

# HEAVENLY BREAD

## A SERMON

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“Our soul loathes this light bread.” Numbers 21:5

Such is the difference between the carnal and the spiritual mind, that whatever comes direct from the hand of God, and is intended to set forth eternal things, especially those eternal mercies which are by Jesus Christ, the carnal mind is sure to hate the same, is sure to be stirred up with enmity against the same. On the other hand, when the Lord blesses a man with new creature-ship, gives him a new heart, a new understanding, and gives him to understand something of the goodness and mercy of the Lord, and of the range of his goodness, that it extends to everything that is needed in temporals, as well as to everything that we need in eternal things, when the Christian is brought to understand this, he loves the same things that the other hates, for the very reason that the other blindly hates them; the one is stirred up blindly to hate the truth because it is of God, and the other loves it because it is of God. And so the two different characters among the Israelites; the one that had an understanding of this manna, that it came by the special hand and goodness of God, and that this manna had a spiritual and an ulterior meaning, such a man, however the manna might taste, if it did not taste very good, would like it because it was of God. He would say, I love God, and he is infinite in wisdom, and he certainly knows a great deal better than we do what is suited for us; therefore, I will take it, and be content with it, and bless God for it, whether I understand it or not, any further than this, that it is of God. And that is the great thing to recognize in our troubles and afflictions, that they are of the Lord; and if we know the causes, and those causes have been any omission or want of foresight on our own part, still the Lord permits the causes, and we must not exclude him. Just in proportion as we are enabled to recognize the hand of the Lord shall we be reconciled to his dealings with us. Hence the Lord said of those among that people that believed not, “This people do always err in their heart, for they have not known my ways.”

I shall not dwell so much upon the form of the text as upon the subject contained in it; or else you will observe the words have a tremendous meaning, “this light bread.” We shall have to show what this manna represents. “This light bread;” they made light of it, they reckoned it a something that was worthless. And is not the truth of God made light of by the carnal mind? Was not Jesus Christ made light of, and did not thousands, after professing some degree of attachment to him, go back and walk no more with him? “This light bread.” Oh, how light, how worthless, how trivial are the eternal mercies of God by Jesus Christ in the estimation of the carnal man! However, I shall this morning try to point out the spiritual meaning of this manna, and leave you with this one thought, namely, speak after this any of you against this manna if you can, taking it in the spiritual sense.

In so doing I take a twofold view: first, *the spiritual meaning of this manna, as suggested by the circumstance itself*; secondly, *the way in which the Holy Scriptures deal with this manna in its antitypical character*.

First, *the spiritual meaning of this manna, as suggested by the circumstance itself*. It is a great thing to be delivered from the spirit of that people who are called despisers; it is a great thing to be delivered from that spirit that makes light of these eternal things. In order for us to be right, in order for us to be saved by the grace which this manna sets forth, there are four things essential. There must first be a sense of need; there must secondly be an actual eating of the manna, for their sense of need would not save their lives unless they did actually eat of the manna. The third thing essential was conformity to the order of the manna; and the fourth and last thing essential to the welfare of the Israelite, as typifying that which is essential to the welfare of the spiritual Israelite, was that of continued satisfaction; so that they should never make light of the manna. First, there must be a sense of need. You will observe that the Lord brought the Israelites into such a position that this manna alone could save their lives. It was God's provision; they must have that or nothing, nothing else could save them. And the blind among them spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "You have brought us out of Egypt into this wilderness to kill us with hunger, for here is no bread, here is no water." But then this, you must understand, was from unbelievers. How many weaklings among the true Israelites were affected by this murmuring, I know not; but I will mention two or three self-evident things here. First, if these Israelites had been literally and physically dead, there could have been no sense of need in any way whatever; so that they were not dead literally. And the right-minded among them are a type, therefore, of that work of the Holy Spirit that convinces a sinner where he is spiritually. Every man's reason will tell him where he is circumstantially, and where he is morally; but no man's reason, without the teaching of the Holy Spirit, can tell him or show him where he is spiritually. So that this sense of need is the first essential to our eternal salvation. "Blessed are the poor in spirit:" and "he fills the hungry with good things, but the rich he sends empty away." Now when a sinner is brought to feel that he is in the wilderness of sin, that he is under the almighty and eternal wrath of God, that death is just before him, and eternity just at hand, and he feels that he is a poor, lost, perishing sinner; the Lord in his own time shows unto such a one that if he be saved it must be by Jesus Christ; for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. It must be his atonement, or we must be lost; it must be his grace, it must be his work, for he is the bread of life; that is the only way in which we can be saved. It is a great thing to be brought to know that our works and our doings have nothing whatever to do with this matter, to be brought to know that we are lost, helpless, poor, blind, and wretched, and to say with the apostle, "O wretched man that I am!" and to be brought simply into that spirit described by the apostle when he says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Oh, how many good Christians there are in the world that are got thus far and can get no farther! Ah! they can say, I see and feel and know that nothing but that free, sovereign, sufficient grace which is by Jesus Christ can save my soul; I have no hope but in his righteousness, his atonement, the promise that is by him; I have no hope but in the eternal mercy of God that is by him. "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer." So that all that experience that you would not have if you could help it, namely, that hardness of heart, that bondage, that darkness, that casting down, that distance from God, that helplessness which you feel, these are paths into which we certainly should not enter if the Lord himself did not force us into them. And I think these paths of downward and trying experience are, at least, one part of the

meaning of that scripture where the Lord says, "I will bring the blind by a way they knew not; I will lead them in paths they have not known." What shall they see in these paths? what shall they learn in these paths that they knew not? what shall they see, to which they were formerly blind? Why, they shall see what crooked things they are, what a crooked thing sin is, what a crooked thing error is, and they shall see everything that seems discouraging. Ah! how can matters become straight between me and God? They shall see a gulf before them they can never ford; they shall see rising mountains of difficulty, and heavy clouds hanging over them; and they shall become wretched and miserable, and shall wander about in the wilderness in a solitary way, and sometimes experience a little rebellion as well. What does the Lord say when he brings the soul down into this state? "I will make crooked things straight." But how can that promise be acceptable to the man that has never seen in what a crooked state he is before God as a sinner? And the Lord will exalt the valleys. But what can that be to the man that has never been brought down into the valley and brought very low? And the Lord will lower the mountains. But what can that promise be to the man that has never seen any impediments between him and God? "And I will make the rough places plain." But what can that be to the man that has no rough experiences, and nothing to discourage him? "And I will turn darkness into light." But what can that be to the man that has not experienced this darkness? I will bring them to know what they are and where they are. "These things will I do unto them." Ah! says the tried soul, I don't mind this if it is all to end well. Well, it will end well, for the Lord says, "These things will I do unto them, and will not forsake them." I make no hesitation in saying that this is the great secret, the foundation secret, of the distinction between the true church and the world, between the true possessor and the mere professor. The man that is thus brought down can stand before a heart searching God and say, Lord, without your sovereign pleasure I am lost; I am brought to feel that it is not whether I will be saved, but whether you will save me. Lord, without that perfection that is in your dear Son I am lost; without the sovereignty of your Holy Spirit coming into my soul, as it did into the dry bones in Ezekiel's valley, I am lost. Are you thus brought off, my hearer, from all creature confidence? Are you brought to feel the truth of the words you sometimes sing? and I trust and believe and am satisfied that hundreds of you can adopt the words experimentally,

"You must save, and you alone."

Here, then, is a sense of need. Now these are they that will listen to the tidings of the provision when the provision comes. They will say, Ah, this is it! Hence the question when it did come, "What is this?" And so, with astonishment, when the Lord shall come in in his eternal mercy, you will say, What is this? Thus, then, what are your experiences? Why, such as you can only partly tell, such as you can only partly describe. Ah! who would believe it, that all those evils of the heart that make things appear to you so crooked, so rough, and are so discouraging, and all the outward vexations and troubles you meet with, who would believe it that these are the precise paths, the precise experiences that God has ordained you to come into? It is his hand that has brought you there; it is to make you poor that he might make you rich; it is to wound you that he might heal you; it is to bring you down that he might bring you up, to be brought down again no more forever; it is to bring you into such a state of destitution that you will not feel it any too humbling when you are described as a poor creature in the dust, or as a beggar on the dunghill. He thus brings you down to make way for the coming in of the exceeding riches of his grace. You will not say then, "Our soul loathes this light bread." These are humbling experiences; but oh! those of you that know Jehovah in his everlasting covenant, you will not be alarmed at the experience. When I was

very young in the ways of the Lord, these experiences used to alarm me dreadfully, and sent me off into despair; but they cannot send me off into despair now; I know too much of the grace of God, I know too much of the efficacy of Immanuel's blood, I know too much of Jesus' righteousness, I know too much of the stability of his word. This device of Satan to make use of my downward experiences to drive me to despair is an old device, the snare of which has been broken for many years. I am let somewhat into the spirit that God let the apostle Paul into when he besought the Lord thrice that experiences might be very different with him. Lord, he says, this is not Christian experience; here is the devil, and here is the devil's messenger; here is a thorn in the flesh; it is more like a devilish experience than like Christian experience. Let this depart from me. No, Paul, I want you to preach to great sinners, and unless you learn a little more of your sinner-ship, you will never suit great sinners; therefore "my grace is sufficient for you, my strength is made perfect in weakness." "Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities." Oh, how the devil must be mortified to think that he is beaten by a poor sinner like me; that he is trodden down by a poor little babe like me; that I can stand in the name of the Lord, and defy Satan, shake my head at him, despise him, laugh him to scorn, and my soul go forth in holy gratitude to God! "Thanks be to God, that gives us the victory by our Lord Jesus Christ." You are in the wilderness, and you must have wilderness experiences, in order to make way for the provision which the Lord has for the poor and needy. I suppose some few among you go sleeping on from time to time. Been to chapel this morning? How did you like the minister? Well, much as usual. Go home, go to sleep, and next day much about the same; go dreaming on, no trial, no trouble.

Do you believe election? I think I do, because our minister does. Do you believe predestination? I think I do, because the people do where I go. And do you believe in a covenant ordered in all things and sure? Well, I think do, but I don't understand it. That is about the religion of some of you, and you will be lost if you have no more religion than that. There must be a personal conviction of your state, there must be personal soul-trouble, personal casting down; you must be broken to pieces, dashed as it were in your false confidences to atoms, and your soul must be wakened up and cry mightily to God. Wherever there is the work of God in the soul, it will create a solemn jealousy; there will be striving, struggling, seeking after God, and everything else, in comparison of the salvation of your soul, will appear not worth a thought. As to silver and gold, all the silver and gold in the world put together is not worth the butt end of a straw when set by the side of the salvation of our immortal and precious souls. The religion that has not this at the root of it and the basis of it is a religion that the devil laughs at; it deceives the soul, brings no good to man, and no glory to God.

But we will look, secondly, at the provision. The manna represents three things; and there must be the actual eating of the manna. The Israelite's knowing his need of the manna would not save him; he must receive the manna; he must actually eat it. This manna represents three things: first, the word of the Lord; second, the Christ of God; third, the blessings which are by Jesus Christ. Let us have a word upon this eating. The manna must be eaten. Your sense of need is essential. The Israelite in his right mind regarded this manna as a precious treasure. Why, he would say, all that a man has will he give for his life; and this manna saves my life. And if that manna was essential there to save life, how infinitely more important is that that saves the soul! Now first it represents the word of the Lord. The Lord enable us to deal with this part very carefully, because those of you that have to live the longest, your time is short, and I want to see you all prepared, if the Lord's will, for that change; and a blessed change it is to those that belong to him. This manna represents,

first, the word of the Lord. Let us see whether the word of the Lord has been food to our souls and is food to our souls; let us try it. There is a promise that it shall be so, "He loved the people; all his saints are in his hands; they shall sit down at your feet, they shall receive every one of your words." Now let us try it. "He loved the people." Has the testimony of God's everlasting love ever been strengthening and encouraging to us? Has the testimony sometimes been sweet to us that God's love is everlasting, that God's love not only lasts forever but is always the same, that it is immutable? And that his saints are in his hands; can we say that we do understand and receive to our comfort the delightful truth, for it is the same doctrine stated by the Savior when he says of his sheep, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hands." Can we say that these testimonies of the love of God as manifested in the gift of Christ have many times been to us, or at least sometimes, that which is described? Let us go on a little further. David said, "Your word was sweet unto my taste; sweeter than honey and the honeycomb." Have you not sometimes in reading a chapter recognized a sweetness in it that has been very encouraging? Have you not sometimes heard the word in God's own appointed ordinance, that of the public ministration of the word, has not some word come and described just where you are, and just what you are? Has it not endeared the Savior, taken away some of your bitterness of spirit, I mean your sorrows and griefs, lessened the weight of your burdens, and encouraged you to hope in the Lord? And have you not said, Ah, that sermon this morning, or this evening, as the case may be, has been a great help to my soul; it seemed to encourage me to hope in the Lord; it pointed out for whom Christ died; the sermon pointed out who the persons were that the Lord intends to save, that it is the poor, the needy, the hungry, the thirsty; and that none are either the hungry or the thirsty but those who are made experimentally acquainted with their state as sinners? These are they to whom the word of the Lord is indeed sweet and precious. They receive it, and regret, and deeply regret, that they cannot feed more upon the word of the Lord than they do. If we cannot now, perhaps we can look back to times when we could say so, and if we have not yet experienced what Jeremiah in his 15th chapter describes, we can seek the experience of it; we can say, Lord, bless me with that experience; you know that I cannot say with your servant yet, but I would like to say with him, because I should know then that I am a saved soul, where Jeremiah said, "Your words were found, and I did eat them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." His testimonies have encouraged you many times. Why, this is nothing else but being fed as the Lord promised, "I will give you pastors according to my heart, that shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." When, a minister feeds the soul, that is, when he does so instrumentally, he does not do it by mere information, though it says, "They shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." How does he do it? When he speaks the word, and the Lord attends it with power, makes Christ precious to your soul, brings you into the enjoyment of eternal things, and makes you happy in the house of the Lord, that experience gives you such a knowledge as nothing but such an experience could give you. It gives you a knowledge of God's love; for if the Lord did not love you, you would not have this heart full of love to him; and if the Lord did not rejoice in you, you would not thus be favored to rejoice in him. "Your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." I hardly know what to say here to do justice to this part. Oh, my hearer, believe me, if you can, that the word of the Lord is defiant of everything. You may be under the most excruciating bodily pain, if God is pleased to speak a word to the soul, you will care but little for it; you may be in the fiery furnace, if God throws a word in, the violence of the fire is gone, and you are happy. If you are in the lions' den, if he throws a word in, the lions' mouths are shut, and you are happy. And when you come presently to the bed of languishing, and have to breathe your last, let the Lord give you a word as you are in the midst of the valley of the shadow

of death, that word will be an inextinguishable lamp, that will discover to you the dear Redeemer, the heavenly world, the paradise of God. Many a child of God before departing has recognized in his soul the music of heaven, has seen by the eye of faith some of its glories, and has felt as though he could not live here any longer. As Toplady well observed, "No mortal can live after seeing and realizing what I have seen and what I have realized." It is said of the literal manna that its taste was like that of wafers made with honey, all the bitterness goes off, nothing but sweetness left. Thus, then, this manna represents among other things the word of the Lord. And can we say, "this light bread"? What I make light of the glorious gospel of the blessed God? May the Lord stop our breath before we should ever live to see the day when the glorious gospel of God should sink one ten-thousandth part of a degree in our estimation. I can only say after forty-four years' experience that the gospel stands higher with me than ever, that I love my covenant God more than ever; and, bless his dear and holy name, I know well that he can be safely trusted with all our troubles and all our cares. So, then, to eat the word of the Lord is to be strengthened, and comforted, and helped by it; for our confidence thus to be kept fixed up in him, and our love to abound.

Secondly, this manna represents the Christ of God. "He that eats me, even he shall live by me." I often have occasion, because of course I always remember we have a sort of mixed congregation, to throw out a kind of caution of how careful we ought to be with the word of the Lord, and pray to the Lord for clarity of mind and purity of heart to recognize the holy and proper meaning of his blessed word. I do not know anything by which we might more easily get into that which would be irreverent and blasphemous than some of the expressions of the Lord's word. The words I have just quoted, "He that eats me shall live by me," we see how absurd the notion of literal eating there is. What, then, are we to understand by eating him? I shall come more definitely to that presently, when I refer to his own description. "He that eats me," I will just give two thoughts upon that. First, can you say that you cannot live without him? It was an Oriental and ancient mode of speech, when one person was very much attached to another, and very fond of that other's company, to say, Why, that person is your life; you never seem happy without that person; you don't seem as though you enjoy anything without that person. And just so the soul, nothing without Christ:

"I cannot live if you remove,  
For you are all in all."

There is no life, no hope, no sanctification, no justification, no fellowship with God, no liberty, no anything without Christ. Ah, can you say this? That is one step, then, towards eating him. And the other thought is that of receiving him. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hears my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him, and sup with him, and he with me." Therefore, the eating him there I apprehend to mean receiving him and being supported by him. Now you have come to the house of God, and all your motives, desires, and feelings are summed up, if you are come with right motives, which I believe you are, in these words, "We would see Jesus." That is a beautiful scripture where the apostle, after reminding us of his own triumphant end, says, "There is a crown of righteousness laid up for me, and not for me only, but for all them also that love his appearing." Can you not say that you do love his appearing as the end of the law, as the end of sin, as the mediator of the better covenant? that you love his appearing in your minister, in the ministry; that you love his appearing to your soul, that you love his appearing to you in every way? What is this but, as it were, eating him? You cannot live without him; but if he

be nigh, then you feel satisfied at all times, satisfied with the breasts of his consolation, and delighted with his beauties, saying, "He is altogether lovely; this is my beloved, this is my friend."

But, thirdly, the manna represents also the blessings which are by Jesus Christ. Upon this I will not enlarge; I will quote only one scripture: "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Now the mercies that are by Jesus Christ are sure mercies. You see they come by faith. You hold fast the truth, hold fast Jesus Christ, these mercies came by him. He is the High Priest of good things to come. But there must not only be a sense of need, and eating of the manna, there must be conformity to order. That is another thing very essential; but I will mention only one part of the order. You are aware that on the sixth day they were to gather twice as much, and that that which was gathered on the sixth day would preserve, it was preserved; so that on the next day, the sabbath, there was nothing to do but to enjoy what the sixth day brought in; so that the sixth day preserved the manna, gave rest to the people, and preserved them. I feel utterly at a loss for language to set forth the blessedness of the doctrine here contained. Jesus Christ died on the sixth day of the week. Ah, my hearer, by the finished work of Christ every promise, every mercy, every soul is preserved. "Sanctified by God the Father," set apart by him in eternal election; "preserved in Christ Jesus," even when dead in trespasses and sins. Could things be preserved by Adam? He lost everything. Then came the Levitical priesthood, and the Jewish royalty; but the mildew overtook the whole, the cankerworm, the caterpillar, the locust, and the palmerworm destroyed the whole, and left them destitute. But bring in the finished work of the blest Redeemer, there is the promise, there is the testimony, there is the love, there is the mercy, there is the city, there is the land, there is the paradise, there is the heaven, there is everything eternally preserved. Ah, would you be preserved? It must be by faith in the death of Christ. Would you be triumphant? It must be by faith in the death of Christ. But there were some, if I could not have thrown the globe at them pretty well, if I had been there, and had known what I know now, and had seen the infinite fools wandering off on a Sunday morning to see if they could find any manna. I would have said, You infinite fools, what are you going to do? Has not the sixth day brought in plenty of manna? Of course, it has. But off they must go; cannot believe Jesus Christ has done everything; we must do a little, must go and get a little more. Oh, so hard it is for people to leave their own works; so hard it is to sit down and do nothing but enjoy what Christ has done. And yet this will be our heaven to all eternity, to:

"Sit on every heavenly hill,  
And spread the triumphs of our King?"

And the Lord said concerning the sabbath day, "You shall not leave your place." No, Lord, not for ten thousand worlds. Where is my place? In the perfection of Christ, in the completeness that is in Christ, in the victory that is in Christ, in the plenty that is in Christ, in the preservation that is in Christ, in the happiness that is in Christ, in the glory that is in Christ, in the blessing that is in Christ. Leave my place? Why, to leave my place is to leave Christ, to leave the perfection of his work, and leave the only place in which mercies are sure, and my soul can be preserved. Is it not remarkable that on the sixth day they had quite enough to keep them all the sabbath enjoying themselves at rest? That sabbath was only a few hours long; nevertheless, it typifies that sabbath that will never end,

"Where congregations never break up,

And Sabbaths never end.”

Ah, “light bread” indeed! Am I speaking to a poor besotted sinner now, thinking Christ too worthless to sacrifice anything for, or to seek after, calling the blessings of the everlasting covenant blindly and ignorantly mere fanaticism, mere fancy, something not worth seeking after? All I say is this, God open your blind eyes, turn you to yourself as he brought the prodigal to himself; and when you see what a lost sinner you are, then you will see these very things that you now despise are the only things that can pluck you as a brand from the burning, and bring you to heaven at last. Here is the need, then, the eating, and the conformity to order. Oh, says one, that is so easy; the completeness of Christ is just my hope; I do not see any difficulty in conforming to order; that is as easy as possible to me. And so, you think you are not right because it is so easy. Why, you silly thing, does not the Savior say his yoke is easy? and does not the Lord say, “This people have I formed for myself”? Then, if they are formed for him, it is easy; of course, it is, quite easy. Is it not written that he has predestinated his people to be conformed to the image of his dear Son? And so, you are afraid you are not right because it is so easy! It is not easy to the carnal mind, and it was not easy to you once; you did not know nor understand it. Jesus has released us from all bondage. Here, then, is conformity.

But not only must there be this sense of need, this eating, and conformity to order, but there must be continued satisfaction. Some that were pleased with the manna today became displeased tomorrow. The Lord preserve us from this. May we never be discontented with the gospel. Oh, may our satisfaction with it increase; may we still say that we are “satisfied with the goodness of your house, even of your holy temple;” and that we may never be dissatisfied with such a Jesus Christ as our Jesus Christ, with such a provision as the Lord has made; for he will satisfy the poor, not the rich, no, you cannot satisfy them, they are fanciful; but he will satisfy the poor with bread; “I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, says the Lord.” Let me have a little word of expostulation with yon here, all of you that are Christians; whenever you feel the least dissatisfaction arising in your mind with the gospel, or with Jesus Christ, or the provision the Lord has made, the Lord give you at the same time a spirit of prayer to deliver you from that dangerous foe; for if Satan can once get the wedge in, as it were, between your soul and God’s truth, his object is to sever you from God’s truth; he well knows if he can sever you from that he severs you from everything. God’s word is one with God himself; God is in the word, and the word is in God. May we never, therefore, live to see the day when we shall be dissatisfied with his blessed truth. To be dissatisfied with me, as many of you very often very much are, is only what I must expect; and to be dissatisfied with yourselves is all very proper, as much as you like; and to be dissatisfied with the world, and dissatisfied with everything short of God himself is all very proper; for the more the Lord makes us feel the emptiness of other things, the more he will make us prize the fulness that is in Christ Jesus the Lord.

We had three more things to notice, and I must just name them. How does the Savior handle this subject? In the 6th of John, he takes up this very subject “He that comes to me shall never hunger” or come to want, as we say, that is the idea. Ah then, all my needs shall be supplied according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. “And he that believes on me shall never thirst.” Then the people asked a question, and the Savior confirmed the fact “Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you.” Then I will try and answer the question which the people put, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” There is a fourfold answer to that. First,



by his sinlessness. Let us put the question in another shape, which will mean the same thing, How can we have eternal life and sustenance by this man? First, by his sinlessness, for he could not be life unto us, if there were any sin in him. He is the end of death; he is the spotless Lamb. Secondly, by the righteousness which he has brought in. He throws in his eternal righteousness and meets all the demands of law and justice. Being justified by faith, we therefore shall live, and not die; we have peace with God; we are reckoned friends and not foes.