

A Living Hope - Part 3

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the significance of feeding on Christ and the different phases of Israel's life, highlighting the progression from faith to works and the corresponding responsibilities and challenges.

Duration: 45:41

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 6:33, Colossians 1:27, 1 Peter 1:3

Topics: "Hope"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker uses the example of Israel's journey through the wilderness to illustrate three phases of every Christian's life. The first phase is the Passover, representing the foundation of our faith and the mysterious ministry of Christ that sustains us even in the midst of challenges. The second phase is the wilderness, where believers are under discipline and learning the lessons of walking by faith. The speaker emphasizes that in both phases, we are unable to do anything on our own and must rely on God's provision and guidance. The sermon highlights the hope of glory that springs forth when we feed on Christ, who is in us, and how this transforms our lives.

Transcript

We shall read again the two passages around which much of our meditation has circled at this time and then we shall add to them a third fragment. First is in the first letter of Peter, chapter one, verse three, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away reserved in heaven. Living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

The letter to the Colossians, chapter one and verse 27. God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Now this fragment from a very considerable setting in the sixth chapter of the gospel by John, verse 33. For the bread of God is he which cometh down out of heaven and giveth life unto the world. Just the small phrase, the bread of God, Christ in you, the hope, glory.

It is possible that you have been impressed as I have with the fact that throughout the bible from beginning to end, feeding has such a large place. Some will have discovered that with great pleasure, others of us

perhaps are not so pleasantly surprised that it is so. But there it is, seems that the first thought of God for man after having created him was his food, everything for food is the word.

And on from that point the whole matter of eating and drinking develops tremendously. All the great religious convocations in Israel were mainly characterized by this feasting element. They were feasts of the Lord.

And everything in relation to the Lord and in the Lord's relationship to man in the old testament seemed to be centered around this matter of eating and drinking. And there's not a little in the gospels about it. Some of the parables, parables of feasts.

But we can be quite sure of this, that in as much as so largely by the instigation, instruction, prescription of the Lord, his thought never ended with the merely physical, temporal, the gratification of natural desire and appetite. We can be quite sure that back of all that, there is a spiritual thought and an eternal thought. And it looks very much as though John 6 brings it right in, in fullness.

For it's so very largely a long chapter on the bread of life. Christ, the bread of life. Feeding.

Drinking, as he said, his blood and eating his flesh. Now bread, as we quite well know, is a town. It's a town which everywhere is synonymous with the stable food of life.

Some countries it is not what we call bread. Bread. But to everybody, whatever the form is, it is this or that, it is bread.

That is, it is the very basis of existence. And is not a great distance from the symbol and the temporal to the spiritual. The very subsistence of life, the very basis of life, is Christ in you.

That is the deepest meaning of the Lord's table. The eating and the drinking is symbolic of this one thing. Christ in you.

Christ becoming your very inward basis of existence. That's the principle. Now as in so many other things, Israel is a great illustration of this great truth.

For Israel's life and history had three aspects, every one of which was based upon food. The very beginning was the Passover meal. The eating of the Passover.

Their sojourn in the wilderness based upon the manna. And when they came into the land, it says, and when they had eaten of the old corn of the land, the manna ceased. A new phase, but still this governing factor of bread, of food.

And those three phases of Israel's life are in figure the three phases of every Christian's life. The life of the church, the life of any company of believers. There is that which answers to or is typical of the Passover.

The very foundation of our being the Lord's people is in the Passover. We know that it was foundational to their national history. It was in the eating of the Passover on that night ever to be remembered.

That their deliverance from the power of this world. Their deliverance from the old bondage to its tyranny. Their deliverance from all the defeat and frustration of that old life.

Their emergence to become the Lord's people in covenant by him in blood. All that was centered in the eating of the Passover. Their salvation rested upon their eating of the Passover.

That night bondage was broken and death destroyed for them or nullified for them. Judgment escaped and they were constituted the nation of God, the Lord's people, his own possession by eating the Passover lamb. And that became an institution throughout all their generations.

Passover was an annual event as we know, meaning that it governed all their years and all their generations stands to this day in Israel and always in relation to what happened at the beginning. A feeding. You may think that that is simple and elementary.

My dear friends it does make a difference to us what we eat. It makes a lot of difference what we eat. What are you feeding on? It will show itself in your face.

If you are feeding upon yourself, your miserable wretched self. That self that is not redeemed and cannot be redeemed and God never intended to redeem it. That sinful self which he never patches up or repairs.

You are feeding on yourself. Well no wonder you're miserable. It's poor fare isn't it? When you go to prayer first thing in the morning and I take it that you do, what do you feed on? All the time telling the Lord what a wretched thing you are, what a failure you are.

You can't give the Lord any new information about that. He knows far, far more about that than you could ever tell him. No wonder you begin the day in defeat.

You're feeding on food that is not convenient. Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. Feeding upon the very elements and constituents of the redemption of salvation.

Christ crucified. That's the way to start any day. There are many other things that you might be feeding on, not only in the morning but through the day and through all the week.

On some grievance, some offense, some trouble that you're nursing, something you're feeding on it. Is that your daily food? You do not get very far in the Christian life until the foundation provision of God is your daily meal. Like that.

I say it does make a difference what we feed on. Well there is the first phase you see. It's a mighty phase but it was basic to everything else, basic to everything else.

An eating of that which represented and symbolized the completeness and perfection of our redemption in Christ Jesus. The finished work. The mighty deliverance from the power of the enemy and of the world and of our spiritual bonding.

Oh let us feed on it more. If we did we'd be far more triumphant people if we would feed on that first aspect of God's provision. Look at Israel in Egypt.

What's the picture? An oppressed and a depressed people in shame, in disappointment. Yes in everything that was not glorious but the opposite to what is glorious. What a picture.

And we don't have to look back to Israel in Egypt to see the picture. Come nearer. We know how true in the spiritual life that state is without Christ.

But from that despair and God saw to it that they did reach the point of utter despair. From that despair and that shame and that reproach and they had everything so contrary to glory. The hope of glory sprang when they fed on the lamb.

When they took him inside Christ in you. The hope of glory right at the beginning to change everything. Like that.

The second phase they're in the wilderness. Redemption has been effected. They are out as the Lord's own people.

But now this phase has its own particular and peculiar features and characteristics. They're at school, under discipline, deep. Learning the deep and drastic lessons of a walk of faith with God.

Very hard school for it is a life of faith indeed. There's nothing for sight in a wilderness that you can find any hope in. Nothing there that will grow of itself or that you by any effort of yours could make to grow.

You're cast upon God for everything. You've got to learn right from the beginning all the way along that God and God alone is your resource. God is your resource.

With every element against you. With every difficulty around you. With everything that speaks of desolation on the outside and hopelessness.

By daily lessons of testing and trial. Learning this one thing that God can meet the situation. God is sufficient for this.

He is the only recourse. But he is the recourse. The manna signified that when they first saw the manna they said what is it? That's a poor translation of the original language which can hardly be translated.

If we were to try to put it into a phrase it would be difficult to do so but something like this. This is a mystery. What is it? We've never seen anything like this before.

Never known of anything like this. There's nothing within the whole compass of our natural knowledge that explains this. It's a mystery.

It's something quite strange. It's something from outside of this world. That was the manna.

The sustenance of the Lord's people in all that which corresponds to the wilderness discipline and chastening and training and trial. I say the sustenance through it all is a mystery. How you and I have gone on through the years with everything calculated to destroy faith.

To undermine confidence. To shake us. And to destroy us.

How we've gone on it's a mystery. But that's manna. It is that marvelous though so mysterious unspeakable inexplicable ministry of Christ where we can do nothing about it at all.

It's like this. They couldn't do anything. What could they do to get food in the wilderness? They could do nothing.

There's no use of ploughing and sowing in a desert. Nowhere to go for anything. What could they do? Could do nothing and yet all this is on them of demand.

Demand and they can do nothing about it. What can we do today? What can we do in this situation which is a part of our spiritual education and training? To know the Lord. To prove the Lord.

What can we do? We can do nothing. That's just the truth isn't it about so much of the Christian life. You can't do anything about it.

How we look round search and explore for some way of being able to solve the problem we shut up to it. Nay we're shut up to God. And we've come through a thousand experiences like that.

When there was no way and no record, no solution, no answer and nothing that we could do. The mystery of Christ in you, the hope. We've come on.

You could have no more hopeless situation than a desert. Have you ever seen a desert? I've passed over that very same desert many times. My word it brings it home to you.

People should be in that for 40 years and survive. No water, no food. What is the hope in such a situation? Christ in you the bread of God.

The bread of God. Not of man. Now of course a very great deal of all this was while necessary training and discipline a very great deal of it was due to themselves.

Due to themselves. Their own fault shall we say. And we're all going to be perfectly candid and frank about this.

A great deal of our trouble is our own fault. But thank God. Though it was so much their own fault.

He didn't say it's your own fault I leave you to it. He gave them manna out of heaven. See the Lord from his side didn't intend that.

When they were leaving Egypt he told them to take victorials. And their kneading troughs. What's the good of a kneading trough in a desert? This that it was only from the divine standpoint an 11 days journey to the land.

But it extended to 40 years due to their fault. The Lord did not intend it to be like that. But you know there's so much in our lives the Lord never intended.

But what I'm coming down on all the time is this. Oh yes let that be true. Fully true.

And how many of us today have to say oh when I had my time over again with the knowledge that I have today I wouldn't do that. I wouldn't do that. I would do other.

I see where I made the mistake. Where I involved myself in difficulty. Where I made confusion and a mess of things.

But the Lord never abandoned us as he never abandoned them. Thank God he gave them manna out of heaven. He still sustained them with this mysterious sustenance that they knew not of.

They could not explain. But there it was. Second phase.

They did have to learn very much. And learn in a hard school. But the Lord provided the sustenance for that phase.

Third phase. They pass into the land eventually or the next generation. They pass into the land.

As I have said in Joshua 5 it says and when they had eaten of the old corn of the land the manna ceased. Now I want you to note this before you go that far. These other two phases are not left behind as something done forever.

The Passover was maintained all the time year by year. You've always dear friends right to the very end of your history with God got to reckon on and stand into all the values of that Passover. That is not something just done and left.

You and I will right to the end have to stand upon the infinite virtue of the body and blood of Christ. So the Passover is an ordinance forever in Israel. And even though they left the wilderness and the manna behind they took a pot of it over with them in the ark.

It is there still as a testimony right at the heart of their life. In its changing aspects and phases nevertheless right at the center in the ark there's this pot of manna a testimony to how God can furnish a table in the wilderness. Great thing to have that in the background of your life.

If you hadn't you couldn't go through this next phase. For when you come to the third phase in their life and history it's the phase of tremendous responsibility. Up to that time it has all been what the Lord has done for them.

Now it's going to be what the Lord will do through them. They're involved now not in the kindergarten or childhood education period. They're now in the maturity responsibility phase.

There's warfare, continuous desperate warfare on. It's another phase. Now all that has been by way of provision, instruction, teaching and education has got to be put to the test in practical ways.

What's the value of it now? You're up against it now. It is not the matter of your salvation now. It's a matter of your testimony before principalities and powers.

Your testimony before the world nations. Now it's something tremendous that's on hand. Firstly the warfare with the adverse, the antagonistic forces.

Then the taking possession of the inheritance, the mighty wealth. And then the turning of that inheritance. That which you have come into turning it and exploiting it.

Making it serve divine purpose. Out of whose hills you can dig brass. There's some hard work to be done to exploit the resources that you've come into.

To make good the values of the inheritance. We've, we've graduated now from being the irresponsible people of the wilderness to being the responsible people in fellowship with God in his great purpose. For this there's a change in the food situation.

Now you've got to be very careful that you mark the real point of the change. Before it was always the appropriation of faith. They went out every morning to appropriate by faith God's provision for the day.

And while they observed the laws of that provision and were obedient to what the Lord said about it, that it was to be day by day and none left over for tomorrow, while they were obedient, faith made good God's provision. It is not a change from faith to something else when you get into the third phase. But it's a

change of faith.

It's a change of faith. Then it was faith appropriating, receiving, taking, getting. Now it's the works of faith.

It's faith working. You've learned something about faith by the Lord's wonderful goodness to you. Have you noticed how in the Christian life so often, not invariably, because it seems sometimes the Lord hastens things by shortening the time and making it very intense for some young Christians.

But have you not noticed that very often young Christians are treated like children and given so much of the Lord at the beginning? It seems to be made so easy for them. He almost seems to pander to them, spoil them. They have a wonderful time.

They don't even have to ask, and they get it. Isn't it like that? Yes, it's just as we call it simple childlike faith. And the Lord responds to that at the beginning.

But there comes a point at which it changes. Not from faith, but where you have got to fight the fight of faith. You're in the land.

There's a battle on. Tremendous battle. It's the fight now of faith.

Faith is not just that simple thing that it was. We must preserve that simple appropriating faith where our salvation is concerned. Our continuous salvation.

Take that simply by faith. But we're in something more as we go on. We're involved in tremendous things.

This conflict with the evil powers, forces. There's now something that we've got to do about all these resources that are ours in Christ. We just do not find that they're coming to us.

We are put through exercise. Through, yes, exercise. We have to do some real spade work now to turn to good that which is our inheritance.

Do you follow? If you don't understand the teaching, you know it in experience. It's like that. It is that changed aspect of faith because of a changed position.

It is not now just salvation. I don't mean by that that salvation is a little thing. Do you know what I mean? Not just our acceptance and that we are made children of God.

Not that. We are in a mighty, mighty thing in this universe. We're out of Romans.

We're into Ephesians. We are in a mighty, mighty thing in this universe. We're out of Romans.

We're into Ephesians. We're in the mighty things. The deep things.

The deep things of God. In these things we only turn our resources to account by some very, very hard work. Shall I put that another way? By really being put to it.

Now are we going to know the power of his resurrection? My word, to know that we've got to know something very deeply of the power of death. Are we going to come back to our theme? Are we going to know the wonder of the hope? The hope which is Christ in us. The hope of glory.

We'll taste something of despair to discover it. We'll be plunged sometimes. Oh yes, you say that.

That's terrible. But listen. Listen to your favorite apostle.

We despaired even of life. Paul, you say you despaired. Yes, I despaired.

And I've written it down that I despaired. We had the sentence that it was death. That we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raised us from the dead.

If you're going to know that kind of raising, you've got to know something of that kind of experience. But you see, Paul was not just there circling around his own personal salvation. His context is, I fill out that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ for his body's sake, which is the church.

I don't mean that that's the context in his writings. I mean that that's the spiritual context. His sufferings, his deep places, his being put to it to tremendous spiritual exercise of faith is not just personal.

It's related. It's connected with the church and the church's destiny. But when you get over into the land, things cease to be merely personal.

It's the responsibility of the whole purpose and people of God that Christ in you is the hope of glory even there. It's very true. Whatever is true, and it is very true, about our salvation by appropriating Christ and about our sustenance in the Christian life through the years by simply feeding upon him, taking him from day to day as our life, as our strength.

Whatever is true about that, it is equally true. I could almost say more true in this realm, where it's not because of our responsibility at all. It's not our fault.

It's not because of what we have done or not done. Nothing to do with our merely human weakness and faultiness and error and wrong. We are involved in something objective, a tremendous thing.

No, this battle rages, and there's no explanation for many of the situations into which we are brought, many of the ordeals. There's no explanation in the realm of our own faultiness, our sinfulness. It is not because of something that we have done or not done that this situation arises.

It arises altogether apart from us, and we are thrust into it, become a part of it. It's something immense, far beyond the individual, the personal. It's related to the Lord's people everywhere in this world.

But here I was saying the marvel, the marvel of that provision of the Lord. Christ in you, the hope of glory, even in that, in that when all the forces of evil are let loose, when all the fire of the enemy is released, when we are in this great battle of the ages, in the heavenlies, Christ in you is the hope of glory. See, that's the point upon which Paul finishes in that very letter which brings this third phase of Christian life so fully into view, glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus unto all ages and therefore forever and ever.

Why glory in the Church? How glory in the Church? Christ in you, the hope of glory. Christ in the Church, his presence makes everything possible for an issue of glory. Well, what have we said? We have simply pointed out with all these words and in these illustrative ways how God has made Christ the basis, the foundation of eternal glory and that by Christ being within.

Oh, take him, appropriate him day by day, stand on him as the basis of your salvation, not on yourself. Don't feed on yourself. Don't feed on yourself, on your failure, on what you are.

If you do, you know, you know you're feeding upon ashes. God has made ashes of us all in the great altar. Don't feed on ashes, feed on Christ, the living Christ.

Under discipline, trial, training and chastening and education, learning the lessons of faith, feed on Christ. Take him, take him in every time of faith trial. And in the great battle in which we are, we find ourselves from a certain point in the Christian life.

Thank God it is not left to us, not left to us to get through like that. I did drop a word just now which might be helpful if I were to come back to it. I said in some cases it does seem that the Lord is saving a lot of time by pressing into a short period the intensity of this training and trial.

You can see some young Christians having the trial of mature Christians, having the discipline, the hard schooling that we would think should only come to those who have a lot of experience. But there it is. Maybe you're one of those.

The Lord is shortening the time to get you matured quickly for some purpose. You'll be able to take responsibility early, early. Why wait till you've had years and years of Christian life before you're able to take serious responsibility in the battle and in the corporate life of the Lord's people? It's not necessary, but there are a great many people you know, unfortunately and tragically, a vast number of Christians today who will not face or contemplate any difficulty.

They're going to have a good time. They're going to turn the Christian life and Christianity into a continuous picnic, a continuous holiday, making it all a matter of pleasure, pleasure. Well, they'll break if ever they get into the battle.

Well, they'll be scattered if ever they should have to face something of the third stage of the Christian life. It's not the Lord's unkindness to put any young Christian into a hard school. It's that he might trust them with large responsibilities and do it early.

It's a grand thing to see a young Christian, a young Christian, an old Christian. You know what I mean? One who really now can stand up to things and doesn't have to be nursed like a babe. One who can shoulder responsibilities in the house of God and does not all the time got to be chased after and looked up and coddled.

No, but to be such, be such. It's always this way. It's a difficult school, a difficult school, but the point is that for every phase and aspect, Christ is the bread of God, the bread of God.

Christ in you, the hope.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/0/SID0004.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/a-living-hope-part-3/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net