

LIVING ON THE WORD

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A SERMON
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*“Man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds
out of the mouth of the LORD does man live.”
Deuteronomy 8:3.*

THE main thing for every one of us is life. What would it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own life? Of what avail would riches be if life were gone? What is the value of broad acres to a dead man, or the applause of nations to one who lies in his sepulcher? The first thing, therefore, that a man is to look to, is life. There are some persons who take this truth in a wrong sense, and so make mischief of it. They say, “We must live;” whereas, in the sense in which they mean it, there is no such necessity at all. That we must continue to live here is not at all clear; it were better far for us to die than to live by sinning. Martyrs have preferred to suffer most fearful deaths rather than, even by a word, to bring disgrace upon the name of Christ; and every true Christian would prefer immediate death rather than dishonor his great Lord and Master.

Now, brethren, according to our common notion, if we must live, we must eat; we must eat bread, which is the staff of life; and, sometimes, when bread is scarce, and hunger sets up its sharp pangs, men have been driven to put forth their hand unto iniquity to provide themselves with necessary food. You remember how our Divine Lord, who is our perfect Exemplar in all things, acted when He was in this case? When He had fasted in the wilderness forty days and forty nights, He hungered, and then the evil one came to Him, and said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones be turned into bread.” This was, in effect, saying, “Leave off trusting in Your Heavenly Father. He has evidently deserted You; He has left You in the wilderness among the wild beasts; and though He feeds them, He has not fed You. He has left You to starve; therefore, help Yourself; exercise Your own power. Though You have put it under God’s keeping, and, being here on earth, You have become Your Father’s Servant, yet steal a little of Your service from Your Father, and use it on Your own behalf. Take some of that power which You have devoted to His great work, and employ it for Your own comfort. Leave off trusting in Your Father; command these stones to be made bread.” At once this text flashed forth, as the Master drew it out, like a sword from its scabbard: “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” It was only by the use of this “sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God,” that the arch-enemy was driven off from Christ; and I want to use that weapon now. I may say of it what David said of the sword of Goliath, “There is none like that; give it me.” That sword, with which Christ won the victory, is the best one for His servants to employ.

This answer of our Lord to the tempter teaches us that the sustenance of our life, although naturally, and according to the ordinary appearance of things, depends upon bread, yet really depends upon God. It is God who gives the bread the power to nourish the man. To me, it seems a great mystery that bread, or any other kind of food, should do this. I can understand how, being matter in a certain form, it tends to build up the material structure of the body, albeit that the process is a very wonderful one by which bread turns into flesh, and blood, and bone, and muscle, and hair, and all sorts of things, by a perpetual working of the power of God. But it is more remarkable still that this material should seem, at any rate, to some extent, to nourish man’s heart, so that the very soul and the living principle within him should be dependent upon its being sustained by the food of the body. Can any of us tell how it is that the inner

spirit sets in motion the muscles of the hand, and the nerves that communicate with the brain? How is it that the impalpable spirit—a thing which you cannot see or hear, which is not itself at all material—yet possesses powers by which it controls the materialism of this outward body? And how is it that the material substance in bread somehow works to the keeping of our spirit in connection with this flesh and blood? I cannot explain this mystery, but I believe it to be a continual miracle worked by God. I am frequently told that miracles have ceased. It seems to me that miracles are the rule of God's working, and that, everywhere, things of marvel and of wonder are to be perceived if we will only look below the outward appearance. Dig for a while beneath the mere surface, and we shall see—

“A world of wonders: I can say no less.”

According to our text, we are called upon to observe that the power which keeps us alive is not in the bread itself, but in God, who chooses to make use of the bread as His agent in nourishing our frame. I do not infer from this truth that therefore I ought never to eat, but to live by faith, because God can make me live without bread. Some people seem to me to be very unwise when they infer that, because God can heal me, therefore I am never to take fit and proper medicine for a disease, because I am to trust in God. I do trust in God, but I trust in God in God's own way; and His way of procedure is this, if I wish to satisfy hunger, I must ordinarily eat bread; if I wish to be cured of any malady, I must take the remedy He has provided. That is His general rule of working; but, still, it would be an equally grievous error, and would show another form of folly, if we were to say that it is the bread or the medicine that does the work. It is the bread that feeds, it is the medicine that heals; but it is God who works by these means, or, if He pleases, who works without them. If it were necessary that His child should live, and He did not choose to put ravens into commission to bring him bread and meat, or if He did not command a widow woman to sustain His servant, yet He could support him without any means, for “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” When the Lord speaks, and bids him live, he lives. God spoke the world into existence; His Word still keeps the whole fabric of the universe upon its pillars; and, surely, that Word is able to sustain our soul in life even without the use of outward means, or by means as long as God pleases.

That, I think, is the meaning of the text. God took His people into the wilderness, where there was no sowing, no reaping, no making bread, and they seemed as if they must be famished there; but, then, God made the manna drop from heaven, to show that, if not by one means, yet by another He could sustain them. He took them where there were no rippling brooks or gentle purling streams of water, but His servant struck the flinty rock, and the water came forth to show that God could give men drink, not only from the fountains of the deep below, or by rain from the clouds above, but from the solid rocks if He so pleased. God can give you bread to eat, my friend. Though not perhaps in the way you hope, it may come in a fashion of which you have never even dreamed. I have read of one who was condemned to be starved to death; and, as the judge pronounced the sentence, he said to him, “And what can your God do for you now?” The man replied, “My God can do this for me—if He pleases, He can feed me from your table.” And so it happened, though the judge never knew it, for his own wife sent food to the poor man and kept him alive until at last he regained his liberty. God has a way of using most unlikely instruments to effect His purpose. He can, if He pleases, make the waters stand upright as a heap, until the chosen nation has passed through the midst of the sea; or He can permit the fire to blaze around His people, and yet keep them from being burned, as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came forth unharmed from Nebuchadnezzar's burning fiery furnace, and not even the smell of fire had passed upon them.

I now come to the more spiritual meaning of the text; and I pray God to make it to be rich food for your souls. I ask you to notice, first, *the Word*: “every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.” Secondly, consider *the use we are to make of the Word*: we are to live upon it; and then, thirdly, note *the adaptation of that Word to our use*—every word of it, for, according to the text, we do not live upon *some* words that come out of God's mouth: “but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live.”

I. First, then, let us think a little about THE WORD OF THE LORD.

What do we mean by the expression “the Word of God”? God deigns to use figures of speech such as we can understand, for we are like little children, who have to learn by pictures. Now, with regard to a man, his word is often *the expression of his wish*. He desires such-and-such a thing to be done, and he says to his servant, “Do this,” or to another, “Come here,” or, “Go there.” His word is the expression of his wish. Alas! With us, our wishes are often strong, and our words are feeble; we order such-and-such a thing to be done, but it is not done. We have, perhaps, a thousand wishes in our hearts which, if we were to utter them, would be to make ourselves appear ridiculous. We may wish to do this and that, but if we were to say, “Let these things be done,” they would not be done in spite of all our saying; for, often, where the word of a man is, there is weakness. It is only where the Word of God is that there is power. Speaking after the manner of men, when God wills a thing, He says, “Let it be,” and it is immediately. Power goes forth from God with His will. He said, “Let there be light: and there was light.” God said, “Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so.” God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth: and it was so.” He has but to will anything and it comes to pass. His Word is His will in motion, His power put into action; that is the common and emphatic sense of the term.

God’s Word is also *the expression of His truth*. A man says to us, “I promise you so-and-so,” and we say to him, “We rely upon your word.” A man’s honor is involved in his word; he who does not keep his word is not a man of honor, and he soon falls very naturally and very properly into disgrace with his fellows. Men will not trust one whose word is not reliable. Alas! The words of men are not only feeble, but they are often fickle and false; but the Word of God is the promise of one who knows what He is saying, who is able to perform what He promises, and who will never change nor ever be untrue; so that, if we look at His Word as being the expression of His truth, we see His faithfulness; and upon these two—the power that can keep the promise, and the will which is faithful to keep it—we may rest with joy and confidence.

Again, if a man is a true man, his word is a *revelation of himself*. One of the ancients said of a very beautiful boy or young man, when he had looked at him, “Speak, boy, for then I can see you;” and we often see a great deal more of a person’s character when he speaks than when we simply look at him. There is many a pretty face that has been admired because of its appearance; but when its owner’s not very pretty tongue has begun to chatter, love has been almost driven to its wits’ end to find any cause for admiration. There are some people who talk in such a way that, when we see their inner selves, they appear as unlovely as their outer selves seem to be comely. But a true man reveals himself by his words. Hence it is that the Lord Jesus Christ is called, “The Word of God;” Jesus Christ is God speaking. God thinks what He says, and the thoughts of God are embodied in the person, work, life, and death of Jesus Christ, His dear Son. With all reverence, we say that God never could have revealed Himself so fully in any other way than by giving “His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Well did Dr. Watts sing—

*“Nature with open volume stands,
To spread her Maker’s praise abroad;
And every labor of his hands
Shows something worthy of a God.
But in the grace that rescued man
His brightest form of glory shines;
Here on the cross, ’tis fairest drawn
In precious blood and crimson lines.
Here I behold His inmost heart,
Where grace and vengeance strangely join
Piercing His Son with sharpest smart,
To make the purchased pleasures mine.”*

So, you see, dear friends, the expression “the Word of God” has a very wide range. But my text bids me remind you of something very sweet: “Man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live.” It is beautiful to think of the Scripture as *proceeding out of the mouth of God*. Do not look upon that scroll of parchment on which it is written, and over which the critics quibble and quarrel. They stumble at almost every letter and word of it, and so miss its meaning and spirit; but, as for you, pray the Holy Spirit to speak it into your heart as coming immediately from the mouth of God. When Cowper looked up at his mother’s portrait, after, to his great sorrow, she had long been gone from earth, he cried—

“O that those lips had language!”

Well, you are to regard this Word of God as constantly coming forth from His lips afresh. The Holy Spirit puts into the Word a power which makes it go right into your heart with the very tone and majesty of the God of grace, the Father of your spirit. This manna falls ever fresh from heaven. The Israelites never had stale bread in the wilderness; they gathered the “angels’ food” new every morning just as it came down from the skies. In the same way, take every passage of God’s Word as coming to you fresh from God; regard it as your Heavenly Father speaking it straight to your heart.

I was reading, one day, in one of Mark Guy Pearse’s books, a pretty thought that I had never noticed before. He puts into the mouth of a very simple but godly man, who is talking about his Heavenly Father, words something after this fashion:—“I am quite sure my Father will take care of me. He never rested during the six days of creation till He had fitted up a place for His child to come and live in; until He had put the finishing stroke on it, and got the house all ready for Adam, He would not rest at all. And now my Heavenly Father will not rest until He has made heaven ready for me, and made me ready for heaven; and all that I need on the way He will surely give me.” When I read that, it came just as fresh to me as if I had seen the second chapter of the Book of Genesis written. It did not look to me like an old, stale record, but a fresh and living message proceeding out of the mouth of God, there and then. And there is many a dear child of God who, taught of the Spirit, has given new readings to old texts, and, as it were, hung the old oil paintings in a better light, till we have said, as we have looked at them, “Can they be the same pictures? They seem to have fresh beauty and fresh force put into them.” This is what you are to feed upon, dear children of God—His own Word, as you have it here; but you must feed upon it as continually coming forth out of His very mouth.

The text further says, “*by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live.*” Don’t you be at all disturbed, dear friends, concerning the doctrine of inspiration, as to how the Bible is inspired, whether by this process, or by that. I do not much mind how it is; I know that it is inspired, and that is enough for me, and I believe that it is verbally inspired. I find the apostle Paul hanging a weighty argument upon the use of a singular or a plural, where he says, “He says not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to your *seed*, which is Christ.” I find the apostle Peter dwelling upon a word spoken by a woman, and making it teach an important lesson: “Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord,” and so forth. And, you remember that, not long ago, we had the text, “And it shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me Ishi; and shall call Me no more Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name;” in which a great truth was involved in the use of two words that were somewhat similar in meaning. [See Sermon #2571, Volume 44—*The Climax of God’s Love*]. I do not say that either of our English versions is inspired, for there are mistakes in the translation; but if we could get at the original text, just as it was first written, I am not afraid to say that every jot or tittle—every cross of a “t” or every dot of an “i”—was infallibly inspired by God the Holy Spirit. I believe in the infallibility and the infinity of Holy Scripture. God inspired the whole record, Genesis as well as Revelation, and all that is between; and He desires us to believe in one part of the Word as much as another. If you do not believe that, it will not be food to you; I am sure that it will not; it will only be a kind of emetic to you, and not food. It cannot feed your soul as long as you are disputing about it. If it is not God’s Word, then it is man’s word, or the devil’s word; and if you care to live on the devil’s word, or on man’s word, I do not. But God’s Word is food for the soul that dwells with God, and it cannot be satisfied with anything else.

II. Now let us pass on to our second point; that is THE USE WE ARE TO MAKE OF GOD'S WORD. We are to live on it.

I was sitting, one day, in the New Forest, under a beech tree. I like to look at the beech, and study it, as I do many other trees, for every tree has its own peculiarities and habits, its special ways of twisting its boughs, and growing its bark, and opening its leaves, and so forth. As I looked up at that beech, and admired the wisdom of God in making it, I saw a squirrel running round and round the trunk, and up the branches, and I thought to myself, "Ah! This beech tree is a great deal more to you than it is to me, for it is your home, your living, your all." Its big branches were the main streets of his city, and its little boughs were the lanes; somewhere in that tree he had his house, and the beech mast was his daily food, he lived on it. Well, now, the way to deal with God's Word is not merely to contemplate it, or to study it, as a student does; but to live on it as that squirrel lives on his beech tree. Let it be to you, spiritually, your house, your home, your food, your medicine, your clothing, the one essential element of your soul's life and growth.

There are some, whom I know, who take God's Word, and play with it. They are interested in its narratives, they study its histories in the light of modern research, and so on; but it was not meant merely for such a purpose as that. Loaves of bread are not put on the table for you to carve them into different shapes simply to look at; they are intended to be eaten. That is the proper use for bread, and that is the proper use for God's Word.

Some do even worse than this; they do not so much play with the Bible as fight over it. They contend fiercely for a doctrine, and condemn everybody who cannot accept their particular interpretation of it. I think that I have heard preachers who have seemed to me to bring out a doctrine on purpose to fight over it. I have a dog, that has a rug in which he sleeps, and when I go home tonight, he will bring it out and shake it before me, not that he particularly cares for his rug, but because he knows that I shall say, "I'll have it," and then he will bark at me, and in his language say, "No, you won't." There are some people who fetch out the doctrines of grace just in that way. I can see them trotting along with the doctrine of election just in order that some Arminian brother may dispute with them about it, and that then they may then bark at him. Do not act so, beloved. The worst implement with which you can knock a man down, is the Bible; it is intended for us to live upon—not to be the weapon of our controversies, but our daily food, upon which we rejoice to live. I do not think that our Bibles were given to us that we might merely employ them as telescopes to peer into the heavens, to try to find out what is going to happen in fifty years' time; I am weary with the prophecies and speculations that, as a general rule, end in nothing. I know some brethren with whom one cannot talk about any passage but they say, "Oh, you have not seen the last little book of R. B. S. (those are not the real initials of the good brother), in which he says that this passage does not apply to us, it is meant only for the Jews;" or else, "That was only for the Church in the wilderness, and not for us in these days." Let us not so misuse the Word of God, but prize it as the bread upon which we are to live: "Man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live."

"But how can we live on words?" asks one. You have spoken well; we cannot live on words if they are the words of men; but there is nothing like the Word of God to live upon. To that Word we owe our life. He spoke us into being; He spoke the soul into our body. By that Word of God we are daily kept alive; let God but reverse it, and say, "Return, you children of men," and we must at once go back to the dust from where we came.

Certainly, it is by God's Word that we began to live spiritually; we believed on Christ through the effectual working of His Word. The living and incorruptible seed was sown in our heart, and by it we began to live; and it is by that same Word that our soul has been sustained in life. Up to this moment, you and I have received no nutriment from the Holy Spirit except by that Word of God which is the food of the spiritual Israel in the wilderness of this world. Christ said, "My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed;" and it is by Him, as the Word of God, that our life is yet further to grow. There is no development of the Christian that will come to him in any way but by God's Word, incarnate or inspired. He who spoke us into being must speak us into yet stronger being. Faith is God's gift; but so is

assurance. The very first spark of life is the gift of God's grace; but so is the seraphic flame of zeal. That all comes from God's Word; and when we are about to enter heaven, the last touch that shall perfect us will be given by no engraving tool, but the Word of God. Our Lord prayed for His disciples, "Sanctify them through Your truth; Your Word is truth;" And that Word shall complete the entire process. See, then, beloved, on what your inmost spirit must live—God's holy Word.

Brothers and sisters, may I ask you whether you are all sufficiently aware of this great truth? You never received spiritual life by your own feelings. It was when you believed God's Word that you lived; and you will never get an increase of spiritual life, and grow in grace, by your own feelings or your own doings. It must still be by your believing the promises, and feeding on the Word. There is no other food for your souls; all else in the end will prove but husks. Therefore, are you hungry? Come and feed upon the Word. Have you backslidden? Come and feed again upon the Word. God heals His people by feeding them. "How so?" you ask. When the church at Laodicea was neither cold nor hot, so that Christ felt that He must spew her out of His mouth, yet even then He said to the angel of that church, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me." I am bold to say, "There is no cure for lukewarmness like a good supper with Christ." If He enters in, and sups with you and you with Him, your lukewarmness will disappear at once. Do not begin to be saved by faith, and then go on to be saved by works; do not try to mix the two. If you are of the house of Sarah, do not bow your knee before Hagar, and go back to the bond-woman. If you have lived on the pure, simple Word, crediting it by a living, God-given faith, go on to live in the same way, and grow by the Word. Feed thereon continually, that you may be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

III. Now I come to my last point, which I want to insist upon very urgently, and that is THE ADAPTATION OF THE WORD OF GOD FOR THE FEEDING OF OUR SOULS: "By every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live."

"By every word." If you restrict yourselves in your food to one or two articles, every physician will tell you that there is a danger that your body may not be supplied with every form of nutriment that it requires. A good wide range of diet is recommended to those who would have vigorous health. And in spiritual things, if you keep to one part of God's Word, you may live on it, but the tendency will be for you not to attain to complete spiritual health through the lack of some nutriment with which the Word would have supplied you had you used it all. Every Word of God is that upon which man lives in the highest and healthiest state.

Look, for instance, at *the doctrine* in the Word of God. "I do not like doctrine," says one. Do you know what you are saying? You are a disciple, yet you do not like teaching, for doctrine means teaching. For a disciple to say that he does not like to be taught, is as good as to say that he does not like to be a disciple; and, in fact, that he is not one in the true meaning of that term. Whatever truth is laid down in God's Word, it is important for us to know it.

"Oh!" says one, "but there are some truths that are not important." I do not know of any. In places where they cut diamonds, they sweep up the dust, because the very dust of diamonds is valuable; and in the Word of God, all the truth is so precious that the very tiniest truth, if there is such a thing, is still diamond dust, and is unspeakably precious. "But," you object, "I do not see that such a truth would be of any practical use." You may not see it, dear friend, but it is so. If I could write out my experience as Pastor of this church, I could show that there have been persons converted to God by doctrines that some might have thought unlikely to produce that result. I have known the doctrine of the resurrection to bring sinners to Christ; I have known scores brought to the Savior by the doctrine of election—the very sort of people who, as far as I can see, would never have come if that truth had not happened to be an angular doctrine that just struck their heart in the right place, and fitted into the crevices of their nature. I believe that everything that is in God's Word ought to be preached, ought to be believed, and ought to be studied by us. Every doctrine is profitable for some end or other. If it is not food, it is medicine, and children need a tonic sometimes as much as they need milk. Every plant in God's garden answers some good purpose, so let us cultivate them all, and not neglect any doctrine.

Yet, when I come to God's Word, I find that it is not all doctrine, and I discover much of *precept*. Now, perhaps a man says, "I do not care about precepts." We used to have a set of Christian people, so-called, who, if you preached about any duty of a believer, said at once, "We cannot bear the word, 'duty;' it has a legal sound in it." I remember saying to one who called me "a legal preacher," "That is all right; 'legal' means lawful; and you mean, I suppose, that I am a lawful preacher, and that you are an unlawful person to object to my preaching." But so it used to be, if you preached good sound doctrine, if you preached on the privileges of believers, then they were as pleased as possible; but when you once began to talk about the practical parts of God's Word, then straightway they were offended. No wonder, for their conscience pricked them for their neglect of those portions of the Scriptures. But, dear friends, we live upon the precepts as well as upon the doctrines, and they have become to us as our necessary food. You know how David said of the Lord's commandments, "More to be desired are they than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb; moreover by them is Your servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward."

Blessed be God, there is also a large portion of this Book that is taken up with *promises*. Dear friends, be well acquainted with the promises. I have often found it profitable to consult that little book in which Dr. Samuel Clarke has arranged the promises of Scripture under different heads. It is very helpful, when you are in trouble, to refer to all the promises which are given to those who are in similar circumstances to yours; for instance, to the sick, or to those in poverty, or those suffering from slander. As you read them over, one after the other, you say to yourselves, "This is my checkbook; I can take out the promises as I need them, sign them by faith, present them at the great Bank of Grace, and come away enriched with present help in time of need." That is the way to use God's promises, so that they shall minister to the life of our spirit.

But, dear friends, much of God's Word is taken up with *histories*. Here you have the story of the Creation and of the Fall, of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, and of Moses, and of the kings and princes and people of Israel. You ask, perhaps, "Is this food?" Certainly. There are critics, nowadays, who speak very slightly of the Old Testament, and talk as if the Gospels comprised the whole of God's Word; even the Epistles are reckoned to be of inferior quality. But this is all wrong; it is by every Word of God that man does live; and, often, a history, giving us an example of faith, or a proof of God's faithfulness in helping His tried people, becomes more suitable food than the promise by itself might be. There is more force, men say, in the concrete, than there is in the abstract. Certainly, there is more power in a thing put into actual life than there is in that same thing merely stated in words. If ever you go to the picture galleries of Versailles, you may walk through—I was about to say—miles of galleries, among portraits of kings and notable men of different ages; but you do not see anybody stopping to look at them, neither do you care to see them yourself. They are just portraits; but, downstairs, there are paintings of the same men, only they are pictured in battle array, or in various positions which show them in action. Now you stand and look at them, for you are interested in the representation of the scenes in which they lived. So, sometimes, God's promises hang up like pictures on the wall, and we do not notice them; but when we see men who have trusted those promises, and proved the truth of them, then there is a sort of human interest about them which wins our attention, and speaks to our hearts. Never neglect the historical parts of God's Word, for they are full of food to the children of God.

It is precisely the same with regard to *the prophecies*. I once heard Mr. George Muller say that he liked to read his Bible through again and again, and he liked especially to read those portions of the Bible which he did not understand. That seems rather a singular thing to say, does it not? For what profit can come to us if we do not understand what we read? The good man put it to me like this; he said, "There is a little boy who is with his father, and there is a good deal of what his father says that he comprehends, and he takes it in, and he is very pleased to hear his father talk. But sometimes his father speaks of things that are quite beyond him, yet the boy likes to listen; he learns a little here and there, and, by and by, when he has listened year after year, he begins to understand what his father says as he never would have done if he had run away whenever his father began to talk beyond his comprehension." So is it with the prophecies, and other deep parts of God's Word. If you read them once or twice,

but do not comprehend them, still study them, give your heart to them, for, by and by, the precious truth will permeate your spirit, and you will insensibly drink wisdom which otherwise you never would have received.

Every part of the Word of God is food for the soul; so, dear friends, it may be that there is a message of *threatening*, which speaks very sharply to you, but which is also most profitable for you. Perhaps, some Sabbath, you go out of the Tabernacle, and you say, “Our Pastor has not comforted us this morning; he seems to have harrowed us and plowed us.” Yes, I know that it is so sometimes; but it is for your profit, for, as Hezekiah said, “by these things men live.” It frequently happens that we need humbling, and proving, and testing, and bringing down; and every right-minded child of God will say, “Do not let my training be according to my mind, but let it be according to God’s mind.” That sermon, which pleases us most, may not profit us at all; while the one which grieves and vexes us may, perhaps, be doing us a most essential service. When the Word of God searches you through and through, open your heart to it. Let the wind blow right through your whole being, and carry away every rag and relic that ought to be taken from you.

There are some of God’s Words that are very short, but they contain an abundance of food for the soul. I have sometimes stood still, as I have been looking at a text, and I have felt like Jonathan when he found the honey. I could not eat it all; I could only dip my rod into it, and taste it; and I wanted to call you all up, to see if you could clear this forest, which was so laden with sweetness. At other times, on my way home, when I have not got much myself during the sermon, the Master has given me a feast on the road; and I have laughed to myself again and again for very joy of heart over some precious passage out of which fresh light has broken to cheer my spirit, and make me glad in the Lord. Oh, keep to the Word, my brothers! Keep to it as God’s Word, and as coming out of His mouth. Suck it down into your soul; you cannot have too much of it. Feed on it day and night, for thus will God make you to live the life that is life indeed.

If there is a poor soul here that wants to find eternal life, my dear friend, I bid you seek it in God’s Word, and nowhere else. “I thought I would go home and pray,” says one. Do so; but, at the same time, remember that your prayers are of little worth without God’s Word. Hear God’s Word first, and then go and tell God your own word; for it is in His Word of promise rather than in your word of prayer that salvation is to be found. Remember that grand sentence in the Book of Exodus, where God says, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” It is not said, “When *you* see the blood,” but when *I* see it. So, when God looks upon Christ’s shed and sprinkled blood, it is then that He looks on you with pity and compassion. Look where God looks, and then your eyes will meet His. If you look to Christ, and God looks to Christ, then you shall see eye to eye, and you shall find joy and peace in believing. God the Father admires Christ; poor soul, do you admire Him, too; then there will be a point on which you will both be agreed. God the Father entrusts His honor and glory to Christ; trust you your soul with Christ; for so you will be agreed. God grant that you may do so this very hour! Remember this one text as you go your way, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” God grant that every one of you may have that everlasting life, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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