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## **Feasting in the Presence of Your Enemy!**

***By David Wilkerson***

February 28, 2000 "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over" (Psalm 23:5).

Of all the wonderful promises God gives us in the 23rd Psalm, this is one of the most glorious. Think of what he is pledging to do for us here: He says he's going to set a table for us, spread wonderful food upon it, then put on a waiter's apron and serve us a feast. And he does all of this in front of our enemies.

Now, we know when God says he's catering, the dinner won't be just any ordinary meal. The word for table in this verse means "spread." God isn't speaking of just a little plate of food. He's talking about a vast spread of goods - a massive feast. He sets before us row upon row of delightful heavenly foods, for us to taste and eat.

And there is only one guest at this meal - you. God does this wondrous work of preparing, waiting and serving for every individual who loves Jesus and calls himself by his name.

Furthermore, to set the atmosphere, God declares that this feast is a time for laughter, joy and singing. He tells you, "Eat, drink - rejoice and be glad." "A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry" (Ecclesiastes 10:19).

Then, as you dine on the sumptuous foods, God anoints your head with the oil of gladness. "Thou anointest my head with oil" (Psalm 23:5). "God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (45:7).

Meanwhile, as God is preparing and serving your feast, he makes your enemies sit on the outer fringe of the scene and watch everything unfold. They see the Lord himself spreading your table with food, escorting you to your seat and waiting on you. Then they watch as you fill up your soul with heaven's delightful fare. I tell you, no demon power, including the devil himself, could ever comprehend this kind of love, mercy and grace.

What an incredible scene - can you picture it? Your enemies are in shock. They were sure God was going to strike you down for your failures. They were prepared to stand over you gloating, as you fell into destruction. Yet now they have been ordered to watch as you feast on food served by God himself. They're forced to observe how the Lord serves you, feeds you and anoints you with the oil of joy and gladness.

Jesus tells us that the father does this for all his children: "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Luke 12:37).

Before We Talk About The Table of the Lord, We Need to Discuss Who Our Enemies Are. In biblical terms, there are two kinds of enemies - the demonic kind and the human kind. Here in the 23rd Psalm, David is referring to demonic enemies. These represent the devil and all of his hellish principalities and powers.

According to Jesus, "The enemy... is the devil" (Matthew 13:39). When David speaks of his "strong enemy" in Psalm 18, he's talking about the demonic hordes who hate him because of his strong walk

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with the Lord: "He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me" (Psalm 18:17).

Yet many of our enemies aren't from hell. When Jesus tells us to "love our enemies," he certainly isn't speaking of the devil and his hordes. He's talking about people in your life who have become tools used by Satan to make you miserable. It was David's fleshly enemies who caused him to cry, "Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me" (Psalm 143:9).

You may have only a few human enemies because you move in a small circle. Or, you may have an abundance of enemies because your sphere of influence is broader. In any case, if you have set your heart to follow Jesus, you're going to be an offense to many. And you're going to be resisted by both non-believers and fleshly Christians alike.

Moreover, you will be marked as a target by the devil and his wicked spirits. Your adversary, the accuser, is going to attack you physically and spiritually. And he'll stir up trouble for you among your human enemies.

In this sense, the Lord's supernatural feast becomes even more amazing - because both classes of enemies have to sit by and watch as the Lord serves you. On one side are the devil and his hordes, and on the other are all your earthly enemies. And in the midst of them, the Lord is pouring out his oil of gladness upon you.

On the demonic side, the devil rages because he thought he surely had you. And on the human side, God heaps your enemies with shame. His word says of the righteous, "His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish" (Psalm 132:18). God is saying, in essence, "Your fleshly enemies thought you were finished. But now they can only gaze in wonder as I feed and bless you."

As you dig into the glorious food before you, the Lord leans down and whispers in your ear, "You don't have to worry about any of these enemies. They aren't able to do anything against you." "They intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform" (21:11).

Indeed, God gives you every divine assurance. And finally, you are able to sing: "Now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord" (27:6).

God Spreads This Table for You Not Just in Your Times Of Victory, But Especially In Your Times of Failure. The Puritans often used the phrase "surprised by sin." This refers to those times when you don't expect to sin - but suddenly the enemy comes in like a flood, and you're overwhelmed. Something overcomes you - an old lust or habit you thought you'd conquered - and you end up falling.

You quickly repent, grieving and sorrowing over your sin. But then you get down on yourself, wallowing in guilt and confusion. You think, "How could I allow this to happen again?" And when you try to enter God's presence, you feel ashamed and embarrassed. You tell yourself, "I need some space from the Lord while I try to figure this out. I've got to make it up to him somehow. I've got to prove to him I didn't mean to do it."

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This is when your accuser, the devil, pounces on you like a hungry lion. He brings to your mind every scripture concerning God's hatred for sin. He reminds you of biblical warnings about sinning against the light. And he recalls to you God's displeasure with all those who fell in the Old Testament. Then he whispers to you:

"Look at how God lifted his Spirit from all of these others who fell. And now you've sinned in the same way. He has removed his Spirit from your life completely. You're a phony, a hypocrite - you don't practice what you preach. And when you stand on judgment day, your own words are going to condemn you."

Beloved, the devil never knows the outcome of any Christian's failure. He doesn't know how you're going to react after you fail, or how God will respond to your sin. In fact, Satan's greatest fear is that you will run straight to God's mercy and forgiveness.

So the enemy does everything in his power to keep you from understanding the covenant promises. He wants to bring you back under the law, where your conscience will condemn you. He wants you to be convinced you have to pay for your failure. He wants to see you wallow in grief, trying to earn your way back into God's favor.

No - that is never what the Lord intends for the repentant heart. You see, just when you think you deserve his wrath and chastening, God calls you to a feast. And as your enemies settle back to watch you suffer under judgment, the Lord surprises them - and you - by feeding you from his table. That is how God treats his repentant children.

Here is an example: Consider a church elder - a godly man who prays daily, searches God's word, honors his wife and is a loving father. This man's past transgressions are all under the blood of Christ. His once quick temper has been conquered by the power of the Holy Spirit. And now this kind, thoughtful, considerate man moves in the wisdom of God.

But one day the enemy comes against him like a flood. The man has a horrible day at his job, and as he leaves the office his mind is harassed. He tries to pray during the drive home, thinking, "Lord, I just want to get home, lie down on the couch and thank you that this day is over."

Meanwhile, at home, his wife has had a bad day also. Everything has gone wrong, and the children have been out of control. Now she's uptight as she waits for her husband to come home and deal with the unruly kids.

So, as soon as this harassed man walks through the door, his wife runs up to him and begins to unload about all the problems that day. He is too overwhelmed to listen, however - and he tells her he doesn't want to hear about it. Now she becomes even more frustrated. They begin to argue - and suddenly a dam bursts. In an instant, they're shouting, name-calling, pushing each other's buttons. They exchange ugly words meant to cut and hurt.

Then, out of nowhere, the man snaps. He spews out a torrent of angry words - including a curse word. His wife steps back, aghast. She says, "Oh, so that's how a man of God speaks to his wife? That's the talk of a church elder, a man everybody thinks is so holy? What a phony."

In anger, the man turns and storms out the door. Outside, however, he is shaken and wounded, his soul overcome with shame and godly sorrow. He begins to cry out within, "Oh, God - where did that

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come from? My heart must be so wicked. Now I'm taking out all my frustrations on my family."

Even the godliest Christian is surprised by overwhelming, unexpected situations like this one. And sometimes it happens to us right after we experience great victories. Like Adam, we want to hide from God. We think he's angry with us and that Satan has gained a foothold in our lives. Then, in our confusion, we fall into the rut of Romans 7: "That which I hate, I did. And that which I hoped to do, I failed to carry out."

Suddenly we think, "How can I even consider ministering to anyone, when I'm so wicked? Oh, God - how long will it take for me to get this dirt off my hands and feel holy again?"

That is the very moment the Lord beckons us, "Come to the feast. You don't need time away from me. Sit down and taste of my mercy. I want you feasting at my table, in the presence of your enemies."

What Is God's Attitude Toward His Children When They Are Overtaken by Sin? Jesus answers this question in the parable of the prodigal son. This runaway young man was overcome by sin, spending all his resources on his lusts. He ended up in virtual bondage, having to eat swine's food. And he thought, "I've sinned so badly, I can never be accepted by my father as before. Surely I have to pay for this somehow."

The prodigal's fears kept him from returning to his father. Yet, in truth, his father was never angry with him. That godly man simply yearned for his son's return. Finally, when the prodigal was in the pit of despair, feeling the full impact of his failure, he thought of the abundance of his father's house. And, in desperation, he returned home.

What was the father's response? He ran out to meet his son - embracing him, kissing his neck and forgiving him, with no questions asked. Scripture tells us, "The father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry" (Luke 15:22-23).

Here, in Jesus' own words, we see the heavenly father's attitude toward his children: Immediately after we fail, our Lord serves us a feast and anoints us with the oil of gladness. You see, God looks on the heart - and the very moment he hears our heart cry out for forgiveness, he spreads the table for us. He tells us, "Don't run from me. Don't wallow in the devil's pigpen, accepting his lies. I love you - now, come and see what I have prepared for you."

The first blessing you will find on your plate is immediate and unconditional forgiveness. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). As soon as we repent, God ends the whole matter of our sin. He drops all charges against us and casts our transgression out of his sight completely.

Furthermore, he doesn't want to hear any more about our sin. He says, in essence, "I'm over it - now, you get over it. I don't hold anything against you. I've buried it all. Now, rejoice in my salvation, mercy and grace. Be glad in it all."

Once we have accepted the father's forgiveness, he invites us to feast on every item listed on his menu: grace, mercy, kindness, tenderheartedness, compassion, unmerited love, peace, rest, joy, happiness, fresh springs of Holy Ghost renewal.

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Talk about experiencing the glory of God. Just when you expect judgment and retribution, the Lord invites you to a feast of his mercy and grace. "Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee" (Psalm 86:5). "Great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell" (verse 13).

I know what it is like to expect God's judgment to break out on me after I have failed. I wonder, "Will there be an attack on my body? Is one of my children going to suffer? Will my wife succumb to illness again? God, where are you going to strike me for what I've done?"

Yet immediately, the Lord spreads a great feast for me in the presence of my enemies. Who are my enemies in this case? They are devilish foes of fear, depression, confusion, inner turmoil, satanic lies. Therefore, I quickly repent, laying hold of God's covenant promises. And I remind myself, "David, you don't have to weep to prove you're sorry. All you need to do is confess, repent and stand on your father's word. Then go to the feast and rejoice in the presence of all your enemies."

So I sit at the Lord's table, and my shepherd Jesus serves me. He restores my soul by feeding me his mercy, forgiveness and tender loving kindness. Then he makes me lie down by still waters and shows me scripture after scripture about his love. I feel the grace of God sweep over my soul. And tears of rejoicing wash away all my guilt, fears and anxieties.

As this incredible blessing takes place, my enemies are forced to sit by and watch, utterly defeated. And finally, I hear them whisper, "He has learned the secret - he is trusting in God's promises. Let's move on."

Let's Focus Now on Feasting in the Presence Of Human Enemies. The promise of Psalm 23 covers both kinds of enemies, demonic and human. And the Lord wants us to feast even before our human enemies - people who have become tools of Satan to harass us.

Let me illustrate with an example from a letter our ministry received. A dear Christian woman writes of her troubled marriage with her unsaved husband. This man feels condemned by his wife's holy life. So lately he has become abusive toward her, harassing her and calling her names.

One day recently, the husband came home drunk. In a rage, he pinned his wife against the wall and yelled in her face, "You Jesus freak - you're crazy. I'm tired of your preaching. I don't want to hear another word. You're no better than I am." He went on and on, in hellish language, bringing endless accusations against her.

Slowly, an anger rose up in the woman. Everything within her wanted to react, naming all of her husband's mean actions toward her. But instead, she closed her eyes and prayed silently, "Holy Spirit, help me."

The grace of God poured over her - and she was filled with supernatural peace. She merely looked at her husband tenderly, saying nothing. When he saw that she wasn't going to react, he let her go and stomped out, parking in front of the TV. Meanwhile, she quietly went about her housework with peace and joy in her heart. She was feasting at the Lord's table - feeding on the grace, patience and hope God had spread for her.

Maybe you're enduring a stressful situation on your job. Perhaps your coworkers have betrayed you, gossiping and lying about you to your boss. You spend your days grieving over the cruel ways they

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have hurt you.

Dear saint, Jesus is calling you to feast in the presence of your enemies. He's reminding you that even in the worst situation, you can run to God's covenant promise, "No weapon formed against you will prosper." Your father is already spreading a table for you - and he wants to fill you up with his grace and compassion.

It Is Possible to Miss The Lord's Table Through Unbelief. When Israel came out of Egypt, they missed all the feasts God had prepared for them. You see, after their deliverance, God commanded them to keep the feast of unleavened bread every year in the promised land. This meant that for six days they were to eat unleavened bread - and on the seventh day they were to hold a feast.

God planned several other feasts for Israel as well - wonderful times for the whole nation to rejoice in the Lord, enjoy his presence and receive his anointings. Their tables were to be laden with good things - milk, honey, oil, grapes, grains, meats.

One of these celebrations was to be a feast of first fruits. "Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house" (Deuteronomy 26:11). The Lord was telling his people, "I want you to rejoice over everything I have given you. This is a time for you to laugh, sing and remember."

Also, Moses instructed Israel's leaders to celebrate the Passover Feast. This feast was meant to be a time of teaching for their children: "Thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt" (Exodus 13:8). Every father was to tell his son, "This feast is all about celebrating our deliverance. We're rejoicing because God set us free from Egypt."

With every feast, the Lord told Israel, "Rejoice - be glad and sing." The feasts were all meant to be healing, freeing celebrations of God's covenant loving kindness toward his people.

Yet scripture records only one feast being observed in the wilderness. That feast occurred on the first anniversary of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. After that, the commanded feasts apparently were forgotten.

This is not what God intended for his people. His plan was for them to reside in the promised land, where they would have all manner of resources to hold the feasts. But because of Israel's sin, they remained in the wilderness. And their only resources were the manna God sent from heaven and a small amount of corn they brought with them from Egypt.

Can you imagine what an Israelite child must have thought during the one feast that Israel celebrated? He had lived on manna morning, noon and night all his life. And now, as the feast is being held, he sees more manna being served. So he asks his father, "Dad, what's this celebration about?"

His father answers, "It is the feast of unleavened bread, son. We're celebrating our deliverance from Egypt. This is a time to rejoice over the freedom God gave us."

The boy is puzzled. Rejoice over deliverance? All he has ever heard from his parents has been murmuring, complaining and unbelief. And on several occasions he has seen them sneak into their tents to worship the little idols they smuggled out of Egypt.

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So the boy asks his father, "Do you call this deliverance? What are we supposed to rejoice over - the dry desert? All we've ever experienced is the boring old sameness of things. Why do we have to feast on more of this manna? Why aren't we living where all the good things are?"

Sadly, Israel continually failed to observe the Lord's feasts. Scripture tells us, "We see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19).

I wonder how many teenagers today see only unbelief in an older generation that testifies of being delivered from sin. How many kids in Christian homes are saying, "Dad, Mom - you call this deliverance? There's no rejoicing in our family. Our home is full of turmoil and fighting. And all I ever hear is complaining and gossip. This place is like a funeral parlor."

No wonder so many teenagers today don't serve the Lord. Their parents are still wandering in the wilderness. They have never entered into the covenant promises of God. They don't know what it means to rejoice, because they never go to the feast.

Do you lead a life of spiritual stagnation? Are you always burdened down - living one day at a time, ever fearful, never truly enjoying your walk with the Lord? Let me ask you - aren't you tired of it all? Don't you ever say to yourself, "I know Jesus saved me and that I have been changed. So, why don't I enjoy his feast? Where is my anointing with the oil of gladness?"

You have to take a step of faith. Don't stagger at God's promises to you. Lay hold of them - and be fully persuaded that what he has promised, he is able to perform. The Holy Ghost responds only to faith. He doesn't respond to your river of tears or your promises to do better. Those may be a part of your repentance. But only faith brings the Lord's response. Faith moves him to action, bringing to your life his very glory.

So, accept your father's love and forgiveness. You have a right to the feast - and no demon in hell can rob you of it. Believe God's word to you - and let him seat you at his heavenly table.