

HOW THE LAMBS FEED

NO. 3199

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“Then shall the lambs feed after their manner.”
Isaiah 5:17

THE sense of this passage may be that Judea would be so desolated that it would become rather a wild wilderness pasture for flocks than an inhabited country, but that is not the meaning which the old readers of the Bible were accustomed to give to it. The Hebrew commentators considered “the lambs” to mean the house of Israel, and regarded this as a promise that in all times of distress and affliction, God’s flock would still be fed, there would still be a people kept alive, and these should still meet with suitable support. Whether that is the correct sense or not, I shall use the words as having some such meaning.

Our text deals with the lambs, and to the lambs we intend to speak, may the Good Shepherd speak to them also! Young converts, newborn souls, these words are for you, you shall feed after your manner.

I. Our first observation is, that GOD WOULD HAVE ALL HIS CHURCH FED—a simple enough observation certainly, and clearly to be inferred from the common course of nature, for no sooner is any living thing created than there are appliances for its feeding. No sooner is a seed cast into the ground and vitalized than it gathers to itself the particles upon which it feeds, and no sooner is an animal born than it receives food. Surely the Lord does not create life in the regenerated soul without providing stores upon which it may be nourished. Where He gives life, He gives food.

Simple as this statement is, it has often been forgotten by those who should best have borne it in mind. It strikes me that it has been forgotten by some ministers. They have exhorted, threatened, and thundered, but they have never fed those to whom they have preached. They have cried, “Believe! Believe!” but seldom explained what was to be believed, or when they have mentioned the simple elements of the faith, they have gone no further, but have continued still to speak the first principles of the Gospel, and no more. These brethren have their proper sphere, but they should not be pastors unless they can *feed* the flock of God.

The wanderers must be gathered first, but afterwards they must be fed. For want of this, many have remained in weakness and bondage, and have made no advance in the divine life. The necessity for spiritual food has been forgotten by some ministers, who have continually harped upon the sublime doctrines of the Gospel, but have not preached the elementary truths. Surely they have not carried out their Lord’s command, “Feed my lambs.” They have been content to feed the older people, who by reason of use have had their senses exercised, forgetting that the same necessities befall all the flock, and that the lambs need to be fed as well as the sheep.

If the teachers have forgotten this, the taught have also failed to remember it. I have been very anxious, beloved, that you should be diligent in the service of God, and I have continually stirred you up, not to be sitting listening to sermons when you ought to be doing good, and the consequence has been that some have gone forth to attempt to do good whom I should not have exhorted to do so, because for them it would have been better if they had waited a while, till they had learned somewhat more, both of doctrine and experience.

Young brethren, there is a time for feeding as well as a time for working. There is work for strong men, and there is nurture for babes. To little children we do not allot the labors of husbandry, some little service in the house is suitable for them, and will do them good, but we do not exact much labor from them, for we know that youth is a time in which they must be learning and growing. Therefore let me

say to some of you who know little or nothing of your Bibles, or of your own hearts—Wait a little, and run not before you are sent. Sit you, young brother, still a while at Jesus' feet, and learn what He has to say to you, then, when you run as a messenger, you will have a message, but perhaps now you have more foot than heart, more tongue than brain, and this is ill.

Let us not forget that *our souls need to be fed*, and this I say to some of you who do but little for the Lord Jesus, and may be said neither to work nor to eat. Look at the mass of our Christian people, what do they do? Monday morning early at business, and on till Saturday evening late at business. What is their reading? The daily paper! I condemn it not, but of what use is this to their souls?

What, then, do they read to nourish the inner life? Ah, what? A magazine with a religious tale in it! A tale which will, probably, be spun out to two or three volumes! If the religion were taken out of it, it would probably be improved, and if the rest of the book were burned, some light might come of it, but none comes by reading it. I will not judge severely, but what is the reading of many Christians? Is it food for their souls?

And beyond reading, what else are they doing that their spirits may be nourished? Our fathers would go into their chamber three times a day, and take a quarter of an hour for meditation, how many of us maintain such a habit? Is it done once a day? It was once my privilege to live in a house where, at eight o'clock, every person, from the servant to the master, would have been found for half an hour in prayer and meditation in his or her chamber. As regularly as the time came round, that was done, just as we partook of our meals at appointed hours. If that were done in all households, it would be a grand thing for us.

In the old Puritanic times, a servant would as often answer, "Sir, my master is at prayers," as he would nowadays answer, "My master is engaged." It was then looked upon as a recognized fact that Christian men did meditate, did study the Word, and did pray, and society respected the interval. It is said that if, in the days of Cromwell, you had walked down Cheapside in the morning, you would have seen the blinds down at every house at a certain hour.

Alas, where will you find such streets nowadays? I fear that what was once the rule is now the exception. When will God's people perceive that it is not enough to be born again, but that the life then received must be nourished daily with the bread of heaven? It is not enough to be spiritually alive, our life, to be vigorous, must be familiar with its source.

Every Christian man should know that he needs times for supplying his soul with the meat which endureth unto life eternal, as the body needs its mealtimes, so must you sit down to your heavenly Father's table until He has satisfied your mouth with good things, and renewed your strength like the eagle's. The more intensely earnest we are in feeding upon the Word of God, the better.

My young friends, *you require to be fed with knowledge and understanding*, and therefore you should search the Scriptures daily to know what are the doctrines of the Gospel, and what are the glories of Christ. You will do well to read the "Confession of Faith," and study the proof texts, or to learn the "Assembly's Catechism," which is a grand condensation of Holy Scripture. I would say, even to many aged Christians, that they could not spend their time better than in going over the Shorter Catechism again, and comparing it with the Book of God, from which it is derived.

Truly, in these days, when men are so readily decoyed to Popery, we had need know what it is that we believe. Protestantism grew in this land when there was much simple, plain, orthodox teaching of the doctrines which are assuredly believed among us. Catechising was the very bulwark of Protestantism. But now we have much earnest preaching, and yet people do not know what the doctrines of the Gospel are, be ye not ignorant, but be ye nourished up in the truth.

My young friends, may you obtain *a spiritual understanding of God's Word*, which is more than knowledge! May you discern the inward sense, compare spiritual things with spiritual, and see the relation between this truth and the other, and the relation of all truths to your own selves and to your standing before God! May the Holy Spirit feed you so! May you also be fed by mingling with the saints of God, and learning from their experience!

Many a young Christian gathers from advanced saints what he would never discover elsewhere. As they tell of what they have felt, and known, and suffered, and enjoyed, the lambs of the flock are strengthened and consoled. Seek for your companions those who can instruct you. It is a dreary thing for a young man to have association with those only who are below himself in experience, and not to know those from whose lips pearls drop, because they have been in those deeps where pearls are found. Be much with experienced Christians who have been with Jesus and you will be fed by them.

Young friend, much feeding will come to you by *meditation on the truth that you hear*. As the cattle lie down, and chew the cud, so does meditation turn over the truth, and get the very essence and nutriment out of it. To hear, and hear, and hear, and hear, as some do, is utterly useless, because when they have heard, it is all over with them, it has gone in one ear and out the other, and has left nothing upon the mind. Press the truth as men tread the grapes in the winefat. Fling the red clusters into the press of memory, and trample on them with the feet of meditation, then shall the rich juice flow forth to cheer your heart, and make your spirit strong within you! Meditate, young man. This is the thing you need if you would be fed.

And higher still, there is a divine nourishment in communion, when the soul ascends to Jesus Christ, and feeds on the Lord Himself, when the incarnate God becomes the soul's bread, and the bleeding Savior in His substitutionary sacrifice, becomes the heart's wine. Feed on Him, O beloved, you who have lately come to Him! Eat, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved! May the Lord give you a mighty hunger after His Word, and after Himself, and then lead you by the still waters, and make you to lie down in green pastures!

Thus much on the first simple fact, that God will have all His sheep and His lambs fed.

II. Secondly, the text says that the lambs shall feed "after their manner," and that leads us to observe, that **YOUNG BELIEVERS HAVE THEIR OWN WAY OF FEEDING.**

I believe every single Christian has his own idiosyncrasy in that matter. Beloved, there are some of you who could not constantly hear me to profit, and yet this is neither my fault nor yours, but a wise arrangement, for you can hear some other brother, and thus there is work for him as well as for me. If all could be fed by me, and by no one else, where should I put my congregation, and where would others get theirs?

Certain persons can receive the truth from one man better than they can from another, not because that man is any better, or the other any worse, but because there is a way of putting it, or there is a kind of congruity of nature between the hearer and the preacher. I am glad to think that God has not cast all His people in one mold, and made them all desirous to listen to one voice in order to be spiritually fed.

It may happen, moreover, that in our church there are people who cannot be instructed in one of our classes. Well, if it is so, do not quarrel with the brother who conducts it, go to another teacher, and try him. Or perhaps you are not edified by the teaching of some Christian with whom you associate. Well, the world is wide, try another. "Then shall the lambs feed after their manner."

Each Christian has his own way of feeding on the Word. Let him have it in his own way, and do not judge him. There may be something of self in his peculiarity, but perhaps there is also something of God's purpose in it. Do not pass an Act of Uniformity, but rejoice in the diversities of operations, provided you see the same Lord.

There are several things certain about the manner of feeding of all lambs. The first is that, *if they feed after their manner, they feed on tender grass*. Young Christians love the simple truths of the Gospel, hence these ought to be often preached, and we ought not to be angry with newborn believers if they cannot understand the higher doctrines. I hope we shall never, as a church, exact from young converts the wisdom of age.

I trust we shall never say, "There, you must go back, you won't do for us, you are not up to our mark, for you cannot expound the deep things of God." God forbid! If we shut out the lambs, where shall we get our sheep? If the Lord has received them, let us receive them. No father excludes a child

from his table when he is three or four years old because he is not yet able to speak Latin. If the little ones know their A B C, it is a good beginning.

We think a great deal of the first little verse our babes repeat, they say it in such a queer way that nobody thinks it is language at all except father and mother, but they are charmed with the simplest form of speech which infant lips can try. So, to see a little spiritual knowledge in new converts should gratify us, and cause us to love them. Leave the lambs to feed on tender grass, and you older ones may take as much of the tougher herbage as you like.

Again, *lambs like to feed little and often*. They are not able to take in much at a time, but they like to be often at it. I love to see our young people coming to the prayer meetings and week day services so continually. You will grow in grace if you are often engaged in the means of grace, but it is possible to make such things a weariness to the flesh if they become protracted.

Strong saints can bear whole days of devotion, and delight in them, yea, a whole week spent alone in a sacred retreat might be a glorious holiday—a holy day, rather—an anticipation of heaven, but for young believers, let them have here a little and there a little—a text and a text, line upon line, precept upon precept—but let them have it often. “Then shall the lambs feed after their manner.”

The lambs, if they feed well, feed after their manner, quietly. If there is a dog in the field, they will not feed, if they are driven about hither and thither, and not allowed to rest, they cannot feed. I pity young Christians who get into churches where there are disturbances and troubles. Oh, may we ever be kept at peace! I bless God for the love that has reigned among us. May it continue, and may it deepen!

Beloved friends, when we fall out with one another, we shall find that the Spirit of God has fallen out with us. We cannot expect to see young converts among us at all, much less can we hope to see them advance in grace, if we indulge a party spirit, or a controversial spirit within the fold. All believers should endeavor to maintain a sacred quiet within the church for the sake of the little ones.

Have you never heard of the child who was greatly impressed under a sermon, and had resolved to pray on reaching home, but he heard his father and mother on the road home discussing the discourse, and finding such fault with it, that the happy season of tenderness passed away from that child, and in after years, he was accustomed to say that his becoming an infidel was due to that conversation?

Let the lambs feed in quiet. If a little bit of the sermon suits my boy, though it seems childish to me, let me be glad that there is something for him. If the preacher did state the truth in a way which I do not like, I daresay the preacher’s Master knows how to guide him far better than I do, and perhaps my neighbor who sat next to me has profited by precisely that which I have criticized. Let the lambs feed quietly.

I would say to young Christians—Never mix up in the controversies of these days. There are people about who seem to be cut on the cross, and the only use they are in this world seems to be to raise irritating questions. They and the mosquitoes were created by infinite wisdom, but I have never been able to discover the particular blessing which either of them confer upon us. Those persons who discuss and discuss, and do nothing else, had better be left alone. If there be a way to live peaceably with all men, I should say to the young Christian, “Follow it.” The lambs feed best when they are not worried, but dwell in peace with all.

Then, next, *when lambs feed after their manner, they feed in pleasure*. A very disorderly lot the lambs are, if you look over the gate at them. They are never proper and solemn. A draughtsman could scarcely sketch them in their frisking and gambols. Young Christians ought not to be told to cease their holy mirth, they ought not to be expected as yet to groan with those that groan, but let them rejoice with those that do rejoice. Their days of sorrow will probably come soon enough, without their being anticipated, let them rejoice in the Lord, yea, let them rejoice always.

I am glad our friends do not universally call out in the Tabernacle, “Hallelujah,” and “Hosanna,” and the like, but for my part, when I am preaching in the open air in the country, and our Methodist friends do so, it seems to stir my blood, and I am glad of it. It is much better than having a sleepy congregation.

A little excitement in the Christian church, especially by young converts, is by no means to be deprecated. I remember hearing dear Doctor Fletcher say, when talking to a number of children, that he once saw a boy standing on his head, dancing on the pavement, and displaying all sorts of antics of joy. He stopped near him and said, "Well, my Lad, you seem to be exceedingly merry." "I think I am, and so would you be, sir, (or Guv'nor, I think he said,) if you had been locked up three months, and had just got out." "Well," said the venerable man, "I thought it very reasonable, indeed, and I told him by no means to stop his performances because of me."

Now, when a poor man has felt the burden of sin, and has been shut up in the prison of the law, and Jesus comes and brings him out, and he begins to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, if any man living would stop him, I would not. Nay, let him rejoice. Let the lambs feed "after their manner."

And if somebody tonight should come to me and say, "Your young converts have been extravagant in expression, and injudicious in zeal," I would reply, "My dear brother, are you better than these young ones? At any rate, there is one respect in which you are worse, for you show a propensity to find fault with those who are serving God with all their might. Go your way and join them. If you have not a heart to do so, and if they seem to be enthusiastic beyond measure, only thank God that there are some few left among us yet who can appreciate fervor, and wish that there were a little more of it."

For my own part, I would like to see a downright fanatic. It is so long since one has set one's eyes upon such a curiosity, that I should like to see one—just one! I have seen snow enough, pray let me see a fire-flake. I have seen thousands of wet blankets, oh for the touch of a live coal! Enthusiasm in excess might be a blessing in disguise. Let the lambs feed pleasantly, in their own wild, natural way.

Once more, *when the lambs feed after their manner, they feed in company*. They like to get with others if they can. Sheep thrive best in flocks. I call upon every young Christian here to get into some part of Christ's flock. I invite you into this portion of Christ's church, but if you find any other, where, all things considered, you think it would be better for you to be, go there. Mind that you join yourself first to Christ, and after that unite with His people.

Do not try to go to heaven as a solitary individual, that is not the Christian way. Jesus gathers His people into a church, He does not profess to lead His people one by one, as solitary pilgrims, but they are to go in groups and bands. From company to company they proceed towards the New Jerusalem. May you have much love to the visible church, and believe that, notwithstanding all her faults, there is none like her in the earth, that, notwithstanding all her spots, she is excellent for beauty, and fairest among women.

III. I must close with the remark that IN THE WORST OF TIMES, GOD WILL SEE THAT HIS LAMBS AND THE REST OF HIS FLOCK ARE FED.

It is said, in the text, "*Then shall the lambs feed after their manner,*" that is, when the vineyard was destroyed and the hedge broken down, when thorns and briars had come up, and the clouds had refused to rain, and God had sent desolation upon Israel, and the people were gone into captivity, even then shall the lambs feed after their manner.

This is a blessed truth, come what may, God's people shall be saved, and they shall have spiritual meat. There may come persecuting times. Never mind. Never did Christ seem so glorious as when He walked with His church in the dungeon and up to the stake. Never were there sweeter songs than those which rose from the Lollards' tower and Bonner's coal-hole. Never did the church have such marriage feasts as when her members died at the gallows and the fire.

Christ Jesus has made Himself preeminently near and dear to a persecuted church. Therefore, fear not if you should have your little trouble to bear in the family, or rebuke and shame from an evil world, for you shall feed after your manner. Though your mother should be grieved, though your husband should be angry, though your brother should ridicule, though your employer should scoff, you shall be fed with spiritual meat, and your soul shall surmount all these ills, triumphant in her God.

"But I dread," says one, "that there will come times of sickness to me, I have premonitions of it." Yes, but you shall be fed after your manner. And I, for one, bear witness that sometimes periods of

sickness are times of the greatest spiritual nourishment. The Lord can furnish a table in the wilderness. A very wilderness sickness is of itself, but God can find us daily manna. He can make you strongest in heart when you are weakest in body. Therefore fear not, God will feed you.

“I am afraid of poverty,” says one. Are you? That has been the lot of many of His people. For many an age has the Lord chosen the poor to be His disciples. You need not fear that. Your Master was poor, you will never be as poor as He was, for He had not to lay His head. Fear not, He will feed you. Can you not trust Him? “Ah, but I fear death,” says one. “Then shall the lambs feed after their manner.” Even in the valley of the shadow of death you shall find tender grass. Have you never seen others die? Has it not been a joyous thing to see some saints depart?

I recall to your memories, dear brethren, those who have but lately ascended, whom we loved. Was there anything terrible about their deaths? Did they not smile upon us in their last hours, and make us feel that we would willingly change places with them, and die as they died? Have I not often seen the young girl sickening with consumption, and heard from her strange things that made me think her half a prophetess—a seer whose eyes had been anointed so that she had looked within the veil, and seen the glory of the Invisible?

Oh, how texts of Scripture have been placed in golden settings by dying saints! How sweetly have they set promises to music! Speak of monks and their illuminated missals! Scripture illuminated by dying saints is far more marvelous. What amazing joy they have felt! They told us that joy was killing them—that they did not die of the disease, but of excessive delight. It was as though the great floods of glory had burst their banks, and they were being swept right away by them to eternal bliss. It has visibly been blessed for the saints to die, and therefore it is foolish—perhaps wicked—for any child of God to be afraid to depart. “Then shall the lambs feed after their manner,” feeding near the very scythe of death, and cropping choice morsels at the grave’s mouth, for the Lamb, Jesus Christ, being with them, no lamb of all the flock shall have cause to fear.

We shall now separate, and scatter, as congregations have scattered, I might say, these hundreds of times from this house, and scattering and going each our own way to his own home, shall we ever meet again? Probably by no means shall we all of us meet in the body, so that these eyes shall look to other eyes and say, “I saw those eyes before.” Well, well, but be the truth remembered that we are a flock, and must gather again in one meeting place before the judgment seat, on that day of wrath, that dreadful day. Shall we meet then as the sheep of Christ, or meeting, will it be to be divided, to the right and to the left, as the sheep of the Great King, or the goats condemned to be cast away? We shall meet there certainly, but will it be an eternal meeting of unending joy? God grant it may! Oh, infinite mercy of the blessed God, let us all be united at the throne of Christ!

But I hear you say, O angel, in answer to that prayer—I hear you speak out of the glory, and say, “There can be no union at the throne except there first be union at the cross.” Harken to that warning, and come to Jesus. There stands the cross, which is the center of the church! Lo, I see upon it the Son of God, His wounds still founts of cleansing blood! Will you come to the cross? Will you trust the Redeemer? Will you bow before Him? Will you be washed in His blood? Will you be saved with His salvation? If so, we shall all meet in heaven to see the face of the Lamb in His glory. God grant we may, for Jesu’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALMS 23 and 24

Did you ever notice that the twenty-second psalm exhibits “that great Shepherd of the sheep” as laying down His life for the sheep, that the twenty-third psalm exhibits “the good Shepherd” with all His sheep around Him happy and restful, while the twenty-fourth psalm represents “the Chief Shepherd”

who shall appear in due time, and when He does appear, then shall His sheep also appear with Him in glory?

Psalm Chapter 23. Verse 1. *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.* [See sermon #3006, “The LORD Is My Shepherd”].

How can a sheep want when it has a good and wise shepherd able and willing to provide for it, and how can a believer want when he has God Himself, the ever-gracious and omnipotent Lord of all, to forestall his needs, and to prevent him from ever knowing what want means? David does not say, “I shall have all I wish for because the LORD is my Shepherd,” but he does say, “I shall not want. Not only have I no want now, but I never shall want while my Shepherd lives. Though I am only one out of His countless flock, yet He cares for me, and therefore I shall not want.” Why should a believer think that he shall ever want? Let him look at his present condition.

2-3. *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.*

Here are four blessed things that the Lord does for the believer. “He maketh me to lie down,” He gives me rest, perfect rest, and He gives me so much spiritual provision that I am unable to take it all in, so I lie down and rest in it as a sheep does in the deep pastures where it seems lost in the provender. There are such deep doctrines, such glorious privileges, such wondrous revelations of the heart of God in this blessed Book, that you and I cannot comprehend it all, but we can lie down in it, “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.”

Take a good stretch, brethren and sisters in Christ. Some are afraid to lie down in the green pastures of the Word. I know some of God’s saints who seem to be afraid of being too happy, they do not like to be too restful. Let no such fear ever cross your mind. “He maketh me”—and He would not make us do what was not good for us—“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.”

Then come those three sweet words, “He leadeth me,” which in themselves are full of music—

*“He leadeth me. He leadeth me.
By His own hand He leadeth me.”*

You know how our song makes these words ring out over and over again, and it is truly charming. “He leadeth me.” The Holy Spirit is our Guide, and as the softly-flowing river of grace marks our trackway, we sing, “He leadeth me beside the still waters.” You and I sometimes go wandering by the noisy brooks that ripple over the stones, and make such a noise because they are so shallow, but when the Spirit guides us, it is beside the deep rivers, the deep still waters, that He leads us.

“He restoreth my soul.” Is not that a blessed little sentence? When my soul gets empty, He stores it again, re-stores it. When it goes wandering away from Him—

*“He brings my wandering spirit back
When I forsake His ways.”*

And when I get spiritually sick, He gives me a sweet restorative, and renews my health, “He restoreth my soul.” Blessed be the name of the great Restorer!

“He leadeth me”—here come those sweet words again—“He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness.” They are very pleasant paths, for nothing is more pleasant to a believer than to be walking in “the paths of righteousness.” God has so constituted His people that if they get out of the right way, they get out of the way of peace. He has so re-made us that our peace and our righteousness agree together, and as long as we are led in the paths of righteousness, we are a happy and a restful people! The Lord does all this for us, “for his name’s sake.”

4. *Yea, though I walk—*

Yes, though *I walk*, not only though *I shall walk*, but though *I do walk* now—

4. *Through the valley of the shadow of death,—*

Though, long before I die, I seem to learn what death means in the cold chill that takes hold upon my spirit, and freezes all my joy—

4. *I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

Some seem to think that God's people would have no distress of mind, and no trouble, if they were trusting in God, but it is not so. Even they "walk through the valley of the shadow of death," but they "fear no evil" even there. When all is dark around you, remember that verse, "Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God."

There would be no room for faith if it were always summertime and always noontide. But Christians are sometimes called to pass through that gloomy experience which Mr. Bunyan has so beautifully pictured under the symbol here used, "the valley of the shadow of death." It is a terrible journey, yet there is no cause for fear to strike the Christian's heart even there, for let the worst come to the worst, he can say to his Lord, with David, "Thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me"

Now look back to the fourteenth and fifteenth verses of the twenty-second psalm, and you will see how fully Christ can sympathize with His people, because He also walked through the valley of the shadow of death even as they have to do. Hear Him crying there, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me"—remember that this is the Savior speaking here—"thou hast brought me into the dust of death." Well then, there is great comfort for the sheep in the fact that their Shepherd has been along that gloomy way before them.

5. *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:*

See what cool, calm courage David here displays. Usually, when a warrior is in the presence of his enemies, he just eats a bit of bread, or something that he can swallow while getting ready for the fight that is impending. But David took matters much more quietly than that. Though his enemies were all around him, there was a table prepared for him, that is to say, there was everything ready for a feast, just as if it had been a holiday instead of the day of battle. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies." You may grin or howl, you devils, you may do what you like, but the true believer takes no notice of you. His table is being prepared by his God while you, armed to the teeth, are seeking to slay him. What a contrast there is between the rage of the believer's enemies and the quiet, calm confidence of the man himself!

5. *Thou anointest my head with oil;*

A sweet savor shall be upon the man who is thus anointed by his God.

5. *My cup runneth over.* [See sermons #874, The Overflowing Cup, and #1222, The Overflowing Cup].

"I have more than I expected—more than I ever asked for—more than I desired—more than I am capable of holding, 'My cup runneth over.'" If ever your cup does thus run over, be sure to call your poor neighbors in to catch the overflowing mercy. If ever you have more blessing than you can hold, ask some other Christian to share it with you. Recollect what Peter and his companions did when, at Christ's command, they let down the net, and caught more fish than their net could hold without breaking, "they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them." What! Come and help them fish? Oh, no, come and help them share the fish!

Many persons say, "You are kindly invited to come to such and such a meeting," because they want to get something out of you, but it is a better kind of invitation when you are asked because there is something to be given away, and those who have an overflowing cup want you to share the blessing with them.

6. *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:*

I shall never be able to outrun the goodness and mercy of my God. I shall always have closely attendant upon me His goodness to supply my needs, and His mercy to forgive my sins.

6. *And I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.*

Psalm Chapter 24. Verse 1. *The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof;*

And therefore it is also the believer's. The real fullness of the earth belongs to the Christian. "The meek shall inherit the earth."

1-2. *The world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.*

So, child of God, you are in your Father's house even while you are down here on earth. Still, that question in the next verse is very suggestive. Albeit that the earth is the Lord's, yet we do not want to stop in it forever.

3. *Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD?* [See sermon #396, Climbing the Mountain].

This is the portion of the Lord's people to ascend the hill of the Zion that is above, to enter the New Jerusalem, and to stand in the immediate presence of God. But who shall ever be able to do that?

4-5. *He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.*

The man who will go to heaven is the clean man, the man who has been washed from his sins in the blood of the Lamb, and he is clean just where he was most likely to be foul, he has "clean hands." Grace has enabled him to touch the things of the world without receiving a stain from them, and to touch holy things without defiling them. This expression—"clean hands"—refers to his outward life, but he is also clean inside, for he has "a pure heart."

If a man were clean as to his actions, but not clean as to his motives, he would not be fit to enter heaven, but the man described here is a true man. He has not followed after vanity, neither has he uttered a lie, but he has followed the truth, and he has spoken the truth. He is the man whom God will bless, but he has no righteousness of his own, so we read that "he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." So he needed to be saved, and he needed a righteousness better than his own, and this God will give him.

6. *This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.*

It is a wonderful thing that Jesus Christ should take His people's name, but He does. He gives His church His own name in that remarkable passage in Jeremiah 33:16, "This is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness," and now, to make the union complete, He takes her name as His own, and Christ is here called Jacob.

7-10. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.*

Now, if Christ is our Shepherd in the meadows down here where He makes us to lie down in the green pastures of His grace, He will also be our Shepherd in the heavenly pastures up there on the hilltops of glory where the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed us, and shall lead us unto living fountains of waters, and we shall delight forever to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

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