

## **Pilgrims' Hunger and Pilgrims' Food**

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on  
Lord's Day Evening, August 23, 1846

"And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." Deuteronomy 8:2, 3

The children of Israel had been forty years wandering in the wilderness; and they were now come to the borders of the promised land. The Lord, therefore, commands Moses to set before them promises, and also threatenings; promises to the obedient, and threatenings against the disobedient. Moses from this is divinely led to recapitulate the dealings of the Lord with them during the past forty years, and to encourage them for the future. How applicable is this to the experience of a living soul! During the time that the children of Israel were travelling in the wilderness, there were many perplexing circumstances, the meaning of which they could not then understand. But when forty years had passed over their head, then they were enabled to see clearly the reasons of the many painful trials and perplexing circumstances, which, when they took place, were completely hidden from their eyes. Is not this the case with the Lord's family while travelling through the wilderness below? How many trials and temptations—how many sharp and severe exercises have they to pass through! But while they are in them, how little they know the reason of them! how little do they feel that

the hand of God is in them! how little they believe that these things are indeed for their spiritual good! But when in the unction of the Spirit's teaching, by the eye of living faith, they are enabled afterwards to look back, O what a sweet light is then cast upon those very trials which when they first came so perplexed them! and how they then see that the mysterious and invisible hand of the Lord did indeed guide them step by step in the way that they should go!

The Lord reminds Israel of this. Every step that Israel had travelled in the wilderness was under divine guidance; they never journeyed till the pillar of the cloud moved before them; they never stayed until the same pillar halted. Yet, were you and I to follow in a map the wanderings of the children of Israel, how intricate would that path tracked out on the chart appear! But this was the termination of it all—the goodly land into which the Lord had promised to bring them. And is it not so with the path that the Lord's people have to travel? so intricate, so entangled, such a maze, such a labyrinth! Yet when they lay their heads upon a dying pillow, and the Lord is about to smile them into eternity, they cannot say that the Lord has led them one wrong step; but that "goodness and mercy have followed them all the days of their life; and now they are about to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." May such an end be our happy portion.

In looking at these words, I shall endeavour to point out what the Lord here chiefly, if I may use the expression, puts his finger upon, and desires more particularly to impress upon their minds. These leading points will come out as, with God's blessing, we travel through the text.

I.—The first point which the Lord impresses upon their conscience is, *to remember*. "*Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the*

*wilderness.*" But some may say, 'How can I remember? I have a treacherous memory; I cannot exactly recollect every circumstance.' No more could they. But is there not a blessed Remembrancer? Is there not a promised Guide and Comforter, of whom the Lord said, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance?" (John 14:26.) And is it not so in soul experience? Why, sometimes the path that we have trodden seems almost blotted out of our memory; or, if we remember the leading circumstances, all is so dark, that we can make nothing of it. Nay, we can scarcely believe that what we considered Ebenezers were memorials of the Lord's goodness at all. But, on the other hand, are there not times and seasons when the Lord sweetly brings to mind his leadings and dealings with us in providence and grace, and raises up living faith in our heart to believe that he did this and did that? that he appeared on this and that occasion? If I may use a figure, it is something like the country spread before our eyes on a very dark and gloomy day. There the objects are. But the gloom, mist, and clouds that hang upon them hide all or pretty nearly all from our sight. The trees, the church spires, the villages, the towns, the parks, and the rivers that run amongst them, are all there; but the darkness rests upon them, and obscures them from our view. But let us travel the same road on a sun-shiny morn, when the cloudless orb of day casts his beams upon every surrounding object—how visible then is every spot which before was enveloped in darkness! The church spires, the villages, the trees, the parks; how they shine forth! And why? Because they are illuminated by the rays of the sun. And yet they were all there just as much in the cloudy day as they are now in the bright sunshine. Is it not so in Christian experience? Our Ebenezers, our testimonies, our tokens, our evidences—they are the same in the cloudy as in the bright day. When the Sun shines into your soul, then you can see them. But when clouds,

darkness, and mists rest upon them, though they are there exactly the same, yet are they hidden from view.

Thus, when the Lord said, "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness," he does not enforce it as a legal precept. I look upon Deuteronomy as the gospel of the Pentateuch; it is so full of spiritual blessings. When therefore he says, "Thou shalt remember," it does not come with the peals of Sinai; it does not blaze, as it were, from that burning mount, as a precept to be fulfilled under the penalty of a curse. But "thou shalt remember," when the divine Remembrancer brings it to thy recollection: when that heavenly Teacher shines upon thy path, and brings it to thy memory. And thus, in true Christian experience, it may be said to a child of God, 'Remember that the Lord appeared for thee on *this* occasion, and that he appeared for thee on *that* occasion; that he met thee in prayer; that he blessed thee in hearing; that he gave thee a visit upon thy bed; that he shone into thy breast in thy chimney corner; that he applied his promises to thy heart; that some sweet passage of his word broke in upon and melted thy soul.'

"Thou shalt remember *all* the way." The dark parts of the path as well as the bright; the crooked paths as well as the straight; the rough passages as well as the smooth; the narrow alleys as well as the broad streets. "Thou shalt remember all the way," from the first to the last, "which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness."

How sweet and refreshing it is to look back upon the way by which we believe the Lord has led us! But how different are our feelings at different times! Sometimes we cannot bear to look back. There are so many things in every man's bosom; there are so many things in every man's life, that sometimes

he cannot, he dare not, look back upon the path that he has trodden. Our very experience itself is so much connected with nature's depravity: there are so many things in self to humble us, though there are so many things at the same time in grace to bless us, that there are times and seasons when we cannot look back upon the path we have trodden, and wish it were altogether buried and forgotten. But when the grace of God begins to manifest itself, and we see it superabounding over the aboundings of our sin, we can look even at the darkest spots, and see the mercies of God superabounding over them. And thus, when the Lord takes us by the hand, we can walk into those paths where we could not walk by ourselves. It is like a child in this vast metropolis. The tender child is afraid to walk out by itself in the dark alleys and narrow lanes; but let the child have hold of its father's hand, and it treads those dark places courageously and boldly which it would fear to do unaccompanied by such protection. And so, when the Lord has hold of his people's hand, as the angels of Lot's, they can walk boldly forward, and look boldly backward, because they lean upon an all-gracious as well as almighty hand.

II.—But the Lord tells his people *why* it was he led them these forty years in the wilderness. His grand object was—to *humble them*. If nothing that we have met with in our pilgrimage has humbled us; if our religion instead of laying us low has exalted us high; if instead of breaking us into humility and self-loathing, it has puffed us up with pride and presumption, depend upon it, it bears not the mark and stamp of God. Where shall we go to find the proudest man in England? In the park on a Sunday, rolling in his carriage? or sitting at a gaming-table in one of the **hells [halls?]** of the metropolis? No; but to some chapel: and there you may see him in a man puffed up by the devil as an angel of light, thinking himself something when he is nothing. And where

shall we go to find a man that is really humble? Into some convent? within the walls of a Popish chapel? or in the cell of a hermit? We shall not find him there. But if we would find such an one, we must look for him in the man in whose heart the grace of God dwells, who knows something of self by divine teachings. And sure am I if our religion has never humbled us, it has done nothing for us—it has left us where it found us, in nature's pride and nature's ignorance.

But how was it that they were *humbled* by walking forty years in the wilderness? Must there not have taken place many things to humble them? We cannot have the effect without the cause; we cannot have the fruit without the root. If, therefore, they were humbled, there must have been something to humble them. We never really can have the grace of humility unless we have had something of a very powerful and deep nature to work that grace in our soul. We cannot walk in our garden on a summer's eve, and pluck the lowly flower, humility, from the border to stick in our button-hole. It grows indeed in the garden of God's word; but we cannot crop it thence to adorn our souls with. There must be some teachings of God the Spirit in the heart to produce that heavenly grace.

Now, what are the two things—for all the dealings and teachings of God to produce humility may be summed up under two things—what are the two things that produce this gospel grace?

1. One is, a deep discovery of what we are; an opening up of the corruption, weakness, and wickedness of our fallen nature. How? By merely shining into our hearts to discover them? That is not enough. How did the Lord discover and bring to light the corruptions of Israel in the wilderness? Was it not by *circumstances*? Was it not by *events*? And did not

circumstances and events make them manifest? For instance, the Lord left them three days without water. What did that produce? Why, it stirred up their rebellion and peevishness. They were quiet enough when they had wells of water to drink at, and the palm trees of Elim over their head. But when they had to go three days without water, then the unbelief and rebellion of their hearts began to work. So it is with the Lord's people. The Lord brings about circumstances and events, and by circumstances and events their corruptions are made manifest. The Israelites were a rebellious people; but their rebellion lay buried until circumstances brought it out. They were an idolatrous people; but their idolatry lay hidden in their bosom until Aaron set up the golden calf. They were a people that longed after Egypt; but it was not manifested till they said, "Let us make to ourselves a captain." They were a gross people; but it was not evidenced until they began to lust after the flesh. Thus it was circumstances and events taking place in the wilderness, that one after another opened up their secret sins, and brought to light their hidden corruptions. Is it not so with you? We do not like to learn humility in this way. We should be glad to learn humility, by its being gently put upon us as a garment, without having to learn it through painful circumstances and distressing events. But the Lord's way of teaching his people humility is, by placing them first in one trying spot, and then in another; by suffering some temptation to arise, some stumbling block to be in their path; some besetting sin to work upon their corrupt affections; some idol to be embraced by their idolatrous heart; something to take place to draw out what was there before, and thus make it as manifest to their sight as before it was manifest to God's sight. I do not mean to say, that we must fall into sin to learn what sin is; but, as a general rule, we learn humility, not by hearing ministers tell us what wicked creatures we are, nor by merely looking into our

bosoms and seeing a whole swarm of evils working there; but from being compelled by painful necessity to believe that we are vile, through circumstances and events time after time bringing to light those hidden evils in our heart, which once we thought ourselves pretty free from.

Now, had Israel been very obedient and submissive in the desert, never bowed down to idols, never lusted after Egypt, they would not have been humbled; but when these wretched evils were brought upon their consciences, they were clothed with humility, because they were thus made to see and feel that indeed they were altogether vile.

2. But there is another way in which humility is taught us, and that is, by having some discovery *of the goodness, mercy, and grace of God in Jesus Christ*. Was it not so with the children of Israel? Was it all wrath towards them? Was it all judgment? Was it all frowns? Was it all threatenings? Was it all stripes? Was there not mercy mingled with the wrath? Were there not smiles blended with the frowns? Were there not the superaboundings of grace over the aboundings of their abominable, aggravated sins? Did not the Lord appear for them, by giving them water out of the rock; by causing the manna to fall from heaven; by defeating their enemies whenever they appeared; by giving them a pillar of cloud to guide them by day, and a pillar of fire to light them by night? Were there not thousands of instances in which the Lord's favour, his especial favour, was manifested towards them? And so it is with the Lord's people now. They learn humility, not merely by a discovery of what they are, but also by a discovery of what Jesus is. When they get a glimpse of Jesus, of his love, of his grace, of his blood; and the blessed Spirit bears a secret testimony in their consciences, that all these are for them; these two feelings meeting together in their bosom—their shame and the Lord's goodness—their guilt and



his forgiveness—their wickedness and baseness, and his superabounding mercy; these two feelings meeting together in their bosoms, break them, humble them, and lay them, dissolved in tears of godly sorrow and contrition, at the footstool of mercy. And thus they learn humility, that sweet grace, that blessed fruit of the Spirit in real, vital soul experience.

III.—But there was another lesson which they had to be taught. The Lord had another purpose to make manifest by leading them about those forty years in the wilderness—to *prove them*, and make manifest what they were. Are not the Lord's dealings continually going on to manifest and prove what his people are? Wherever the Lord implants his grace in a sinner's heart, he will manifest it, he will bring it to light; and wherever there is nothing but nature, the form without the power, profession without reality, he will bring that to light too. We read, "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." (Mal. 3:3.) The Lord tries the heart and searches the reins; and thus he brings to light and makes manifest the counsels of all hearts. Is a man sincere? Is the grace of God in his heart? Is divine life implanted? Does the fear of the Lord dwell in his bosom? That man shall be proved to be one of the Lord's family. On the other hand, has a man taken up religion? Has he begun with God, instead of God beginning with him? Has he a mere name to live among men, while his soul is dead before God? Is hypocrisy, superstition, and self-righteousness the sum and substance of his religion? It shall be made manifest; it shall be proved. The Lord will place the real child of God in those circumstances which shall manifest him; and he will place the hypocrite in those circumstances which shall manifest him. The Lord's dealings with his people in the wilderness are very

much to this purpose and to this end—to prove them, and to know what is in their hearts. Has the Lord implanted life in your soul? Has he touched your conscience with his finger? Has he begun a work of grace upon your heart? If so, in your travels through this wilderness there will be things from time to time to prove the reality of this work upon your soul. You will have *temptations*. Now, when temptation comes, it will prove whether you have the fear of God in your soul to stand against the temptation, or whether you fall under the temptation; or, if you fall under the temptation, whether you are ever recovered out of it. Or you shall be placed in those *circumstances* of life that shall prove whether the grace of God be in you or not. The Lord shall give you worldly prosperity, and shall open for you doors in providence in all directions. Your heart shall be caught by it, if not one of God's people; you shall be drawn away from the Lord's saints, and it shall be manifested by these things that the root of the matter was never in your heart. But on the other hand, if you are a living soul, the Lord will keep bringing circumstance upon circumstance, event upon event, one thing after another; and all these things, as they come upon you, shall be made to prove whether the fear of God be in your soul or not. Now, if the fear of God be not in a man's heart, he must decline, he must fall away. Satan will be more than a match for every one except God's own family; sin will overcome and destroy every one but those whose sins are pardoned through atoning blood and dying love; and the world, sooner or later, will overcome every one who has not the faith of God's elect, whereby alone the world is overcome. Thus the Lord, in his mysterious dealings (and how mysterious his dealings are!) proves the reality of the work of grace in every heart where that work is begun, and proves the hypocrisy of all who have but a name to live while their soul is dead before God.

But more especially, in the case of the Lord's people, are

they called upon to look back, and see all the way the Lord has led them these many years in the wilderness, that everything was a means to an end—to prove them, that the Lord might know whether they would keep his commandments or not. Look back. Do you not see, that so many years or months ago, there was a snare spread for you? and do you not see how the Lord delivered you from that snare? By that the Lord proved you, and saw what was in your heart. Look back, and see some strong temptation—temptation to covetousness, to adultery, to fall under the power of some sin. Do you see, or do you not see, how the Lord delivered you from that besetment, and broke to pieces that temptation, which well-nigh had you in its grasp? Or look back, and see if there was not some sacrifice to be made to pursue the right way of the Lord; by acting up to your profession you must have brought down some persecution upon your head; or greatly have offended some of those to whom you were much beholden; you must have cut off some right hand, plucked out some right eye. Or again, did you, or did you not, overcome that peculiar besetment which conscience at this very moment is speaking of in your bosom? Now, by these things does the Lord continually make manifest what is in your heart. Is sincerity there? It shall be proved and manifested. Is hypocrisy there? It shall be proved and manifested. Is the grace of God there? Circumstances shall bring it to light. Is nothing but delusion, deceit, self-righteousness, and lies there? They shall be all made manifest; they may be cloaked for a time, but they shall all come to light, for the Lord's purpose is to bring all things to light. Thus, when you look back upon the way the Lord has led you these many years in the wilderness, can you not see how circumstance after circumstance, and event after event arose, to prove what was in you; whether godly fear, whether simplicity and sincerity, whether a desire to fear God, whether a dread to offend him, whether the life

and power of vital godliness, or whether little else than an empty profession without the life-giving power of God in the soul? What a mercy for you to be able to look back and see how the Lord appeared for you, when without him you must have sunk; when you can feel, to your soul's comfort, that the Lord did uphold you in the trying hour, did appear for you in distressing circumstances, did make bare his right arm when you had no strength of your own, did guide you when you had lost all clue, did bring you safe through all when, without his help, you must have been utterly lost. What a mercy it is to be able, by the actings of living faith (and sure I am, there must be faith in exercise), to look back upon the way, and believe that indeed the grace of God was in your heart, that the Lord proved it, and showed it to be genuine by every circumstance that has taken place.

IV.—*"Whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no;"* which thou lovedst most, God or the world; which thy heart clave to in earnest, the things of Christ, or the things of time and sense; whether the word of God was thy rule, or of man; whether the fear of God was thy motive, or the good opinion of the creature; whether to serve God in sincerity and godly simplicity, to obey God's precepts, to keep God's word, was the desire of thy heart; or whether a little outside religion, just to please man, was your object, whilst within there was little else but dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

V.—*"And suffered thee to hunger."* What is this? Another memorial of the forty years' pilgrimage. It is true literally of some of the Lord's pilgrims. While the wicked in this world eat their full, so that their eyes stand out with fatness and they have more than heart can wish, how many of the Lord's poor are suffered to hunger, even in a literal sense! But it is true of all spiritually, though not true of all literally, "he

suffered them to hunger." What is it to suffer a soul to hunger? Is it not the denial of food to it? It is so literally, is it not? If a man has food denied him, he must hunger. And so it is with God's people. There is in them an appetite after food, a desire after living bread. There is that in their souls which God himself alone can supply. There is a guilty conscience, which nothing but blood can appease; a dark heart, which nothing but light can cure; a dead, unfeeling soul, which nothing but the sweet revivings of the Lord can restore and comfort. There are trials that need deliverances, sorrows that need consolations, castings down that need liftings up, griefs that need the healing balm. Thus there is in their hearts an appetite, a desire, a hungering after living food, such as the Lord himself alone can supply.

But "he suffered them to hunger." How keen must be the feelings of a parent to hear his child cry for bread! And yet the Lord often leaves his children to cry for the bread of heaven, leaves them hungry. When perhaps you could not bear that your child should be hungry half an hour, the Lord allows his people to be hungry for days. Why is this? It is to give them a keener relish for food; to wean their appetite from worldly victuals; to bring them off that gross feeding of which they have contracted a habit, and make them long after heavenly food. Was it not so with the children of Israel? They came out of Egypt fat and surfeited with Egyptian food, the leeks, the onions, the garlick, and the flesh, when they sat by the flesh-pots. They had then to be cleansed from the gross humours which infected their body. Egyptian air and Egyptian diet had made them so gross, that they needed a course of fasting to remove out of their bodies the corrupt humours. The Lord therefore suffered them to hunger, that there might be a keener appetite for spiritual food; that they might be brought down to the fasting point, a healthy appetite, which nothing could appease or allay but a shower

of bread from heaven.

Is it not so with God's people? What gross appetites we have by nature, swallowing sin by mouthfuls! No thirsty horse ever plunged his throat into a bucket of water with more eagerness than we, in times past, have plunged headlong into every sin. Was there not some need to be brought off this gross feeding? How could we relish heavenly manna, the love and blood of Jesus, sweet love visits from his heavenly presence, pure love tokens from his precious hands, without being well purged from this Egyptian food on which we had been nurtured from our very cradle? And therefore the Lord suffers his people to hunger, that they may have an appetite for something more than what nature can give, that they may long for those supplies of heavenly food which the Lord alone can supply.

Is it not this keen hunger which creates an appetite for heavenly food? Surely. But after the Lord has given his people a taste for heavenly food, they still have to hunger, that they may relish it the more. There are times and seasons when, like the children of Israel, after we have tasted manna, we want quails, we long for flesh; and the Lord, perhaps, answers our request, as he did theirs, but sends leanness withal into our souls. The quails came, and fell round about the camp three days' journey; but whilst the meat was in their mouth, the anger of God was manifested, and they loathed the very flesh for which they had so idolatrously longed. Is it not so with you? There is some sin that you are longing to enjoy, some lust you want to gratify. The Lord may permit you to go great lengths in this matter; but what would be the consequence? Why, no sooner would the meat be in your mouth, than the wrath of God would come into your conscience; and you would loathe the very meat that your wicked heart has been lusting after. Thus we

are suffered to hunger, in order that this great Egyptian habit may be purged away, and there may be given a pure appetite for pure food, a heavenly appetite for heavenly provision; that hungering, that thirsting, that inward desire, which nothing but the love and blood of the Lamb can supply.

Now, can you not look upon the path the Lord has led you in the wilderness, and see how you were suffered to hunger? Perhaps you went months without a testimony. You come to hear the word Sunday after Sunday, but nothing for you. You went down upon your knees time after time, but no testimony, no whispers, no smiles. You read chapters, and turn the leaves of the Bible over and over; but nothing for you! nothing for you! nothing to touch your heart, nothing to meet your case, nothing to dissolve, to break, to melt you. So you went on, moping and moaning, and fearing your case was altogether desperate. Is not this suffering you to hunger? Can you not look back and see how, again and again, the Lord thus suffered you to hunger? You could not, as hundreds do, feed upon ashes, satisfy yourselves with forms. Sermons and doctrines did not content you. You must have feeling and power, the smiles of God, and the whispers of his love, or you are not satisfied. And therefore you can see (at least, I can) how good it is that the Lord should sometimes suffer us to hunger. It is a very painful thing; but how sweet it makes food when the food comes! How it weans a man from going after those things which never can profit, which never have profited us.

VI.—*"And fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know."* How this follows their suffering from hunger! See the connection. Here are the three steps—first of all, Egyptian food; then, wilderness hunger; then, heavenly manna. Egyptian onions and heavenly manna did not meet together; they were separated by an interval, and

that interval was hunger. Is it not so experimentally? When your heart is going out after idols, when you spiritually are travelling the same path as the children of Israel in the wilderness, lusting in your affections after Egypt, have you any appetite for spiritual food? None, none! The shop, the business, the wife, the husband, the child, the world—these are all you care about. But when the Lord begins to deal with your conscience more powerfully, is not this the effect that, like the prodigal of old, you feel an aching void in the very bottom of your heart, which neither farm, nor shop, nor house, nor business, nor family, nor the things of time and sense, can satisfy? Then, you begin to long after something from God, dropped down from the Lord's own lips into your heart.

"And fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know." What is this manna? Is it not the bread from heaven, of which the Lord has given us an explanation in the sixth chapter of John's gospel?—"I am the bread of life." This manna, spiritually, is the flesh and blood of Jesus—embracing him in the arms of living faith, as a crucified Saviour; feeling the application of his atoning blood to the conscience; enjoying the manifestations of his dying love to the heart; and receiving him as a blessed Mediator between God and our souls. And when the Lord is pleased to unfold his glory, to bring a sense of his dying love into our hearts, and give us to look upon him as the crucified Man of Sorrows—this is manna, such as the children of Israel never tasted—this is the bread of life, that fits the soul for heaven, and takes the soul to heaven.

But *who* are to eat this manna? *Who* can come unto a bleeding Jesus? *Who* can look unto a crucified Man of Sorrows? *Who* can feel the application of atoning blood to the conscience? *Who* can feed upon the sufferings of Jesus by



living faith? The unexercised, the untried, the unperplexed, the undistressed? They cannot, they cannot. They must have Egyptian diet purged off by painful exercises, by wandering in the wilderness, by sharp temptations, by keen and cutting sorrows, before they have an appetite for heavenly food. But when the Lord is pleased to give them this appetite, and then begins to drop a little sensation of his goodness, mercy, and love into their soul—this is heavenly manna, which neither they nor their fathers knew.

VII.—And why is all this? The Lord sums it all up in those words—*"That he might make thee know, that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."* What a spiritual light these words cast upon the whole! "Man doth not live by bread alone." There is heavenly food to support his soul, as well as natural food to support his body. If man is supported spiritually by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, if this be the only food the Lord's people enjoy, how little they have! How strong and striking these words are!—"Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Now, if you have no more food than that which proceedeth out of the mouth of God into your heart, how much have you? If you take away all your religion that does not stand in this, into what a small compass is it all crushed up! It takes your religion, which, in your vain thoughts sometimes might almost fill this chapel, and screws it up into a nutshell. If you and I have no more religion than that which comes from what God has spoken into our soul; if that be the bread we are to live upon: if that be the strength of our heart; if that be our living portion and our dying sufficiency;—how it narrows up our religion into so small a compass, that sometimes we seem to require a microscope to see whether we have any or not. But thus we learn this lesson, "that man liveth not by bread alone." He cannot live by doctrines in the

head. He cannot live by bodily gestures. He cannot live by rites and forms and ceremonies. He cannot live by anything that springs from the creature. His life is first given by God, and his life is maintained by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. What the Lord teaches, he knows; what the Lord works, he feels; what the Lord gives, he possesses; what the Lord speaks to his heart, he has in his soul, as from the lips of the sovereign Majesty himself.

But into what a narrow spot this brings the living family! In your trials, can you take any comfort (I cannot) except from what the Lord speaks to your soul? Can you believe anything that the Lord does not bring with power into your heart? Can you take any promise that does not come accompanied by divine unction to your conscience? Can you believe your own interest in the love and blood of the Lamb, except God tell you so with his own mouth? You cannot, you cannot, if the fear of God is in exercise. But how this cuts to pieces all man-made religion! and the sooner and more completely it is cut to pieces, the better. Why need I deceive myself by thinking I have a religion, which will not stand the trying hour, which will not give me comfort on a death-bed, nor land me safe in eternity? Now, the only religion that will give my soul comfort on a death-bed, and that will take my soul into eternity, is what God is pleased to work in my heart with his own almighty hand, the word he is pleased to speak with his own lips to my soul, and the manifestations of his mercy and love which he alone can bring down with convincing power into my heart. But what a narrow path is this! How it cuts up all creature righteousness! How it lays the creature low in the dust of abasement! With all your religion, you have none but what God gives, nor can you procure a grain; for you have to live, not by bread alone, in your natural life, but on every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. How then are you spiritually to live, except from time to time the

Lord speak a word to your soul?

Now, this is a mark of the Lord's family. When they come to hear the word, they do not come in a criticising mood, as though they were great people, and would pass some very decisive judgment on those who stand up in the Lord's name. Not but what they will have their discernment, not but what they will have their judgment. But thus—'O that the Lord would speak a word to my soul! O that the Lord would apply his precious truth to my heart! O that the Lord would shine upon me, and give me some testimony that I am safe for eternity!' Why are these prayers going up out of their bosom? Why, as they come to chapel, are they looking down upon the pavement, and their heart going up from time to time that the Lord would bless them? Because they feel that nothing but the Lord's blessing can stand their soul in any stead; and that nothing but the Lord's own words, proceeding from the Lord's own mouth into their heart, can raise up in their soul that faith, hope, and love, and those sweet testimonies and blessed evidences, which alone can satisfy them.

Now, if you can do with any religion short of this, *I* cannot. I tell you honestly, *I* cannot. I have seen an end of all other. No other will ease a guilty conscience; no other speak peace to a troubled heart; no other banish doubt and fear; no other bless me here, nor take me safe to glory hereafter. But I am sure that that religion which is God's gift and God's work, which stands not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God—*that* will bless me here, and take me to glory hereafter. I am sure that what God speaks to my soul, will stand when the world is in a blaze. What man may speak, will be driven away by the first gust of wind. The smoke out of the chimney, the chaff out of the threshing-floor, are not more transitory than the mere word of man. So that the Lord's

people stand distinguished by this one mark, if they have no more—that they must have those testimonies which the Lord alone can give them, those words which the Lord alone can speak, and those smiles which the Lord alone can bestow. But what a mercy if the Lord has humbled you thus, to raise you up; if the Lord has made you hunger thus, to feed your soul with heavenly manna; if the Lord has raised up this cry and sigh in your heart, that he himself would speak with power to your soul, and you can listen to no other voice but that of the good Shepherd. You have a mark and testimony that the Lord's hand is at work in your soul, and that he is dealing with you as his child.

May this be our religion. I want no more; and I would sooner have none at all, if not this. I would sooner on a Sunday take a walk in the park, or go to Hampton Court, and be a worldly man altogether, than come to chapel, and never feel life and power in my soul. To put on religion, and yet be devoid of that in which the very life of God consists!—O what a wretched state to be in! to be a professor, to go amongst God's people, to hear God's truth, to listen to the most heart-searching appeals, and then to be dead in sin or dead in a profession, and cloak over all your wickedness with the mask of hypocrisy! I, for my part, would sooner be a worldly man altogether, than have a religion that does not stand in the power of God. Though I may have my doubts and fears (as no doubt you have sometimes) and am often plagued and pestered with sin morning, noon, and night; yet this is my deliberate opinion—I would sooner be a worldly man altogether, making no profession, but living like other men in the world, than have a name to live while dead, the form without the power. Such is the feeling of my heart, and such the verdict of my conscience.