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THE LIVING BREAD.

BY CHARLES CULLIS, M.D.

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. — ISAIAH lv, 10, 11.

God's Word, from beginning to end, is full of pictures; pictures that excite the imagination and put it to its use; pictures that are brought before us in such a clear and forcible manner that the mind can never forget them. God's Word to us is always simple and yet always full of imagery — as fresh to us as the sweet measures of any poet.

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We know how the rain cometh down from heaven — we can see it; and how the sun sheds its beams upon the earth. So heaven gives us pictures through its emblems; and God to-day makes real to us his Word in the illustration and type of the rain and sun coming down and causing the earth to bear fruit. Man's heart is like the earth. Before the sunshine of God's love comes into it, it is barren and withered and parched, and bears nothing but the briar; the rain of God's love comes into it and makes it blossom and bring forth the rose and fir-tree and myrtle.

We have, then, the type of God's wondrous love in the rain as it comes upon the earth: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, . . . so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth." Rain comes in summer — yes, and at all seasons — and represents to us God's Word coming at all seasons, in the winter of life

as well as in the summer of man's prosperity and joy; at the time when troubles and trials and difficulties sweep over man's heart, as well as in his time of ease and comfort.

Then the Word comes as the snow in winter, to cover the earth and protect it from the inclemency of the season. By-and-by the sun's warm rays come upon the earth, and again it rains glad streams and again the earth brings forth fruit. So in the winter of man's trial and despair, when the enemy says: "Where is now thy God?" he is covered with the triumph of God's Word, and the sun of God's Word comes into his heart, and the precious promises open and brighten to him more and more.

I want you to notice that in this whole chapter it is the gospel invitation clearly. In the Old Testament, as well as in the New, the Jews were in captivity to the Assyrians, and the prophet pleads with them in God's name to be reconciled to God, to give

themselves to him unreservedly, and he would make a covenant with them. He says to them in the second and third verses: "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken 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, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

This was God's promise to his ancient people. And then David's psalms are full of the mercies of God. They stand out as clearly and distinctly as the blossoms in springtime covering the earth; as clearly as the stars in the firmament at night. All through the songs of David, and all through God's Word, the gospel is distinctly taught from cover to cover. We have always the type of the three — God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

In the eighth and ninth verses you will find: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Then the Son of God is represented as the rain coming down; for the Son of God came down from heaven and manifested himself to the world and gave himself, that whosoever believed on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Out of God's heart of love came the Son. The second person in the Trinity came down from heaven to us poor sinners, who needed to be saved by the precious blood of Jesus.

In the closing verses of this chapter we have the type of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God, who, as he brings the Word down out of heaven, says: "For ye shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace," referring to the captivity of souls in Satan's grasp and power. And every soul to-day who

has been born again, and come out into the principle of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, has come out with joy. It is a joy unspeakable and full of glory! It is a joy you cannot express, for you cannot put it into words! It is higher than the heavens, for it reaches to the very throne of God itself—a joy that flows down, a rivulet, and then a grand river as it enters the ocean of God's love!

You could no more express it than you can tell why the sun gives heat and warmth and light upon the soil and makes it bring forth fruit, or what keeps the stars in place, except that God does it all. He puts the joy of the Holy Ghost into man's heart, and he puts the stars in their places. It is his power from beginning to end.

You notice it says here: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, . . . so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth." The Word of God cometh out of his mouth to us,

and the utterance of the mouth is breathed in the Bible. The Holy Ghost is mentioned as the breath of God, when he breathed upon the waters and breathed upon his disciple. "The wind bloweth where it listeth. Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell from whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth." It is the breath of the living God.

So this Word that has come down to us out of heaven is the Word of God out of his mouth. And the only reason this Word has had power over men's hearts is because it is the Word of Life, the breath of the living God, spoken by God himself. We have many illustrations proving this Word to be the Word of power and of the living God.

There is a man who goes up and down this country gathering his thousands of dollars in city after city by blaspheming God's Word. It is not a question of what he believes, or of doing good or evil; it is money-mak-

ing. That man one day said to a friend of his, General Wallace:—

“General, if you do not believe the Bible is a book of falsities from beginning to end, read it; and you will find it out.”

General Wallace was an unbeliever himself, and he said: “I will read it.”

He read it and found it to be the living Word of the living God to his soul. He has written the book which many of you have read,—“Ben Hur,”—giving the gospel all through that story. Thus the wrath of man shall praise God.

Years ago, when a missionary in Japan wished to translate the gospels into the Japanese language, he sent for two educated men to help him, and they sat down with him day after day and week after week, translating the Gospels into their own language. By-and-by they came to the closing words in Revelation, the closing of the whole book from cover to cover: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you

all. Amen.” The missionary began to gather up his manuscripts, and said:—

“It is all done; it is finished.”

The men sat there a while, and, thinking perhaps they did not understand, he told them again: “The translation is completed.”

“Well,” said one of them, “we cannot leave this table till we tell you that through reading this Word, and helping you in this translation, we have found the Word to be true. Your God is our God. Your Jesus is our Saviour.”

It is not the written letter, but the breath of God in this Word that comes out of the mouth of God. You cannot speak it to others, that the power of God shall not accompany it. You will not tell the story of the cross, when it is overflowing in your heart as a living Word to other souls, but this power of the living God will go with it. It will bring its results. As the rain causeth the seed to grow in the soil, so shall the seed which you sow bring forth fruit.

Jesus says: "I am the bread of life. He that eateth of this bread shall never hunger." So, beloved, when you talk about this Word to other souls, or read about it, or live for it, you are putting seed into the ground that will bring forth bread for the sower. Yes, the bread will return unto your own heart a hundredfold more in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting. Man's life is, until the Spirit of God comes upon it, as I have said, a wilderness life, dry and parched and withered, bearing nothing but the thorn and briar — an unsightly growth which it is no comfort to look at or touch.

But when the rain and sun have descended, and the seed has been sown in the heart and in the ground, then it brings forth bread for the sower; and if you eat of it, you will never hunger again or thirst any more, for you will go out with joy and be led forth with peace. Yes; the moment a soul gives himself to the Lord Jesus to

be saved, that moment he becomes filled with joy, and the Lord leads him in the paths of righteousness. The joy may come in, amounting to an ecstasy, but it will settle down into such solid peace! You are led by green pastures and still waters, no more to wander alone. Such blessed results follow his leading, you wonder you have not seen these things before and wonder what makes the Word of God so beautiful.

There was never yet a soul converted to God to whom everything did not look changed — all nature and human faces. Some one asked a Scotch girl, who was converted under Whitefield's teachings, "How do you know you are converted?"

"Well, I don't know; but everything looks so different; the trees even have such a different aspect. Whether the change is in my own heart or everything else, I do not know; but there is a change."

Yes; it is the change which comes

when the Spirit of God moves upon the troubled waters of your heart and the blood of Jesus cleanses the heart and makes it his own dwelling-place. Then there is that joy, and the Lord takes you to lead you in paths of righteousness and peace. The Shepherd goeth before his sheep and calleth them by name and never leaves them alone. Our Lord never leaves us. "Lo, I am with you alway." "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." There is no people on the face of the earth that has such glorious privileges, such a wondrous power, as the people of God. His chariots cover the mountains; his angels hover about us; but better than all, he who created all things, from an angel to the smallest insect, he himself walks by our side, and no evil shall befall us. He himself takes charge of us and becomes to us the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

So then, upon the dry, parched ground of our hearts and minds before

we are converted to God, the Word comes as the gentle rain. No artificial power can produce the effect that rain does. You may pour water down the mountain-side that will irrigate the land, but it does not moisten the atmosphere like rain. So the hard and parched heart becomes, under the dew of God's grace, the blossoming field, and no more brings forth thorns and briars. God says there shall spring up the fir-tree and the myrtle-tree, — green all the year round, — reminding us of his covenant of peace, and bearing all manner of fruits for the healing of the nations.

He who sent the rain and the sun has sent his Word to our hearts, and it shall not return unto him void. I want you to notice that the rain never yet descended upon the earth that it did not bring forth fruit unto God. And the Word of God has never yet descended upon any heart that it has not accomplished what God said it should.

Nations have been buried and restored; despots have arisen, had their day, and passed away. The earth itself has been flooded, cast away, and rejected almost. Men's hearts change everywhere. But the Word of God can never change. He who gave his life for you is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. That covenant is like the covenant of the sure mercies of David, that can never be broken. And while friends change, and you change, and associations change, and nations come up and disappear, God never changes. The promises stand out as clear as when they were penned by the pen of the Holy Ghost. The Word stands just as clear to-day as when he himself, in the person of the Lord Jesus, walked the earth and healed the lame, restored the eyes of the blind, and unstopped the ears of the deaf, and commanded the dead to walk.

He left with us that covenant that his Word should not return unto him

void. Oh, blessed Spirit of God that has moved upon the waters of our hearts and breathed peace! Praise to the Spirit of God who has made this Word true to us, so that we never speak it, or write it, or give it in tract or Testament or Bible, and have it return unto him void! It is seed put into the ground; you see it not, perhaps; but when the seasons have ended and the time has come, and the power of the rain and sunshine of the Sun of Righteousness has reached that seed, you find it blossoming on the other shore, waiting to wait its perfume into your heart and life when you walk the golden streets.

Praise him, then, that the Spirit of God moves upon the face of the waters; that instead of thorns and briars springing up in your heart, there is to be the fir-tree and the myrtle-tree bearing fruit unto everlasting life. You have been led into the joy of the Lord, and he offers from this minute to lead you into the peace of God

that passeth all understanding. You need not walk alone for a moment; you need not wander on in despair and turmoil and trouble, for the very God of peace shall come and shine upon you as the rays of the morning sun.

You may ask: "How can these things be? Oh, that I might take hold of them!" I know of no better way than the way laid down in God's Word, the invitation of the prophet to the Jews that they should no more buy wine but come unto him and have wine without money and without price. Everything inside the Bible is God's gift to people everywhere. If you be a sinner, you have only to bow before him and say: "God be merciful to me a sinner!" If you be in doubt or trouble in your soul, you have only to bow before him, and he will say: "My peace I give unto you."

The Word of the living God comes down from heaven, falling as the dew upon the grass, or the vapor that rests

in a shower of sweetness on the morning flowers; gentle as the breath of heaven that wafts itself into your very life, saying, "My joy shall remain with you, and your joy shall be full."

Oh, that we may surrender ourselves to him! that we may know that the blood of Jesus cleanses us and the power of Jesus is to keep us! "As the rain and snow cometh down from heaven . . . so shall my word be that proceedeth out of my mouth." The Word is a living Word; eat it for yourself; feed upon it. By-and-by we shall praise him that he ever gave to us his living Word and that his Son came down and said to us: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me."