

## ***Feasting on God: A Table in the Presence of My Enemies (Psalm 23)***

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

*<sup>1</sup> The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. <sup>2</sup> He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. <sup>3</sup> He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. <sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (Ps. 23:1-6)*

- A. The Lord said to me, "I have prepared a table for you in the presence of your enemies" (Jan. 8, 2010). I understood this as a word of focus preparation for me personally and the IHOP family.
- B. Psalm 23 is David's experience and confession. It is a declaration of his faith and how he lived before God. It describes what he determined to walk in before God.
- C. This is our confession before God to agree with Him and before the Devil to resist him.
- D. We see the Lord as a shepherd of sheep (verses 1-4) and as a host providing a meal (verses 5-6).

### **II. THE LORD PREPARES A TABLE FOR HIS PEOPLE**

*<sup>5</sup> 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. You prepare a table for me: The practical theme of Psalm 23 is feasting on God, even under pressure. To feast on God's table is to connect with God by His Word and Spirit. In other words, we feast on God by prayer-reading the Word and fellowshiping with the Holy Spirit with a spirit of gratitude and confidence. Christianity is an on-going encounter with a Person.
- B. The Lord will not force-feed His people. Feasting on God empowers us to walk in victory over our fear and anxiety related to our enemies. When we feast on God, our enemies look differently. They appear small and temporary instead of powerful and permanent. Many feed their soul on what their enemies are doing. We feast on whatever we focus on or are preoccupied with.
- C. In the presence of my enemies: Pressures in society, or from people and circumstances. Our enemies include anything that seeks to hinder our connection with God and His will in our lives.
- D. There are enemies that resist us and enemies that annoy us causing us to disconnect from God.  
*<sup>40</sup> Martha was distracted with much serving...<sup>41</sup> And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. <sup>42</sup> But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part..." (Lk. 10:40-42)*

- E. **Anoint my head with oil:** As we eat at God’s table, His manifest presence is released in our life. The spirit of glory increases, when we respond to God rightly, when persecuted for His sake.  
*<sup>14</sup> If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. (1 Pet. 4:14)*
- F. **My cup runs over:** An overflowing heart or a vibrant heart in God is *satisfied* (instead of being bored or with bondages) and filled with *peace* (instead of annoyance and fear). David’s cup was the Lord Himself and His goodness in his life. David’s cup was overflowing, it was not half full.  
*<sup>5</sup> O LORD, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot. (Ps. 16:5)*
- G. We respond to God’s goodness by taking and saying “thank you” for all that He provided us.  
*<sup>12</sup> What shall I render to the LORD For all His benefits toward me? <sup>13</sup> I will take up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD...<sup>17</sup> I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. (Ps. 116:12-17)*
- H. **Our confession:** I will feast on You in the presence of my enemies. You feed my heart even in the valley of trouble (not just in the green pastures). You sustain me, body, soul, and spirit, even when the enemy draws near me in the valley. You anoint me with Your Presence. Your portion is abundant. You give me more than I deserve.

### III. THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

*<sup>1</sup> The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. (Ps. 23:1)*

- A. **My shepherd:** David described God’s affectionate leadership in his life to supplying all that he needed. The blessings of Psalm 23 are for any who make the Lord the leader of their life. The blessings here rest on the personal pronoun “my.”
- B. **I shall not want:** I shall not lack anything needed to accomplish God’s will for my life.
- C. **Our confession:** The Lord is my shepherd, my leader, and my provider, who is responsible for me. I shall not lack or come up short. When the whole story is told and the whole plan unfolds, then it will be clear that I lacked nothing.

### IV. HE MAKES ME TO LIE DOWN IN PEACE WITHOUT ANXIETY: FEASTING ON GOD

*<sup>2</sup> He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. (Ps. 23:2)*

- A. The way to practically walk the truths in v. 1 is to feast on God as described in v. 2.
- B. **Lie down:** A flock lies down to rest when it is satisfied after eating and not afraid. Sheep are fearful animals that cannot lie down unless they feel totally secure. They are so timid that if someone ran by them or a disturbance occurred, it would cause the flock to scatter in fear.

- C. **Green pastures:** Speak of abundant provision of food. It is not one pasture, but "pastures" as in an oasis in the desert. The Lord nourishes us **abundantly** giving us food from His Word.
- D. **Still waters:** Are easy for sheep to drink from as contrasted to fast-flowing streams, which make sheep afraid. The Lord's leadership is sensitive to nourish us by giving us drink from the Spirit that is according to our understanding, need, and thirst.
- E. **He leads me:** Sheep are very dependent, needing to be guided to food and water and protected from wild animals. They cannot survive alone in the wild without a shepherd.
- F. **Our confession:** We will lie down without fear even in a desert because He nourishes us abundantly and practically (in a way that we can receive).

## V. HE RESTORES MY SOUL AND LEADS ME

<sup>3</sup> **He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. (Ps. 23:3)**

- A. **Restores my soul:** restores my vitality, strength, peace, purity, and confidence. Our soul is restored by the Word (Ps. 19:7-12). He restores us when we wander and frees us from burnout. The nourishment in verse 2 results in the restoration of our soul.  
<sup>7</sup> **The law of the LORD [word of God] is perfect, restoring the soul... (Ps. 19:7, NAS)**
- B. **Leads me in paths of righteousness:** The paths of righteousness are the paths that are right with Him and for us. He leads us into right paths that will restore our focus, ministry direction and sense of clear purpose in life. I cannot stay in His way without His help. I cannot restore myself.
- C. **Our confession:** He leads me in the right path so that I can fulfill God's plan for my life. In this, He restores my focus and direction for ministry and life.

## VI. THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

<sup>4</sup> **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. (Ps. 23:4)**

- A. **The valley of the shadow of death:** It speaks of danger that can cause us great fear. It can refer to any distressing time in our lives. Both the godly and ungodly experience the dark valley.
- B. **I walk through the valley:** We walk "through" this valley instead of staying in it. We turn the "valley of weeping" into a spring by feasting on the Lord while in the valley.  
<sup>5</sup> **Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage.** <sup>6</sup> **As they pass through the Valley of Baca [weeping], they make it a spring... (Ps. 84:5-6)**

- C. **You are with me:** David was comforted by God’s presence and protection in the hour of danger. We are never in situations the Lord is not aware of. He never leaves us (Heb. 13:5).
- D. **I will fear no evil:** David understood that no man or devil could take what God gave him.
- E. **Your rod and staff:** Two instruments a shepherd uses in the care of his sheep. Both terms are needed to give us the full meaning. The **rod** was a club to fend off wild beasts (protection) and the **staff** was used to guide sheep (direction) to food and water and away from steep cliffs, etc.
- F. **Our confession:** In the time of attack: “I fear no loss of anything God has given me. I am comforted by the assurance that God will intervene to give me protection and direction.”

## VII. GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME

<sup>6</sup> **Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (Ps. 23:6)**

- A. **Goodness and mercy:** Mercy is forgiveness of the past so we can live free from guilt. Goodness is provision in the present so that we can live free from lack.
- B. **Follow:** The Hebrew verb “follow” describes an animal in pursuit and can be translated as “pursue.” Our enemies pursue us, but God’s mercy and goodness outruns them.
- C. **All the days of my life:** Not just when we feel good or are in an easy season of life.
- D. **The house of the Lord:** David committed to continue ministering to God in the place of prayer and worship without being distracted or offended at God during the seasons of pressure.

<sup>4</sup> **One thing I have desired of the LORD...that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple. (Ps. 27:4)**

- E. **Our confession:** God’s goodness and mercy will continue in the future and will outrun the works of the enemy. I will prevail over failure, defeat, and the attack of the enemy all the days of my life and throughout all eternity. I will continue to minister to God in His house by worship and prayer. I will not be offended and will never draw back.
- F. God finds it attractive when His people trust Him with gratitude instead of being filled with fear and complaints. This is called a gentle and quiet spirit that is beautiful and very precious to God.

<sup>3</sup> **Do not let your adornment be merely outward...<sup>4</sup> let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.**

<sup>5</sup> **For in this manner...holy women who trusted in God adorned themselves (1 Pet. 3:3-5)**