

Cup-Overflowing Grace from our Shepherd-King (Ps 23:5)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on July 11, 2010

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Sometimes people will describe pessimists or negative people as those who see their glass as half-empty, and they'll say you need to be an optimistic and positive person who sees your glass as half-full. The Bible has a higher analogy and way we are to view our cup, our blessings: not only is our cup full, but it's overflowing. It can't contain "*all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places*" we're given in Christ. Ephesians 1:3 says all believers already have "*every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...*" 1 Peter 1:3 says God has given His children "*all things necessary for life and godliness.*" James 4:6 says God continually "*giveth more grace ...*"

He giveth more grace as our burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength as our labors increase;
To added afflictions He addeth His mercy,
To multiplied trials he multiplies peace ...
His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,
His power no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.

He giveth continually so that my cup overfloweth continually. But if you're not thinking spiritually and scripturally, you won't have eyes to see the spiritual blessings of God's grace in Psalm 23:5: *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over* (NKJV, or "overflows" NASB)

That last phrase really I believe applies to the whole verse, so let's look at this whole verse today through the eyes of our title: "Cup-overflowing Grace from our Shepherd-King." The shepherd is also a king, and in v. 5 He assumes the role of gracious host. In the NT chapter where our King Jesus describes Himself as the Good Shepherd, He says of His sheep: "*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full*" (or "*more abundantly*"; John 10:11). I think that's the NT equivalent of Psalm 23:5 – our Good Shepherd spiritually abundantly overwhelmingly overflowing fills us over and over again with uncontainable and unexplainable blessings on our heads that run down like oil, spilling over into our lap as our cup can't hold it all, as we sit at this spiritual table fit for a king. This is not just grace, this is like John 1:16 "*grace upon grace ... from His fullness.*" In other words Christ's abundant sufficiency overflows as *He giveth more grace* as James 4:6 says, or as the hymn says "He giveth and giveth and giveth and giveth again."

This is not merely grace (if there is such a thing as mere grace), this is exceedingly-abundantly-far-beyond-we-can-ask-or-even-think grace, like Ephesians 3:20 says. In the presence of enemies this is peace-that-transcends-all-understanding grace, like Philippians 4:7 says. Or like Ps 23:5 says, head-anointing grace, king's-table-VIP-seat grace, and cup-running-over grace.

Our King's grace uses even the dark valleys we go through to give us the richest blessings of His grace, transforming the blackness of suffering into a banquet of His sufficiency overflowing to us. Life's trials lead to our Lord's table. Even bitter cups can become blessing-cups that Christ fills with cup-overflowing grace. On the dark backdrop of v. 4, the brightness of v. 5 shines.

‘Psalm 23 is traditionally sung by Jews in Hebrew at the third Shabbat meal on Saturday afternoon. Sephardic and some Hassidic Jews also sing during Friday afternoon services and as part of the Sabbath night and day meals.’¹ ‘The early [Christian] church sang Psalm 23 as the baptized person emerged from the font and proceeded into the newly illumined church for [the Lord’s Table]. Contemporary churches turn to this psalm for Holy Communion and funerals, depending whether one stresses the early walk through darkness or the later banquet.’²

What does “the table” mean in the original context? What is the picture in v. 5 of eating in the presence of enemies? What did oil anointing the head communicate in Bible times? Overflowing cup?

OUTLINE:

1. What this meant for sheep
2. What this meant for David
3. What this means today for all children of the King

1. What this meant for sheep

Some think David doesn’t have the sheep imagery in mind at all in v. 5, he’s now using a different metaphor of human beings at a feast. And a good case can be made that the scene changes in v. 5-6. On the other hand, it can be argued that the Lord as Shepherd from v. 1 is still in view for the whole psalm, although of course the human and spiritual reality behind the words is close by and is what makes the metaphor rich. David is never just talking about sheep (he’s talking about people) but using the vividness of the natural world of sheep / shepherds.

The phrase “prepare a table” comes out of Israel’s history. Yahweh their Lord was their shepherd through the wilderness wanderings, but the lost sheep of Israel couldn’t honestly say “*I shall not want.*”

Psalm 78:19 *Then they spoke against God; They said, “Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? [same words as Ps 23]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?” ... [‘prepare a table’=provide needs - Look at v. 52; rest of Ps 78 explains God *did* prepare a table and overflowing drink for grumbling Israel, He graciously shepherded] ...⁵² **But He led forth His own people like sheep And guided them in the wilderness like a flock** ...⁷⁰ **He also chose David His servant And took him from the sheepfolds;**⁷¹ **From the care of the ewes with [nursing] lambs He brought him To shepherd Jacob His people, And Israel His inheritance.**⁷² **So he shepherded them ...***

So in the psalms, our Lord shepherds His people through people (Moses, David, etc.) As Shepherd, God *prepares a table* for them. Literal shepherds in parts of the world to this day speak of tables or table-lands sought after for sheep, flat grazing areas found atop hills or mountains where sheep can be led to for a special meal. In some parts of the world, the finest sheep ranges are called “mesas” (word for table) whether Western US or Southern Europe, and the African continent has a similar word and even a “Table Mountain”

Phillip Keller, who grew up as an MK in Africa and shepherded in North America for many years, writes how these table-lands need to be prepared before the sheep, because of the presence of many of their enemies (ex: poisonous weeds, vipers, predators, etc.).

Isaiah 25:6 says (NIV) “*On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food [another version has “lavish banquet”] ... the best of meats and the finest of wines.*” And Isaiah describes the Lord as Shepherd (40:11) as well as a host inviting to a feast with unlimited and infinitely satisfying food and drink (55:1-3), where the presence of enemies is eclipsed by the Lord’s presence.

In Isaiah 65:11, the Lord rebukes those “*who forget my holy mountain, who set a table [same words as Ps 23 prepare a table] for Fortune and fill cups of mixed wine for Destiny.*” In the verse right before that, God said His land would be a pasture for flocks. So he’s speaking of His people but using the analogy of sheep, and He speaks of how foolish it is for them to forsake the Lord and His provision, and to instead prepare a table for the false god fortune. Israel filled the cup of another false god instead of allowing the true God to fill their cup with truly satisfying running over grace.

New Bible Dictionary says the phrase “table in the wilderness” could also refer to an animal skin laid on the ground.³ If a shepherd prepared special food, he tried to keep off the ground.

The former shepherd J. Douglas MacMillan explains from a book about agriculture and shepherding in Eastern countries: ‘... of how difficult it was to bring in new sheep and improve the stock because of the infestation of the sheep grounds with all kinds of parasites. And the suggestion was made that sheepmen in the East should return to an old oriental practice ... feeding the sheep on raised tables. When the shepherd was on the mountain, he would not go all over the mountain to hand out food to his sheep, but he would bring them to one place. The sheep would come in carrying these pests with them, and so the ground would become infested. If the shepherd put their [special meal of] hand-feeding down on the ground, they fed not only on the food but on the bacteria that were there. So, according to this book, the old oriental shepherding practice was to use little raised tables. (That is why shepherds in the Highlands ... use wooden troughs.) ... The sheep pick up these ‘enemies’, and get all sorts of diseases from them, just as you and I do, although we didn’t know about it until the scientists told us. These sheep were being preserved from their enemies’⁴

Someone gave me a copy of a book this week by W. Catherwood that points out enemies can also be within the flock, butting sheep that dominate and treat their fellow sheep like rivals / enemies: ‘The stronger of the flock ... forge ahead and pick up all the tenderest bits of grass which left little for the weaker ones, so the shepherd would pluck tender bits of grass here and there and at resting time he would gather the weaker ones and feed them the choice tufts of grass in the presence of their enemies.’⁵

YOU ANOINT MY HEAD WITH OIL – for sheep, oil also could protect them from cuts or scrapes becoming infected, or diseases like scab, or insects that annoy or can even destroy (ex: nasal flies).

The head in particular was the problem area to anoint (this Heb. word for anoint is not the religious ceremonial anointing). Keller writes how even modern shepherds use oil mixtures for the head: ‘At the first sign of flies among the flock he will apply an antidote to their heads ... What an incredible transformation this would make among the sheep. Once the oil had been applied the sheep’s head there was an immediate change of behavior. Gone was the aggravation; gone the frenzy; gone the irritability and restlessness. Instead, the sheep would start to feed quietly again, then soon lie down in peaceful contentment.’⁶

MY CUP OVERFLOWS – Arguably this could refer to a water container or bucket or jug shepherds used to fill what sheep drank from. Catherwood says some shepherds put ‘water in a leather cup with a wooden bottom and the sheep putting its nose in the cup to drink the water makes it run over the edge. So David, who had no doubt done this often, [is saying in v. 5 God] “supplies the water of life in such abundance that my cup runneth over.”⁷ Blending the sheep/human aspect of v. 5, David also could identify with a story Nathan told of a man in 2 Samuel 12:3 with “*one little ewe lamb Which he bought and nourished; And it grew up together with him and his children. It would eat of his bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom, And was like a daughter to him.*”

To a loving shepherd, his sheep was more than animal, more than a precious pet even, it was like a beloved family member he had paid dearly for, and was willing to even pay by laying his life down for his sheep as a good shepherd (unlike a hired hand, Jn 10). Precious sheep eat from his own table and drink from his own cup!

2. What this meant for David

For David, these were tender precious images of his Father’s intimate relationship. To David, the Lord didn’t merely fill his cup, the Lord was his cup (Ps 16:5). God satisfied his thirst (Ps 63:1). God satisfied his soul like the greatest meal on a table (63:5). Anointing with oil in the psalms signified joy and gladness from God, God-given joy or gladness above what others have (Ps 45:7). In Psalm 104:15 the imagery of Psalm 23 is summed up this way: the cup of drink speaks of a glad heart, oil speaks of a shining face, and food speaks of the sustaining strength God gives.

Application: God gives us abundant reason to rejoice

David and others elsewhere compared Scripture to a meal of food. The table to David’s son Solomon represented God’s wisdom that He has placed before us and invites us to partake of: “*She has prepared her food...set her table*” (Prov 9:2, wisdom in the Word). God has provided abundantly to feed all our spiritual needs in His sufficient soul-satisfying Word, as David knew well (see Psalm 19)

Application: Be fed in the table of God’s Word

As someone who God has called to be a shepherd in a local church, this is priority #1: to feed my soul and yours, to prepare a table for you each Sunday in the Word of God, to work hard to prepare food that will strengthen the flock, even if preaching may make enemies at times.

Our services aren't geared for goats (Scriptural term for unbelievers) although we do want to preach the gospel to every creature and so all are welcome. But we aren't here to cater to their voice; we're here to call all to follow the voice of the Shepherd-King Jesus. We don't even want to follow the opinions of the sheep as to what they want, we must be faithful to teach the whole counsel of God and what He has determined we need spiritually.

The one verse in the Bible that uses the word "pastor" (which is just the Greek word for shepherd, not a separate or specialized term) is Ephesians 4:12 which says the Lord gave to the church "*pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ*" (NET). ESV keeps the word "shepherd" in that passage: "*shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.*"

Another writer gives this application: "the Lord provides a green pasture for his sheep every time the Word of God is truly preached. This challenges all who know the Lord to prize biblical preaching heartily. And it soundly rebukes all those 'preachers' who lead their people away from the green grass the Lord has provided in his Word to the brown, withered grass of human wisdom."⁸

The CUP in the psalms refers to salvation and spiritual blessing: Psalm 116:12-13 "*What shall I render to the LORD For all His benefits toward me? I shall lift up the cup of salvation ...*"

Application: praise God for salvation and spiritual blessing

Below is from Warren Wiersbe:⁹

| Phrase from Ps 23 | Compound Name of Jehovah / Yahweh | Meaning of name | Cross-reference example |
|--------------------------|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| "I shall not want" | Jehovah-Jireh | The Lord provides | Genesis 22:14 |
| "still waters" | Jehovah-Shalom | The Lord our peace | Judges 6:24 |
| "restores my soul" | Jehovah-Rophe | The Lord who heals | Exodus 15:26 |
| "paths of righteousness" | Jehovah-Tsidekenu | The Lord our righteousness | Jeremiah 33:16 |
| "you are with me" | Jehovah-Shammah | The Lord is there | Ezekiel 48:35 |
| "presence of my enemies" | Jehovah-Nissi | The Lord our banner | Exodus 17:15 |
| "anoint my head" | Jehovah-m'kaddesh | The Lord who sanctifies | Leviticus 20:8 |

David writes Ps 23, not just physically of sheep, but also humanly spiritually. The Lord of Ps 23 is not only a Shepherd, but a King and Host as well. David himself was not only shepherd, but also king and host, and had been hosted many times.

So we don't have to make v. 5 an abrupt change in subject – the same Shepherd-Lord is the subject and object and focus throughout the psalm, just in different roles that enrich the metaphor to us.

John Davis explains from his time in the holy land with shepherds:

‘In my travels in various parts of the world, I have encountered all types of hospitality, but none that quite equaled the warmth and completeness of that offered by Bedouin [shepherds treating me as] ... a “brother” in the family [therefore getting] the appropriate honor ... we all sat around a large circle on a beautiful oriental rug with surrounding pillows [to eat, tables in Bible were close to floor] ... there were two sides to my shepherd friend ... I had witnessed his rugged individualism in the wilderness of Judah as he cared for the sheep and goats. Now I was able to watch him in the role of a gracious host and provider. It was still the same man, the same shepherd, but with new circumstances ... [like Ps 23:5] the change is not one of figure, but setting ... Many Palestinian shepherds are comparatively wealthy and are capable of providing a dinner of exquisite quality. This was effectively illustrated by my experience in the tents ... With this approach, we are not faced with such a radical change in the imagery of the passage and yet the distinctive elements of v. 5 can be interpreted literally without resorting to allegorical approaches ...’¹⁰

David, after all had been anointed with oil literally and had literal human enemies, and often ate with his enemies round about him. David experienced a table prepared before him in the presence of his enemy at King Saul’s table when Saul saw him as an enemy he wanted to kill. David wrote in Ps 41 how one he had shared a table with as a trusted friend betrayed him and became his enemy (v. 9), which NT applied to Jesus at another table prepared before Him in the presence of His soon-to-be betraying enemy and traitor Judas.

In 2 Sam. 17, David’s own beloved child has turned against him, Absalom and Israel became his enemies. But in v. 27, some men whose names I can’t pronounce so I’ll skip (former enemies is the important thing) prepare a table before David in the wilderness:

²⁸ *brought beds, basins, pottery, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans, lentils, parched seeds,* ²⁹ *honey, curds, sheep, and cheese of the herd, for David and for the people who were with him, to eat; for they said, “The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness.”* [even when surrounded by enemies, the Lord prepared a table in the wilderness; Ps 23:5 may be recalling?]

David never forgot this to his deathbed. He told Solomon (1 Kings 2:7): “*show kindness to the sons of Barzillai ... and let them **be among those who eat at your table** [i.e., prepare a table before them]; for they assisted me when I fled from Absalom your brother.*”

To eat at one’s table was an honor in Bible times. It was to come under the protection of the one showing hospitality. Someone you invited into your home for a meal or a stay was safe from enemies as long as they were in your house (ex: Lot, even to sinful extreme). Filling a cup to the brim with expensive wine was a sign of honor.

To fill to overflowing was very unusual over-the-top honor. One visitor to India in past centuries records an experience similar to what Psalm 23 describes: “The gentleman of the house poured upon my hands and arms a delightful odoriferous perfume, put a golden cup into my hand, and poured wine into it until it ran over, assuring me at the same time that it was a great pleasure for him to receive me, and that I should find a rich supply in his house.”¹¹

Jesus was anointed twice in the NT, with expensive oil / perfume, signifying highest honor. In Luke 7:44 He said “*Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head.*”⁴⁵ *You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in.*⁴⁶ *You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.*⁴⁷ *... she loved much”* (NKJV)

What’s amazing is that Jesus stoops to wash our feet, the job of a slave in those days! King Jesus not only prepares a table for His disciples, He Himself actually takes on the role of servant to them. Jesus said the reason He came was to serve, not to be served. He anoints every believer with the Holy Spirit (1 John 2). He gives salvation and every spiritual blessing in Christ to all His children.

David as a boy would have heard the stories of his great-grandma Ruth who came to Bethlehem as a Moabite widow. Moabites had been ethnic enemies of Israel for centuries. Moabites were banned from the temple 10 generations. But Boaz, the human lord of the harvest, the owner of the field, he brought this Moabite under his protection in an environment not always friendly to those like her. Boaz only allowed this outsider to glean in his field, he gave her above and beyond what her barley sack could hold, it was truly running over with grain and barley, he overflowed of his water cups to her so that she could freely drink from what other workers had drawn from the well at any time, and Boaz himself prepared a table before Ruth in the very presence of enemies (Israelites racist to Moabites). Ruth 2 says *he served her!*

‘To lay a table for someone is to act as a gracious host (cf. Prov. 9:1-2), and it is what a king does (by means of his servants) for his extensive household [Look at 2 Sam. 9].’¹² But for *the master to himself serve* is astonishing – the King of Kings, unthinkable! And yet that is the picture of Scripture: Jesus *prepares a table for us!!* Being at any king’s table even was quite an honor, as David well knew. To be a continual regular guest was the highest of honors.

In 2 Sam 9:3. David ‘**The king said, “Is there not yet anyone of the house of Saul to whom I may show the kindness of God?”** And Ziba said to the king, “There is still a son of Jonathan who is crippled in both feet.” ... [normally, former king / dynasty relatives were enemies the new king would kill off] ...⁶*Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and prostrated himself. And David said, “Mephibosheth.” And he said, “Here is your servant!”*⁷*David said to him, “Do not fear, for I will surely show kindness to you for the sake of your father Jonathan, and will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul; and you shall eat at my table regularly.”*⁸*Again he prostrated himself and said, “What is your servant, that you should regard a dead dog like me?”*⁹*Then the king called Saul’s servant Ziba and said to him, “All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master’s grandson.*¹⁰*“You and your sons and your servants shall cultivate the land for him, and you shall bring in the produce so that your master’s grandson may have food; nevertheless Mephibosheth your master’s grandson shall eat at my table regularly.” ... So Mephibosheth ate at David’s table as one of the king’s sons ...*¹³*So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate at the king’s table regularly. Now he was lame in both feet. [i.e., amazing grace!]*

There's Mephibosheth, regularly daily at the king's table, having a table prepared before him in the presence of those who would normally have been his enemies in the ancient world, and who normally would have killed him as a survivor from a rival dynasty. He is lame, crippled, disabled, helpless, hopeless – in the eyes of the ancient world he would have been considered like a dead dog.

But in the eyes of God and in the eyes of a man after God's heart, he is considered *like an adopted beloved child*. He is given *a full inheritance*! Servants will even work *for him*! He is treated like a son of the king, and it says 4x he ate regularly at the king's table!!

And this all is traced back to v. 3, the kindness, the *khesed* of God, that David's cup had been filled with that now overflows to others. *Khesed* is the Heb. word translated "mercy" in Psalm 23:5 – mercy that follows, literally pursues. It chased down and sought out this man who was unable to run away or even walk, it carried him.

Not only did mercy allow him to live when first brought before the king, but everyday as a cripple he had to be brought to the table prepared before him who had once been his enemy, now seated at the king's table he is given grace that regularly runneth over.

- This is cup-overflowing grace that restored his soul and life and even restored the inheritance of a king to him!
- Instead of fearing evil and even the shadow of death he had the shepherd-king with him, and as ruler over Israel, his rod comforted Mephibosheth now under his protection!
- As Ps 23:1b says, he would now never lack again his needs
- As Ps 23:5 says, he had a table prepared before him, and he would have continually been anointed with oil as honored guest, his cup would have been continually overflowing!
- As Ps 23:6 says, goodness and mercy (*khesed*) would come after him and carry him all the days of his life in this house!

Dale Ralph Davis writes that this "sort of thing that wasn't supposed to happen [is for us who know the NT] something like Romans 5:10, '*While we were enemies we were reconciled to God ... you will never appreciate David's covenant love unless you understand the source of it, the Author of it. In fact, is it not Paul's purpose in Romans 5:6-10 to highlight the who-could-have-guessed quality of God's love? ... 'While we were yet helpless ... while we were yet sinners ... while we were enemies ...' ... we are [all] Mephibosheths, and there is absolutely no reason why we should be eating continually at the King's table. And if we have any sense, we won't be able to understand it either.*'¹³

3. What this means today for all children of the King

If this picture doesn't move your heart to want to praise and love Christ, friend, I have to seriously question whether you even love Christ at all or have ever experienced His amazing saving grace. I say that in love because this imagery is the very heart of the gospel you must believe to be saved. The very heart of saving faith is the Gentile woman in Matthew 15 who comes to Christ for help, and He says His mission was for the sheep of Israel, not the dogs, and she says "*Yes, Lord, but even the dogs feed on crumbs that fall from their Master's table?*" He then blesses her for her great faith.

It's equally amazing any of us get any crumbs from the Master's table. All of us were once an enemy of God, committing crimes against the Judge of the universe. We were spiritually disabled and unable to do anything, spiritually dead, as desirable to God as a dead dog or as filthy rags. But God takes us from rags to riches!

God replaces my filthy garments with perfect righteousness of Christ who He makes us joint heirs with, seats us in heavenly places with, and adopts us and gives us full inheritance with, and carries us to His table though we could never get there on our own!

Instead of the death we deserve and eternal punishment outside His kingdom for our crimes against Him, He makes us a son of the King, and gives us a seat at His table forever! Instead of death row, He puts me in His honored row of seats!! Instead of the electric chair, He lets me sit at White house banquet near the president in a top-dollar seat!! I get a feast instead of the firing squad! I'm guilty before the court, but God lets me enter His courts with praise, the guilty now a guest of honor, the prisoner now a palace resident! A sinner now a singer: "once your enemy, now seated at your table!"

In Psalm 16, David speaks of his full cup, aware of enemies all around him who seek drink and satisfaction in other sources:

16:4 *The sorrows of those who have bartered for another god will be multiplied; I shall not pour out **their drink** offerings of blood, Nor will I take their names upon my lips.* ⁵ **The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup**

[God doesn't just *fill man's* cup so it overflows, God Himself *is the cup* for man, the never-ending thirst-quenching enemy-befriending pride-offending, mercy-sending heart-mending satisfaction that restores my soul with cup-overflowing grace at His table] ...
 ... ⁸ *I have set the LORD continually **before me**; Because He is at my right hand, **I will not be shaken**.* ⁹ *Therefore my **heart is glad** and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will **dwell securely*** [even in presence of enemies, v. 10, Ps 23:4]

But back in **Psalm 11**, God's enemies have a different cup to drink:

⁵ *The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked, And the one who loves violence His soul hates.*

⁶ *Upon the wicked He will rain snares; Fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup.*

Divine hatred and hell-fire and brimstone are not popular subjects if we want to think of only God's love for you and wonderful plan for your life. But we need to let God define love in His Word, not sentimentalism. God's love and grace *is offered to all who repent* but there is a horrible future planned eternally for all who do not love Jesus as Lord and Shepherd and Savior. God's righteous wrath and indignation is also described as a cup they must drink.

But the good news of the gospel is that for those who hate their own sin as God hates their sin, and who repent and renounce sin and all its bitterness, and who come to Jesus as bread of life and as living water, trusting in His death and resurrection (as the Lord's table signifies), they can then come and dine with Him forever.

David raised lambs of his own that might be slain at Passover, but the greater Son of David Jesus Christ was raised *from the dead*, as the Lamb of God slain for the sins of the world for all who repent. Jesus is our Passover lamb and table and cup that causes the cup of God's wrath to pass over us, because His grace overflowed to us!

In Jewish Passover tradition, the association of cup and sheep (the sacrificed lamb) at a table prepared beforehand is interesting to remember at this point. Psalms were sung, they ate at the table and drank of the cup, and in the case of Jesus at the Last Supper, the table was prepared before Him in the presence of His enemy Judas.

Jesus instituted what we call "the Lord's Table" on that night, giving the meal and cup new significance. Then Jesus went out to the Garden of Gethsemane where He spoke of this other cup, the cup of God's wrath toward sin, and He prayed, "*If it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless not my will but thine.*" Then the disciple-turned-enemy who had been in His presence at the table prepared before him hours earlier, who had shared a cup with Jesus, Judas greets Him not by anointing his head or honoring Him as King, but by a kiss of false affection and ultimate betrayal. When Peter tries to stop the soldiers from arresting Jesus, Jesus said, "***The cup the Father has given me, shall I not drink it?***"

What are the ingredients of Christ's full cup, F. B. Meyer asks? This cup was overflowing with suffering, 'the shame and spitting; the pain and anguish; the physical torture; and, above all, the bitterness of our sins, which were made to meet in Him; the guilt of our curse, which He voluntarily assumed; the equivalent of our punishment, which was imputed to Him [the full wrath of God He drank for us, as if all His children and future children] stood in one long line, each with a cup of [poison] in his hand; and Christ passed along, took from each his cup and poured its contents into [His cup] which He carried; so that on the cross He "tasted death for every man" [redeeming all who believe]. Thus our lives brim with salvation, because His brimmed with condemnation. Our cup is one of joy, because His cup was one of sorrow. Our cup is one of blessedness, because His was one of God-forsakenness.'¹⁴

- He drank a cup of wrath I should have had to drink, and instead I get to drink a cup of the waters of life without cost
- He drank it to the dregs, to the last drop, leaving nothing in the cup, so His children have nothing to fear of His wrath
- He emptied Himself, so our cup can be full, overflowing!
- He prepared a table for me that I never could for myself
- He deserved me to anoint His head as my King, and yet He anoints my head and crowns me with love and compassion and honors me with His gifts and every spiritual blessing
- He stoops to serve us, wash feet, fill cups like a servant
- I'm the one who should be serving Him, I'm not worthy to even untie His sandal to begin to wash His feet, or to even be the lowest of His slaves and yet He treats me as His son and heir and He lets me sit at His table and eat at His table!
- We sing "He brought me to His banqueting table, His banner over me is love" or with David "my cup runs over"
- Once an enemy, now seated at your table! It gets better! If you turn to Revelation 3, the cup overflows unbelievably
- Listen to what the Good Shepherd says in Luke 12:32: "*Fear not, little flock. It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*" Not just a part *in it*; the kingdom!

- In Rev. 3:20 Christ says *'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. [v. 19 says it's those who repent who have this fellowship]* ²¹ *'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne [sitting with Him on His throne!]*

That type of grace is unexplainable and unattainable humanly, in fact it not only boggles my mind, it messes with my eyes that want to think that must be a typo in my Bible. Sit with King Jesus on His throne just as He sits with His Father on His throne to dine with Him individually?! There's a far greater feast than David ever gave or experienced at the end of time that God prepares for us, the wedding supper of the Lamb in chapter 19, a table banquet for the ages! He went to prepare a place that where He is we will also be. To be able to see Christ ever at all is extra grace (anything besides eternity in hell is undeserved), to be anywhere near Christ ever is extraordinary grace, to be able to sit at the same table and even near Christ is extravagant grace, but to be able to sit with Christ on His throne at that meal is extreme excessive grace, mind-blowing cup-overflowing grace to once an enemy now seated at His table!

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psalm_23

² Mays, J. L., Harper & Row, P., & Society of Biblical Literature. (1996, c1988). *Harper's Bible commentary* (Ps 23:1). San Francisco: Harper & Row.

³ D. R. W. Wood and I. Howard Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 1148.

⁴ MacMillan, 115-116.

⁵ Catherwood, p. 46.

⁶ Keller, 99.

⁷ W. W. Catherwood, *The 23rd Psalm*, p. 47.

⁸ Roger Ellsworth, *Opening Up Psalms* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 45-46.

⁹ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Worshipful*, (Cook Communications, 2004), p. 94.

¹⁰ Davis, 107-112.

¹¹ Captain Wilson, in *Pictorial Bible*, cited in *Barnes Notes on the Old Testament*, Vol. 5.

¹² Goldingay, *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Psalms*, Vol. 1, p. 352.

¹³ Dale Ralph Davis, *2 Samuel*, p. 105-106.

¹⁴ F. B. Meyer. *Shepherd Psalm*.