

**John 6: 48-59; “Whoever Eats My Flesh”, Sermon # 43 in the series –
“That All May Honor the Son”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall,
on September 10th, 2017, in the Morning Worship Service.**

Jesus was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. And His disciples, those who had been following since He fed the 5,000, were listening to Him teach these things. Some were understanding Him and some were not understanding. The question that each of us here this morning must consider as we listen to this sermon, is this: Am I a partaker of Christ? Have I spiritually fed upon Him for the salvation of my soul, or am I only interested in earthly and worldly food? Many of these people who were calling themselves Christ’s disciples were only interested in Jesus because He had fed them physically with the five loaves and two fish. They were following Him simply because they ate of the physical loaves of bread and they were satisfied with that. But they had no real interest in spiritual things; of feeding their souls with Christ.

There are many people in the world today, even those who go to church, who would say that they are Christians, if you asked them, and yet they do not understand the reality of the truth of what the Lord Jesus was talking about here; the great truths that He was presenting to them. We see here, that after Jesus fed the 5,000, He then preached to them about the absolute necessity of their spiritually feeding upon Himself in order to have everlasting life. That is what this passage is about. If any person is to live forever and have eternal life, they must by faith, spiritually partake of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we look at this passage we find that our Lord describes Himself as better bread than the earthly manna which God gave to the Israelites in the wilderness; better in these 4 ways. 1st – If you eat of Him you will not die. (verses 48-51) 2nd – If you eat of Him you will have spiritual life in you. (verses 52 and 53) 3rd – If you eat of Him, He will raise you up on the last day. (verses 54 and 55) And 4th – If you eat of Him, you will abide in Him. (verses 56-58) As I preach to you these blessed truths, will you not ask yourself whether you are a person who is feeding upon Christ?

1st of all – Feeding upon Christ is better than eating the manna, for if you eat of Christ you will not die. (verses 48-50)

In verse 48 Jesus says – “I am the bread of life.” Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead.” “This is the bread which comes down from heaven, and that one may eat of it and not die.” We see here that Jesus is drawing a comparison and also making a contrast. He is comparing physical bread with spiritual bread, and He is showing us that only by partaking of the spiritual bread, can we never die. He was showing these disciples that the manna which was given by God to the children of Israel in the wilderness was a type of Himself as the bread of life which if you will spiritually partake of it, if you will spiritually eat of it, you will live forever. He says to those whom He was speaking to that their fathers ate of the physical manna and died. I want you to notice that He does not say – “our fathers”. He says to them – “your fathers”. The “fathers” that he was speaking of were not only dead physically, but they never had fed upon Christ spiritually when they partook of the manna, and thus they died eternally.

I would like to open up this truth a little further. And so, if you will turn back with me to Exodus chapter 16, verses 1-5. It says here – “And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt.” “Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.” “And the children of Israel said to them, ‘Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full!’ “For you have brought us out into

this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you.’ “And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.” “And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.” (Twice as much was given on the sixth day so that they could rest and observe the Sabbath day, and not collect manna on that day; not work, in other words.)

Now, I want you to see that God’s giving to the children of Israel the manna was the way that He was going to provide for them during the whole time of their wanderings in the wilderness; that is, for 40 years. And God says here, that He was not only going to give them this manna for their daily provision, but He was also going to test them in His giving of this bread, as to whether they would walk in His law. Whenever God gives something related to His providing for your physical life, and what will lead to your having spiritual life, He will also bring a test; to find out whether you are willing walk in His ways. “If anyone is willing to God’s will, they will know concerning the truth, the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether Jesus was speaking on His own authority,” He says in John 7: 17. The kindness and goodness of God are meant to lead you to repentance, it says in Romans 2: 4.

In this case, God’s goodness in providing the manna was meant to lead the Israelites to stop complaining and trust in Him. God’s physical provision is given to you in order that you might trust in Him, and in order that you might continue to trust in Him every day. The test that He gives is often related to whether you will believe in Him and keep His commandments by faith in Him; whether you will believe that He will supply your every need physically and spiritually. God supplied the physical need for food, for all of the Israelites, but not many of them believed in Him. In fact, we are told here in Exodus 16: 7 that there were murmurings among them. “Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, ‘At evening you shall know that the Lord has brought you out of the land of Egypt.’ “And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord; for He hears your murmurings against the Lord.” “But what are we, that you murmur against us?”, Moses says.

What were they murmuring against? They were murmuring against God’s way of doing things, and the way that He was leading them. But they should not have been murmuring; they should have been trusting and repenting of their sins of murmuring where they needed to. In Verse 7 of Exodus 16 it says that in the morning the children of Israel would see the glory of the Lord; that the glory of the Lord would appear in the cloud which led them. This glory would be directly related to God’s giving them the manna. Look at verse 10 of Exodus 16. “Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.” “And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel.’ “Speak to them, saying, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread.’ “And you shall know that I am the Lord your God.”

“So it was that quails came up at evening and covered the camp, and in the morning the dew lay all around the camp.” “And when the layer of dew lifted, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a small round substance, as fine as frost on the ground.” “So when the children of Israel saw it, they said to one another, ‘What is it?’ (or “manna”, for the is what the word manna means - What is it?) “For they did not know what it was.” “And Moses said to them, ‘this is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat.’ “This is the thing which the Lord has commanded: let every man take for those who are in his tent.” “And the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less.” “So when they measured it by omers, he who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack.” “Everyone gathered according to each one’s need.”

Now, God did this for the children of Israel so that they would not die of hunger. He knew exactly what they needed and He provided it. But, nevertheless, many of them went on to murmur and complain; to doubt the Lord's goodness, and whether His provision for them was right, and whether Moses and Aaron ought to be their leaders. In other words, even though they had seen such mighty miracles, they did not savingly believe in the Lord. If a person savingly believes in the Lord, they will trust in the Lord's provision for them; both physically and spiritually. You will pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," and God gives it. But do you pray that God would give you the bread of life, the bread of heaven, our Lord Jesus Christ, and all the good words and the grace that He can give to you? You see, if you do not have this spiritual bread, you will not have any spiritual life. And if you do not have this spiritual life, which comes from partaking of Christ by faith, you cannot be a Christian or live the Christian life. But when you do believe in the Lord Jesus; that is, you do partake of Him by faith, then you do have everlasting life.

2nd – The Lord gives a better bread than manna in that if you eat of Him you will have spiritual life in you. (verses 51-53)

Verse 51 says – "I am the living bread which came down from heaven." "If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." "The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us His flesh to eat.'" "Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.'" We see here that the Lord Jesus is the living bread which came down from heaven. His mission was to come down from heaven, to be God Incarnate; God made manifest in human flesh. The Lord Jesus was not born in the normal way that everyone else is born. He came down from heaven, and was formed as the Son of God in the Virgin Mary's womb; she who had never had relations with a man. This tells us that He is unique among men; that He who was fully God, became a Man. He came down from heaven to become living bread. That is, His life and His actions would be done in such a way that we who are sinners by nature and practice, would be able to feed upon Him.

Truly, we ought to glory in this; that Jesus became our Mediator, the One who would become our Savior and our brother, and take upon Himself to do everything that would be necessary for us to be bought out of our sins. This is redemption, that Jesus acted righteously in our place, and on our behalf, as a substitute and surety for our sins. And this is the reason that He had to be made a man. For God does not need to obey His own law; for He is the One who gave it, and He is perfect already; He is the living representation of perfect righteous, in and of Himself. But we, as sinful people, needed a Savior who would not fail to obey God at any point in His obedience. All must be perfect in His obedience, and all must be lovingly rendered to the Father, His taking our place. And only that, could be imputed to us. And yet, if Jesus Christ was not God, the value of the sufferings that He endured would only be for Himself, and then you would still be in your sins. But because Jesus Christ is God, there is unimaginable value that has been placed upon His life by the Father, and it ought to be seen in this way by us. His incarnation is of inestimable value, as He took upon Himself human flesh, in order that as a Man, He might obey God's law and humble Himself unto the point of death in His obedience; even the death of the cross.

How could Jesus suffer, bleed, and die on your behalf, if he did not come down from heaven, become a man, and give His flesh to suffer there on the cross for you, so that you might have spiritual life? "The bread that I shall give is My flesh," he says, "which I shall give for the life of the world." The value of Jesus' Person determines the sufficiency of His sufferings to save you. Since His value as a Divine Person is infinite, His sufferings for us have an infinite value. If Jesus Christ were not both God and man, He could not successfully accomplish the work of redemption. He could not give to God a ransom for our soul that He would accept. Listen to

Psalm 49, verse 7 – “No man can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him – for the redemption of his soul is costly, and he should cease trying forever – that he should live on eternally, that he should not undergo decay.” (NASB) The value of one man’s sufferings for another man, may help his body, but it cannot save his soul, for the soul is of infinite value. But Jesus accomplished our complete redemption because He was a Man to obey God perfectly and suffer on our behalf. And He was God as well; He was, and He is, two natures in one Person, in order that there would be infinite value to His obedience and sufferings, and that He would be able to suffer in His body, the just punishment for our sins. This is what you are exhorted to believe –

There is better bread in Christ, than in the manna, in that in Christ you most truly do partake of the spiritual realities of salvation when you believe in Him; when you partake of Him, and feed upon His faithfulness. Not all of the children of Israel were saved, even though they partook of the manna. They partook of the manna, but they had no spiritual blessing and no spiritual benefit from it unless they tasted Christ in it by faith. They had to look forward to the coming of Christ; He who would come to do this great work of redemption. If they would partake of the manna with faith in God, and in the faith that He would send His Christ in due time to atone for all of their sins; this is what God would be looking for from them. If they partook of the manna, looking for the spiritual meaning of God’s having given it, they could have come to know the reality of being spiritually saved and redeemed; if they would believe this, having partaken only of the manna, the type of Christ.

But when you come to Christ in faith; He who is the living bread, you are given spiritual and eternal life the moment you call upon His name. Yours is a most definite salvation if you truly believe. The value, the power, and the efficacy (the certainty) of what Jesus died to bring to you is wrought in your heart, and it is made known to you when you first begin to believe in Him. This is because you realize that it is Christ’s life which is now in your life. It is His Spirit who is dwelling there. There is a certainty. There is a definiteness of understanding. You will not, when you believe in Jesus, sit there saying: “How can this Man give me His flesh to eat?” You will know that it is by faith that these blessings are conveyed to your heart. You believe in the truth that is given in Isaiah 53: 4 – “Surely He has borne your griefs and carried your sorrows.” You know that He was smitten by God and afflicted for your sake. You know that He was wounded for your transgressions, and He was bruised for your iniquities; and the chastisement for your peace was upon Him.

You will know and come to understand, most certainly and most definitely, that eating His flesh and drinking His blood has brought you this life; the life of God in the soul of you, a man. This eating of Christ’s flesh and drinking His blood is not some sort of cannibalism. It means that you take the reality of Christ’s sufferings into your mind, and into the stomach of your heart, by faith. You believe Him, and you receive Him, and you digest the meaning of His death and His resurrection, and you realize that He has raised you from your death in trespasses and sins. You realize that He will never leave you, nor forsake you. He will be with you always, even to the end of the age. It is because you have eaten the flesh of the Son of God and have drunk His blood, that you know that you have life in yourself. This you have understood by faith, and this is confirmed for you in your partaking of the Lord’s Supper. It is not the taking of the Supper that brings you life; it is partaking of Christ by faith that has brought you life. But Christ’s life in your life ministers to you the confirmatory blessing that He is yours and you belong to Him, and that you are drawing life from Him during that precious time of the Supper. You are feeding upon His faithfulness.

3rd – Christ describes Himself as better bread than that which God gave to the Israelites, in that – If you eat of Him, He will raise you up on the last day.

(verses 54 and 55)

Verse 54 says “Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” “For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.” Now this certainty of salvation, this definiteness of spiritual experience of Christ, when coupled with His word, leads to the conviction of things that are coming, which Christ will do. In this case, it is the certainty of that fact that He will raise all true believers up, at the last day. He is speaking here about the certainty of every true believer being raised up to a good resurrection; to the resurrection of the just. For it is just as certain that He will raise all men up from the dead on the last day; both the righteous and the wicked; the just and the unjust. John 5: 28 – “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” Notice how it says, “the hour is coming” is relation to all the dead being raised. It does not say that there will be two resurrections of all the dead, but one resurrection of all the dead, but two different kinds of resurrection on that last day.

But you can see the connection between eating Christ’s flesh and drinking His blood and the certainty of His raising you from the dead if you will turn over with me to 1st Thessalonians 4: 13-18. “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.” “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.” “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.” “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. “And the dead in Christ will rise first.” “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” “And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” “Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

Here in 1st Thessalonians 4, Paul is wanting to bring comfort giving comfort to those who have exercised true faith in Christ; for those who have eaten His flesh and drunk His blood. He says: “If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those sleep in Jesus. (Those who died in Jesus) It was through their faith in Jesus’ dying and rising again from the dead that everlasting life was brought to their souls, and this life was confirmed in them, all during the remainder of those believer’s lives. And this belief in the promise of God concerning what He would do for every believer in Christ, that gave them the certain expectation that even as Jesus was raised from the dead, even so He would raise them up from the dead. This ought to bring great encouragement to those who are fearful of death. We ought to be able to comfort one another with these words.

Because you understand from these verses that Jesus does see the reality of your faith in Him, you know that He will take steps to establish you in the certainty of a good outcome, a good resurrection. He is the author and Perfecter of your faith, and He sees that you have been a recipient of all of his faithful work in your heart and life, ever since you first believed. His flesh has been your true food, and His blood has been your true drink. Therefore God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. Dear believer, remember the connection between Jesus’ death and resurrection, and your resurrection. Jesus died and was raised from the dead that you would most certainly be raised from the dead to a good resurrection if you are eating of His flesh and drinking His blood. Eternal life is yours.

And then 4th and finally - Our Lord describes Himself as better bread than the earthly manna which God gave to the Israelites in the wilderness, because if you eat of Him, you will abide in Him. (verses 56-58)

Verse 56 says – “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.” “As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.” “This is the bread which came down from heaven – not as your fathers ate the

man and are dead.” He who eats this bread will live forever.” When Jesus says that the person who eats His flesh and drinks His blood abides in Him, and I in him, He is speaking of the doctrine of perseverance. Abiding in Christ is continuing to receive all the grace which He gives to you with a view to keeping His commandments and bearing fruit unto Him. He is the vine you are the branches. “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Christ.” (John 15: 4) Abiding means that you continue to trust in Him, you continue to draw from Him your vital strength to persevere unto godliness. “I am the vine and you are the branches,” Jesus says. “He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15: 5) Eating Christ’s flesh and drinking His blood, we have seen, is spiritually partaking by faith of the blessings which Christ alone can bring you, and He brings them to you on the basis of His having suffered and bled and died to be able to bring them to you. You have believed in Him for life and justification, and the forgiveness of all of your sins. You are now continuing to believe in Him for life, each and every day of your Christian life.

This should show you how important it is for your spiritual strength and well-being, to continue to partake of Christ’s flesh and drink of His blood. You must, as you persevere in your faith, and labor for Him, remember the basis of all of your ability to do these things is not yourself but it is because Jesus purchased with His sufferings and death, the gift of life for you. And He Himself is the strength of that life. If you remember this, you will have the right view of perseverance; that it is not by your free will that you will persevere and bear fruit unto God, but it will be by trusting in Christ Himself, and drinking deeply of all of the blessings and benefits of grace that He gives to you. Remember that you must deny yourself to be Christ’s disciple. You must pick up your cross to be His disciple. You must run the race fixing your eyes upon Jesus to be His disciple. May it be that you see Him as your life, and strength, in all of your perseverance. “You have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer you who live, but Christ lives in you; and the life which you now live in the flesh you live by faith in the Son of God, who loved you and gave Himself for you.” Remember this, and then persevere. Abide in Him and you will bear much fruit for Him.