

# THE BEST BREAD

## A SERMON

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“Labor not for the meat which perishes. but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life.” John 6:27

ON what ground did the Savior thus address the multitude which was then before him? Was it on the ground that this was the appointed time that they were ordained to come out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son; that this was the appointed time that they as the redeemed of the Lord were to return, and to commence their pilgrimage to Zion; that this was the appointed time in which, like the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision, they were to be raised from the dead, and to come into that labor and into that state to which they seem here invited in our text? Was this the ground upon which the Savior addressed the multitude before him? If this were the ground on which he addressed them, then the word would have gone with that power which would have quickened their souls; the word would have gone with the same power that it ever did go to the soul of every object of everlasting love at the appointed time; whether it be, “Zacchaeus, come down;” or whether it be to Levi, “Follow me;” or whether it be to Lazarus, “Come forth.” It matters not at all where they are, what their circumstances are; when the time comes, power attends the word; and when the Savior thus speaks, there is life in his voice that raises the dead. Now it could not have been on this ground that the Savior here addressed them; because we find in this very chapter that the same persons who were here thus invited to labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, the same persons went from him; they went away, and walked no more with him. He could not therefore, have addressed them on this ground, this new covenant ground; that is clear beyond all dispute; because, as I have said, the word had no abiding effect upon them. Secondly, did he address them on the ground of its being their duty to do that which he here commands? If he did, let us try that matter. We will assume, and we may perhaps with some degree of awful propriety assume, that they did not belong to God; we will therefore, for argument's sake, assume that their names were not in the Book of Life; that God the Father had never loved them, had never given them to Christ, had never imputed their sins to Christ, had never imputed Christ's work to them, that they had no new covenant relation whatever to God the Father; that the Lord Jesus Christ was not obeying the law for them, that he was not bearing their sins, that he was not about to lay down his life for their redemption; that he came not to save them; that they were not within the range of his mediatorial responsibility; and that they were persons that the Holy Ghost never intended to regenerate that the Holy Spirit in covenant had undertaken to regenerate only those that were given to Christ; and that therefore, these persons had

no new covenant relationship whatever. Now if the Savior addressed them on the ground of its being their duty to believe savingly in Christ, then we must make the Savior, that which we tremble to think of, namely, most frightfully insincere; for the Savior to exhort them to labor for the meat that endures unto everlasting life on the ground of its being their duty to do so, when he knew at the same time there was no provision for them, knew at the same time that the thing was impossible; he knew that they would not, that they could not; he knew that God had not ordained them unto it; he knew that he would not die for them; he knew that there was nothing of the kind for them; and yet mocks, and deludes, and deals in that insincere way with them, inviting them to that which he knows is not theirs, and never can be theirs; for the kingdom, with its immunities and all its eternity of glories, shall be given unto them for whom it is prepared. If, therefore, I adopt such a principle as that, I make the Almighty the greatest mocker possible; he merely mocks me, he merely trifles with me; to invite a man to that which he never intends that man shall have it represents the Savior to be that which is grossly untrue; for if real sincerity ever dwelt anywhere, in perfection, we are sure it was in the Lord Jesus Christ; would he then mock the souls of men like this? But while then neither of these grounds will bear the test, let us seek some ground that will bear the test; that will accord with the Savior's sincerity, that will accord with the new covenant, and with the Scriptures generally and I am sure we shall feel more satisfaction in that than we shall in a system that represents the Savior as mocking the souls of men; inviting them when he knows they will not, and cannot, come, and that there is nothing for them to come to. What then is the ground upon which he addressed them? The ground, as is easily proved, upon which he addressed, them, was the *profession* that they made, and his object in so addressing them was to bring to light the hollowness of their profession, and to get rid of them; these were his two objects in thus addressing them. First, on the ground of their profession. In the preceding part of this chapter these persons took Christ for a prophet. They said, having eaten of the loaves and fishes, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world." They took him, therefore, as a prophet; they took him as their teacher; they therefore, where his disciples, that is, professionally so; they, professed to be his disciples. Then, said, they, there is the prophetic and the royal character met together in David and this prophet is the son of David, let us also make him king; and so he shall be our prophet to teach us and our king to reign over us; here then is a good beginning: we have eaten and we are filled, and now we will seek after him and they walked many miles to find him, walked many miles to reach where he was, walked many miles in order to receive his instruction. Now, when they came into his presence, as though he should say, you profess to be my disciples; yes, we are taking you to be that prophet that should appear in the world; we are come to make you king; we are professing this. Well, I will tell you what you must do if you will be my disciples, you must labor not for the meat that perishes; discipleship does not consist in that; but discipleship consists in laboring for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him has God the Father sealed. If therefore, you are my true disciples this is what you must do. But, as you find, when he thus put them to the test of God's truth, the object of so addressing them was answered; it brought to light the hollowness of their profession, undeceived them and he ridded himself of these cumberers of the ground. And I have thought that that verse in Isaiah 1:24, may have perhaps in prediction some reference to this very circumstance; where the Lord says, "I will ease me of my adversaries;" for all these persons, though they followed him in the way they did, were spiritually his adversaries, they were in heart his adversaries; and therefore, he said, "Ah, I will ease me of my adversaries." Here he has an immense congregation of enemies; he puts them to the test of his own truth; the end is answered; the hollowness of their profession is brought to light; and they go back, and walk no more with

him. The words, therefore, were addressed to them not on the ground of its being the time for them to be called by grace, for that was not done; not on the ground of its being their duty to believe savingly in Christ, for that would have been believing a lie; for them to believe there was salvation for them when there was not, that there was eternal mercy for them when there was not, would have been believing a lie; and I ask any man of common sense if he would charge the pure and perfect Savior with inviting a man to believe a lie? It is the devil's work to do that, but not the work of Him who is truth itself. But if you take the words as addressed to them on the ground of their profession, in order to bring to light the hollowness of that profession, also to get rid of them, and also to give his own disciples a lesson as well for they were there; that if you will be a true disciple, you must labor not for the meat that perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life; if you take the words in this way, then I think everything harmonizes with the truth of God, with real experience, with the purity of the Savior, with the order of the covenant, and with the Lord's general dealings with men. What is preaching the gospel from Sabbath to Sabbath? It is putting men to the test; Hence you, recollect, the Savior says, "This gospel must be preached for a witness to all nations." Now the gospel comes in as a witness, bears testimony of what Christ has done, and bears testimony of the kind of character that shall be saved. Men are put by the preaching of the gospel to the test of God's truth; and they who stand the test, and prove to be spiritually taught, and prove to be true disciples, and prove to be born of God, the gospel unto such is a savor of life unto life, But the others when they are put to the test, and prove themselves to be enemies of the truth, and destitute of the grace of God, and still in a state of nature, why, then the gospel is as a testimony unto such a savor of death unto death.

Having made this rather long introduction, I shall proceed to notice the text as it applies to the real Christian; and in so doing, I will first describe *the timeliness, and the nature, and the order, of that meat which endures unto everlasting life*; and then, second, *the labor*; how they are to labor for it; and then, third, *the negative*; "Labor not for the meat which perishes."

First. I notice, then first THE TIMELINESS OF THAT MEAT THAT ENDURES UNTO EVERLASTING LIFE. This chapter refers, as you are aware, to the manna in the wilderness, as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the bread of life; and who has said, "He that comes unto me shall never hunger; and he that believes in me shall never thirst." This chapter therefore, refers to the manna. I prefer taking up the manna, the account of which is given beautifully in the 16th of Exodus; I prefer taking that to taking any other similes which I might have taken to have worked out the great truth of laboring for that meat which endures unto everlasting life. I notice then first *the timeliness of the manna*. Here are the people in a state of utter destitution, in a state of despair; and that despair drove them into rebellion; that is the state they were in; indeed, it was a life and death matter; so that the manna came into them in the wilderness at a time when there was no possibility of their obtaining sustenance; and also, it came in the face of all their rebellions. Just so it is now; the Lord brings a sinner into a wilderness state; he brings him out from the flesh pots and fleshly systems of Egypt; he brings the sinner out of the world into the wilderness, in order to turn his face towards a better country, towards that city which he has founded, towards that rest which remains for the people of God, towards

"That land of pure delight  
Where saints immortal reign."

The sinner is thus brought into a wilderness state; he feels he is destitute; he says, what am I to do? Here are all my sins; and there is the law against me. Sinai is not far off him; they were not very far off from Sinai, though they had not yet reached it. Here, says the poor sinner, are my sins behind me, the law before me; what a destitute condition I am in; what reason is there to believe I shall not perish? Surely, I shall perish. Ah, then, let the Savior be revealed unto such a one; let the heavenly manna come, let some sweet promise come, like this; "I have blotted out as a thick cloud," that so enveloped your mind, "your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins;" ah, such words will become as manna to the soul. He will say, Ah, how timely this pardoning mercy came; if it had come some time ago, it would not have been so timely, because my guilt was not a burden to me, my sins were not a trouble to me, my condition was no particular distress to me; but now it has come exactly at the right time. This is well timed, salvation well timed, sustenance well timed. And then the Lord again comes in, and reveals in connection with this the blessed truth that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin; for he that eats of my flesh, my sacrificial flesh; he that believes upon me as the one great sacrifice; he that makes my sacrifice his hope, his life, his way of access to God; and he that drinks my blood, he that believes in my blood of the New Testament, he that believes in the blood of the everlasting covenant, shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. Such then was the timeliness of this manna that it came when the people were in danger of losing their lives. And just so now; the Lord brings a sinner to feel his sad condition, and then rolls in, freely rolls in his mercy. I scarcely need remind you of the freeness of this manna. You see, man had no hand in bringing it; it was brought only by the good pleasure of the blessed God. He had his plan in reserve; and he met the Israelites with this plan just as they came into that need. And so the Lord's plans are with him, his counsels are with him; and he will never suffer any of his people to come into any difficulty, or any necessity, or under any burden, or to be afflicted with any affliction, that he has not in reserve a remedy for he knows how to time his mercies both in matters that pertain to a vast eternity and matters that pertain to fleeting time; all lies with him; and happy the man that is favored to trust in him for both worlds; for "godliness is profitable unto all things; having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." But then see how suited this manna was as to place also. Had it come to some other part, where they might have obtained it by travelling to a certain distance, it is quite possible and quite probable that they never could have reached there; their enemies might have cut them off, or a thousand things. But the manna came to just where they were. So, the Gospel comes to just where I am. Am I a sinner? Christ came under my sins. And so, does the Gospel come and reveal to me a Savior? It comes to me just where I am. Am I under the law? Christ came under the law and so the Gospel comes and brings a righteousness that magnifies the law; and the law is as glad to let me go as the Gospel is to take me; for the law is magnified, the Gospel is glorified, the soul is saved, Christ is exalted, and God is honored; it is a matter of divine and glorious honor in every sense of the word. And are we under the curse of the law by nature? Jesus Christ came under that curse; yes, he himself was made a curse. And when the sinner is brought in apprehension under this curse, then in comes the blessing of the Gospel swallows up the curse; and if I may again personify the curse, the curse is as glad to leave us as the blessing is to abide by us; and thus, the matter becomes settled. It is suited as to time, and suited as to place. And then again, it came also in the right proportion. We never read of any man dying in the wilderness of starvation; those that died, died of infidelity; they disbelieved God's truth, and fell in the wilderness. But he that did cleave unto the Lord, Moses says unto such "You are witnesses of his faithfulness; for not a day has passed over in which he has not fed you, he has fed you every day;" and as though Moses should say, those of you that did cleave unto the Lord your God, I have almost heard you

sometimes saying to yourselves, Well, surely, if the Lord condescend to bring the manna every day, it cannot be too much for me to do to be fed every day; if he will feed me every day, I may well be glad to be fed by him. And yet those that erred in their hearts, and had not known the Lord's ways, they had come out of Egypt, and they saw these things, but they did not see the Lord, they did not recognize the Lord; and not recognizing the Lord, they therefore, erred in their hearts; and would turn back again to Egypt. I say, then, that this manna came in proper proportions. And just so it is now. If you give up God's truth, you will not give up because there is not enough in Christ; you cannot say that you could give up because the promise of God fails you; you cannot give up on the ground that his mercy does not endure forever; so that if you give up, it must be simply on this one ground, that there is something else that you like better than you do God's truth, and so you part with God's truth for that something else that you like better, and thus you spiritually die; not that such persons were ever vitally and spiritually alive, but they were alive professionally. Such persons die, and crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh; not from any deficiency there is in Christ or the Gospel, but because there is something else that they like better. Ah, it is a great thing, then, to be able to come before God and say, Lord, your mercy has been so well timed to me as a poor sinner that without it I must have perished; second, that your mercy came to where I was. There is nothing heard now-a-days in the professing world but coming to Christ, and coming to Christ. But then all coming to Christ that is not by the Savior coming to them is mere form and profession; is like the young man in the Gospel, "Master, I will follow you whithersoever you go but when the Savior said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has not where to lay his head;" we hear no more of that young man. And, just so it is; if we come to Christ without Christ first coming to us, we shall surely go away again. Just the same as these persons in this chapter; they came to Christ, but Christ had never come savingly to them; he came to them providentially, but not savingly; for if he had, their coming to him would have been a settled matter, and they would have gone away no more again for ever. Ah, it is a great thing to be able to bear testimony of his mercy, that it came to where we were; and to be kept from saying that our soul loathes this light bread. The weighty matters, that is to say, matters that are weighty with the children of God, namely, faith, judgment, and mercy, had no weight with the Pharisee; they were such light matters with him that he passed them over; and as the ancient Pharisees did, so do the modern Pharisees, these matters are light to them; they have no weight with them. But they have every weight with the real child of God; the man taught of God can come before God, and bear testimony that every truth has with him a solemn and everlasting weight; they outweigh in his heart, and conscience, and affections, everything else. The people said then, "Our soul loathes this light bread and their hearts turned back, to Egypt; and God cut them off, as he will all that get tired of the truth. Then, my hearer, putting you to the test this morning, have you been brought to feel that you must perish forever without this bread of eternal life, Christ Jesus; and can you say that you are in that wilderness, helpless, state, that unless this bread be brought to you, you have no power to climb to heaven, or bring it down from heaven? The manna was sent down from heaven; the people could not reach it, nor bring it; it was God that sent it down, brought it to the people. And then, can you say that those blessed truths that reveal God to you in these sweet, attractive forms, that so far from your thinking less of them, they grow with you more and more weighty; that you love the word of the Lord; and that when the Lord is pleased to speak home a word with power, for that constitutes the real life of the soul when he pours life into it, can you say that his words are sweeter to your taste than ever?

After noticing the timeliness of the manna, I now notice *the nature of the manna*, in order to get at some of the attractions of the antitypical Manna. As to the nature of the manna, it was round in form, white in color, and sweet in taste. If it was round in form, what would that mean? Why, it would be like Ezekiel's transverse wheels, constituting a globe, to look all ways. And so, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God looks east, west, north, and south. So that John, when looking at this bread of life, and then looking at heaven, looking at the throne of God, he says, there is a people out of all kindreds, and nations, and peoples, and tongues. So that the round form of it, then, will mean in the first place that he shall gather up his people from all nations. Then the manna would also look downwards, Ah, there is a poor sinner, he may be degraded as low as Magdalene, as low as Saul of Tarsus, as low as the thief on the cross: it does not matter how low; the manna looks down; Christ will come down to you; you are down at hell's door, you are down at the mouth of the pit, and in your apprehension the pit is open to receive you; you are trembling, and saying, O Lord, let not the pit shut her mouth upon me. Ah, says the Manna, I will come down. Christ comes down, and gives a little food to strengthen the man's heart; and the youth of the soul is renewed like the eagle's; it stretches its wings of faith and love, up it rises, takes a wide circle, comes up into the promised land, flies in the happy liberty of the Gospel, glories in the climes of everlasting love, and is amazed that this bread of life could raise up a poor, dying sinner in this way; Then again, the manna would look upwards. Ah would you like to live where Jesus is? The manna will take you there; there is the hidden manna there, as high as Christ himself is gone; there shall you feed; for the manna of course, will mean sustenance altogether, as the word meat in our text will mean general sustenance. Then the manna would look forward; and so, my text looks forward; it endures unto everlasting life. And then again, being round, it had no beginning nor end and the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, Is that fanciful? I have no objection to being fanciful if my imagination is consecrated to the glory of God; if my imagination imagines a thing, and my soul lays hold of it, and my judgment puts it to rights; and I find it brings a good piece of solid food to my soul, I care not what men call me, nor what they say, so long as I am enjoying the truth. As good Romaine says, while other people are grumbling about it, I am enjoying it. Again, this manna is also white in color Ah, there is no adulteration here. What there is in the bread we eat now-a-days, mercy knows, I don't; I know they make some of the loaves very hard to squeeze the water of the potatoes, and rice out of them; and what we eat mercy knows, I don't; they call it bread. But here, in this bread of life, there is no adulteration; it is pure, free-grace bread never hurt anyone yet and never will, depend upon it. Purity. Ah, sin is ended, death is ended, transgression is ended, Satan is cast out; and here is a feast, here is the pure bread of life, in sweet accordance with the purer blood of the grape, in sweet accordance with the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Ah, it does us good. I had almost said, and I may as well say it too, not only does it do us good, but it is medicinal as well as sustaining; for if there be a disease, this pure bread will heal that disease. Then it was also sweet in taste. Now I have always had rather a sweet tooth; I confess that: I do not mean extravagantly so but I certainly like sweets better than bitters; so, do you whether you confess it or not. Now this manna was sweet, like unto wafers made with honey; sweet as honey is. You know how to apply this without my enlarging upon it; you know that the word of the Lord is sweet; there is nothing so sweet. Whatever bitter cup may be put into your hand, whatever bitter loss, bitter privation, bitter affliction, bitter reproach, or bitter slander, or bitter trouble, or bitter experience there may be, let the Lord just throw in a sweet word, ah, it is like the tree that Moses cast into the bitter waters at Marah, when the people could not drink them; when the tree was cast in, the waters were sweet. And so now, the Lord by one word the Lord can turn the bitterest

circumstances, the bitterest experiences, into the sweetest: and make us know that notwithstanding all his mysterious dealings with us, he is still full of tender mercy, that he does not afflict unnecessarily, nor grieve the children of men; but he gives the bitters in order, as good John Bunyan says, to make the sweet the sweeter when the sweet shall come. The next thing will be *the order of this manna*: We shall have two sermons upon this text; I shall not attempt to go all through it this morning. The next thing, then, is this manna. The first feature of its order was to keep the people near to God; It was not suffered to be kept from day to day; for then the people might have accumulated a stock, and said, we can do without God; and have gone away from him. It was so ordered that they should keep close to God; so that when the next morning came, their necessity came also; and with the necessity came the manna; and that manna could come only by the goodness of the Lord. So, it is now, that is the way he deals with us. He will not allow us to accumulate a stock of enjoyment and walk off with it.

The Lord, then, will deal with you in a way to keep you close to himself. For instance, suppose the Lord bless the word, and you go home this morning, and say well, I shall not go to chapel tonight, for I have got enough; and so next Sunday, and perhaps we should never see you again; and you would not seek the Lord at the throne of grace, you would go off with your stock in hand like the prodigal. The meaning of all the Lord's dealings with us then, is to keep us at home, to make us feel our need of his mercy continually. The second thing remarkable in the order of the manna was that it was twice as much on Friday, on our Friday. I mention that because I have a use to make of it presently, on their Saturday; and it would keep good from Saturday to the Sabbath, and through the Sabbath it would keep; to show, as far as mere shadow can, the blessed truth that this manna endures all through that Sabbath which is yet to come; for there remains a rest unto the people of God. But mark, it was on the Friday, that is, our Friday, on their Saturday, that Christ was crucified, a remarkable thing, that the manna that came on that day of the week on which Christ was to be crucified should keep; the other should not, the old covenant manna, where Christ's death was not only in type, that should not keep: all promises relative to it have vanished, all but that promise that comes by the death of Christ, that will remain, that is yea and amen. He is the bread of life, he saw no corruption, never can, and never shall; and his people shall be like him, incorruptible, and shall live forever. Again, this manna had to undergo a preparation: it must be crushed and baked; therefore, it had to undergo a crushing and a burning process. Shall I be reckoned fanciful if I say to you that I am, by the manna undergoing this crushing, reminded of a Scripture which says: "He was bruised for our iniquities, he was wounded for our transgressions; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed," The manna also had to undergo a fiery trial. And Christ underwent a fiery trial all his days; but, more especially, when the fiery, the flaming sword of justice awoke against him; he had to undergo that fiery trial; and by that fiery trial he was made perfect: "To make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." As it was thus prepared to be bread for the people, so Christ is our bread, not Christ uncrucified, but Christ crucified, Christ who died, and rose from the dead. He was bruised, he underwent the fiery trial, and hereby becomes adapted to every poor sinner that is on his way to the Canaan that through grace he is made to love. And then we read that a measure of manna was taken, and put into the ark, and preserved as a memorial for many generations; all the rest passed away. And so, whatever is not within the ark of God's covenant will perish and pass away; but that that is within the ark of God's covenant will remain forever. Christ is in the ark of God's covenant; the people are in the bond of the covenant; all the promises are there; God is there; and these shall endure forever. What became of that pot of manna ultimately, we do not know, nor does it matter, we take it historically.

We have no account of parentage or descent connected with Melchizedek, and he therefore, stands historically a type of Christ in the eternity of his priesthood; we have an account of this pot of manna being preserved, but no account of its end; and so, it the more effectually reminds us of the eternity of that bread which endures unto everlasting life. The monarchies of the world are not in the ark of the covenant, and therefore, they must pass away and perish; yes, the earth and the heavens all must pass away; not anything can be finally preserved in life and glory, but that which is within the range of God's everlasting covenant.

Thus, then I have tried to point out, first, the meaning of the text, and then the timeliness, the nature, and the order of the manna. Time will not allow me to touch the other part, namely, the laboring not for the meat that perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life.

I trust many of you are true gospel laborers. Instead of seeing (on such a wet morning as this is) ten or eleven hundred here, which I do see, I might have expected to have seen about three or four hundred. It looks like sincerity. The Lord bless all his people, feed, and lift them up for ever. Amen.