

John 6:51 (Samuel Tomkins) 72016

Bible Treasury: Volume N10, Christ the Living Bread (6:51)

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). In these precious words did the Son of the living God announce one of the most important truths that ever fell from His blessed lips. Only just before, as the five barley loaves and the two small fishes had passed through His almighty hands, had He, in divine compassion, wrought that wondrous miracle whereby five thousand hungry men had not only been fed, but filled, only with "the meat that perisheth."

In contrast with the manna that fell in the wilderness, and in answer to the inquiring crowd who asked for a sign that they might see: and believe, Jesus presents Himself, in the scripture quoted, as "the living bread which came down from heaven." He had already declared Himself to be "the true bread," "the bread of God." The grace and truth expressed in the words that the "bread" He was about to give was "His flesh" or body, had reference not only to Israel, as the favored nation, but to the whole world, for which He would lay down His life.

Yet, alas! "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The "carnal mind" is "enmity against God," and is here seen amongst these unbelieving Jews, who strove among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat"? The world to-day, as then, loves to reason on divine things; and the Person of the Christ of God has, from the beginning, been the object of Satan's attack. Faith, on the contrary, accepts God's Holy One as the sinner's Savior, and rests on His death at Calvary, as the one, and only, way of blessing for man. Neither angels' food, nor loaves and fishes, however suited to meet man's natural hunger, can satisfy or save the soul; it cannot give eternal life to the eater. But, says Jesus, in answer to their carnal reasonings, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread that cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die."

The absolute necessity for the shedding of Christ's blood in death, was an enigma to those striving Jews; but faith's appropriation of Christ's death for the remission of sins is the one divine foundation on which all blessing rests for the believer. And atonement, cleansing, peace with God, redemption, justification, sanctification, and other infinite blessings, as well as eternal life, are secured for the believer in this way only. Hence "the Son of man must be lifted up" on the cross; and the eating His flesh, and drinking His blood refers not to the ordinance of the Lord's supper (as some mistakenly think); but is faith's appropriation of all that is connected with the Savior's finished work, and atoning death. As man's fall involved him in sin, death, and judgment, so Christ's being "made sin," dying for sins and to sin, involved God's righteous judgment of it, root and branch, in the person and work of His own dear Son. This new life, made good in Christ's resurrection, is not only "eternal," but is a life to which neither sin, death, nor judgment can ever attach, for Christ Himself is that life.

All this is implied in the Lord's words, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." Yet these glorious words proved "a hard saying" to the Jews, and to many even of the Lord's disciples, who "from that time went back, and walked no more with Him." Alas! how easy it is to go back, and to cease to walk with Christ, when the path becomes a narrow one, and something or other comes in to hinder either our fellowship with Him, or our understanding of His ways! But Jesus, knowing in Himself that His disciples murmured at His words, said unto them, "Doth this offend you? What, and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before"? This intimation, not only of His death, but of His resurrection, intensifies the truth that this new life in a risen Christ, possessed now by every believer, must be sustained, fed, and strengthened, by constant communion with Himself, where He now is, in brighter scenes above! It is only by daily feeding on this heavenly Christ that our souls can truly grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Himself.

All our links are now with heaven; and a glorified Christ is not only the answer to every accusation of sin and Satan, but the true measure of the believer's acceptance by God, and his rejection by the world. Where God finds His joy and rest, there too we find ours; and it is just in proportion as our souls feed on the many glories, and deep perfections, of that exalted, crowned and glorified Man, that the world loses its hold upon us; and our thoughts, minds, and ways become formed and fashioned by His holy will, and, so as taught of the Spirit, we enter into God's thoughts about His well-beloved Son. This is true rest to the believer's heart amidst the growing corruptions around; but the secret of this rest lies in constant feeding on the "living bread;" and thus only is the "Christ-life," in any little measure, reproduced in us. The fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic of Egypt may appeal to the flesh, but they cannot satisfy the needs of the new man; and, when God's ancient people longed for them, they soon lost taste for, yea they loathed, the heavenly manna; and in answer to their question, "Who shall give us flesh to eat?" God gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls.

What a striking contrast to their desert murmurings is presented at Gilgal, where the circumcised host of Jehovah's redeemed ones, with the reproach of Egypt "rolled away," are feeding on their God-provided food; for so the holy record runs, "And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho." With the walls of that doomed city before them, yet in perfect rest and peace, "they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn, in the self-same day. And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year."

If now, in spirit, we have reached our Canaan, how will our hearts delight themselves in that heavenly Christ, of Whom all these precious types and shadows so sweetly speak! Yes, He is still the "living bread" to our ransomed souls, the secret spring of all our joy. May it, then, be our constant delight to feed upon Himself, "the living bread;" and in a deeper, fuller, and closer communion, learn the meaning of His own precious words, "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live on account of the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live on account of

Me!”

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