

Psalm 23:5

Introduction

5 Thou dost prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
Thou has anointed my head with oil;
My cup overflows.

- **The way we see things determines how we feel and act.**
 1. The modern view of the Christian life.
 - **Fact** (Bible teaching) > **Faith** (Personal commitment) > **Feeling** (Subjective experience).
 - It is assumed that the facts are public knowledge and that we all use the same rational facility to assess them.
 2. The postmodern view of the Christian life.
 - **Feelings** (Subjective preferences) > **Faith** (Conscious commitment) > **Facts** (Sorted data).
 - It is assumed that the facts are not absolute but relative, constructions of our preferences.
 3. The Biblical view of the Christian life.
 - **Facts** (Perception from light and sight) > **Faith** > **Feelings**
 - **While the core of the Gospel is not about me there are parts of its message that are about me.**
- **The power of affirmation**
 1. **How we see ourselves** in relationship to our environment is critical to our lives.
 - Affirmation is a powerful foundation for a child's life.
 - All that follows (Empathy, Diplomacy, and Skill) cannot make up for the lack of love (affirmation).
 2. Most of us receive **mixed messages** in life and what or whom we choose to see or hear is critical.
 3. At the heart of the Gospel is the **affirmation** of the believer.
 4. We can sense the love **only when we can see** the table set before us.
- **Psalm 23:5 is parallel to 23:2-3.**
 1. "Green pastures", "quiet waters", and the "restored soul" are to be understood in the context of "a prepared table", "anointed head", and "overflowing cup."

2. My fear is removed as I sense the presence of the shepherd and his affirmation and restoration of my soul.

1. What the shepherd does not do.

a. He does not remove the enemies.

- Just as the Shepherd does not prevent us from experiencing the valley of death so he does not remove our enemies.

b. He does not help me remove my enemies.

- This does not mean that we should never remove ourselves from bad circumstances. But it suggests that there will be times when we cannot and need not in order to be blessed by God.

c. He does not bring in others to rescue me from my enemies.

- We need not look far in the Biblical record to find examples of this fact. David's enemies were often members of his own household. Paul's opposition came (in many cases) from his church family – the very people he expected to help him.

2. What the shepherd does do.

a. He takes the role of a host.

b. He seats me at his table as an honored guest.

- The children in Israel, after the exodus were cared for by God in the presence of their enemies. Ps.78:19-20 “¹⁹ Then they spoke against God; They said, ‘Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? ²⁰ Behold, He struck the rock, so that waters gushed out, and streams were overflowing; can He give bread also? Will He provide meat for His people?’” The reference is to provision of food and drink in a context where they were not expected.
- While facing opposition in this life, we should not be surprised when we see God providing for us in spite of an unfavorable environment.
- The world believes that it can control any situation by controlling the finances and the information. The church has survived in China for years in spite of all attempts by the political establishment to destroy it.
- Will I survive my present trouble? My enemies have taken away all my security. Can I feast and be blessed in such a place? Listen to Paul in Romans 8:31-39.

Romans 8

“³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God {is} for us, **who {is} against us?** ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

³³ **Who will bring a charge against God's elect?** God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died,

yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

³⁵ **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?** Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

³⁶ Just as it is written, “*For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.*”

³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

“³¹ What then shall we say to these things?

Can God take the blessing away?

If God {is} for us, who {is} against us?

³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Can Satan take the blessing away?

³³ Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ who is the one who condemns?

Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

Can the world take the blessing away?

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

*Observations from
Romans 8:31-39*

- Paul understood the logical questions that would arise from his teaching in 8:28.
- The promises of Scripture are focused on the coming victory in heaven not on heaven on earth.
- The greatest threats to my soul are not the issues of this life but the next.
- The cross of Christ is the anchor for my faith in God’s love for me.
- It is God’s work for me not my work for Him that secures me.
- Often we miss the provision of God because we do not recognize His hand in our lives. We have narrow criteria by which we will recognize a blessing.

c. He shows me that I am blessed in my position in spite of my circumstances.

- I must have eyes to see this lest I only see the enemy before me.

Matthew 6 “**The lamp of the body is the eye**; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! . . . **For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life**”

Ephesians 1 “¹⁸ {I pray that} the **eyes of your heart may be enlightened**, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. {These are} in accordance with the working of the strength of His might ²⁰ which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and **seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly {places}**, ²¹ **far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.**”

3. The Lord’s Supper as the “table and cup” set before us. We see this verse through the lens of the Gospel.

- **In David’s day:** This figure grows right out of the historical situation in which David lived. When David was driven into the wilderness by his son’s rebellion he found himself out in the desert, hungry and weary, his army in disarray. As recorded in II Samuel 17, three men who were not even Israelites, Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai, “brought beds, basins [so they could wash and refresh themselves], and earthen vessels, wheat, barley, meal, parched grain, beans and lentils, honey and curds and sheep and cheese from the herd, for David and the people with him to eat; for they said, “The people are hungry and thirsty in the wilderness.” (2 Sam 17:28-29)
- **In our World:** We see the last supper as the table set before the disciples in the midst of their enemies and the prospect of losing all they had invested in Jesus as the Messiah. Like them, we are asked to bear our cross to a greater banquet awaiting those who abide and endure the thorns of life for the hope set before us.
- **When we take the bread and cup we are asked to see that we are bearing a cross in the context of a banquet.**
 1. Listen to the Spirit.
 2. See beyond our circumstances.
 3. Sense that we are special to God.
 4. Bear our cross.

4. What do I see? This is the critical question that we face as we observe David’s experience as reflected in this verse.

When have you felt most affirmed by God and why?