

## "Bread From Heaven For You"

Exodus 16:1-15, Easter Sunday III

May 3, 2009

Beloved of the Lord..... There are not many people who like to take tests. Most of us, when we were young, loathed the thought of test day, or those dreadful final exams in college. Usually when we graduate from high school or college we are all to happy to be done with that period in our life, where we had to take tests.

But in God's kingdom, is that ever really the case that we no longer have any tests to take? Isn't it true that God Himself tests His children whom He loves, for the purpose of purifying and strengthening our faith? In our lesson today God said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you.....that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no." When God proves, He tests our faith. He tries us, yea He probes the very depths of our soul to see whether we will faithful to Him.....will we keep His commandments? When God proves us, when He tests our faith by taking away our earthly goods, what He is really doing is this: for our own good He is to breaking our trust and confidence in earthly treasures which cannot save, that we might be rich toward God. By His grace we pass the test, we overcome the trial, when our hearts turn once again to the Lord and we cry out "Abba Father". While it is always sinful to murmur and complain about what we do not have, it pleases our heavenly Father when we turn to Him in faith and prayer, when we fear, love, and trust in God above all things. In the midst of our sufferings and trials then dear Christian let us rejoice that the Lord has rained down upon us heavenly manna, Jesus is the Living Bread which came down from heaven for you.

I. Heavenly discipline for our heavenly good. It wasn't long after the bitter waters of Marah were made sweet, that the Lord tested His people again. In the Wilderness of Sin along the eastern shore of the Gulf of Suez, the people began to be in want. It was not that they didn't have their daily bread, but only that supplies were running low. "The children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness." O that we had the flesh pots of Egypt! O that we had enough bread that our bellies might be full! Their complaint was not really against Moses or Aaron, but against God. Such is the fickle nature of man. God gives us each day our daily bread, but the first day we are in want, we question God's mercy. Job said, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

It goes without saying we can relate to the complaint of the Israelites. There is much corruption in our government today which causes many to suffer. Our economy is in distress, unemployment is high, and many hardworking people cannot find work. There is also this

swine flu and many are worried. Naturally when such things happen we first remember such is the consequence of sin. Every loss, every tragedy in the world is the fruit of not only Adam and Eve's sin, but also our own. While there will always be within us that persistent and stubborn old man who will blame all his problems on God, we know well from God's Word a corrupt tree bringeth forth corrupt fruit. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is everlasting life." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

The Lord tests and tries our faith only to keep and preserve us in the true faith. Rest assured, all who trust in Him will be tried, and "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." For our own good then, our heavenly Father may test our faith with the loss of a job, loss of income, loss of spouse, loss of child, loss of position or title, loss of health, loss of food or money to buy food. While there are those who have little because they don't want to work, others have little only because God is testing their faith. God knows that when it comes to our temporal goods like food, clothing, house and home, our heart tends to trust and find security in these things. Remember the parable Jesus spoke about the farmer who was going to tear down his barns and build one great big storehouse for all his goods. In his heart the farmer said, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Lk. 12:21 You can't take it with you. There are no hearses with luggage racks. Heaven cannot be bought with gold or silver "but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

You see, our heavenly Father does not want us to lose our own salvation. He doesn't want us to be "fair weather Christians" who fall from grace when the going gets tough. Thus regarding temptation, God is seeking to grow our faith but the devil is seeking to destroy it. While God indeed tempts no one to sin, the devil always tempts one to sin. While the devil promises us the sweetness of sin and all its pleasures, in the end those sweet sins become bitter, a snare to our immortal soul. God however tempts us only in the sense that He tests our faith for the purpose of purifying and strengthening it. When we resist the sin and overcome by faith, our reliance in His mercies is only stronger. Thus when we suffer loss or even great tragedy we must always remember He never gives us more than we can bear and "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Does it really matter if we lose all temporal possessions when "I'm but a stranger here, heaven is my home." When we suffer temporal loss then of any kind, we should actually be very thankful in our hearts to God.

Instead of murmuring we should instead sigh and say, "This is a sign of His grace and love, He is again directing my thoughts and affections heavenward to the things above." Jesus does not desire we be as the farmer whose heart trusted in his possessions, but He desires we be "rich toward God". Our true riches on earth are to be found in the very body of Christ, in His very blood, "given and shed for you for the remission of sins." Where there is forgiveness of sins there is also life and salvation.

When the test is over and we persevere by faith, there is spiritual growth and our hearts long more perfectly for heaven. Thus if you wish to pass this test God has given you, you must let go and let God. "We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things." Where there is trust in God, faith responds and the new man within says, "the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." You will find dear Christian, that when you trust in God's mercy and grace, you will pass your test with flying colors. "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us."

II. Those who hunger eat this heavenly Bread. We should indeed trust in Him because Jesus is the Bread of Life. In John six Jesus said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Bread and life go hand in hand. Bread is the life of our body. Without bread we die and cannot live. We should also note that bread is a universal food, found throughout all parts of this world, in every nation and culture. Bread is also the term Jesus used to describe His purpose, His reason for coming. Jesus said, "I am that Bread of Life.....I am the living Bread which came down from heaven" and the bread He gives is "for the life of the world." Jesus is the living Bread because He gave His living body into the death of the cross for the sins of the world. He is the Bread of Life because He gives everlasting LIFE to the world! Thus in the name of Christ, the Bread of Life alone, there is the teaching of universal grace, universal forgiveness, even universal reconciliation for the whole and entire world.....ALL men, ALL women, ALL children! He is the Living Bread "which came down from heaven" FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD. In the gift of God's Son, our Heavenly Father reached down His mighty hands from heaven, and placed in that manger the Bread of Life. Isn't this Bread of Life food for your weary soul?

What is remarkable in our text today, is that even though the Israelites again and again failed their tests in the wilderness, God overlooked their weakness and instead fed them a living bread called manna. "They looked toward the wilderness and behold the glory of the

Lord appeared in the cloud." The cloud probably shined in a brilliant white light, for Christ, the Living Bread from heaven, was the glory thereof! From this cloud the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, promising to fill His hungry people with heavenly food. That evening, "the quails came up and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host." When the dew evaporated there was manna, a little white and light bread, "the taste of it was like wafers made with honey."

"Take and eat, this is My body given for you". "Take drink, this is my blood." In the very same chapter where Christ reveals Himself to be the Bread of Life, our Lord Jesus also says, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." Do you see dear Christian how even the manna from heaven is symbolic of the sweet wafer, the sweet bread in Holy Communion? Do you see how His flesh is meat indeed and even His blood tastes sweet? Do you how God prepares before you a table in this wilderness, so that along with the bread and wine there is His sweet body and blood? Do you see how important it is to Him, that all His adopted children have the constant assurance that through this Bread of Life, all sins are forgiven? Do you see what it means to eat His body?.....to drink His blood?....Is this not faith? Those who hunger to be forgiven are happy to eat this heavenly Bread.

Imagine the joy of the Israelites as they scrambled all over the place laying hold of this bread from heaven above! Who would be so foolish as to grow tired of this heavenly manna, this heavenly gift, His body, His blood? The members of our congregation who partake of Holy Communion are not forgiven because we go through the motions, or because we confess our sins, or because we are sorry, or because we eat the bread and drink the cup. We are forgiven because the Living Bread came down from heaven, and He gave His life a ransom for many, and He rose again the third day for our justification. We commune only with believing hearts, because He Himself through the Gospel has convinced us beyond all doubt, that He has placed His real body and blood in this Sacrament, therein sealing unto us the sweetness of His forgiveness. Here then weary traveler, you will find all the strength you need to pass the many tests in life God gives you. It is here that you should eat and drink and be merry! Eat the Bread of Life, drink the sweetness of the cup, and may your soul be fully satisfied with the riches of His forgiveness. "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give you." Amen.

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