

The Bread of Eternal Life

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Introduction

John 6:48-51

"I am that bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." (NKJV)

There it was again! It interrupted my concentrated play out in the backyard and I just couldn't help but follow that wonderful smelling aroma. It led me from rounding up a whole "herd" of bad guys single handedly. Those guys would just have to arrest themselves because this fragrance grabbed me by the nose and pulled me into the house, through the living room and right into the kitchen where my mother was just taking a steaming hot, fresh loaf of homemade bread from the oven. She sliced off a big hunk, smothered it in butter which melted instantly, permeating the texture of that white fluffy substance that had to be heavenly food. With a big glass of milk I had now entered "Homemade Bread Heaven!"

At this point, I didn't care if it was good for me, how many calories it had in it or any of these present day considerations. All

I knew was that this was the best food I had ever eaten, well, at least until she took out the next batch of homemade peanut butter cookies . . .

In the Scripture, just the day before, Jesus had fed 5000 men plus women and children with only 5 cakes of barley bread and 2 small fish; the lunch of a boy who had come to hear this man from God. No one else had thought of bringing something to eat out in this wilderness. Jesus had taught long, and people had been miraculously healed.

By now, this large outdoor crowd was growing hungry. Jesus had a plan, but He never did anything without a lesson involved. "Where can we buy food for these people?" He asked His disciples. Phillip quickly whipped out his mental calculator and after studying the situation a moment, said "The daily pay of 200 Roman Soldiers (200 pennies) is not enough that each person would have only a little."

Andrew, Peter's brother, had found the boy who's mother had thoughtfully prepared him a lunch of 5 barley cakes, and 2 small fish, but that was like a single peanut to a herd of hungry elephants! How could they even think about feeding this crowd?

With a twinkle in His eye, Jesus had them seat the people. He blessed the food and began breaking it, giving it to His disciples who in turn passed it out to the people. He continued doing this until all had eaten their fill. Jesus then commanded them to gather up the leftovers, which the bewildered disciples did, and to their utter amazement, those five barley loaves and two fish had fed the entire congregation, and they had 12 basketfuls of leftovers!

The Faith of the Boy

Faith is a word that we have stretched, pulled, defined and spoken until it means something so holy and unreachable that it almost scares us. It has often been said when someone fails to receive from God "You don't have enough faith." But how do you measure faith? You can't put it in a flask, or use a ruler. How do you measure something you cannot see?

Jesus said several things about faith, three of which I'd like to point out here:

1) When speaking to His disciples, He often referred to them as "Ye of little faith . . ." but instead of meaning that they needed to be looking for more faith, they needed to exercise what little faith they had. You see, faith cannot be obtained in quantities, but it is more like a child, as it is exercised, it grows.

2) Secondly, He referred to faith as a grain of mustard seed, one of the tiniest seeds. A seed is a miracle in itself. It never ceases to amaze me how a seed can push through rock, find cracks in cement, and grow. Again, faith grows, and it only takes determination like that mustard seed.

3) Finally, He realizes that our human faith may include a shadow of doubt. As we grow in faith, that doubt diminishes more and more. At first, our faith is shaky. The man who came to Jesus with the demon possessed son believed, and wanted more than anything to have his son healed. But when Jesus asked him if he believed he said "Of course I believe," then after a moments thought, added "Lord, help my unbelief!" The man was being honest inside and faced up to the truth that there was a pinch of doubt mixed with his belief. Jesus understood this and the man's son was healed. But I'd bet that the next time this man's faith was called on, there wasn't nearly as much unbelief mixed with it, because his faith had grown.

The young boy in the story played a very small roll. He had been there probably most of the day and had witnessed the great miracles Jesus had done. Now, when asked if he would give up his lunch for all these people, instead of doubting, or being selfish about it, he gladly gave it knowing that the Master of Miracles had a good plan in mind.

This was no small crowd that Jesus was going to feed with this minute amount of food. Note that it is specifically mentioned that there were 5000 men, besides women and children. People of this day usually had large families, but for the sake of comparison let's say that three fourths of the men were married, and that each married couple had an average of only two children (it was probably many more). This would mean that there were at least 16,250 people there and probably more like 20,000 - 25,000.

Five barley cakes and two small fish were just enough for a boy's lunch. But that became enough for each individual to eat to their fill. It amounted to 81,250 barley cakes and 32,500 fish plus enough to fill 12 baskets with leftovers. All this came from 5 small barley cakes and 2 small fish! A miracle of great magnitude!

We might also note here that Jesus did not produce gourmet meals from the barley cakes and fish, but He used what was common food for all people of the day, showing that His truth, and the Good News He came to give was for all. By this miracle He demonstrated that He could not only feed and take care of the outward, physical man, but also the inward, spiritual man.

Jesus' Message on Manna

During the night, Jesus had sent His disciples by ship across the sea, while He himself stayed to seek God in a lonely place. As the sea became choppy because of the wind, they saw Jesus walking on the water, coming to them and they all, especially Peter, had another lesson in faith.

The next morning, many of those people who had eaten of the loaves and fish missed Jesus and so took boats and crossed the sea themselves, looking for Him. When they met Jesus His response to their question of why He had left was an accusation: "You follow Me not because of who I am, but because of the miracle of food. Don't work so hard for food which will perish, but work for the food that will never spoil or rot" to put it in my own words.

According to Matthew Henry, it was a traditional teaching of the Pharisees that the coming Messiah would be able to call Manna from Heaven. This most likely was an assumption based on the prophecy found in Deuteronomy 18:15, where the prophet like Moses was predicted.

"What can we do to work the works of God?" the people asked, to which Jesus quickly answered "The work of God for you is to believe on the One He has sent." This, of course, referred to Himself.

The people realized this and began to get defensive. Sometimes, when we get defensive we think irrationally and ask questions that border on stupidity. These people were no different. After eating of the food He had miraculously provided just the day before, they now asked Him for a sign, or a work that would cause them to believe on Him without exercising their faith. It was then that they reminded Him about the Manna as mentioned above. I mean, come on, what more did they need?

Now Jesus made some statements that would cause these carnal minded people to stop following Him, and actually turn against Him. The human mind just can't comprehend the reality of the spiritual without faith that is fueled by the Holy Spirit.

The following statements of Jesus are a summary of the entire passage found in John 6. I would suggest that you read the entire chapter for yourself. Literally Jesus said these things: "I am that bread of life. Those who believe My words will never hunger or thirst again. I am the bread that came down from Heaven and He who believes in Me will live forever. Your forefathers ate the Manna which came down from Heaven and are dead. But those who eat Me The living bread from Heaven, will never die. The bread that I will give is My own flesh which I will give for the life of the world. Unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood, you have no life in you. Are you offended by these words? What if you see Me ascend back to Heaven where I was before? It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is worthless. The words I speak to you, they are spiritual, and they bring life."

These were some very hard and difficult words for a Jew, trained in the ways of the Pharisees. They went against the doctrine that had been poured into them and had become their very lives. Jesus was asking them to give up all they had been taught and to believe Him. Before we become quick to judge those people, let's think about our own situation. What have we been taught? What must we give up to accept the words of Jesus? "If you live good enough, you'll make it to Heaven. Just keep on working for the Lord and you'll be good enough to go to Heaven. God knows your heart even though you do bad things. He knows what you mean to do. He'll overlook those things. Just live as good as you can and you'll be alright."

These things sound good on the surface don't they? But they are like a bucket full of holes; they don't hold water. If we want

Eternal Life then we are no different from these Jewish people. We must give up what we have been taught, what has become a part of us, and accept the fact that nothing we can do is worthy of God. Even if we could live a perfect life in the eyes of the world, never committing a sin, never having an evil thought, we still would not be good enough to go to Heaven. Man is hopelessly lost without the sacrifice of Christ. So Jesus not only spoke those words to this Jewish congregation, but they echo through the centuries to our ears today. We must eat His flesh and drink His blood if we want to live with Him forever.

The things that Jesus told these people insulted their long heritage in their deliverance from Egypt. Jesus never meant to minimize that great and wonderful experience. But it had come to mean something different to these predecessors of Moses and the people of Israel who had crossed the Red Sea on dry land. They now were on the border of actually worshipping their heritage rather than learning from it.

The claim Jesus was making was that He was the real bread from Heaven. He was the true spiritual nourishment that had the power to restore them into fellowship with God. He was saying that the manna, as great and wonderful as it was, was only a type of Himself. The manna was eaten and sustained physical life, but He would give eternal life. He had basically said the same thing to the woman at the well. The difference was that they were talking about water instead of bread. The point is, that Jesus used the common, basic elements that were necessary to support physical life, to compare to His own ability in God to give eternal life.

The people then, as do the people now, only thought about physical life. This flesh we live in, the pain we suffer when wounded, eating, drinking, and appeasing the flesh. That was all they knew. The Law of Moses taught them to worship God but only to the limits of the flesh. Was God being shallow minded

when He gave Moses the Law? Was God encouraging them to be concerned only with physical life?

God doesn't make mistakes, that you can be sure of. God knew that mankind would only accept the physical and so gave the Law as a teacher, showing man that he could not live up to standards that would make him perfect. Instead, after the Law was given, the balance of the Old Testament shows how miserably man failed God. He was constantly forsaking the Law for other religions and false gods. Why? Hadn't God promised peace and prosperity if they would just keep the Law? But they couldn't keep the Law. That's why they kept straying from it. Other religions allowed things as part of their practice that appealed to the flesh. And so they eased their consciences by continuing to worship God, but also worshipping other gods. They couldn't be perfect.

That is exactly why God gave the Law. It proved to man that he could not be perfect. It showed man just how unholy his righteousness was stacked up against God's. Man came far short from God's holiness and to make up for it, he turned to false religions to appease his conscience.

So, these people who were talking to Jesus continued to think as their ancestors did. It was difficult for them to accept something that they could not see, feel, hear, smell, or touch. They just couldn't understand.

When Jesus said that they would have eternal life if they would eat His flesh, He wasn't encouraging them to take up cannibalism and take a big bite from His arm, but He was referring to the sacrifice He was soon to make. His flesh would be crucified for their sin. His blood would be spilled to make up for man's shortcoming in the Garden of Eden. Believing on Him meant giving up all the old symbolism's and rituals and accepting Him. By believing in His mission, and believing that He was the Son of God, or God in the flesh, would give them the hope of a

spiritual eternity. It would give them a life that would bring peace from turmoil. No longer would they have to believe that this was all there was and they would have to fight and scratch to live from day to day, but they could rest assured that, despite the condition of the flesh, that it was all only temporary. When the flesh ceased to exist and passed on, returning to the dust from which they were made, then life continued on in the spirit.

They just couldn't see this. When Jesus taught that they must eat His flesh to have eternal life, all they could picture in their minds was having a feast on His body. To a Jew who was taught to eat only certain animals, this picture was grotesque and ugly. They just couldn't see past it.

The Bread of Life is the Flesh of Christ

When we eat bread, we generally don't think about what is going on inside our bodies. Instead we are concentrating on how good it tastes and how wonderful it feels inside our mouths and stomachs. To one who is literally starving to death, it becomes a promise of further life.

But what actually takes place inside of us is that it is churned in our stomachs into tiny small bits that are absorbed into our blood streams. There it is turned into sugars and the things our body needs to continue life.

If our bodies are in need of nourishment, then it goes straight to work providing the energy we need. If our bodies don't need nourishment at that particular moment, then it is turned into fat, and stored until we do need it.

Isn't it wonderful how every part of life is but an example of our spiritual needs? Spiritually, it works exactly the same way. When we begin to eat, it feels good to the outward man. Whatever the need in our lives, whatever our situation, when we accept the Spirit of Christ, as He enters us we feel a warm permeation in our flesh. Despite our emotional reaction, whether very demonstrated, or very reserved, the same thing takes place in each of us. His Spirit goes straight to work, giving spiritual life to one who is starving to death; filling our very blood stream with spiritual energy and giving eternal life to our souls.

At this point we need to understand a deeper teaching, however. Christ's body was only broken once. We spiritually taste of His flesh at salvation. But to maintain that spiritual feeding, we must continue to feast on His Word. In the first Chapter of John's Gospel, it is taught that Jesus and the Word are essentially the same. It doesn't mean that the ink printed on the pages of your Bible is alive. What it does mean is that when we read the Word, the Holy Spirit moves upon us. If we are not a Believer, then He

begins to prod our spirit to accept the truth of God. If we are already a Believer with Christ living in our lives, the Holy Spirit then prods us to make the truth we have just read a part of our lives. In this manner, the Word becomes alive to us.

Each time an individual becomes a Believer, then the flesh and blood of Christ become "spiritual nourishment" for that person. But Christ is only crucified once. The Bible says that He was crucified once for all (Hebrews 10:10). There are those who believe that each time they take the communion that the elements of the communion (namely some form of bread and grape juice or wine) literally become the flesh and blood of Christ. This is not the case. The Bible says that we should not "crucify Christ afresh" or again (Hebrews 6:6). Christ died once. That was all it took to free us from sin and death. He is not sacrificed newly each time we stray from Him and return, or each time we take communion. The communion is merely a ceremony we do to remind us of what Christ did for us. We take of the spiritual flesh and blood of Christ at salvation and that's all it takes!

Eternal Life At Last!

Because of His sacrifice, we can discover something that people have dreamed about and sought through the centuries. We find a way to live forever. Because of a world cursed by sin, this body will wear out and die. But inside each of us is a living spirit that will go on forever. Without the flesh and blood of Christ, we are doomed to die forever because of our guilt of sin. None of us are good enough to escape it. But by His sacrifice, He became the Lamb of God - the accepted sacrifice for sin. No other sacrifice is needed. When we believe to the point that we give ourselves to Christ, He applies this sacrifice to us and by His grace, instead of dying forever, when this Earthly body of flesh expires, our spirits live forever with God. That's exciting!

How Can I Eat The Body Of Christ?

As mentioned above, it is done spiritually. It is done by faith. Just like the boy in the story, who had enough belief and trust in Jesus to give Him his lunch, knowing that Jesus wouldn't cheat him and fully trusting Him, so we must do with Christ. We trust Christ.

There is a story of a man who was a high wire walker. He was supposed to be the most skilled and greatest in the world. One day, he stretched his wire over a high and wide waterfall, and with the rush of water below him, carefully walked across the wire and back. Everyone cheered, "You are indeed the greatest!" Then the man got a wheelbarrow, and pushed it across the wire and back. Everyone clapped in awe of the skill and concentration of this man. "You are the greatest in the world!" Then the man went one step further. He spoke to the crowd saying, "If you think I'm the greatest and that I will not make a mistake, will one of you volunteer to ride in the wheelbarrow as I cross one more time?" Upon hearing these words, a hush fell on the crowd. As long as he was the one taking all the risk, then he was the greatest. But when he asked them to put their lives in his hands, well, that was a different story all together.

Jesus Christ has done it all. He became our sacrifice. He paid the price for sin and to undo the curse that fell on the world because of our sin. He then was resurrected, thereby conquering sin and death. All has been done. All we must do is trust Him. He is asking us to "climb in the wheelbarrow." He is saying to each of us, "If you believe that I'm the Son of God and that I can free you from sin, then believe to the point that you trust Me."

What Happens When We Make Christ Our Savior?

When we accept Christ, then His Spirit (the Holy Spirit) joins with our spirits which, though living, are all but dead. When the Holy Spirit joins with our spirits then we are "quickened" to use a familiar word from the King James Version of the Bible, which means, brought back to life and renewed. This is the New Birth. This is being born-again. This is Salvation. This is the result of believing in Christ. This is the one and only way that we can even hope to have Eternal Life. Without it, we are hopelessly condemned and doomed to die forever in the place we call Hell.

The Results of Eating the Bread of Life

One of the first things that happens when we have decided to "eat" of the "Bread of Life" is that our fellowship with God is restored. That position that was lost when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in Eden is given back. God, by way of the Holy Spirit, dwells in our lives. He is right there beside our own spirit, giving life.

We still have hardships, temptations, trials, etc., but now, all we must do is realize He is ever with us, right beside us, helping each step of the way. It is when we don't realize this, or momentarily put it out of our minds and try to do things on our own that we begin to lose joy, hope, and courage, and feel alone. But it is because we have ignored His presence in our lives. He is still there.

That curse that is upon the world and our lives because of sin is now reversed. Yes, we still live in a mortal body that is subject to pain, disease and failure. But we are now free from that curse. It's demands are no longer upon us because we have died out - The old man is dead. Instead we are re-created. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. " (2 Corinthians 5:17). The words "new creature" in the original language literally mean "re-created." We are made over new. The man within us that was a sinner, that failed miserably is gone - Dead and buried with Christ. We are resurrected with Him a new being - A new man! A second chance on life is given to us.

We still look the same when we stare at ourselves in the mirror. The outward flesh hasn't changed, but if we could only see the New Man inside of us! We'd actually see two figures: Our new man and the Holy Spirit always standing there beside us. What a picture!

We are now given Eternal Life. The curse said that man must die, and the connotation is that man must die eternally. The curse went much deeper than just this house of flesh and bone. It meant that man was forever separated from God. What an awful thought! It would be even worse than a child taken from its mother, never to see her again. It would tear out the heart. Sin caused us to be hopelessly, forever separated from our Creator. The One Who gave us life would never be a part of us again.

But Jesus paid the price for sin, died in our place, and rose up conquering sin and death in our stead and because of that, now we can be restored and given reunion with our Creator. Not just as Master and Servant but as Father and Son! Think of what this means to each of us! Because of Jesus, we are given back the fellowship with God that we so uncaringly threw aside for a moment of pleasure. The one relationship in the universe that brought us the most pleasure, made us the happiest, and gave us the ability to live forever, we just tossed aside not knowing its true value. We lost it forever. But Jesus gave it back!

The soul inside of us which is our actual life, will go on either in eternal death, or eternal life. When the Holy Spirit comes in at our invitation, He brings our dead spirits back to life and gives us once again that ability for our soul to LIVE FOREVER!

How to Do It

"It all sounds good. But how do I do it?" Very simple. Following I've outlined it in just a few simple steps. But this is not a formula. Just speaking these words will do absolutely nothing for you. They are suggested words. If it doesn't come from your heart, if you don't really mean what you say, then you have wasted your time.

God isn't looking for someone who knows how to act the right way or say the right things. He's looking for those who want a change in their lives. He's looking for those who are sick and tired of this wasted life that we live, and want to change to the point that they are willing to give up this old death and take on life in Christ.

If you're ready to do that, then this is for you. If you're not ready to do that, then, please, start at the front of the booklet and begin reading again. Let God speak to you as you read, and realize that no matter how good you may think you are, you will never be good enough to get to Heaven. If you really want to live forever, if you really want to be with God, if you really want to go to Heaven, then you've got to want it more than anything else in your life.

First of all, you must confess. God isn't looking for those who want to justify their actions. We stand before Him guilty as guilty can be. We could point the finger and say that this or that caused us to do what we did but the truth of the matter is, it's our fault. Confess that. "God, I realize that I'm a sinner, and I don't have a chance without You. I confess that it's all my fault." Say those words or put it in your own words now.

Next, you must repent. This means that you are sorry for what you've done with your life. You're sorry that you are guilty. What else can we say? We are guilty. It's our fault. We can't undo anything that has been done. We can't take back anything we

have said. It's out there. It's burned in the minds of others. We did it and we can't change it. But we can say "God I'm sorry for what I've done with my life. I'm sorry that I have been a sinner. I know I can't change anything, but I would if I could. So, I am truly sorry. I'm at Your mercy, God. Forgive me for being a sinner."

Guess what . . . He will every time. God always forgives when we repent. He doesn't stand still accusing, saying "I don't know if I can forgive you or not." Or, "I'll try to forgive you." No. When you ask God to forgive you, He does it.

Finally, you've got to believe it. The devil will tempt you when you've said these words and tell you that it's impossible for you to change. It's impossible for you to ever hope to be any different. He does this because he knows that you are on the brink of being jerked out of his control and becoming his mortal enemy. Don't listen to him. Listen to the Holy Spirit who is filling you with love, mercy, and joy from God.

You can't ever be good enough on your own. But with Jesus Christ you are even now being made a Son of God! You've got to believe that.

You've got to believe that Jesus Christ has forgiven each and every sin you have committed in your life, and not just the individual sins but the very sinful nature that is inbred into each of us. God is changing all of that as you speak these words. He is instantly forming you into a new creation. While you are speaking, inside of you God is changing, tearing down and rebuilding.

It will take you the rest of your life on your journey to Heaven to make the outward man perfect, and you may never accomplish this, but at this very moment, if you are speaking these words and believing them as you speak, God is perfecting your

spirit and soul and making you worthy by the Blood of His Son, Jesus Christ, to be His SON!

Believe that. If I tell you this building is on fire and you just sit where you are doing nothing about it, that tells me that you really don't believe what I'm telling you. Just so, if you've read this message and you say "I believe," but just sit there doing nothing, going on just as you've always done, then you really don't believe. Belief calls for action. It calls for you to do something about what you've just learned. Please, for your own sake, do it now.

You will be saved. *"That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."* (Romans 10:9-10). God won't turn you away. This scripture tells you that if you do these things and you really believe, you will be saved. Isn't that wonderful? Isn't that the best news you've ever heard in your entire life?

Do it today. Don't wait. You'll never be better without Christ. You don't need to put off anything before coming to God. Come now, just as you are. Start all over from here. Listen to Him speak to you now . . .

