

THE SOUL'S BEST FOOD.

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*“Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”
— Isaiah 55:2.*

ALL life here below needs to be sustained from without by food of some kind or other. We know not how the angels live; yet the psalmist's expression, “Man did eat angels' food,” might lead us to imagine that even they need to be supplied with nourishment from without; but, certainly, all earthly life requires appropriate nutriment. The physical life of man cannot be sustained unless he has bread to eat. His mental life, too, though that is often forgotten, cannot be in a healthy condition without an adequate supply of understanding and knowledge. The poor creatures, which have been immured in prison cells, year after year, with nothing to read or to think upon, have come forth to liberty as imbeciles; quite unfit to go into society, because the mind has pined in starvation. You must feed the mental, as well as the physical man, if it is to be in a right and healthy state.

And this is pre-eminently true of the spiritual nature, which God has implanted within his people at the time of their regeneration. That higher nature must be nourished; God has been pleased to give us an ordinance on purpose to remind us of this great fact. Baptism is the symbol of the entrance upon the new life by passing through death in the type of the Savior's tomb: “buried with him by baptism into death.” And then, when that life is once obtained, there follows the sacred feast of the Lord's

supper, wherein, under the emblems of the bread and the wine, we are taught that Jesus Christ must be, in a spiritual sense, both meat and drink to our souls. We derive our life from him, and he must sustain it. We receive spiritual life by hearing concerning him; and that life is to be sustained by our still hearing the truth concerning him. Our spiritual life must have spiritual food; it cannot possibly do without it. The great mercy is that, according to our text, there is abundant provision for sustaining the life of our souls. The Lord would not have said to us, "Hearken diligently unto me," if he had not had something good to say to us. He would not have said, "Eat ye that which is good," in such a connection as this, if he had not provided it; nor would he have said, "Let your soul delight itself in fatness," if that "fatness" had not been already prepared by the great Host of the gospel feast. So we are taught two things, on the very threshold of our subject; — first, that our soul must be fed; and, next, that God has provided the best food for our soul.

When God creates the beasts of the field, "he causeth the grass to grow for the cattle." He does not make a single bird without providing the seeds or the insects upon which that bird shall live. There is not a tiny minnow in the brook but has its own special provision; while the great leviathan, that "maketh the deep to boil like a pot," through his terrific and powerful plungings, has all that he needs to feed his vast bulk, for God simply opens his hand, and so satisfies the desire of every living thing. As this is so manifestly the case, it would not be conceivable that he should make spiritual life, which is the nearest akin to his own, in that it is the life of God in man, and yet not provide that it should continue to exist, expand, develop, and become perfected. So, while the truth of our necessity can never be shaken off from our consciousness, the other great truth of the divine provision, which is the counterpart of it, must never be forgotten by us.

To stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, I am going to speak about the soul's best food; and, first, let us note the reason for the exhortation of our text; then, secondly, let us note the benefits which will flow from our obedience to that exhortation.

I. First, then, LET US NOTE THE REASON FOR THE EXHORTATION IN OUR TEXT: "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

The first reason which I shall mention is, the exceeding bountifulness of God in Christ Jesus. The invitation here given is in accordance with the character of the God who gives it. He is no niggard; he never stints his guests, or keeps his children upon low diet. He is so good that he delights to give to them of his goodness, and to give of it freely. As it is of the very essence of the sun that it should not only be bright, but that it should scatter its beams far and wide, so is it of the very essence of God that he should not only be goodness intrinsically, but that he should generously bestow his goodness upon us. He delights to give out of his fullness; and, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, that fullness is stored up on purpose that there might be human receivers of it. Blessed be his holy name, “of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.” The invitation in our text seems to me to come so naturally from the very nature of our covenant God. He delights not in starving his creatures, nor in seeing them pining in want; but he rejoices in their being filled to the utmost fullness of satisfaction; and therefore he says to us, “Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

This invitation, too, seems to me to come naturally from God when we remember the abundant provision that he has made for the supply of our needs. If any of you prepared a feast, it would be very grievous to you if your friends did not eat what you had provided. What host or hostess, with a bountiful heart, and a liberal hand, ever felt pleased to see the viands remaining upon the table untouched? It is an insult to us if we have taken care to provide fit provision for our guests, and then that dish after dish should be brought in, and carried back again, nobody caring to taste; and the great Lord of all has, in the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ, made such plentiful provision for our needs that he cannot bear the idea that it should be left neglected, and that none should partake of it. So he says, “Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” It is the very heart of God speaking in these words, and it is the provision of God’s grace claiming to be consumed — God’s love pleading that what he has provided so bountifully should not be lost or wasted. Blessed be his name, it cannot be.

It seems to me also to be an expression of the divine desire for fellowship; for, almost always, when fellowship is spoken of in relation to God, expressions which concern eating are used. Fellowship begins, as it were, at the passover, at the eating of the lamb. In the tabernacle in the wilderness, the offerings were not all burnt upon the altar; many of them

were partaken of by both the offerer and the priest, and by God as represented by the devouring flame. Fellowship was thus established in eating and drinking; and so, when Jesus instituted that blessed memorial supper, he said to his disciples, concerning the bread, "Take, eat;" and, concerning the cup, "Drink ye all of it." When, in the Revelation, he said to the angel of the church in Laodicea, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock," you know how he goes on to say, "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." This appears to be God's favorite image to express fellowship. So, when I read, "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness," I understand our great Father in heaven to mean, "Come, my children, come into close communion with me, come and eat with me." I also understand the blessed Son of God to be saying to us, "Come, my brethren, and let our hearts be linked together in choicest fellowship, and let us feast together." I understand the Holy Ghost, too, as here saying, "Enter into the secret chamber of communion, shut to the door, and let your fellowship be with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." That seems to me to be the drift of the expression, "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." So, you see, the exhortation is given to us for these reasons, — it comes from the bountiful heart of God, and is congruous with the provision made for us by him and with the inward desire for fellowship which the great Father ever feels towards his children.

A further reason for the exhortation is found in our exceeding great necessities. You must eat, so "eat ye that which is good." Your soul needs the best food, so "let your soul delight itself in fatness," in the fat and dainty morsels which the great God, who understands us even better than we understand ourselves, has so bountifully provided for us. He sees the present and the future necessities of his children, and he knows that the main supply for those necessities must come through their inward partaking of the abundant provision made for them in his everlasting covenant. Yes, brethren and sisters, we must eat, or else hunger of soul will come upon us, and we shall have a gnawing at the heart which will be insatiable. There will be the daughters of the horseleech within us crying, "Give, give;" and they will make their voice to be heard, and their craving will become more and more intolerable. A true believer, when he loses the company of his Lord, seems to have in his soul a wolf that is hungry to the last degree, and that howls and cries after its food. Yes, beloved, you must

have spiritual food to satisfy your soul's hunger; nay, I may go further than that, and say that you will pine away unless your spiritual nature receives suitable nutriment. Want of food is the cause and the nurse of many diseases. When the constitution is not sustained by proper nourishment, the famished flesh becomes fit soil for disease to grow upon. And we, beloved, shall soon be filled with all manner of inward doubts and fears, if we do not fall into outward sin. Unless our spiritual constitution is kept strong, and our inner man is built up with spiritual meat, we shall become like Pharaoh's lean kine; and who among us wishes to be in that condition? When the body is kept without food for a long time, it is liable to faint and swoon. Many a man has fallen into unconsciousness, upon the very threshold of black death, simply for lack of bread; and, in like manner, and for a similar reason, the child of God may get spiritually into a state of coma, in which he will be insensible, indifferent, incapable. Prayer, even in its simplest form, and all spiritual exercises, may become almost impossible to his fainting spirit. We must have food for our souls. It is not enough for the minister to come into the pulpit, and tell the child of God to do this and to do that; God's people must have suitable food, or they can do nothing of the kind. A farmer is always wise when he puts his whip into the manger, — that is to say, when he makes his horses able to work by feeding them well; and this is the way in which God enables his children to perform their spiritual duties, by giving them spiritual meat.

I may go even further, and say that, if the child of God did not have spiritual meat, he would absolutely die. We must be fed upon divine food, or else the life within us will expire. Will it ever expire? No, never; because we shall be fed. But, still, we must be fed, we must have the Word, which liveth and abideth for ever, to nourish our souls. I do not say that we may have it, but that we must have it; we must feed or die, depend upon that. The branch that is in the vine must have sap rising from the root, and flowing to it through the stem, or it will wither; so is it with us. We must have spiritual food, or spiritually we must cease to be; but that shall never come to pass. "The Lord is my Shepherd;" and, therefore, "I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." He will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish, but he will give us our portion of meat in due season, and so we shall be fed. The bread of heaven will continue to feed us until we want no more. Now, brother, you see, at least in some measure, what are your spiritual necessities, and the reason why the Lord

so emphatically says, "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

Another reason for the exhortation before us is our extreme foolishness. What a stupid animal man must be to need to be told to eat, and be urged to eat that which is good! The little lamb, in the meadow, has scarcely come into the world before it finds out where its mother's milk is, and very soon it begins to crop the tender herbage, and to find food for itself. Most creatures, by what we call instinct, discover their own natural food; but here is man, so foolish, so mad, so much more wild than the wild ass's colt, that he needs to be told to eat, spiritually; and he never will eat till the Lord puts the bread into his mouth, and he never will, by any kind of discernment, eat that which is good unless the Lord shall teach him to discern between the good and the evil,, and give him spiritual appetite and taste by which he shall distinguish the wholesome from the poisonous. One part of human foolishness lies in the fact that we so often seek that which is not good for us, so that the Lord has to say to us, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?" Man is described in Scripture as feeding upon ashes. That is strange food for a human being. We have heard of cases of insanity, in which persons have swallowed ashes, eaten earth, devoured pins and needles, and all sorts of strange things. That is only a feeble emblem of the absolute insanity of the unregenerate heart. You remember that the prophet Hosea said, "Ephraim feedeth on wind." He opens his mouth to eat nothing at all, and thinks himself to be filled when there is nothing whatever that can satisfy his hunger. O strange bewilderment of man, who was made in God's image, and once ate the fruits that grew in the paradise of the Most High! Yet, by nature, we choose the husks that the swine do eat, and would fain fill our bellies therewith if we could; but God's grace will not let his people act so foolishly as that.

Then, again, it is not only that we are willing to eat that which is evil, but that we are unwilling to eat that which is good. Many persons will hear that which is good, and will even assent to our declaration that it is good; yet they do not eat it. What is spiritual eating? It is the inward reception of the truth of God into the soul. To hear the truth is, as it were, to see the bread. To think upon the truth is, as it were, to cut the bread, and put it on the plate. But this will never nourish any man; he must take the bread into his inward parts, and digest and assimilate it; and so, by faith, a man must take the truth into his inmost soul, and make that which was outward become

inward to him, till his soul eats it, and drinks it, and so absorbs it into its own self that it lives upon it. The most of mankind never do this with the sermons they hear. They criticize the preacher's manner of expression and mode of utterance, but they do not feed upon the truth he sets before them. I like the hearer who can say, "My soul was fed by that sermon; there was real spiritual nourishment in it for me; "for that is the true way in which to receive the Word of the Lord. It is "bread for the eater" as well as "seed for the sower," and we must eat it; otherwise, we do not put it to its proper use. God grant us grace to be willing to feed upon the Word! But man, by nature, will not eat spiritual food.

Then, brethren, there is this folly about even God's own children, that they do not eat that which is good according to the lavish me in fullness provided by God: "Let your soul delight itself in fatness." How very few minutes in a day most of us spend in feeding our soul! There are some countries in which the people eat fast; they bolt their food, instead of properly masticating and digesting it; and, in consequence, they are dyspeptic, and suffer greatly from indigestion. And there are some people who act in a similar fashion with regard to spiritual meat; they seem to bolt their food. They have two or three minutes for their morning prayer, and just a few verses of Scripture. There are some, who go all day without any spiritual meat at all; but among those of the better sort, who do feed their souls, how very little time is given to real feeding upon the Word of God, — very little reading, and much less meditation! Sermon-hearing we do attend to rather better; some of us even come out on a wet week-night, which is something to our credit; yet we do not feed enough, we do not go in for the fatness of which our text speaks: "Let your soul delight itself in fatness." I have known some Christians pick a sermon over, and eat nothing except the gristle; — not a morsel of that "fatness" which is the very part that God's finger points out. It is too rich for them; they leave the fat doctrines for those whom they call "the high-doctrine people." But that is not the right way to feed; everything that God puts on his table is good to eat, and it is a point of spiritual etiquette for everyone at the table of the Lord to eat all that Christ puts on his plate. You never do right unless you take it all, for it is all yours, and especially that part which seems even too good for you. You are to be sure not to miss that: "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." There is something of the touch of an epicure about this verse. I wish that we would all learn how, spiritually, to gourmandize; for, if we were to go even to that length, we

should not go further than the emphatic expression of our text warrants. Do go in for a thorough hearty meal, and keep on eating. Devour the Word, feast upon it, and feed again and again and again: "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

I must tell you one other reason why this exhortation is given in the text, and that is, because of our fears. There is many a dear child of God, who longs for spiritual food; but he is afraid that he would be guilty of presumption if he ate it; so, when there is a very fat piece that is just going into his mouth, he says, "No, that cannot be for me," and he draws back from it. Now, just look at the text: "Let your soul delight itself in fatness." Do not restrain yourself from taking that to which you have a perfect right. Believe the message that the preacher brings you from his Master. When you hear it, do not say, "Oh, that I could believe that the eternal love of God were mine! Oh, that I could know that my name is written in the Lamb's book of life, and graven on his hand, and on his heart!" Do not say that, but believe that it is so if you have really trusted in Jesus. "Let your soul delight itself in fatness." Do not say, "Oh, that he would keep me to the end, even me!" A fat morsel is that precious doctrine of unchanging love and final preservation; do not hold back from feeding upon it. "Let your soul delight itself in fatness." You are like a flock of sheep, close to a clover field, with the gate set wide open. Go in, go in; you cannot eat too much of that which is before you. It will not hurt you; you may lie down in the pastures of tender grass, and eat to the full. I know that Satan, and your own unbelief, and especially that natural fear of presumption will combine to make you say, "But I dare not claim a share in such a privilege as that. I am afraid I have no right to it." Then, listen to the exhortation of the text, "Let your soul delight itself in fatness." Do not even the dogs, under the table, eat of the crumbs that fall where the children are feeding? They ask nobody's leave, but they eat what they find. So, surely you, who are the children sitting at the table, ought to take as much liberty as the dogs do. Eat what the master gives to you, just as the little dogs under the table eat what their masters (the children) give to them, for that is really the meaning of that passage. — Be bold enough, and trustful enough, to take what your Lord so freely offers you. It is foolish to be poor when he invites you to be rich. It is a pity for you to starve when he entertains you to feast; with such an exhortation as this, it is sad indeed that any of us should not eat that which is good, and let our soul delight itself in fatness.

II. Now, secondly, LET US NOTE THE BENEFITS OF OBEYING THE COMMAND OF THE TEXT.

The first benefit is, the pleasure of it: “Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” I recollect the time when I used to look upon the precious things of God as many a poor street and has gazed at the dainties in a confectioner’s window, wishing that he could get a taste, and feeling all the more hungry because of that which was stored behind the glass out of his reach. But when the Master takes us into his banqueting house, and his banner over us is love; and when he says to us, “Eat, friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved,” then we have a grand time of it, and we feel almost as if heaven had begun below. Have we not, sometimes, on a Sabbath day, when the great King of glory has feasted us to the full, felt so happy that we did not think we could be any happier unless we went straight away to heaven? Each of us has been ready to sing, at such a time as that, —

*“My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss.”*

O dear friends, search out one of the exceeding great and precious promises of the Word; feed upon it, get it right into your soul, and then you may feel that your soul can no more be troubled, for you believe in God, and you believe in Christ; and, therefore, you are full of gladness. “Let your soul delight itself in fatness.” There is this joy as one of the benefits of obedience to the exhortation of the text.

The second benefit is, the great preserving power of good spiritual food. It helps to keep us out of temptation. I do not think a man is ever so likely to be tempted as when he has neglected to eat his spiritual meat. We have this truth, in a parable, in Christ’s own life on earth. Of course it is only a parable, for in him there was no lack of spiritual meat; but, after he had fasted, when he was an hungered, then it was that he was tempted of the devil; and if your soul has been, for a long time, without spiritual food, you are very likely to meet the devil. I have known men go away for a holiday on the Continent; and when they have been away, there has been no hearing of the Word, and, possibly, no private reading of the Word. Or they may have gone to live in a country town, where the gospel was not faithfully preached; and they have made a terrible shipwreck of character,

because their inward strength was not sustained by spiritual meat, and then the tempter fell upon them. There is rather a pretty remark that someone makes, though I do not vouch for the truth of it. You know that, when the Lord put Adam in the garden of Eden, he said to him, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it;” and, says one, “If Eve had availed herself of that gracious permission, on that fatal day, and if she had eaten freely of all the other trees in the garden, of which she might have eaten, she would not have been so likely to wish to eat of that which was forbidden.” I know this; when my soul is full of Christ, I can defy the devil himself, for what can he bring me when I want nothing? He puts down poisoned meat to tempt us to eat; but when we are filled with all the fullness of Christ, we do not want his meat, and we will not touch it, except to fling it far from us. He who has Christ, has all things, and abounds, and he is, by this divine strengthening of his spirit, made strong to resist temptation. I have heard people say that, if they have to go through a feverish part of the city, there is nothing like having a good coating inside, well lining the interior; and I am sure it is so, spiritually. Line your soul well with spiritual meat; and, then, if you have to go through the most feverish parts of the earth, where temptations fill the very air, you will be preserved from them by divine grace. Recollect what happened when Saul, in his folly, ordained that anyone who ate food should be accursed. The soldiers were not able to smite the Philistines as they might have done if they had not been so faint; and, then, as soon as the sun went down,” The people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew them on the ground,” and devoured them raw, “with the blood,” so breaking the commandment of the Jewish law, and bringing severe condemnation upon themselves. Hungry men will do such things as that, for hunger makes them break through stone walls, and through God’s laws, too; but he who is filled with good things walks in the way of God’s commandments.

A third blessing is this. Spiritual food comforts mourners. The analogy of this will be found in the Book of Nehemiah, the eighth chapter, and the ninth and tenth verses, where we read that Nehemiah said to the people, “This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep....Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared.” A feast is a good way of breaking a fast. He that eats forgets his former misery, and remembers his sorrow no more, especially if he eats the mystic meat which God provides so abundantly for

his sorrowing children. It was of this that Mary sang, "He hath filled the hungry with good things."

Spiritual meat has another excellence. It revives the fainting ones. Did you ever study the sermon that was once preached by an angel to a desponding prophet? It consisted of only three words, and he preached it twice. The prophet was Elijah, who, after the wondrous victory and excitement on the top of Carmel, fainted in spirit, and was afraid of Jezebel, and said, "Let me die;" and so fled from the field of battle, and longed to expire. In his weariness and sorrow, he fell asleep, and an angel came, and awoke him, and this was the sermon he preached to him, "Arise and eat." And when he opened his eyes, he saw that "there was a cake baking on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again;" — the very best thing he could do. But the angel awoke him, the second time, and preached the same sermon to him, "Arise and eat;" and I pass on that little sermon to some of you who feel faint in heart just now. You do not know how it is, but you are very low-spirited; here is a message for you, 'Arise and eat.' I will not prescribe you any physic, but I say, 'Arise and eat.' Get to the Bible, and study that; search out the promises, and feed upon them. Get away to Christ, and feed upon him. 'Arise and eat.'" Often, the best possible cure for a poor, dispirited, fainting soul is a good meal of gospel food. Your bright spirits will, in that way, come back to you; you will not be afraid of Jezebel, and you will not say, "Let me die," but you will go, in the strength of that meat, for many a day according to the will of God. So I give this as God's message to any discouraged, dispirited ones whom I may now be addressing, "Arise and eat."

This spiritual eating is also a great strength for service, for he who eats that which is good, and lets his soul delight itself in fatness, will be strong to run in the way of the divine commands, or to perform any work that may be required of him. You recollect what Jonathan said, concerning that long day of fasting to which I have already alluded. Jonathan said, "Mine eyes have been enlightened because I tasted a little of this honey. How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely to day of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines!" Quite right, Jonathan; as the old proverb puts it, "Prayer and provender hinder no man's journey;" and, for a soul to wait upon God to be fed, is to gather such strength thereby that it can do much more work than it could otherwise have done. Sunday-school

teachers are apt to think, "We cannot attend a weeknight service: we must be thinking about the lesson of our class." Your soul must be fed my dear brother. Young men are very apt to think that they will begin preaching, and they will not stay even a few months after conversion to learn from those who might instruct them. You will be wrong, brother, you will be wrong if you do so. He who begins to run a race, and who thinks that it is a waste of time to pull on his boots, will make a great mistake. You had better not begin your journey till you are properly shod. You had better not go to the battle till you have put on all your armor. All the time that is taken to fix that armor on properly, is time wonderfully well spent. It will be true economy in the long run. To keep men always working like slaves, and to give them little to eat would be a very wretched, as well as a very cruel, policy. Eat well, that you may work well. "Eat ye that which is good," that you may be able to do good to others. "Let your soul delight itself in fatness," that you may have the delight of being useful in the service of your Lord.

I must very rapidly mention other blessings, which result from our partaking of spiritual food. One is that it fits us to feed others. Ezekiel had to go and speak to the house of Israel in the name of the Lord; do you remember his preparation for that task — the college to which he went? Well, he saw a hand, which held a roll of a book, and a voice said to him, "Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel." He cannot preach till he has eaten the roll. I believe that, in the courts of law, young men have to eat themselves into the profession; beside all other qualifications, they must eat a certain number of dinners before they can be fully certificated. It is a strange regulation with regard to earthly courts, but it is a right and proper thing in the courts of heaven. Young brethren in the College, you must eat your way into the ministry. You will never be able to say to others, "Eat ye that which is good," unless you have feasted upon those things yourselves. Unless you have an inward appreciation of their sweetness, and have sucked them into your very being, you will never be able to talk with power to others concerning them. Paul wrote to Timothy, "The husbandman that laboreth must first be partaker of the fruits," so Christian ministers, Sunday-school teachers, and all workers for Christ, must eat that which is good if they are to be used in feeding others with spiritual food.

And, then, as I have already said, — but I must mention it again to make my recapitulation complete, — this is the best mode of fellowship. Christ's

word to you, beloved, when he would most show his love is, "Take, eat;" and your risen Master, when he spoke most familiarly to his disciples, said, "Children, have ye any meat?" and then gave to them the invitation, "Come and dine." And again I repeat that gracious message to the lukewarm Laodiceans. "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Even throughout eternity, this is to be the fashion of fellowship, for the glorified are to sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. So, beloved, feed on the Word of God; especially feed on the Incarnate Word, Christ himself; otherwise, you cannot possibly enter into true spiritual fellowship with God.

There is just this one more remark that I must make upon this point. Feeding upon the Word is the best way of promoting praise. You know how the 103rd Psalm begins: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name." Then, a little further on, the psalmist says, "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." A hungry soul cannot sing well; the soul that best sings the praises of God is the one that has delighted itself with the fatness of the divine provision, and therefore has its mouth filled with the praises of its God.

Now, dear friends, I am sure that the topic, on which I have been speaking, is a very important one, yet it is a very neglected one. A great many young Christians and I am afraid some old Christian people, especially women, read no end of tales and novels. That is not eating that which is good; it is doing that which is worse than useless. There is no spiritual nutriment and little if any mental food in most of the stories that come out nowadays. We used to keep our tales for our children, — our babies; but, now, the stories are written for grown-up people, and newspapers and magazines sell best if they contain pretty stories for the great babies of the present day. Nothing will suit them but stories. "Eat ye that which is good." But they eat ashes, they feed upon the wind; that is their spiritual meat. Sometimes we complain of present-day Christians that they have no backbone, no stamina, no strength, compared with the Christians of past ages. I should think not; how can they? They do not eat the food out of which spiritual manhood can grow. They eat what would not nourish a mouse, and then hope that they may be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

And, then, how common is the neglect of reading the Word of God itself! A great many persons take all their religion at secondhand. They never go

to the good old Book themselves. Years ago, it was a very difficult thing to get milk; it was not milk that was called by that name. The only way to be sure of having milk, was to keep a cow; and I recommend everybody to ensure getting the unadulterated milk of the Word by keeping his own cow, that is, by reading the Bible for himself, If you want to get pure water, go to the fountain head. I was once going over the mountains, in Northern Italy, and I wanted to drink of a little stream, but my guide would not allow me to taste of it. I did not understand why, but he went on some considerable distance, and then he allowed me to drink as much as ever I liked; and I noticed that, then, I was drinking at a spring just where the water flowed out; but, the time before, the stream had been running down the mountain side, and was full of all sorts of impurities; and, besides, it had lost its freshness and sweetness by travelling over the earth in the warm sun. The guide wanted me to have water that was worth drinking, — to drink that which was good. So I would advise you, my friends, to take no notice of anything I say that is not according to the Word of God. Put it away among the lumber, for it is good for nothing; and whoever it is that preaches, and whatever book you read, if it is not according to this Book, say to yourself, “Well, I have not any time to try experiments. If I do eat, I want to eat that which is good; and if I do delight myself, I want to delight myself in what God calls fatness.” There is plenty of carrion about, — plenty of religious carrion I mean, — tainted through and through with false doctrine, and unhappy is that man who has a taste for it; it looks as if he were no true child of God. Dear friends, what we do need is, to feed on the gospel, and nothing but the gospel; to feed on the Scriptures, and to keep to them alone; to feed on the promises; to get a promise, and turn it over and over, to read mark, learn, and inwardly digest it; to feed upon the teachings of the Holy Spirit within our own soul, and to feed upon Christ himself, for his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. I would to God that some, here present, who have never known what spiritual life is, and, therefore, cannot know what spiritual feeding is, might be quickened, this evening, by the Divine Spirit; and if they are, the first thing that they will do will be to hearken unto Christ that they may live. “Incline your ear,” saith he, “and come unto me. Hear, and your soul shall live.” And as soon as you have heard his life-giving Word, then go on to hear it again and yet again. “Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

And listen to this: If thou believest in Christ Jesus, within a short time that head of thine shall wear a coronet of glory that shall outshine the stars of heaven; thy feet shall be in sandals with light, and thy whole being shall be full of indescribable ecstasy. Then, though thou deservest to be cast into the lowest hell, thou shalt have a place above the angels, where the white-robed host forever chant their hallelujahs to the redeeming Lamb. Yes, as surely as that thou now livest, thou shalt be there. Now what sayest thou with such a prospect before thee? Wilt thou walk any longer in the ways of dishonesty? Wilt thou go home to thy cups, and be found among the drunkards? Wilt thou take upon thee that dear name, by which thou art to be called in heaven, and yet be found amongst the ungodly? I know that thou wouldst sooner die than that should be the case, for thy heart cries out to thy Lord, "Deliver me from sin, O my gracious God! This great love of thine, which promises me heaven, and gives me a nature fit to live in glory, — how can I rebel against it? No, let it hold me fast, with golden chains, to obey thee, my Lord, and to keep thy commandments henceforth and for ever." The Lord grant it, for his dear Son's sake! Amen.