

Psalm 23: Feasting at the Table (part 1)

I. I WILL PREPARE A TABLE FOR YOU IN THE PRESENCE OF YOUR ENEMIES

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me besides the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (Psalm 23)

- A. The beginning of 2010 Mike gave a message “Feasting on God: A Table in the Presence of my Enemies.” This message has been one that I have returned to several times throughout the years to find a strengthening, vision, and realignment in various seasons of life.
- B. In my life, the truth of Psalm 23:5, ***“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies...”*** has been instrumental in past seasons. This revelation is key for the season we find ourselves in currently. I am confident this “prepared table” is our promise and hope for thriving in the glorious but enemy filled future.
- C. The devil is raging, he is mounting his attack against the Body of Christ and against the nations in general. The Lord’s answer is, ***“I have prepared a table for you in the presence of your enemies,*** right in eyesight of your enemies. That means they are close, present and drawing near.
- D. In this Psalm David speaks on how the Lord had prepared to feed his heart and to sustain him. He proclamations lead to an increase his experience in God and an increase with his encounter in God. ***It is an amazing thing when that the attack comes and our relationship with God is strengthened and our experience in the Spirit is increased.***

II. DAVID’S EXPERIENCE, CONFESSION, AND DECLARATION OF FAITH

- A. Psalm 23 is a description of David’s experience in God and it is his confession before the Lord. God called David, “the man after God’s own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14). Here we have the man after God’s own heart showing to us how he talks to God. Psalm 23 is a declaration of his faith, particularly in a time of trouble. It is how he lived before God. It is what he determined he would experience in God. There are about ten or fifteen different phrases. They are confessions. They are statements that David made before God. They are statements we also speak against the attack of the devil when he comes against us.
- B. ***The Lord is my shepherd:*** David describes the Lord’s attentive leadership as a shepherd. He is consciously recognizing Jesus as the leader of his life. He is saying “I am consciously submitting to Your leadership. I am consciously transferring the ownership of my life into Your hands. You are the shepherd. I am the sheep. You provide the direction. I follow You.”

- C. We can have confined to commit our way and submit to the leadership of the shepherd because He is the good shepherd who gives His life for the sheep.

Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass (Ps 37:5)

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. (Jn 10:11)

- D. ***I shall not want:*** I shall not lack anything necessary to accomplish the will of God, the destiny of God, or the assignment of God in my life.
- E. Your destiny in God is in God's hands and in your hands. It is not in the hands of your enemy. That was one of David's biggest points if you study the life of David. One of the great themes of David's life is that David understood that the will of God in his life to be king was not in the hands of the devil, or the hands of his enemies trying to kill him.
- F. You lack nothing when He is your shepherd. David had so much confidence in the Shepherd. God will give you the *emotional strengthening*, and He will give you the circumstances to do the will of God. The Lord will open doors it is not in the hands of others.
- G. ***He makes me to lie down in green pastures:*** The green pastures is what the sheep ate and the still waters is what they drank, so David is declaring the Lord leads us to the place of feasting. This is talking about feasting when everything is going well. If we feast when we are in an easy seasons we are much more likely to feast on God when the enemy approaches.
- H. If we do not feast on God in the easier seasons of life, chances are we will just yield to despair, when the enemy draws near.
- I. Sheep lie down only when they are satisfied after eating and only when they are not afraid. Sheep will not lie down if they are hungry or they are afraid. Under normal circumstances, they will not lie down. They are such fearful animals that until they are secure, they cannot lie down.
- J. When the Lord is our shepherd, He feeds us in a way where we have the ability to rest on the inside. He satisfies our spirit in communion with Him, and He takes the anxiety level where we can actually have confidence with God. That is what it means to lie down. We can be at rest.
- K. ***He leads me beside still waters:*** Sheep cannot drink from a fast flowing stream. If you bring the sheep up to a river that is flowing or even a brook that is fast moving, they cannot drink from it. They will just die of thirst before they are able to drink. The water has to be gentle, or they cannot drink. David is making a statement about the Lord ability to lead us. The statement is *the Lords leadership is so sensitive that He will feed you, and He will give you drink in a way that suites your ability to receive.*
- L. The Lord giving us drink speaks and points to the ministry of the Spirit in our lives. He knows He has to do it at the level at which we can receive it.

- M. **He restores my soul:** We are constantly in need of our soul restored. Our peace restored. Our purity strengthened. We need to get restored daily, weekly, and all the time. We must have a shepherd or we will lose our way.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter.” (Is 53:6-7)

- N. We are all like sheep who go astray by nature. By nature, we lose our way...all of us. There is not a human being on the earth who does not, by human nature, lose their way, and spiritually we all, by nature, get disconnected with God. We disconnect from the food. We disconnect from the right path by nature.
- O. We have a proneness to lose our way. This is not a problem because we have an attentive shepherd. The problem is will we give ourselves to that shepherd. “Lord, restore my passion and my vitality. Lord, last week I felt connected. Next week, I might not; but You will restore me. Here I am. I am constantly in the mode of You renewing me.”
- P. **He leads me in paths of righteousness:** Righteousness does not just mean moral virtue. It does mean that, but it also means correct paths, or right paths. We lose our focus. We lose our direction in our life, our family, our marriage, our ministry, our children, and our money. The Lord leads us in the right path by giving us hints, whisper and impressions. He shows us how to realign week after week.
- Q. We should not be surprised by the fact we have the need to realign on a regular basis. Realignment is exactly how life in the kingdom works.

III. THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” (Psalm 23:4)

- A. The devil tells us it is death, but it is only a shadow because Jesus is the victor over physical death, but He is also the victor over the devil and the devil’s attack. It appears like the valley of death, but it really is not. It is a shadow. It is passing. It is not the substance. It actually will lead to a greater experience in God. It is not the valley of death. *It is actually a valley that will lead to life.* It only looks like a valley of death, but if you are feeding on the Lord, you see through the Lord’s eyes, and you see it differently.
- B. **You are with me:** His nearness and presence is the truth and reality that keeps us from fear and despair. He will not leave us or forsake us. It is in the valley seasons where the enemy comes in with his primary accusation that the Lord is not with us, that He has left us and we are to fend for our selves. The temptation is to see the added pressures and pains that come along with valley seasons as proof the Lord is not with us. We must get our confidence that He is with us by the truth of the word and the anointing of the Spirit rather than our circumstances.

- C. In the psalm, verse 4 is the turning point in the Psalm. David changes the language he uses. He goes from talking about God to talking directly to God. The gift of the shadow of death seasons is the pressure that can produce a desperation that drives us to God. Talking to God is the solution in the pressure filled valley of the shadow of death.
- D. ***Your rod and Your staff they comfort me:*** These were two instruments that the shepherd used regularly. The rod was the club to fend off the wild beast. The rod is the protection of the Lord. The staff was a different instrument it was to guide the sheep. The staff was to nudge the sheep to show them the sheep we are going. When to go to the left and when to go to the right. *The rod is protection and the staff is direction.*
- E. The direction from the staff is mostly just nudging from the Lord that leads to the small and regular adjustments in our lives.
- F. ***They comfort me:*** When we are in the valley of the shadow of death, we can have confidence. We can be comforted by this: He will fend off the wild beast, and He will give us the midcourse corrections constantly to get us through that period of time. We can be comforted knowing He will intervene. He will stop the wild beast from devouring us and He will keep us from veering off the straight path. We can have the assurance that God will constantly intervene to give us a midcourse correction at every step of the way.

IV. THE LORD PREPARES A TABLE FOR HIS PEOPLE

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.” (Ps 23:5)

- A. David presents the Lord as the host providing a meal for a friend, for an honored friend. It is more than a guest. It is a friend.
- B. When the enemy gets within eyesight, when the enemy is that close to you, the Lord will feed you in a way that will cause you to have victory at the heart level.
- C. One of the practical themes of Psalm 23 is feasting on God. We are to feast upon God even under pressure. This table is within the reach of every single believer; yet many believers are suffering from spiritual malnutrition. The Lord has spread the table in front of us all. We must avoid just studying the menu without partaking of the bread.

39 You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life... 40 But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. (Jn 5:39-40)

35 And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. (Jn 6:35)