

Perishable Food

by J.C. Ryle

Jesus teaches that we should labor for spiritual food that endures to everlasting life, rather than physical food that perishes, and offers salvation to all who desire it.

Scripture: John 6:26

Topics: "True Faith", "Spiritual Nourishment"

Description

J.C. Ryle emphasizes the importance of seeking spiritual nourishment over physical sustenance, as illustrated in John 6:26-27. He critiques the shallow motives of those who followed Jesus merely for material gain, highlighting that true faith should be rooted in a desire for everlasting life. Ryle encourages believers to labor for spiritual food that nourishes the soul, rather than being consumed by the temporary satisfaction of bodily needs. He reassures that Jesus, the Son of Man, is willing to provide this eternal sustenance to all who seek it, regardless of their past motives. Ultimately, Ryle calls for honesty in our spiritual pursuits and the necessity of actively engaging in practices that promote our spiritual well-being.

Transcript

"Jesus answered them and said, Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you." (John 6:26,27)

This is a sad exposure of the true reason why many followed our Lord. It was not now even a desire to see miracles performed, as it had been the day before. These, after a time when the novelty was past, would cease to astonish and attract. It was a lower and more carnal motive still: it was the mere wish to be fed again with loaves and fishes. They wanted to get something more out of our Lord. They had been fed once, and they would like to be fed again. The poor, low, and carnal motives which induce men to make some religious profession are painfully exhibited here. Our Lord's perfect knowledge of the secret springs of men's actions is striking. We cannot deceive Christ even if we deceive man; our true characters will be exposed in the day of judgment if not found out before we die. Whatever we are in religion, let us be honest and true.

"Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life." This verse is peculiarly full of instructive lessons. (1) There is something forbidden. We are not to labor exclusively or excessively for the satisfaction of bodily needs--for that food which perishes in the using and does us only a little temporary good. (2) There is something commanded. We ought to work hard and strive for that

spiritual food which supplies the needs of our souls, and when once obtained, is an everlasting possession. (3) There is something promised. The Son of Man is ready to give that spiritual food (which endures forever) to everyone who desires to have it. (4) There is something declared. Jesus Christ has been designated and appointed by God the Father for this very purpose, to be the dispenser of this spiritual food to all who desire it.

The entire verse is a strong proof that however carnal and wicked men may be, we should never hesitate to offer them freely and fully the salvation of the Gospel. Bad as the motives of these Jews were, we see our Lord, in the same breath, first exposing their sin and then showing them their remedy.

When our Lord said, "Do not labor for the food which perishes," we must not for a moment suppose that He meant to encourage idleness and the neglect of all lawful means in order to get our living. This kind of expression--when two things are put in comparison--is not uncommon in the Bible. The simple meaning here is that we ought to take far more pains about meeting the needs of our souls than our bodies. When our Lord says to labor for the food which endures, he teaches very plainly that it is the duty of everyone to use every means, and to endeavor in every way to promote the welfare of his soul. We are especially to labor in the use of prayer, in reading the Bible, and in attendance at the preaching of God's Word.

When our Lord says that the Son of man shall give you the food that endures to everlasting life, he appears to make one of the widest and most general offers to unconverted sinners that we have in the Bible. The men to whom he was speaking were, beyond question, carnal-minded and unconverted. Yet even to them Jesus says, "which the Son of Man will give you." It seems an unmistakable statement of Christ's willingness and readiness to give pardon and grace to any sinner. It warrants us in proclaiming Christ's readiness to save anyone, and in offering salvation to anyone if he will only repent and believe the Gospel.

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