

Table of Grace

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Unless there is a revolutionary change in Christianity throughout our country, the years ahead may be called the years of the cobra and the viper: Many will be infected by the venom transmitted by the serpent, Satan. *It doesn't have to be this way.* God has promised to prepare a table for us in the presence of our enemies. For some, the next few years will be the years of feasting at the table of grace, years of serving in brokenness, humility, meekness, and obedience.

God wants us to hear every single word from the Bible so we will not live in preoccupation with self, presuppositions about people, or presumptions about the past. Matthew 5:6 says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." These people are focused, occupied with the throne ministry of a victorious Lord. Everything in their life is Christ. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness, they are continually filled.

Chapter One

WHICH TABLE?

“And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:16-17).

“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).

“But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils” (1 Corinthians 10:20).

“Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?” (Psalm 78:19).

“Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap” (Psalm 69:22).

There are two tables placed in front of us every day of our lives. What we do with those

tables is important, because God wants each believer to eat from the table of grace, which will give us an eternal self-image, derived from heaven, and the ability to live in *theantric action autonomy with cognitive invincibility*.

“Theantric action” refers to the Kingdom of God operating in a believer. It speaks of the Father’s plan, the Son’s Finished Work, and the Holy Spirit’s power using the Word to produce Christ’s image in the reflection of our thoughts, words, habits, and behavior. When that Kingdom reigns through spiritual autonomy, we are self-governed by the words of Christ while we abide in the local assembly where we were called, faithful to receive from the pastor-teacher and responsible for the words we hear.

“Cognitive invincibility” means that a believer has the knowledge of Jesus Christ in him—knowledge that conquers in every test and every temptation. He is able to overcome everything that comes against him, because he has internalized God’s Word. This Christian has conquering power because of the freshness of his walk with Christ. He has the ability to succeed anywhere, any time.

“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my

head with [the] oil [of the Spirit for my mind]; my cup runneth over” (Psalm 23:5). This is cognitive invincibility—conquering power for the mystical unknown, power to leap over walls in my life.

Can God furnish a table in the wilderness of need and want (Psalm 78:19)? Yes, He can. The Word of God says in 2 Chronicles 13:11 that every morning and every evening, the Levites offered burnt sacrifices and sweet incense, and they set the show bread in order on a *pure* table. For us, this means that we have the pure ability of grace to receive and utilize what has been given to us by God.

The Profaned Table

God said to Israel in Malachi 1:12, “You have profaned [my table].” In verse 7, God said, “Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar.” Then they asked God, “Wherein have we polluted thee?” And God answered, “In that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible” (Malachi 1:12). God was saying, “The things I give you through my servant you soon consider to be worthless for your life.” This is what happens with many Christians who daydream in church, never uti-

lizing the message from God's table.

We cannot take of the cup of Satan *and* of the cup of the Lord. According to 1 Corinthians 10:21, we cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and the table of the devil. We must eat from *one* table: the table of grace.

We have received the fullness of Jesus Christ (John 1:16), and the table God sets before us in the wilderness is a table filled with grace. That grace depends upon the Giver and never the receiver.

But God does not give me grace to serve Satan's kingdom. Neither does He give me grace to serve my flesh to continue in sin (Romans 6:2, 15). God does not give me grace so I can wallow in drug addiction, alcohol, anger, complaining, or murmuring. No, God gives me grace when I'm weak so I can grow (2 Peter 3:18) and become like His Son by receiving something I don't deserve.

The Problems of Spiritual Anorexia and Bulimia

"But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

One of the plagues of the twentieth century is the vanity of anorexia and bulimia. It is iniquity, and it is very serious. A woman who is anorexic does not want to eat because of the way she *thinks* she will look with the weight it will bring. Perhaps she is fearful of looking like her mother or grandmother, or maybe she wants to be successful in the modeling world or as an actress. A bulimic person will go through the motions of eating but will induce vomiting before the food has a chance to digest. Both disorders are extremely dangerous because as they prevent unwanted weight gain, they also rob the body of nutrients necessary to maintain life.

Christianity has a problem of *spiritual* anorexia and bulimia. Spiritual anorexia will keep believers from submitting to a ministry that offers a daily diet of the Word. They will restrict their intake at first because of misplaced priorities and later because of guilt. A Christian who has spiritual bulimia receives the Word of God only to vomit it out because of a preferred lifestyle.

Spiritual anorexia and bulimia are evil. A person may think he can get away with it as he stays "thin," but God sees it as sin. It is more than a psychological disorder but a disorder

caused by a viper and intended to destroy its victim.

The Bite of the Serpent

In Genesis 3:1, a serpent cleverly approached Eve when her husband was not acting as her covering. In Genesis 3:13, she said, “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” From that moment on, Adam and Eve began to live in spiritual anorexia. Then God, in Genesis 3:21, killed an animal and made garments of the skin to cover them. *They were covered through the blood of a sacrifice.*

The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 10:8 that “whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.” Satan’s challenge to God in Job 1:10 was that the only reason Job served God was because God had put a hedge around him. According to Zechariah 2:5, the hedge represents positional truth, or the fire of the Finished Work through doctrine. When the hedge is broken, the serpent bites.

Herpetology is the science of reptiles. The root of this classification is from the Greek, *herpetos*, which means “crawling.” According to Genesis 3:14, the serpent, who was the most beautiful creature in the garden of Eden, was

cursed to crawl on his belly and to eat dust because he deceived Eve. Among the families of reptiles, there are two major divisions of venomous serpents: those which are primarily *hemotoxic* and include vipers, and those which are primarily *neurotoxic* and include cobras. Hemotoxins attack tissue, destroying red blood cells by depositing bacteria. Neurotoxic venom attacks the central nervous system. Sometimes, because of the complex nature of the substance, the venom can effect both areas.

In a spiritual analogy, the devil, “that old serpent” (Revelation 12:9), has an agenda to destroy believers. He will use venom like that of the viper and the cobra that goes into the unconscious mind, producing secret negative attitudes and wrong motives. It produces preoccupation with self, presuppositions toward people, and presumptions about the past, as well as a lack of real faith for the present, which is a great transgression (Psalm 19:13). This “venom” can stay in the unconscious mind for years and years before it is manifested.

There are six kinds of spiritual toxins: the venom of bitterness, the venom of resentment, the venom of blame games, the venom of negative reaction and vindictiveness, the venom of

self-righteousness, and the venom of pride. Like the hemotoxins or neurotoxins we spoke of, they affect a person's emotional complex as well as their body. The emotions become infected as the toxins remain in the unconscious and subconscious mind, dividing the objective, conscious mind.

Consider what happened to Israel in Numbers 21. Because they murmured against God and against Moses, "The Lord sent fiery serpents [vipers and cobras] among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died" (verse 6). This is a picture of what can happen to Christians when the venom in their emotions finally goes into their physical bodies; this can lead to the sin unto physical death.

If the venom in your subconscious and conscious mind is not thoroughly cleansed and purged, it will eventually kill you years before your time. Hundreds of Israelites died years ahead of time, because the venom that was in their emotions eventually went into their bloodstream. In 1 John 5:16, this is the sin unto physical death for a brother who never confesses his sin to rebound (1 John 1:9). He doesn't understand that the Lord said in Isaiah 43:25, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for

mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.” Also, in Isaiah 44:22, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins.”

Healed by Gazing at the Substitute

God is saying, “If you will name your sin, I will forget it. You will no longer be chastised. I will purge the venom from your life.”

What did God do for the Israelites who had been bitten by serpents in Numbers 21? He told Moses to put a brazen serpent on a pole, and said, “Whoever gazes at it will be instantly healed by *grace*—by a gift that he doesn’t deserve (see Numbers 21:8). The serpents can no longer touch him.”

A woman told me, “My husband and I don’t fight—we don’t even talk! I think I married a concept.” She continued, “I married a faithful, naturalistic human being who goes to church three times a week. But he doesn’t initiate. Indeed, he is quite boring. He gets tired all the time, and he reacts very quickly. What’s wrong?” Her husband has been bitten by a serpent.

After a person is bitten by a serpent, Hosea 2:6 says God puts a hedge of thorns around him

so that if anyone comes close and tries to communicate, he will feel the prick of the thorns. Also, this hedge makes the paths difficult to discern. This was the condition of Israel when, after being led by God through the wilderness into lands of plenty, they forsook the living waters and tried to establish their own capacities without God. “For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13).

Classifying Christians

There are three classifications of people in every single church—those who have made pre-salvation professions, saved believers, and Spirit-filled believers.

James 2:19 speaks of the first group. They have made professions but they have never been saved. Jesus said in Matthew 7:22, “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?”

There are cosmic evangelists who exhibit spiritual bulimia. They receive the Word but vomit it out so they can prosper in materialistic

security with money, cars, and extravagant homes. They attract big crowds, and people who live in their emotions patronize them in spiritual ignorance. God does provide prosperity for His people, but he does it through grace blessings (Matthew 6:33).

To every professing pre-salvation believer who never possessed eternal life, Jesus will say, "Depart from me...I never knew you" (see Matthew 7:23). Let God decide who belongs to this crowd. Luke 8:18 says, "Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have."

The effects of spiritual anorexia and bulimia are evident among the second crowd, the *saved unbelievers*. The Word of God says, "be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was" (James 1:22-24). This person is a Laodicean Christian, as described in Revelation 3:15-16: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor

hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”

This doesn't mean these Christians are lost, because at one time they were hot. It means they have no fellowship because they are filled with spiritual anorexia or bulimia, whichever the case may be. But people who live year after year in either physical or spiritual anorexia or bulimia could face the sin unto physical death because of the bite of the serpent.

Now we come to the third group of people in a church—*Spirit-filled believers* who sometimes have to use grace to rebound from a fall seven times in a day, but they isolate their failures and go forward (Philippians 3:13-14). With an honest and good heart, they bring forth fruit with patience. Yes, they have weaknesses and wish they didn't, yet they grow in grace and knowledge in the process of overcoming their weaknesses.

Spirit-filled believers do not use grace as a license to serve sin, the world, or the devil. Desiring to be like Jesus, they are not perfect, but they are honest and mature as they hunger and thirst after God, seeking for Jesus Christ the same as they would seek a treasure (see Proverbs 2:1-5).

Chapter Two

DON'T FORSAKE THE MANNA

“And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

“And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live” (Deuteronomy 8:2-3).

“I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name” (Psalm 138:2).

In Exodus 16, the children of Israel were hungry and believed they were going to die, so

they murmured against Moses and Aaron. In verse four, God told Moses, “I will rain bread from heaven for you.” This special food, called manna, was a supernatural, daily provision from the Lord. Perfect in its composition, containing every essential nutrient, manna is a picture of the Christian’s provision for a daily diet of Bible doctrine to maintain spiritual health.

In verse 7, God said, “In the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the Lord” (speaking of the manna coming down with the dew). The men were told to gather enough manna each morning to feed their family for that day (except for the sixth day, when they were to gather twice as much in preparation for the Sabbath). This is a picture of each believer eating according to his capacity for God and his hunger and thirst for Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, verse 20 reveals that some families did not use all the manna they had gathered for the day, and it bred worms and began to stink. When Christians don’t apply what they have received, it begins to smell inside of them. Because they are not hungry after truth, their lives take on the smell of nervousness, stress, and being emotionally upset and disturbed. They don’t utilize what comes from

the pulpit. They have polluted the table of the Lord. This is a clear case of spiritual anorexia and spiritual bulimia.

In Numbers 11:6, the children of Israel said, "Our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes." What happened? Psalm 69:22 reveals that their table became a snare before them, and that which should have been for their welfare now became a trap.

Filling for the Thirsty and the Hungry

God said in Isaiah 44:3, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty." He said He would pour out blessings upon *their* offspring and upon their offspring. *The condition for this blessing is that we are thirsty.* Then, Matthew 5:6 says that they which *hunger* and *thirst* after righteousness shall constantly be filled. In the original text, these verbs are present active participles. In other words, we are to *continually* produce the action of hungering and thirsting after righteousness. The believer who does not hunger and thirst after righteousness is never filled, even if he likes the message.

We may be stimulated or we may have emotional thrills, but that is not spiritual conversion. We may enjoy messages selectively, but that is

not spiritual inspiration.

To hunger means to go after the whole counsel of God, and when you go out of the church door, you're so filled, you can't even think of anything but Jesus Christ. It shows in your countenance, it is revealed by your heart attitude, and it is communicated with your voice.

The Value of Being Empty

Concerning the Laodicean believer, the Word of God says in Jeremiah 48:11 that "Moab hath been at ease from his youth,...and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed."

Have you ever met anyone like that? His taste remains the same and his scent is not changed; there is no freshness in his expression of life. Yet he doesn't go into any serious captivity. Jeremiah 48:12 says, "I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels and break their bottles." Whatever they have they will lose, because they do not empty their vessels.

Being emptied from "vessel to vessel" means that when a message comes forth, we put it into action. Every Christian should be a soul winner,

and each one of us should go on purpose at least once every week. Here in Baltimore, we are making an impact on our city. We have Bible clubs for inner-city children and a program for our teens. We want to build a gymnasium as a provision for our young people, including our three inner-city schools. We want people to spend evenings with inner-city youth to help them to get off drugs. We keep going forward.

We may respond to the message and agree to empty our vessel. But as soon as we hear it, we need to purpose in our hearts to obey the Word. Moab didn't obey because it wasn't convenient. Those people are hearers of the Word, not doers.

Oh, Moab had reasons. And if you approach this kind of believer, he will look you right in the face and say, "I know," and then proceed to give you all of the excuses. Eventually, God sent to Moab people like himself with wandering minds. The Word that was to save him now caused him to wander (Psalm 69:22, Romans 11:9). Christians like this are not cold, nor have they gone into captivity, but neither are they on fire for God.

Eat at a Pure Table

"[The priests] shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister

unto me, and they shall keep my charge.” (Ezekiel 44:16). This is a picture of a believer-priest who is hungry and thirsty, drawing near to minister to Jesus Christ. This believer is not preoccupied with himself. He has no presuppositions about people. No presumptions about the past. His conscience has been cleansed and purged by the blood of Christ. Finally set free, he is now able to eat at a pure table of grace (2 Chronicles 13:11).

We all have a weakness, and it doesn't matter what our weakness is as long as we don't use it to serve Satan, the flesh, or the world. We must not use our weakness with the venom of pride, blaming others, self-righteousness, resentment, bitterness, negativity, or vindictiveness. Allow the pure blood of the Lamb to cleanse away the venom and take over your life.

In Numbers 11:6, after God gave them manna, the children of Israel said, “Our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.” Do you ever feel dried up despite what God gives you?

A person may say, “I don't get anything out of the messages.” To confess that means that you are polluting God's table, considering His Word to be worthless, and making the provision of

Christ contemptible.

Surprises of Grace

The Bible is filled with the surprises of God's grace. Matthew 5:6 promises that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled. Jesus said in Matthew 21:31 that the publicans and the harlots would go into the kingdom *before* the Pharisees and scribes. It is beautiful to realize that, in one second, the thief on the cross next to Jesus believed, grace erased his past, and he went into Paradise with Jesus that very day.

Elijah had been depressed to the point of despair, believing that in all of Israel he was the only one who remained faithful. But 1 Kings 19:18 reveals that there were seven thousand faithful believers whom Elijah was not aware of—seven thousand believers who had not yet publicly confessed their faith. Thank God for the surprises of grace!

Remember, grace depends upon the Giver, never upon the receiver. We receive it in our weakest, worst moment; we receive it because we hunger and thirst for God; we receive it because we realize that we are children of the dust. Knowing this, we determine to be at church services, to be where God's people are, and to have

an eternal self-image. We have theantric action autonomy (able to live by every Word of God wherever we are) and cognitive invincibility to overcome every test and temptation.

Dwelling richly inside our souls is the Word that created the universe (Psalm 33:6) and holds it together (Hebrews 1:3); a Word that is quick and more powerful than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). We have a sense of conquering, a sense that what we have is invincible, that we can overcome anything, and that Christ is more than our very breath. We have a sense that His Word is more important than the food that we eat to nourish our bodies (Job 23:12).

We have God-consciousness—something that God Himself gives us through His omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience, and in the creative power of His Word.

Do you know why we go soul winning? Because every single person in the universe has been given a consciousness of God. When they get weak, the consciousness of their Creator within them tells them that they must get to know this God. It tells them they must receive Him and learn to love Him. This is the only thing that counts in the universe—the grace of God coming to individuals in the Person, power,

and presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. We go as earthen vessels ready to share the precious treasure that's inside.

A Plea to the Church

“David saith, “Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompense unto them” (Romans 11:9).

The very thing that was meant for the welfare of the nation of Israel became a snare and a trap. This can happen in a believer's life when he receives the Word of God but doesn't use it. It doesn't transform him. As far as this person's life goes, the Word of God is no longer quick and powerful and sharper than a two-edged sword. He is occupied with business and domestic issues. Preoccupied with his schedule, he doesn't communicate with Jesus Christ. He has no hunger or thirst and no capacity to comprehend what God says in Isaiah 44:3, “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty.”

Our hunger and thirst for God's Word will set the stage for the years ahead. Through obedience we can become a pivotal force once again to hold back judgment on our nation. Judgment will come progressively on America unless the churches—regardless of denomination—are

hungry and thirsty after righteousness and understand Psalm 18:44, “As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me.”

Christians must hear the Word of God not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13). This is only possible when it penetrates in the flow of the Holy Spirit.

It is time for God’s people to get on their knees, pray, and repent. God says, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

We must turn away from anything that would infect us, any form of venom. Come to a pure table and be purified by faith (Acts 15:9). Let the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts. Grow in the pure grace of God, which is given for our weaknesses so that we can grow. We can rebound when we fail and be accepted because grace has been given to cleanse us. But though we have received the fullness of grace, we are responsible to apply it. We must not allow grace to remain inside of us untapped.

Be Reconciled to God

What does it mean, practically speaking, when a Christian will not use the manna he receives? It means that when he is told to reconcile, he doesn't do it. (And I'm not talking about reconciling with people; I'm talking about reconciling with God). Whenever there is a serious problem in relationships, we must first be reconciled to God. How do we do it? We eat from the table of grace strictly for the other party. Yet, hundreds of Christians do not do that.

The measure that we hunger and thirst after righteousness is the measure we are going to have a great Spirit-filled life. We will prosper just as our soul is prospering—physically, mentally, spiritually, and financially.

God wants us to pray on our knees that we would have a new hunger and a new thirst for righteousness—a hunger where Christ replaces our vain imaginations with Himself.

God wants to transform our very nature and give us an eternal, spiritual self-image in the Finished Work. He wants to produce theantronic action autonomy within us, enabling us to live unto God and be fulfilled, even without people, although we will *never* outgrow our need to be

part of a local assembly or to hear from the pulpit. When God's Kingdom is fully functioning in us, then we can actually trust in the Lord with all our heart, all our soul, and lean not on our own opinions.

Is our table a communion table, or is it a table of self-justification, stemming from unresolved conflicts that have never been to Calvary? As a final product of the Finished Work, when I am filled with the Holy Spirit, I am ready to go forward with cognitive invincibility, with a conquering knowledge inside me. I have assimilated, masticated, and meditated upon this knowledge in my soul to the point that it becomes residential. My mind is filled with God's life and God's words. I belong to Him, and He belongs to me, and Christ is all and in all things (Colossians 3:11). I am free to grow in my weakness with a proper perspective of grace so that I can become just like Christ in my situation.

Venom from the serpent's bite always causes a guilt complex, but the Holy Spirit sets us completely free and makes us new creatures moment by moment. May we learn to walk in the Spirit of God who is love.

Chapter Three

PREPARE THE TABLE AND ANOINT THE SHIELD

“Prepare the table, watch in the watchtower, eat, drink: arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield” (Isaiah 21:5).

The world is in crisis. Every great nation that has fallen went through five cycles of discipline.* Each progressive cycle was designed to bring the nations to repentance, but because of the hardness of hearts, they would not. Today, America is in the third cycle, characterized by moral decline.

What can we do as Christians to hold back the forth and fifth cycle of discipline? First, we can become true intercessors. We can be true to God, and live in true spirituality. If enough Christians in every city will do that, we can hold back the fourth cycle for a season.

The Word of God says, “Prepare the table, watch in the watchtower, eat, drink: arise, ye

princes, and anoint the shield” (Isaiah 21:5). The shield speaks of the shield of faith, in Ephesians 6:16, which quenches the fiery darts of the devil. Categorical doctrine becomes your hedge and the table of grace becomes your provision. You have repented from spiritual anorexia, and spiritual bulimia, and now you’re daily eating the manna and the corn from heaven (Psalm 78:24). No longer do you confess, “Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?” (Psalm 78:19). No longer is it said that you have “limited the Holy One of Israel” (Psalm 78:41).

The Unique Person of Christ

At a time when David was very discouraged because of his children, the Holy Spirit gave him a prophecy of the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ, who, in His humanity, would be born in the line of David one thousand years later—the Son of God who would magnify the Word above His name (Psalm 138:2). Jesus would magnify the Word above Himself—above His needs, His comforts, His schedule, His habits, His desires, and His purpose. He would magnify the Word above His perfect humanity.

The Word of God says in Deuteronomy 8:2-3 that the Lord humbled Israel by leading them in

the wilderness for forty years. God's whole purpose during those forty years was to humble them. "He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live" (verse 3).

This is what David was referring to in Psalm 138:2. And in Matthew 4:3, when the devil tempted Jesus to turn the stones into bread, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, because it was "this man" (the Lord Jesus Christ in His hypostatic union as God in a perfect man) who would live by every single Word of God.

In essence Satan was saying, "Go ahead! Use Your deity to turn these stones into bread." But Jesus Christ came to empty Himself (*kenoo* in the Greek), according to Philippians 2:7. This is known as the *kenosis* passage. What did Jesus Christ empty Himself of? Certainly He had deity; He would never be anything *less* than Deity. But He lived in His humanity because He was a prototype of what we are becoming.

Tempted in the same desert where Israel murmured about the manna, Jesus went forty

days and forty nights in extreme heat, with no food. He could have used His deity at any time, but because His humanity had to be tested, He did not *exercise* His deity. Instead, Jesus said “no” to Satan’s temptation and lived by the Word. Likewise, we are to follow His footsteps and live by every single Word of God.

Why do you think a faithful pastor studies for hours? It is so he can give the people in his church scriptural messages and not emotional devotionals. Rather than empty stimulation and emotionalism that causes people to live in natural observation without the reality of divine revelation, God is after shepherds who will feed their flock from a table of grace.

Hearing and living by every Word of God is the only way to remain free from venom locked in your unconscious and subconscious mind. When you are free, you can hear about soul winning, intercessory prayer, and about loving one another as Christ loves you, and then go out and empty yourself from vessel to vessel.

Seeking the True Treasure

Every time you receive categorical doctrine, God makes a deposit in your bank account in heaven. When you hear a message on the min-

istry of reconciliation and obey it the best you can, it can transform your marriage and family.

When the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5) and the power of Jesus Christ comes into us through the power of God, we have theantric action autonomy—the Father’s plan, the Son’s execution of the plan, the Holy Spirit’s provision for the plan, and the Word’s instruction, all controlling the soul. God’s Kingdom within enables us to live in Christ and execute the Christian life on the outside. Not only do we experience the richness of His life down here, but deposits are being made in the bank of heaven and we are becoming wealthy up there.

If you want to talk about wealth, start with Ephesians 1:6, “To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” The Greek text implies that we have been “graced out” by the Finished Work of Jesus Christ, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence” (Ephesians 1:7-8). Jesus Christ has made us truly wealthy.

Do you want to talk about wealth? We are

hid with Christ in God. Christ is in you; this is the mystery of the Church Age that the Old Testament saints knew nothing about (Colossians 1:26-27). We have the abundance of mercy and grace on a table—the abundance of joy, forgiveness, peace, and wisdom. The flesh with its affections and lusts have been crucified once and for all (Galatians 5:24). We have all the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are His judgments!

The Exceeding Greatness of His Power

Paul prayed in Ephesians 1:17 that “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.” He prayed this so that the eyes of our understanding might be enlightened, and that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (Ephesians 1:18).

We should be excited about this! Paul continues, “And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and

power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put *all things* under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, *the fulness of him that filleth all in all*" (Ephesians 1:19-23).

When we begin to understand how wealthy we are and that we have everything we need inside of us, we won't suffer from spiritual or physical anorexia or bulimia. There are many reading this who are living in one of the two, and they're not kidding God. God doesn't look upon the outward appearance, but upon the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). We do the will of God from the heart (Ephesians 6:6), and we obey from the heart that form of doctrine that was delivered to us (Romans 6:17).

Christianity isn't taking care of the belly first, but it is taking care of the heart first. When the heart is right, it radiates a beautiful countenance—we look good to God no matter what our physical appearance may be. I'm not suggesting that we should not be disciplined about our appearance; I am suggesting that first we get the heart right. God didn't say to Moses, "You have to *look* better before I can use you." He

said, “Put your hand in your bosom,” and it came out with leprosy. The message was, “Your heart is wrong, Moses.” And then, God fixed it.

Conversation at the Grace Table

Thank God, there’s a grace table where we can get our hearts right toward our besetting sins. There’s a grace table that says to Abraham, “You’re the father of Ishmael, but through Isaac, you’re going to be the father of the entire world of Christians.”

The grace table says to Jacob, “Your twelve sons have come from four different women, but these sons will be the heads of the twelve tribes because you went back and ate from the grace table.”

This table says to David, “You may have done some questionable things on your death bed, but the Son born through your seed line will be Jesus Christ. And David, you fulfilled all My will, and you never turned aside, son. Come up with Me and be the prince in the Millennial Reign.” This is not said to reinforce sin. God *hates* sin. He loves the sinner, but He disciplines and chastises the believer many times.

I know of certain people who probably wouldn’t want to take part in the Millennial

Reign, all because David will be the prince. They think he wasn't good enough to make it. I understand that a young virgin was brought to him to keep him warm the last week of his life. I read it in the Scriptures. But he's still going to be the prince. Oh, that doesn't seem fair.

Grace doesn't seem fair from man's viewpoint. If you don't believe me, read Matthew 20:1-15. From man's viewpoint, grace isn't fair when the guy who worked an hour gets the same pay as the one who worked eleven hours. But from God's viewpoint, it reveals the mercy and love of a table that is set before you in the presence of your enemies (Psalm 23:5).

Peter denied Christ but then he ate from the grace table and became an apostle, preaching grace to the Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles. Paul was a murderer of Christians, yet he found the grace table through an encounter with Jesus in Acts 9 and went on to become the greatest apostle who ever lived.

Thank God that He prepares a grace table before us in the presence of our enemies—a table filled with love, joy, and peace. We can eat freely from this table. And we have wealth in heaven and wealth in our souls. We simply need to release it *by grace through faith* in the same way

we were saved. Let's show people what kind of food we are eating and how well built we are, spiritually.

The Melodies of the Heart

The Spirit-filled Christian is sanctified by the Word of God that dwells in him richly. He sings and teaches and admonishes others in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. There is a melody in his heart unto the Lord. The Spirit-filled Christian has the fullness of the Word of God in him instead of the venom of a serpent.

In Acts 28:3 when Paul was on the island of Melita on his way to Rome, a serpent jumped off a bundle of sticks that were being thrown into a fire and attached itself to Paul's hand. When Paul just shook the serpent off into the fire, those around him were amazed that he didn't die from the venomous bite. But Paul wasn't affected because no serpent could harm a man who had more doctrine than any man who ever lived, after Jesus Christ, because he had a living faith in God.

We can do the same thing. Is there a cobra or a viper trying to bite you spiritually? The hemotoxins and neurotoxins don't have to affect you physically or emotionally; however, because of

the isolated case in Acts 28:3, some people have turned this into a religious movement. God protected Paul in this case as he did not handle the viper on purpose.

A Laodicean Christian gets weary and tired in a church service because he's preoccupied with himself. He has presuppositions about life, and presumptions toward absolute truth. But the Spirit-filled Christian sings with his grace in his heart to the Lord, edifying those around him and always going forward.

The Spirit-filled believer looks into "the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, [and] this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25). He has a little mirror in his soul that keeps reflecting the nature of God in His precise essence. Doctrine has formed that mirror. When he needs something, the mirror reveals it to him as it reflects Christ's nature through the living Word. It is the Word written on his heart: the same Word he has eaten from God's magnificent table of grace.

**Read Dealing with Stressful Times, by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997, for more about the cycles of discipline.*

CONCLUSION

The Word of God says in Jeremiah 17:1, “The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart.” Their sin was so terrible that they had rejected the truth and hardened their hearts. Instead of becoming mirrors that reflected God’s nature, their souls mirrored the effects of serpent bites.

Many in Israel died when God let loose the serpents on Israel’s murmuring generation (Numbers 21:6). But those who looked upon the brazen serpent were healed because it was a substitute—a picture of Christ becoming sin for us. When we look to Him, we are saved *and* delivered.

Serpents cannot infect the believer who lives in theantric action autonomy with an eternal destiny in cognitive invincibility. Hedged about with a wall of fire, we have knowledge inside our soul that conquers everything on the out-

side. When we hear the Word of God, we immediately obey. God is more concerned with the interior decoration of a soul with doctrine than He is with the external things that give temporal happiness. The issue is not the outer man, it is the Spirit-man inside.

We can be hungry and thirsty for the things of God instead of rejecting God's provision in spiritual anorexia. We can keep our food down in the memory center of the soul instead of vomiting it up in spiritual bulimia. Thank God that the manna is for more than mere survival. *It is revival.* And God and you are enough in any situation because you have been eating from God's table of grace.