

Spiritual Food

Once a person becomes a believer in Christ, they embark on a journey through life to the end goal – a place in the coming Kingdom of God. They have tasted the good word of God (Heb. 6:5) and seen that the Lord is both Gracious (1 Pet. 2:3), and Good (Psa 34:8). But there is a continual need to feed upon the spiritual sustenance that can only come from the Bible. Having been begotten by the Word (Jas. 1:18), they begin as spiritual children, and develop into adulthood as they mature in their understanding and appreciation of Divine Things. And the Word of God is able to assist them to do this, for it is written: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

In his temptations in the Wilderness, the Lord gave a rebuttal to each trial from the Word of God – which is itself a tremendous example for us to follow. But in considering the temptation to change stones into bread, he said: “... it is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Mat 4:4). In these words, we behold the vital need to continually partake of the Words that proceed out of the mouth of God in order to “live”. The converse is also true – if we do not eat from the Word that gives life (Jno. 6:63), we will spiritually die. Just as natural food is needed to sustain a mortal existence, even so spiritual food is needed to sustain the new man of the Spirit, in his growth into adulthood. To neglect such a feeding is to place ourselves into the position of being “ready to die” (Rev. 3:2), even if we have a Name, or reputation amongst men (Rev. 3:1) as being alive to the things of the Truth.

Job was a man who endured many trials, and is commended in Scripture for his example of patience (Jas. 5:11). But despite whatever faults he had, he nevertheless had a correct approach to the Word of God: “neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips: I have esteemed the words of his mouth **more than my necessary food**” (Job. 23:12). Here is the correct priority: to seek first the things concerning “the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness” above all other natural concerns (Mat. 6:33). Then “all these things” which we need for natural life shall “be added unto you”. It is only if we are “nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine” (2 Tim 4:6), that we will have the strength to overcome the trials of life.

THE BREAD OF LIFE

The Lord Jesus Christ declared: “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (Jno. 6:35). And again, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever” (vs 51). Natural bread gives life: whereas spiritual bread gives everlasting life! That being so, it is pointless to seek the bread that the world provides:

“Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently

unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live ..." (Isa. 55:1-3).

The Lord likewise comments:

"labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall **give** unto you ..." (Jno. 6:27).

Men naturally labour to obtain the very best of this world's goods – yet true riches cannot be purchased with money. The free gift of God is everlasting life (Rom. 6:23), and it can only be acquired by faith in the Promises he has made. The gift of God cannot be bought, it has to be given – and it will indeed be granted to those whom the Lord will choose.

It is necessary then, to avoid the junk food of worldliness, and partake of the nutritious Bread of Life. Indeed, this is the cry of Wisdom:

"... Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish and live; and go in the way of understanding" (Prov. 9:5-6).

The wise will hear, see and understand!

EATING THE WORD

Speaking of his fathers' rediscovery of the Word of God, Jeremiah said: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by thy name, O Yahweh God of hosts" (Jer. 15:16). The partaking of spiritual delights is source of joy for men of the spirit: "his delight is in the law of Yahweh; and in his law doth he meditate day and night ..." (Psa. 1:2). Again, the Psalmist spoke of this aspect:

"How **sweet are thy words** unto my taste! Yea, **sweeter than honey** to my mouth" (Psa. 119:103).

"... The statutes of Yahweh are right, rejoicing the heart ... the Judgments of Yahweh are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: **sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb**" (Psa. 19, see vs. 8-10).

It has truly been said, that "to read without reflecting is like eating without digesting". Meditation and reflection upon the Word is necessary to imbibe it's principles: without it we will be unable to assimilate them into our thinking.

But although meditating upon the word is a delightful and "sweet" thing, it has the effect of bitterness upon those who inwardly digest it. John experienced this:

"... and I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it

shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter ..." (Rev. 10:9-10, see also Eze. 2:9 – 3:14).

Brother John Thomas expounds this bitterness in his work "Eureka" thus:

"But when he came to digest it, that is, to consider the consequences of its consumption, 'his belly was made bitter.' It is sweet to a believer to know that 'the scripture cannot be broken;' but when he is made to understand that the breaking of the nations like a potter's vessel, and the pouring out of the unmixed wrath of God upon them, are among its indispensable purposes, the consideration of the terrible tribulation is bitter to his soul."

And again:

"It is a 'bitter' thing to the flesh to digest the word; for its assimilation stirs up the direct enmity of the world, and results in 'much tribulation,' and often in death."

The absorption of Divine concepts into the believers' mind results in bitter experiences as a consequence – both at the wrath of God upon the unbelieving, and the difficult tribulation which they experience as a result. It is in a similar vein that when the Passover Lamb was eaten, it was accompanied with bitter herbs (Exo. 12:8).

PROGRESSING IN UNDERSTANDING

It is written that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ..." (1 Cor. 2:14), hence there is a need for a transformation of his mindset: "be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2). This transformation is a process, which takes time to complete. Firstly, the student of the Word must come to understand and accept what the Apostle calls "first principles" (Heb. 5:12). This is, as it were, the milk of the word – suitable for growing infants. Hence Peter exhorts:

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Pet. 2:2-3).

But as the student becomes a believer, embracing and obeying the Gospel, he must mature onto solid food. In our New Testament reading for today, the Apostle rebukes the Hebrews for not progressing in this way:

"... for when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat (or, 'solid food'). For everyone that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat ('solid food') belongeth to them that are of full age, even

those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:12-14).

Again, to the Corinthians, Paul wrote:

“.. And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able” (1 Cor. 3:1-2).

Progression into maturity is a goal to be accomplished for those who would be saved. Sometimes it is thought that all that is needed is a basic understanding of First Principles – but in actual fact the assimilation of these is only the beginning. We must progress from simplicity to Wisdom (Psa. 19:7). Hence the cry of wisdom in the Proverbs:

“How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? And the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you” (Prov. 1:22-23).

And again, Proverbs chapter 9:

“Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith unto him, come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled ...” (Prov. 9:4-5).

To partake of the spiritual solid food of Wisdom is essential in order to progress from simplicity to understanding – to eat the bread and drink the wine thereof will strengthen us in order to endure the trials that a life in Christ will bring.

In the natural order of things, we would use a recipe book in order to prepare our daily food. But it is of no use to just read the recipes – we must also follow the instructions given, and do what is required to prepare and eat the food! Even so, we must ensure that the spiritual food we partake of is the purity of the Word with the nutritional value that only the Bread of Life can provide. Just reading the instructions alone is not enough – we must act upon what we read, to receive our daily bread.

The Lord Jesus Christ spoke of himself: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jno 6:53-54). We must feed upon the Bread of God’s appointing, the Manna provided to sustain us on our wilderness journey. Then, we will know good and evil (Heb. 5:14), and be able to choose the good and refuse the evil (cp. Isa. 7:16). We must mature in our understanding of God’s Ways, as saith the Apostle: “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men” (1 Cor. 14:20). Let us therefore feed upon the spiritual banquet that God has provided for us – and then will we mature and be strong enough to endure even unto the end.

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