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DAILY BREAD

“Give us this day our daily bread,” is the first petition for *self* allowed by the Saviour. This is fundamental, as “bread is the staff of life.” We need food *daily*, to supply the constant waste, and thus *sustain* the life. This petition is an expression of our conscious dependence on “Our Father” as the Giver. He knoweth that we have need of these things, and is constantly supplying the wants of even the prayerless and the unthankful. But the grateful ones know that they *enjoy* the blessings as they never did until they learned to look up.

If any one supposes that this, or any other prayer, will be answered while we remain in negligent misuse or disuse of the means appointed for the attainment of such blessings, they will be disappointed. God helps us to help ourselves. If God gives the increase, it is also necessary that Paul and Apollos should plant and water. To ask aright, implies that we are willing to receive the blessing in the Father’s way, and truly the spirit of prayer will prompt the heart and nerve the arm for needed toil. That the Lord helps the helpless oftentimes, by more than ordinary means, we cannot doubt; and many of the Lord’s poor, but “rich in faith,” have proved to their great satisfaction the value of prayer.

What philosophy may not teach, and philosophers deny, because they can in their sphere deal only with natural or ordinary laws and means, is yet known to be a reality by those trained to a higher sphere of thought and experience, being “led of the spirit of God.”

To deny the supernatural is not uncommon, even by those who would not dare to accept its legitimate conclusion—Atheism. From *God’s* standpoint nothing is supernatural. All is below Him. What is above our range of thought or comprehension is to us miraculous. Let men deny the miracles who are wholly unconscious of the existence of spiritual beings. The existence of such beings involves the existence of spiritual laws, which in operation will produce *effects* as much above the laws with which mortals are familiar, as the laws themselves are higher. That the spiritual has power over the natural, is as true as that mind controls matter; and what we call a miracle, is a manifestation of the superiority of the spiritual over the natural in an unusual way; a glimpse of that, which to all who ever enter the higher plane of existence, will then appear simple, and as easily understood at least as the operation of laws on the plane of the flesh. It required no more *power* to feed the multitude by a miracle, than to produce the same amount of food by the ordinary law of growth. The use of miracles was to show that He who performed them was Divine; the same One by whom and for whom all things were created. Prayer, which is by the spirit, is a connecting link between us and heaven; a *cause*, which, in its sphere, is as *effective* as plowing or

sowing on the earthly plane, and opening the windows of heaven brings the blessing down.

An answer to prayer does not prove that God is *changeable*, any more than the fact that faithful labor will secure temporal blessings, while the sluggard will suffer want.

There is another line of thought suggested by this petition. As bread is the staff of natural life, so it is used to represent the support of the spiritual life. This use of the term is quite common in the Bible: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God," said the Saviour in answer to the temptation. "I am the *Truth*," and "I am the *bread of life*;" comparison will show that the truth and bread are used interchangeably. "He that *eateth* me shall live by me;" "and except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." That this is spiritual life, begotten by the word of truth, and sustained by the same word, I think no Christian will deny. While it is true and necessary that Christ should literally take the flesh and blood of man, that He should "taste *death* for every man," and by means of death destroy the captor and deliver the captives from the bonds of the same natural death, or, in other words, restore the natural life; (Heb. 2) it is also true, that as the natural life *represents* the spiritual, these same terms, "flesh and blood," are used to represent the *bread* of spiritual life.

The Bible clearly teaches the recovery of all from the loss by Adam, unconditionally; as they were not responsible for the curse, they are made partakers of that restoration without their choice, but it is necessary to obey the truth in order to secure the spiritual life, and consequent eternal salvation.

We need *daily* bread spiritually, as well as naturally. Regular eating, and working too, are essential to either natural or spiritual health. The lack of nourishment brings weakness, sickness and death in either life.

"If ye live after the flesh ye shall die," (Rom. 8:13,) spoken, as it was, to Christians, indicates the danger to which we are exposed if we neglect eating and working. That some are what we might call spiritual dyspeptics is doubtless true. They eat, but work not. Like some of old, they spend all their time either learning or telling some *new thing*. They manifest a greater eagerness for new ideas, than to make a good use of what they have already. Such are in danger, we think, of holding the truth in unrighteousness. But while this is true of a few extremists, the mass of professing Christians take the other extreme and eat not at all, or at best so sparingly that they are *dying of starvation*. Some use milk freely, *i.e.* the "First Principles" of the doctrine of Christ, Heb. 5:12 and 6:1,2, which is all right for beginners; as babes in Christ desiring the "sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby," 1 Pet. 2:2, (and it is not improbable that an occasional cup of milk is good even for grown folks,) but grown men need stronger food; (Heb. 5:14,) and the

apostle urges the brethren to advance from the foundation, (building *on* it of course, which no one can do till they have accepted and obeyed the first principles,) going on unto perfection. Heb. 6:1. From the necessary relation between food and its results, we may well infer that the perfection here mentioned has reference to both knowledge and character. “Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

There is doubtless much given for milk that savors but little of Paul’s definition; the high sounding essays on scientific subjects, aside from the science of revelation, may tickle the fancy and educate the intellect, “but starve the soul;” they do not feed the spiritual life. Some hungry ones are crying for bread, but the cry reaches not the ear of a worldly ministry; it does reach the ear of the Lord of the poor in spirit, who has said, “Blessed are they that hunger, ... for they shall be filled. But the mass seem more than content to spend their money for that which is not bread. Isa. 55:2. The satisfaction and joy of those who live by faith on the Son of God is solid, compared to the passing ripple of emotion caused by mere religious excitement. Excitement must subside, but truth and its joys abide.

Advancing with the light in the shining way, receiving the truth as our “daily bread,” we can “rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”

J. H. P.

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