

**Psalm 23: 5 and 6; “Surely Goodness and Mercy”, A Sermon delivered at
The Premier Estates Nursing Home on December 10th, 2017,
by Pastor Paul Rendall.**

The words “surely goodness and mercy” should tell us that God will never fail to do what is good for those who have trusted in Jesus for their salvation. His goodness and mercy shall be very sure to them, each and every day. He will see to it that once He has begun a good work in your soul, dear Christian, He will continue it until the Day of Christ, and He will complete it in such a wonderful and dramatic fashion that you will have all of eternity to thank and praise Him for it. And of course, this eternity of goodness will never end. So, this afternoon I want to speak to you about how the Lord’s good and sure Providential Care is seen, by all believers, in the following 5 ways. 1st – His preparing a table for you. 2nd – His anointing your head. 3rd – His pouring you an overflowing cup. 4th – His personally following you around, doing you good. And 5th – His bringing you to dwell eternally in His house. In relating these things to you, I hope that you will see that if you are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation, that God will faithfully apply all of the blessings of salvation to your life in this life and the next.

1st of all – Let’s think about how God prepares a table for you if trust in Him.

Verse 5 – “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” Now I hope that you understand that in many places in the Bible, there are often words that are used that are not being used literally physically, but rather they are words which are meant to convey to us a picture of a literal spiritual reality in the life of the believer. Words like this are meant to bring spiritual nourishment to your soul. The word “table”, here, is one of those words. A literal table is the physical piece of furniture upon which provisions for your physical strengthening are set. You then sit down and partake of them and you are nourished and strengthened. So, the words here if we would understand them in their depths would read this way – You prepare for me good and nourishing spiritual provision and sustenance, in the presence of my enemies. You strengthen my soul and my heart with grace so that I am able to keep your commandments and face my enemies and bear up under the oppression of spirit I feel when I am in the presence of those who not only do not care for my soul, but they most certainly hate me. You are even able to encourage my heart with making all grace abound to me so that I can actually be joyful and expectant concerning all of Your working and all of Your help toward me and in all of my greatest trials.

This is what David is saying, and he had many occasions where he was surrounded by enemies and yet this was a an ever present literal spiritual reality for him – God prepared a table for him in the presence of his enemies. It is not as though the word “table” here excludes the idea of physically being sustained and blessed by literal physical food, for we have an instance of this in Psalm 78: 17-19 where it says concerning the children of Israel, “But they sinned even more against Him by rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness.” “And they tested God in their heart by asking for the food of their fancy.” “Yes, they spoke against God: They said, ‘Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?’” This, I hope you will see, is the language of doubt and unbelief that came out in the speech of the children of Israel when God led them out into the wilderness for 40 years. They truly did not believe that God could provide all the different kinds of food that they still desired to have. And so they longed to go back to Egypt and to the bondage of slavery that they had before, because at least there, they would have the food of their fancy.

Listen to their words of Exodus 16: 1-4 – “And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt.” “Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in

the wilderness.” “And the children of Israel said to them, ‘Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full!’ “For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assemble with hunger.” “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you.’ “And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.” Now, we need to remember that the Lord had delivered these Israelites from their slavery to Pharaoh and had brought them out of Egypt and destroyed Pharaoh’s army in the Red Sea, while they went through on dry land. And yet what do we find them doing after God had secured their freedom? We find them murmuring and complaining against God and against Moses and Aaron. Even though God had done such great things for them, still they would not trust in God, that He was leading them in the right way or that He could provide for their every need. They made this great statement of unbelief – “Can God provide a table in the wilderness?”

What is the lesson for ourselves? It is this. God is able to provide for your every single true need, as you learn to trust in Him, rather than complain against Him. And you need to understand that God thinks upon you. He studies you, to know about all of the details of the way that you think in relation to what you think that you need to be satisfied. God full well knows how to meet and to satisfy all of your needs, and all of the legitimate desires of your heart. You need to expect, by faith, that He really will provide a table for you in the midst of your particular wilderness, or your particular enemies. He will set this table for you. Listen to Proverbs Chapter 9 and verses 1 and 2 – “Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars; she has slaughtered her meat, she has mixed her wine.” “She has also furnished her table.” “She has sent out her maidens, she cries out from the highest places of the city.” “Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!” “As for him who lacks understanding, she says to him, ‘Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed.’ “Forsake foolishness and live, and go in the way of understanding.”

How often it is that we as Christians do not listen the voice of wisdom. We lack understanding and so we complain that our way is too difficult for us. But our wisdom is found in Christ. He was the fulfillment of all the sacrificial offerings of the Old Testament, and He died to purchase all the manifold blessings of grace which will save your soul, satisfy your soul with good things, and make you wise in God’s eyes. Whoever needs wisdom needs to turn in to this table and open the door when Christ knocks. He will come and sit down at the table of your heart, and He will dine with you and you with Him. Christ has furnished this table. John Gill says – “It has a variety of excellent provision upon it.” “This would include the ministry of the gospel, and the word of God, and it is signified by various sorts of foods, such as bread, meat, milk, honey, and delicious fruits.” “Christ who is the sum and substance of it, is expressed by several things that are eatable, as by a slain lamb, a fatted calf, the hidden manna, the bread of God and of life, whose flesh is meat indeed, and His blood drink indeed; and so is He held forth in the ordinances, particularly in the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper.” “The table that He sits at, and welcomes His guests; encourages them to eat and drink, and He dines with them himself. Here His broken body, and His blood shed, are presented to the faith of His people, to be eaten and drank in a spiritual manner; a table richly furnished indeed!” (end of quote)

Let us remember that Christ prepared this table of the Lord’s Supper before He went to the cross, in the presence of His enemy Judas, who went immediately, after partaking of the sop, to betray Jesus to the Chief Priests. His true disciples benefitted by the bread and the wine, as they were partaking of the emblems of our Lord’s death. And in sitting at His table they found their spiritual life strengthened. You, too, will receive all of the benefits of Christ’s death and intercession as You feed upon Him by faith, even if you are surrounded by people who act as enemies. Let not your heart always be suspicious of men and their motives. Rather, entrust

your soul to God for all needful provision and for all sake-keeping, and believe that He will set the table for you to be sustained throughout whatever trials and testings that you go through.

2nd – Christ’s Providential care is seen in His anointing your head with oil.

It is God who anointed David’s head with oil, through the ministry of the Prophet Samuel. But this is not what our passage in Psalm 23 is speaking of. It actually refers to the custom in that day of anointing with oil on festive occasions as a means of refreshment. It was done so that the person might rejoice and be glad on that occasion of celebration. Even so, when David says, “You anoint my head with oil”, he is speaking of God’s anointing him (and all believers trusting in God) with the Spirit. In this anointing there is a crowning of them with lovingkindness and compassion and tender mercies. There is in this anointing the realization of God’s great faithfulness to keep all of His promises to you. Listen to 2nd Corinthians 1: 18-22 – “But as God is faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No.” “For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us – by me, Silvanus, and Timothy – was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes.” “For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.” “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a deposit.” This is how it is for the Christian. All of the promises of God are true and Yes and Amen in Christ. And God will establish you in Christ as you trust in Him, and He will anoint you with the Holy Spirit, and give to you joy and power in living the Christian life, as you obey Him in relation to the Scriptures.

3rd – God’s Providential Care is seen in His pouring you an overflowing cup.

“My cup overflows.” The cup is the picture of your spiritually drinking of what the Lord has providentially ordered for your life. Listen to Psalm 16: 5 – “O Lord, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot.” “The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Yes, I have a good inheritance.” David is saying – You, O Lord, have assigned to me all the blessings of my life and all of the trials and difficulties of my life. I receive them both as my portion; the blessings and the trials. They are what is due to me based upon my behavior before You, but they are sweetened day by day as I drink deeply of Your covenant faithfulness, Your continual thoughtfulness and Your kindness concerning me; to appoint for me what would be for my highest good, and for Your glory. You have plans for me, Lord, and you maintain my lot in life as a righteous person. Since You are so kind and good to me, I find that my life has been, for the most part, pleasant. “The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places.” I reflect upon the fact that I have not received from You what I have deserved, according to my sins, but I have received grace upon grace in order to see my sins forgiven, repentance granted to me, and grace to sustain and transform my life given to me so that I am becoming more like Christ. Indeed, when I think of all the rich blessings that you daily bestow upon me, it is like a cup that is overflowing. You have poured the riches of the grace of Christ into the cup of my heart, and I am overwhelmed with Your constant love for me and Your care over my life.

4th – God’s Providential Care is seen in His personally following you around, doing you good.

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life...” Goodness and mercy are here personified to indicate to us God’s faithfulness to do good to all of His elect people; all of those who are trusting in Christ for their salvation; all of those who want to learn and to walk in His ways. God Himself, because of Christ and what He has done for us, follows us around, so to speak, to do us good. This is not a literally physical following, but a literally spiritual following. Listen to Jeremiah 32: 40 – “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart Me.” “Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good.” Now, although these promises are given to the Jews, in their conversion to Christ, and their being given all of the blessings of

salvation, they are also given to us Gentiles because the New Covenant in Christ encompasses not only the Jews, but also all of the Gentiles who will trust in Christ as well.

Listen to another passage of Scripture which speaks of the New Covenant blessings coming to the Jews, and through them to all nations everywhere when they are converted. Isaiah 30: 19 – “For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; You shall weep no more.” “He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you.” “And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers.” “Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it, whenever you turn to the right hand or the left.’” This is how Goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our lives. It is because God is faithful to show us His goodness and kindness each and every day, for Christ’s sake, and we then by His grace can trust in His lovingkindness and glory in it.” The question is – Are you doing this? Are you trusting in God’s faithfulness? Are you convinced that goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life; even the worst of those days, because of what Christ has done for you? Ah, this is the blessed life of the Christian disciple; to learn all that God would teach you, and glory in the good care and mercy of your covenant-keeping God. He will never fail nor forsake you. He will always be with you, and always be with His Church until the end of the age.

5th – God’s good and Providential Care will be seen in His bringing you to dwell in His house forever.

“And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” This is truly the most pleasant of thoughts to the Christian; the sureness of God’s promise, to bring them to heaven, and to keep them there with Him forever. I think of this saying of the Lord Jesus to His disciples before His going to the cross. John 14: 1 – “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.” “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.” “I go to prepare a place for you.” “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” The Father has as many mansions as He has Elect people. You who believe in Him shall dwell with Him forever, but you shall indeed have your own place to dwell in. The Lord Jesus has gone ahead of you to prepare a place for you; a place of rest and peace, a place in which you will be happy and satisfied to be there, forever. I want you to remember this, as I close this sermon: God always knows exactly what will be good for you, and what will truly be a blessing to you. As you trust in Him, Christ will lead you into all the truth. He has given you His Holy Spirit to be with you forever. Deuteronomy 33: 26, 27 says – “There is none like the God of Jeshurun, who rides the heavens to your help, and through the skies in His majesty.” “The eternal God is a dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”