

LIVING BY EVERY WORD OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.

"Man shall not live by bread alone; but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." – Matt. 4:4.

BREAD is a general name for food; for that which satisfies the cravings of hunger; for that which builds up and strengthens; for that which enables the continuance of life. It was appropriate, therefore, that the Lord should use bread as a symbol, or figure of that heavenly sustenance which God has arranged should now upbuild and strengthen his people, and eventually, by the first resurrection, impart to them life everlasting. Divine truth is represented as being such spiritual food; and our Lord himself, because in the divine plan he is the channel of the truth, – "the way, the truth, the life," – is spoken of as being also "the bread of life" for his people. We are to eat, or partake of the life-giving qualities which he freely gives us in himself, if we would reach the goal of our hope – eternal life.

Our text is our Lord's reply to the Tempter when he was in the wilderness fasting and hungry. The Tempter had suggested the use of the powers which Jesus had received a few days previous when, at his baptism in Jordan, he received the holy spirit, and with it the gifts and powers which subsequently enabled him not only to heal the sick, but to turn water into wine and to feed a multitude by increasing the two barley loaves and the two small fishes. The Adversary's proposition was that the Lord should use this power for the gratification of his own appetite. He said, "Command that these stones be made bread."

However pleased the Lord was to have these divine powers communicated through the holy spirit he had received, however glad he was, at appropriate times, to perform the miracles incidental to his ministry, he knew that the powers were not given him for any selfish use, for any self-gratification; and, therefore, he declined the

suggestion and his reply is our text. In passing, we note that there is a lesson here worthy of the attention of all God's people; that spiritual and divine things are not to be used in a mercenary or selfish manner. So far as they can discern matters, the Lord's people are to keep separate and distinct their own personal preferences, desires and appetites, from the heavenly and spiritual things; and not use the latter for the services of the flesh, however pure and good the fleshly desires may be.

Our Lord's words accept the suggestion that bread, food, necessary to human sustenance under present conditions; but they carry the thought further – they draw our attention to a higher life than the present one. The present life is not really life, but death: the world is under divine sentence of death; and only those who have come by faith into relationship with God have "passed from death unto life;" as our Master on another occasion said, "He that hath the Son hath life, he that hath not the Son shall not see life." And again he said to one who was thinking of becoming his servant, his follower – "Let the dead bury their dead, follow thou me."

From this standpoint we see that man cannot live by bread alone. He has the divine sentence against him, "dying thou shalt die"; and he can find no kind of bread, no kind of food, that will produce life in the full and complete sense of that word – that will swallow up death in life. He must look for another kind of "bread of life" than any earthly food; he must **[R3058 : page 246]** have another kind of "water of life" than any earthly drink. It is this heavenly food or supply to which our Lord refers; saying, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

But how is it possible for us to live by the words that proceed out of the mouth of God? What did Jesus mean? How can God's words give us life?

He meant that all hopes of eternal life depend upon God – upon the divine plan and its promises. Looking into these promises we can

see distinctly that the divine plan, dating from before the foundation of the world, is that all of God's creatures, created in his likeness and abiding in faith, love and obedience, in harmony with him, shall have life everlasting. This is God's general word upon the subject; namely, that obedience is the condition of life everlasting. This is, undoubtedly, what our Lord had in mind in using the words of our text: he may also have had the thought that he had come into the world upon a special mission, to do the Father's will, and that his understanding from the beginning was that his perfect obedience to the divine will would insure him glory, honor, immortality with the Father, eventually; but that any disobedience would mean the forfeiture of divine favor, and would involve the sentence of disobedience; namely, death.

Our Lord's prompt decision, therefore, was that to disobey the Father's will, and thus to secure bread for the sustenance of his body, would be a great mistake; that food thus secured could sustain life for but a little while; – that his better plan would be to trust in the Word of God, the divine *promise* that those who love and serve and obey him shall ultimately come off conquerors and more, and have eternal life with God. And this, our Master's conclusion, is full of instruction for us who are his disciples, seeking to walk in his footsteps. We are to learn the lesson that a man's life consists not in the abundance of things which he possesseth – food and raiment – but that his life in the fullest, grandest, highest sense, is dependent upon his complete submission to the divine will – his careful attention to every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

The words of God's mouth to us are not exactly the same as to our Lord Jesus and to the holy angels; – because we are by nature children of wrath even as others – sinners: we must, therefore, be addressed from a true standpoint to begin with. Thus it is that we hear the words of God's mouth in different languages at different times in our experiences.

(1) The first *word* of God's mouth to us is the message of justice – informing us that we are sinners, imperfect, helpless, as respects our own restoration to the divine image. This first *word* which proceedeth out of God's mouth to us is alarming; he declares us to be under a sentence or curse of death because of sin; – that "the soul that sinneth shall die"; that "the wages of sin is death." It tells us that by nature we are "children of wrath even as others," – strangers and foreigners, aliens from God and all his blessings, which are held in reservation for those who love him and obey him and maintain the perfection in which they were created. It is necessary that we should hear this voice; necessary that we should be alarmed and feel fearful of the penalty of death; and necessary that we feel lonely and discouraged in our separation from God and our alienation from his gracious provisions for those who love him and whom he loves. This fear and dejection are necessary in a [R3059 : page 246] general way to prepare us for the next word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God; namely,

THE WORD OF GOD'S PITY AND AID.

(2) The message that God, while manifesting his absolute justice and the immutable integrity of his first word and sentence, is, nevertheless, kindly disposed toward us – that he pities us in our fallen condition. This *word* is not to the effect that divine pity will admit us as sinners into divine favor, present and future; but that divine pity contemplated in advance a ransom-price which, meeting the claims of divine justice, would permit of man's recovery from his condition of sin and death, – back to a condition of holiness and life everlasting – as though he had never sinned, had never been sentenced. This *word* which proceeded out of the mouth of God, prophesying a blessing and opportunity for recovery to as many as will accept, was first a voice to Abraham saying, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." As this hope begins to dawn in the heart of the penitent one, seeking life-eternal at the fountain of grace and truth, the ears of his understanding listen intently for other words of life from his Creator and he hears (Acts 10:36),

THE VOICE OF GOD "SPEAKING PEACE BY JESUS CHRIST."

(3) The message of *peace* is that God has already provided the ransom price for sinners; – that Jesus Christ by the grace of God tasted death for every man"; that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and rose again for our justification." This *word* from God's mouth informs us that through this transaction, which is entirely his own without our instigation or aid, "He may be just and yet the justifier of those who believe in Jesus." (Rom. 3:26.) Oh, what joy, what hope of life comes into our hearts as we hear this *word* which proceeded out of the mouth of God! We exclaim with the Apostle, "If God be for us who can be against us?" If God so loved us while we were yet sinners, much more does he love us since we are seeking him, desirous of returning to fellowship with him, and since we accept the provision of his grace in Christ Jesus our Lord. Thus to all who accept the atonement which is in Christ Jesus, through his blood, God indeed speaks words of grace and peace – forgiveness, reconciliation, mercy, love, kindness.

GOD'S WORD TO RECLAIMED SONS.

(4) Another *word* or message proceeds from the mouth of God, to such as have heard of his grace in Christ and have accepted it. He calls them children – not now "children of wrath," not now "children of the Evil One," but he addresses them as reclaimed children, as his own, as those to whom he is pleased to give his blessings upon certain conditions which **[R3059 : page 247]** he specifies; saying, "My son, give me thine heart." This call for the heart is a call for full consecration, for complete setting apart to the Lord and to his service. Our will is the center of our intelligence, our being; if the heart, the will, be given to God, it carries with it the title to every action, word and thought. It is such only as delight to respond to this Word or message from the mouth of God that he is pleased to own in the special

sense of sonship which pertains to this Gospel age – sonship in the house of sons, of which Christ Jesus, our Lord, is the Head.


"THE WORD OF PROMISE."

(5) In our ignorance of the greatness of our Heavenly Father and the richness of his grace toward us in Christ Jesus our Lord, we might fail to appreciate the necessity or desirability of a full consecration of our hearts to him. In our ignorance we might prefer to say, "*Some of self and some of thee.*" Knowing this, God, in his compassion, has been pleased to set before us certain features of his plan, and hence we hear his voice again in the "exceeding great and precious promises" of his Word. In these he points out to us the wisdom of a full consecration and complete obedience to him – assuring us in these promises that by obedience to them we may become partakers of the greatest of all blessings, – the divine nature. (2 Pet. 1:4.) Oh, how wonderful that the great Creator should condescend not only to redeem sinners but to urge, to entice them to receive his bounties and blessings! From the time the consecration begins a measure of the holy spirit is granted, that the consecrated one may, by application – by hungering and thirsting for the words which proceed out of the mouth of God, and by feeding upon them, – be enabled to "Comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." (Eph. 3:18,19.) Ah, yes! those who have heard and have fed upon "the words which proceed out of the mouth of God" thus far, find indeed a new life begun, a new vitality, a new energy, – new hopes, new aims, new ambitions, "old things are passed away," everything is tinged with the glories of the heavenly things which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive" – the things which God hath in reservation for them that love him; – an understanding and appreciation of which God, in some measure, gives to such by his spirit, which "searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

FEEDING ON THE WORD OF ADMONITION.

(6) Harkening further for the words which proceed from the mouth of God – "Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life" – we hear a *word* of admonition. The Father instructs us, that the glorious things to which he now calls us cannot possibly be ours unless our consecration to him and submission to the influences of his providences and promises shall change, transform, renew our minds; – so that the things once loved we will hate, and the things once hated we will love. As a father spareth not the rod of chastisement from the son whom he loves, so the Lord will not spare the rod of affliction and chastisement from those who are truly his; because he loves them, and because he desires to develop in them such a character as will be pleasing to him, and as will permit him eventually to make them his sons on the plane of glory, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, their Lord.

This *word* respecting the necessity of chastisement and our correction in righteousness, that we may become conformed to the image of God's dear Son (Rom. 8:29), is accompanied with assurances of love from the Father – assurances that "Like as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that reverence him." He says to us also, through another apostle, "Faint not when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." He explains that such discipline is not prompted by anger towards us, but by his love, and if we are rightly exercised by the disciplines, trials, experiences of life, they will "work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;"* – they will work out in us such characters as the Lord will be able to use in the service to which he hath called us – the service of the Millennial age – the service of the royal priesthood, to be associated with Christ in the work of judging and blessing the world of mankind. The proper response of all who have the true spirit of sonship is expressed in the language of our Lord and Master, "Not my will but thine be done,"* O Lord; "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my

heart."  Such as thus respond to the chastisement of the Lord, step more and more into divine favor, and hear other words of comfort, of grace, of help.

"YE HAVE NEED OF PATIENCE."

(7) God's Word or message of patience is, "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (Jas. 1:4.) How necessary to our perfection is this divine counsel – this Word which proceeds from the mouth of God! We might imagine that we had received sufficient testing and proving to indicate our loyalty to the Lord, to the principles of righteousness, long before we had been sufficiently proved according to the Lord's standards in the testing of character. He therefore graciously explains to us how necessary patience will be, that we should not think it strange concerning the fiery trials which must test us, as though some strange thing had happened unto us. (I Pet. 4:12.) On the contrary he points out to us as we grow in grace and in knowledge and in ability to comprehend – that the glory, honor and immortality to which he has invited the Church of this Gospel age, is so high, so grand a position, that those who would share those honors must expect, necessarily, to be severely tried and tested that their absolute loyalty to the Lord and to the principles of his righteousness – justice, truth, love – shall be beyond question. Our characters must become crystalized along these lines, firm as adamant, before we shall be ready to be received as the "overcomers" who shall inherit all things, and share the kingdom and glory with the Captain of our salvation. He points out to us, further, **[R3059 : page 248]** that if it was necessary for the Captain of our salvation to be tempted and tried, tested and proved, much more reasonable is it that we who were children of wrath, and justified only through his grace, should be thoroughly proven as respects our loyalty.

WORDS OF CONSOLATION FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.

(8) We might well be exercised with the strictness of the divine requirements as respects this overcoming class, and might say to

ourselves, Others may attain to such glories and blessings; but we are too weak in the flesh through the fall and cannot hope to come off victors – cannot hope to stand the trials and tests which the Lord would impose. And here the Lord speaks again, a gracious **word** of comfort, consolation and encouragement, informing us that the perfection he is expecting is not a perfection in the flesh and of the flesh which is weak and imperfect, [R3060 : page 248] but a perfection of the heart, of the will, of the mind, of the intention. He informs us that he is not judging us as human beings according to the flesh, but as new creatures according to the mind, the new will. He informs us that although he will expect the new mind to do its very best in the matter of controlling the flesh and bringing it into subjection, yet, nevertheless, he knows that the flesh being imperfect, perfection according to the flesh is an impossibility to any of the fallen race: and that, therefore, his arrangement through Christ under the New Covenant is, that the imperfections of the flesh which are not assented to by our wills are not counted as ours. They are covered by the merit of Christ's sacrifice, and are ignored in the Heavenly Father's reckoning with us. He assures us that we are to be judged according to the spirit (will, intent) and not according to the flesh.

What comfort and consolation are in these assurances! These are wonderful words of life, indeed! They inspire us with hope. If God will accept perfect heart-intentions, as instead of the absolute perfection of the flesh, – then indeed we have hope of attaining to the standard which he has marked for us, – the standard of perfection. We can be perfect in intention, in will, or, as the Master expresses it, "pure in heart", even though we cannot be perfect in the flesh. We hear through the Apostle the **word** proceeding out of the mouth of God to this effect, "The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not *after* the flesh but *after* the spirit." (Rom. 8:4.) We can walk after the spirit, though, so far as our mortal bodies are concerned, we cannot walk up to the spirit's requirements. Our minds can walk up to the spirit, our intentions can be perfect; and this is what our Heavenly Father seeks in us, perfection of intention.

THE WORD OF RESURRECTION.

(9) A further *word* from the mouth of God assures us that he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust – under sentence of death, "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return" – weak, imperfect, dying; and that it is not his purpose that we shall always be in conflict with ourselves – perfect will against imperfect body, – that he has provided that in the resurrection we shall have new, perfect bodies in full accord with our new minds. He assures us that he is able and willing to do all this, and that he proposes to give to his "elect" bodies of a still higher order than the human – that he will give us spiritual bodies. They shall have a part in the first resurrection, and thenceforth be able to do the Father's will perfectly in every respect – as they now show themselves desirous of doing his will so far as they are able. Oh, gracious provisions! O wonderful words of compassion, inspiring us to wonderful hopes of eternal life and glory! It will be to such as thus overcome in spirit, in faith (I John 5:4), that the Lord will give the final *word* of his mouth – "Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord."

Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God – every admonition, every encouragement, every promise, is necessary to the development of those whom God is now calling to eternal life as joint-heirs with his Son in the Kingdom. The eating of natural food could not bring this life-eternal, nor its attendant glories; but the eating and appropriating of these words from the mouth of God can bring to us all these blessings which we crave. Let us then, more and more, as the disciples, pupils, of the Lord Jesus, keep in memory and act upon the suggestion of the words of this text, "Man shall not live by bread alone: but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

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