

Fill My Cup Lord

Psalm 23

Sunday February 2nd, 2020

"Fill my cup, Lord; I lift it up Lord. Come and quench this thirsting of my soul. Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more. Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole."

The last section of the 23rd Psalm talks about God filling David's cup. In fact, David's cup is filled to overflowing.

One commentary I read says this may have been talking about the kind of hospitality practiced by Bedouins. As explained to us by Herb and Heather Klassen: According to Bedouin law, once a traveler was received into the shepherd's tent, and especially once his host has spread food before him, he was guaranteed immunity from his enemies. To sit as a guest at the table of such a host was to be assured of food, housing, fellowship and protection. A table that had been prepared was a public announcement that no one was to molest THIS guest. The greater the influence/prestige/power of the host the greater the security. When a guest's head was anointed with oil - it showed he was highly honored. And when a cup was offered to a special visitor it wasn't half-full... it would be running over showing the prestige of the guest. Consider what Lot did when the 2 angels visited him in Sodom, when the crowd outside his home wanted him to send them out to "know" them. Genesis 19 (read), Why would a father send out his 2 virgin daughters to this crowd and tell them "do what you will with them?" Because these were guests in his house and his responsibility was to protect them - no matter what!

Fill my cup Lord! That's what David boldly was saying God would do for him. David had come into the TENT of this great shepherd, and David knew that, once he was there, he'd be provided for and protected.

And that's a repeated theme in David's songs. In ✓ Psalm 27:5 David wrote "For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock."

And in ✓ Psalm 61:4 he wrote: "Let me dwell in your tent forever! Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings!"

(PAUSE) Now what's interesting is that not everybody thinks about God that way. A famous political pundit named Charles Krauthammer said he didn't believe in God but: "There was once a philosopher who said, 'I don't believe in God, but I fear him greatly.'" A committed agnostic, Krauthammer said that this was a thought that was always in the back of his mind.

There's a fear of God that is almost universal. According to one story I read, certain tribesmen in the Congo regarded one particular idol as their spiritual father. They greatly revered this idol... but they keep it hidden in a deep pit. When missionaries asked why they hid this statue, they cried "If we look on the face of our father, we will die."

There was study published by USA Today a few years back. They found that over 31% of Americans saw God as "Authoritarian." He's almost always angry. He wants us to shape up and fly right. But if we don't - He will punish us.

About 16% of Americans pictured God as "Critical" and "Judgmental." He's still unhappy with us, but He has no intention of offering either divine wrath or help.

A 3rd group (over 24%) believed God was "Distant." He may have created earth, but He didn't have any intention of getting involved in our lives.

NOW that's nearly 75% of Americans who believe that God either doesn't like us, or doesn't care what happens to us!!!!

Someone once wrote a "23rd Psalm" for those who thought that way: *"I have no Shepherd, I constantly want. In discontent, I graze in parched fields; I can find no water to quench my thirst. My soul is weary; I wander in the paths of sinfulness, seeking pleasure. When I walk in the darkness of danger and death, I am afraid; I am all alone. No power or principle gives me comfort. There is no nourishment to strengthen me against my enemies. There is no ointment for head. My life is empty. Even though God's goodness and mercy have been available all the days of my life, I shall be banished from the house of the Lord forever."*

But David didn't think that way did he. He said ✓ *"The Lord is my shepherd... You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever."*

David's God CARED for him, and LOVED him, and PROTECTED him.

(PAUSE) But it's obviously not the way a lot of people think about God. But why? Why do so many people NOT believe in a God that would love and protect them? Well... because folks usually don't live their lives the way they should. They believe God hates them... because they deserve to be hated by Him. And they also don't think He'd care to help out in their lives... because they KNOW they DON'T deserve that!

And they're right! They don't deserve God's love and care. None of us do. David wrote: ✓ *"Enter not into judgement with your servant, for no-one living is righteous before you."* Psalm 143:2

And ✓ Psalm 130:3 says *"If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?"*

And ✓ Ecclesiastes 7:20 declares *"Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins."*

As Romans says – all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. NO ONE deserves God's love and care!!! But now, if that's true ... that we DON'T DESERVE God... why on earth did David believe God cared for him? I mean... hadn't David sinned? Hadn't he fallen short of God's glory? Well yeah! David sinned and fell short. David didn't deserve God's love or protection any more than we do! But David was still loved by God... just like you and I are.

You see, that's the big contrast found in Scripture. God hates sin, but He yearns for the sinner.

There's a true story of the young girl born with a cleft palate. She said "when I started school, my classmates made it clear to me how I looked to others: a little girl with a misshapen lip, crooked nose, lopsided teeth, and garbled speech. When schoolmates asked, 'What happened to your lip? I'd tell them I'd fallen and cut it on a piece of glass. Somehow it seemed more acceptable to have suffered an accident than to have been born different. I was convinced that no one outside my family could love me.

But then something happened in the 2nd grade that changed all that. There was a teacher in school that all the kids loved – Mrs. Leonard. She was short, round, happy – a sparkling lady. Every year they had a hearing test. I knew from past years that - as we stood against the door and covered one ear – the teacher would sit at her desk would whisper something, and we would have to repeat it back – things like "the sky is blue" or "do you have new shoes?"

"But that day, the teacher whispered 7 words that changed my life." In a whisper Mrs. Leonard said, "I wish you were my little girl."

That is what God yearns to tell us! "I wish you were my daughter/ my son." Because - you see... that's what God really wants to do. In fact, God is looking for someone that He can say that too. Did you know that?

✓II Chronicles 16:9 says "...the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him"

God's looking for someone!!! He's looking for someone like YOU... and like ME. He isn't looking for the most popular/ attractive/ intelligent/ talented person. He's looking for someone whose heart is fully committed to Him. And when He finds that person God wants to shower that person with blessings and strength. He wants to do something special with that person's life.

(PAUSE)

When God was looking for someone to be the next King of Israel. He sent the prophet Samuel to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse and, when he arrives, Samuel invites Jesse and his family to share in the sacrifice and feast. This is a GREAT HONOR. Samuel was a GREAT PROPHET. And Jesse and his boys are to be honored guests at this feast. And so, Jesse dresses up his boys and brings them to the prophet. They may never be involved in something this impressive again.

And-all the time- Samuel is looking for this someone who's supposed to be next king. ✓"When they (Jesse and his sons) came, he looked on Eliab (the oldest son) and thought, 'Surely the LORD's anointed is before him.' But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: Man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart" 1 Samuel 16:6-7

Jesse brought 7 of his sons before Samuel... but God rejected every one of them. Finally, Samuel says... are these all your sons?

Jesse answered, "There is still the youngest, but he is tending the sheep."

David was an afterthought. When it came to this GREAT meeting of this great prophet of God, Jesse didn't even think David was worth the trouble. But God thought David was worth the trouble. Why? Because ✓ "...the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him." 2 Chronicles 16:9

God is looking for somebody that everybody else may have rejected.

AND... that's kind of the problem with a lot of folks. They think God's going to reject them because they're not worthy. They're amongst that 75% of Americans who believe that God doesn't love them/ care for them.

There is a story of man who felt God hated and despised him. He'd tried to appease God all of his life... even going so far as to become a preacher to gain God's favor. But he never felt worthy. God always seemed to him to be a stern and forbidding deity, Who was only waiting to punish him for his weaknesses and failures.

One day as he was shaving - it was like he fell into a trance. As he looked into the mirror it seemed that he no longer saw his own reflection... he literally saw God - God the way he'd always pictured him. Majestic, powerful, stern, distant. This God sat on a throne and turned his head and looked right at the preacher.

Then - as he watched - this fearsome God stepped down from His throne and walked towards him. Then, this God who he'd feared all his life put his arms around him and simply held him like he was a small child. The preacher said he fell to his knees in tears and woke from his dream a changed man.

From that day on he realized God loved him... just as he was.

As I was reading over this last part of the 23rd Psalm - something caught my attention. It says ✓ "You PREPARE A TABLE before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; MY CUP OVERFLOWS. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

Did you catch that? God prepares a table for us.

God has prepared a "table for us". And here on the table are "cups". These cups are "literally" overflowing (not with juice) but they overflow with the message of God's "mercy and goodness." Every month, we gather around "this table" to hear that message over and over again - this cup speaks of how much God really cares for us - cares enough to pay the ultimate price to redeem us from our sins.

One of my favorite passages is Ephesians 2:1-9. It tells you and I that we ✓ "...were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience — among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."

That's who we were before we were saved. We were objects of wrath, unworthy of God's love and care.

But then we're told ✓ "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, EVEN WHEN WE WERE DEAD IN OUR TRESPASSES, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

It's because of this CUP... that we have the promise of God's mercy and goodness. And it's because of this CUP that we have the promise of dwelling in the house of the Lord forever!