

# Christ - the Bread of Life

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***"Cluster of Canaan's Grapes," 1649.***

"I am that bread of life." {Jn.6:48} These words are a clear and plain testimony of our Saviour concerning himself. In verse 33 of this chapter, he tells the Jews that the bread of God came down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world; and then in verse 35, and verse 48. This is the marrow and the life of all our Saviour's discourse in this chapter as it were centered in this 48<sup>th</sup> verse. "I am that bread of life." In verse 33 he calls himself "the bread of God," and the "life of the world;" and in verse 38, he shows how he came to be the life of the world, even by the will of God, sent by God, and his business the work and will of God. In the 39<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> verses, he tells us, "and this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Here our Saviour clears up whom he meant by the world; namely, the elect and chosen of God, which are given to Christ by his Father, and then declares that his work is his Father's will, and tells us what it is; namely, that all which God his Father had given him, should have everlasting life in him. He tells us how faithful he will be in this work, so that nothing shall be lost that God hath committed to him; and tells us that this is the will of God, that every soul which he hath given to Christ should have a discovery of him, and believe on him, and that in all this will of God runs the seed of eternal life. For that part which is capable of lying down in the dust to sleep, even that part shall not be lost, but shall be raised up at the last day; that is, the last day of the world, which passeth away like a dream in the night. Now if we lay all this together, must we not needs acknowledge this truth, that Christ is the bread of God, the bread of life; yea, the God of life! Our Saviour uses this term of bread indulgently to the weakness of our flesh; but his work is in the Spirit, and if God give us the Spirit with the letter, we shall discern the glory of Christ as he is our life in his own light. This appears by our Saviour's own words in verse 63 of this chapter. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Christ's words are spirit and life, because he himself is our spiritual life. In verse 49, Christ tells us what he doth mean by this bread of life. "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead;" as if Christ should say, no externals whatsoever in your life; you may feed on them all your way in the wilderness, and yet soul and body die. But in the two next verses, he speaks plainly what is the bread that he meant. "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." {Jn.6:50,51} Here I say Christ demonstrates what is the bread that

he meant, namely himself in the flesh, and he becomes this bread of life by giving his life in the flesh for us. In the 53,54,55 & 56 verses of this chapter, our Saviour shows us how that interest in him as a crucified Jesus is our life, and that he may fully clear this out to us, he holds forth himself not only a crucified Saviour, but a living God. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." {vs.57} Our Saviour's argument seems to be thus; I live as one in God, and you as one in me; and thus is Christ that bread of life, or that bread which gives life to his own in the world. Thus much for proof to the two heads that were first to lay down; I shall now hold out such spiritual observations from what hath gone before, as I have received from Christ.

And the first observation shall be this namely, that Christ only is a saints life. By this I mean, that every spark of a saints life lies in Christ, and so in Christ, that it is nothing else in which Christ is not all. Christ is so fully and solely a saints life, that take all duties, ordinances, privileges and external advantages, whatsoever subtracted from Jesus Christ, and they are all dead things; but like the grave clothes in the sepulture, when Christ was risen. Our Saviour himself bears witness to this truth, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the Father but by me." Is a Truth so dear to God and Christ, that Christ speaks to it in this place as fully as terms can express it, both in the affirmative and the negative. "I am the life," {saith Christ;} that is, in the affirmative; and so the life, that no man comes to my Father, the fountain of life, but by me; there is the negative and affirmative; affirmative, both in the negative exclusive from Christ, and in the affirmative, inclusive. If we consult that place and John 16:14, where our Saviour speaks of the office of the Spirit, and his work in the hearts of his people, we shall find him speak to this thing that we have in hand. "He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Mark it, the work of the Spirit is to reveal Christ to us as he is our life, and so glorify Christ in showing him to be our life. And if Christ had said, the Holy Ghost when he comes, he shall show you your names written in the book of Life with my blood; all your sins laid on me, and that I have buried them in my own wounds, so that they shall never rise up in judgment more against you; my Righteousness your robe of glory, perfect glory in the sight of God; my Law of love written in your hearts to be the power that shall slay sin in your lives. Thus the Spirit shall glorify me in showing you that I am your life in whole and every part thereof; Christ as he is one with God is our fountain of life, &c., and in all our addresses to God, he is our way, truth, and life. For further confirmation take the experience of the Apostle; for says he, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God," {Gal.2:20;} and in another place, "for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." {Col.3:3} "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." {I Cor.1:30} Mark it, for here Christ is made all by God to us; for what can you call life, but is not bound up in some or all of these. The 29th verse of that chapter gives a good and full reason why God made Christ all to his people; namely this, that no flesh should glory in his presence. This reason is so full that the truth stand strong upon it against all gainsayers; grace would be no grace if flesh had anything in itself to glory of in the presence of God; our life to be only in Christ, preserves as entirely the glory of God, free Grace, as it doth the safety of our souls; for that soul that glories in Christ as his life, glorifies the free Grace of God which gave that life. When the Apostle speaks of the acts of life in his soul, he makes Christ all; for says he, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." And the same

Apostle in another place says, it is merely of Grace that I am what I am; so that you see where Christ is made all, there Free Grace hath the glory of all, and this is the great design of God to all eternity to glorify his free Grace in Christ.

Thus much shall suffice for the first observation that Christ only is a saints life. A second observation is this; that if it be thus, saints should value and esteem Christ as their life. Saints, what mean these carnal fears? Does not Christ live? If the world be nothing, is not Christ enough? Why fear ye so much to lose that meat which perishes, when Christ this bread of life lives forever; cannot you be content that the world should bring forth wants? Why there is no other place of want but that, for there is bread enough in your Father's house. Heaven only is the proper place of fullness; doth it not speak an undervaluing of Christ that carnal fear shall possess our spirits of want, when Christ the fullness of the Godhead bodily is our life and our portion. Nay, what mean these stoopings and bendings of our judgments, affections, and services to the world, and worldly ends; is not this the end of it, to live in their love and esteem, for as to make a portion of perishing things and friends of the unrighteous mammon? Saints, will this stand with an esteem of Christ as our life? A soul that truly values Christ, it pants thus in spirit, O let me know truths as they are in Jesus, and obey them in the Spirit of Christ. God hath made the world my footstool, as it his, and I am one with him; Christ is only my life and glory; I would trample upon my footstool, and lie down in the bosom of Christ who is my life and glory; this is a soul that truly values Christ. But tell me saints, if we value Christ as our life or portion, and our crown of glory, our best and truest friend, our faithful brother and our loving husband, one that hath borne all God's wrath for us, who hath died that we might live, and whose love is so great. If we thus look on Christ and value him, why is it that we so easily grieve him? Ingenuous nature reaches this, to be tender of offending them that we value, and put a price upon their love. Doth not Grace exceed nature in this? Surely it doth! Oh then let our lives speak our love to Christ, and our value of him.

An experienced soul in the ways of Christ will tell you that it is the hardest travel that ever it went, to step a step in the ways of sin, after it hath apprehended the love of Christ and been taught by the Spirit to value that love; and I believe that if Satan could speak truth, he would confess it to be the hardest work he hath to draw a soul that beholds Christ's love and values that love in any soul. Therefore as the only remedy against sin, eye Christ, love and value him! But saints, if we thus value Christ as our life and our all, whence is it that in time of distress we seek relief of broken cisterns, and forsake the Fountain of Life? My meaning is this; when under a weak or wounded state by sin, we fly to duties for relief, and not to Christ to renew the graces of Christ in us, and not to eye our interest in Christ as he is the gift of free Grace; this is an undervaluing of Christ who in Proverbs 3:18 is said to be a tree of life; those graces you would live on is the fruits of this tree, and are only fruits of life as they flow from interest and communion with this tree of life. Do but consider the folly of your spirits when we fly from Christ to duties, and to the stirring up of gifts and graces in us for our relief in such a state, for fallen man is a creature that can act no grace in himself, and grace without the breathings of Christ is as dead as man, as no grace can act itself. Take our Saviour's testimony to this truth, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." {Jn.15:4,5} Christ is the life and motion of every Grace. It is a mistaking Christ, and an undervaluing of him,

when we go to duties that they may carry us and commend us to God. Christ is the only way to God, and is only he that carries us as living souls to duties, and through duties, in and by his own Spirit. The Apostle knew this well enough when he made that prayer, "that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power." {Col.1:10,11} His desire was that the Colossians should live up to Jesus Christ and walk worthy of the Lord. I think that there is not any piece of the old man in saints that darkens more of the glory of God's free Grace, and damps more of the comforts of his people than this doth, to go any wither but to Christ in straits; for this must needs put a dishonour upon him, and be an undervaluing of him; for doth it not imply thus much, that the thing we seek after is not to be had in Christ, or not so soon in Christ as in duties, or at least that it is not only to be had in Christ, but it is all one whether we go to him or not. Now all these are conceptions of the old man in us, when we through the Spirit look upon Christ as our life, we shall see all fullness in him; grace enough to pity, to pardon, and to die for us; righteousness enough to clothe us, and to present us spotless to the pure eyes of his Father's glory. Power enough to take us out of Satan's hands, and to defend us from all enemies and all evil. Wisdom enough to make us wise in him, to guide and to govern us, that our conversations may be like children of light and heirs of glory; goodness enough to supply all wants in us, and to give out fullness of his own Grace to us, yes and happiness enough to satisfy our souls to all eternity, and the soul says, Christ is enough; yea, he is all, and whether should I go but to him, for he hath the words of eternal life; yea, he is my eternal life. This is the frame of such souls as do truly prize Christ as their life.