to this feast, we can come and see how David was anointed, but acknowledging too that we are anointed by God's spirit and so united to our Savior.

What a glorious truth that you and your Savior are one. But you know, there is also this benefit that you are united with your brothers and sisters.

You know, when they would come to the feast, the one thing that everybody had in common was that everybody was anointed with this oil. And so that was one surefire way of saying, we are all guests at this feast.

We have all been anointed. And so when we come to the table on the Lord's day, if he spares us, we can look around and we can see brothers and sisters and we must remember that we are one.

[ 26 : 53 ] That's what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10 to quote him again in verse 17, because there is one bread, we who are many are one body.

So when we come to the feast, you look around at that table and you see brothers and sisters anointed with the same Holy Spirit and you realize and me with you that we are part of one body, one family.

Might I say this, maybe for discussion, I wonder why when we come to the table we so often sit with our heads down.

Oh, I know that we're pondering the work of Christ and our union with him. But we must remember too that we're at a family table and that those sitting next to us, we are united to them too.

and I wonder if I was to come into your home at a family meal time, would I see you looking down or would I see you looking at one another with smiles upon your faces?

[ 28 : 09 ] Why? Because you're a family and there is a glorious truth for those who have been won by Christ and indwelt by his Holy Spirit.

yes, we're united with him and I'm not taking away from that for a moment but we are also united to one another and what a glorious truth that is for us as a congregation of his people that we are one with one another.

And so we see the preparation of the table, we see the presence of the enemy, the pouring of the oil, fourthly, the pouring over of the cup.

Verse 5 concludes, my cup overflows. Another reason why I think this is the image of a host is when in the ancient Near East the culture was that when you would go to someone's house they would give you a cup and the cup, the passing of the cup to you was to show that you were a welcome guest.

and when we come to this table we are given a cup and there's of course the physical cup that we drink from but what the psalmist is alluding to here is a spiritual cup a cup of God's blessing and you know what's different between this cup and every other cup that we might have when we go to our feast is although that these cups may be filled to the brim this cup overflows and I believe any translation that says that this cup is just filled to the brim is missing the point because what David is saying here is that the cup that is filled with God's blessing the cup of the blessings of God's salvation for us is overflowing the cup cannot contain the blessing it is overflowing for us and you know as Christians have we not found that to be true that when we come to

[ 30 : 21 ] God's word and when we seek to drink from the cup of God's blessing for us do we not find a cup that is overflowing you try simply to contain the blessings that are found in this word and you cannot even stop the cup from overflowing the more you come to God's word the more we acknowledge that we haven't really any knowledge of it at all the more you experience God's blessing the more you say I didn't really know what I was talking about before there's so much more than I even thought so that when we come to the blessings that God has for us in his salvation of us you and I we come to the work of Jesus and the blessings that flow from his salvation of us we say that cup is overflowing maybe you're pondering coming to the table for the first time this weekend and that's great but whether you're there for the first time or the hundred and first time you still find a cup that's overflowing you still find that

Jesus who is more precious to you than he was before and you still find blessings and wonders that you cannot reach or number such is the blessing of this cup that the Lord gives to you in the blessing of his salvation but it reminds me of another cup in the Bible Matthew 26 verse 39 going a little further Jesus fell on his face and prayed my father if it be possible let this cup pass from me what cup was that it was the cup of God's wrath perfect wrath against sin yours and mine if we believe in Jesus Jesus drank a cup of God's wrath so that you and I can drink an overflowing cup of God's blessing and you know the other difference is this

Jesus drank that cup clean one of the commentators put it so beautifully he says Jesus licked the dregs dry there is nothing left in the cup of God's wrath against your sin and mine if we come by faith and rest upon him if we can come and say the Lord is my shepherd because of the work of Jesus on the cross there is no wrath for us because of our sin because he has taken it all he has drank it all it is because of that friends that Paul can say there is now no condemnation why because Jesus took it all and because he did because he drank the cup empty we drink a cup that's overflowing a cup that we can never stop from pouring over the one must come before the other as I said earlier we must think of the one before we think of the other how grateful are we this night that the cup of

God's wrath has been licked clean how grateful are we tonight for the cup of God's blessing a cup that we drink from time and time again but is never exhausted a cup that is always overflowing so it begs the question do we look for blessings at the table absolutely absolutely i think we should expect blessings to flow from that means of grace are the blessings a warm glow no are they a good feeling no are they an unlikely vision no i believe the blessings that come from that our catechism sums up so beautifully when it asks the question what flows and you know when you reach the word flows i make already an image in my head of this cup what flows from justification adoption and sanctification to which the catechism answers assurance of God's love peace of conscience joy in the holy ghost increase of grace and perseverance therein to the end what blessings come from our going to the table and drinking of the cup they are assurance of God's love there is this assurance within us as we partake of that that the

Lord died for us and loved us there is the peace of our conscience a conscience that no longer convicts us of sin why because Christ took it all away there is a joy in the holy ghost a joy that cannot by human reasoning be determined or understood there is just a simple joy from what the Lord has done for us there is the increase of grace and knowledge in Jesus Christ and there is the knowledge that the Lord will keep us to the very end these are the blessings that flow from justification sanctification and adoption and you know I believe they flow from the cup of God's blessing this evening we've seen a table prepared the presence of enemies the pouring of oil the overpouring of the cup finally and in conclusion

[ 37 : 03 ] I want us to see that this table in verse 5 is but a preview what I love most about verse 5 of Psalm 23 is that verse 6 follows it because in Psalm in verse 5 David David is talking about a table in the wilderness that will be packed up a table that will not last forever a table that once the feast is over they must go on and journey on but you know what he does in verse 6 is by faith he looks beyond and he says one day I will be in God's house and from there there will be no rising from that table that table will not be packed up the table in God's house will go on forever more and you know finally

I can't help but link that to our table this weekend if the Lord spares us on his day we will rise from the table and we will pack up that table so to speak and we will go on with our wilderness journey but by faith we look forward to the day when we will be in God's house at the marriage feast of the lamb a place at that table which has your name on it and mine if we can say the Lord is my shepherd and in that place the Lord has prepared that table and in that place there will be no enemies the only ones who will be there are those whom the lamb has ransomed in that place there will be perfect unity between us and our saviour and us and one another as we are one church praising the one lamb on the throne in that place we will drink from heaven's cup and in that place the main difference is that we will never have to rise up we will never have to leave that table that table will go on forever more and we will enjoy the blessings of heaven time without end to quote John Newton ten thousand years bright shining as the sun we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first began so as we go to this table this weekend may we all remember that at best it is a preview of a much better table to come a table which he has prepared for us and a table from which we will never rise may God bless these thoughts let us pray our gracious God we give you thanks for your word and we give you thanks that your word through your spirit speaks directly to our hearts and we ask this night that we would be touched by your spirit that if there are any of us who this night are still without knowing you as the shepherd and as the savior we ask oh Lord God by your irresistible grace that you would draw them to yourself that they would know that they are yours for time and for eternity but we pray that you would bless your people this weekend also those who are yours we pray that you would bless us as we sit at your table on your day if you spare us enable us to know the blessings there enable us to think of what was done to enable us to be there and enable us to think that this table is only one part of it one part of a much greater table to come bless these thoughts to our hearts and take away our sin for your glory's sake amen we will conclude