

THE SWEETNESS OF GOD'S WORD

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“How sweet are Your Words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”
Psalm 119:103.

IT is delightful to find how exactly the experience of David, under the Jewish dispensation, tallies with the experience of the saints of God in these Gospel times. David lived in an age of miracles and many manifestations. He could have recourse to the Urim and the Thummim, and the priesthood. He could go up to Zion and listen to the holy songs of the great assembly. He could converse with the priesthood but still, the food of his soul was supplied to him from the written Word of God, just as it is with us. Now that we have no open visions and the Urim, and the Thummim and the priesthood are altogether departed, we still feed upon the Word! As that is the food of our souls, so it was the food of David's soul. Martin Luther says, “I have covenanted with the Lord that I would neither ask Him for visions, nor for angels, nor for miracles, but I would be satisfied with His own Word, and if I might but lay hold upon Scripture by faith, that shall be enough for me.” Now it seems to be so with David here. The honey that gratifies his taste is not found in angels' visits, or miraculous signs, or officiating priesthoods, or special Revelations, but in the words of God's mouth and in the testimonies of Holy Writ. Let us, dear Brothers and Sisters, prize this Book of God! Be not ambitious, as some are, of seeking new Revelations, or enquire for the whispers of disembodied spirits, but be satisfied with this good household bread which God has prepared for His people! And while others may loathe and dislike it, let us be thankful for it and acknowledge with gratitude the bread which came down from Heaven, testifying to us, as it does, of the Lord Jesus, the Word of Life that lives and abides forever!

I. Notice, first, THE WORD APPRECIATED. This exclamation of David is a clear proof that he set the highest possible value upon the Word of God. The evidence is more valuable because the Scripture that David had was but a slender book compared with this volume which is now before us. I suppose he had little more than the five Books of Moses, and yet as he opened that Pentateuch, which was to him complete in itself, he said, “How sweet are Your Words to my taste!” If that first morsel so satisfied the Psalmist, surely this fuller and richer feast of heavenly dainties ought to be yet more gratifying to us! If, when God had but given him the first dish of the course, and that by no means the best, his soul was ravished with it—how should you and I rejoice with unspeakable joy, now that the King has brought on royal dainties and given us the Revelation of His dear Son! Think a minute. The Pentateuch is what we would call, nowadays, the historical part of Scripture—and haven't you frequently heard persons say, “Oh, the sermon was historical, and the minister read a passage out of the historical part of the Word”? I have, with great pain, heard persons speak in a very depreciating manner of the histories of Holy Writ. Now, understand this—the part of the Word which David loved so much *is* mainly historical—and if the mere history of the Word was so sweet, what ought those holy Evangelists and sacred Epistles to be which declare the mystery of that narrative—which are the honey whereof the Old Testament is but the comb—which are the treasures of which the Old Testament is but the casket? Surely we are to be condemned, indeed, who do not prize the Word now that we have it all!

That Word of God which David so much prized was mainly typical, shadowy, symbolical. I do not know that he understood it all. I *do* know that he understood *some* of it, for some of his Psalms are so evangelical that he must have perceived the great Sacrifice of God foreshadowed in the sacrifices described in the books of Numbers and Leviticus, or it would not have been possible that he would, in so marvelous a style, express his faith in the great offering of our Lord Jesus! I put it to some professors here, do you often read the types at all? If, now, your Bible was so circumscribed that all was taken from you but the Pentateuch, would you be able, to say, “Your Word is sweet to my taste?” Are not many of

us so little educated in God's Word that if we were confined to the reading of that part of it, we would be obliged to confess it was unprofitable to us? We could not give a good answer to Philip's question, "Do you understand what you are reading?" Oh, shame on us that with so many more Books, and with the Holy Spirit so plenteously given to guide us into all the Truth of God, we should seem to value at least half of the Word of God even less than David did!

A great portion of the Pentateuch is taken up with precepts, and I may say of some of them that they are grievous. Those commandments which are binding upon us are not grievous. Some of the commands of Leviticus and Deuteronomy are so complex and so entrenched upon the whole domestic life of a man that they were a yoke of bondage, according to Peter, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. Yet, that wondrous 20th Chapter of Exodus with its Ten Commandments, and all the long list of the precepts of the Ceremonial Law which you may, perhaps, account wearisome to read, David says were sweet to his taste, sweeter than honey to his mouth! What? Did he so love to hear His heavenly Father speak that it did not much matter to him what He said as long as He did but speak, for the music of His voice was gladdening in its every tone to him? Now that you and I know that all the bondage of the Ceremonial Law is gone, that nothing remains of it but blessing to our souls—and now that we are not under the Law, but under Grace—and have become inheritors of rich and precious and unspeakably great promises, how is it that we fall so far short and do not, I fear, love the Word of God to anything like the degree that David loved it?

David here speaks of all God's Words, without making any distinction concerning some one of them. So long as it was God's Word, it was sweet to him, whatever form it might take. Alas, this is not true of all professors. With an unwise partiality, they pronounce some of God's Words very sweet, but other portions of God's Truth are rather sour and unsavory to their palates. There are persons of a certain class who delight in the Doctrines of Grace. Therein they are to be commended, for which of us do not delight in them if we know our interest in them? The Covenant and the great Truths of God which grow out of the Covenant—these are unspeakably precious things and are rightly enough the subjects of joy to all Believers who understand them! Yet certain of these persons will be as angry as though you had touched them with a hot iron if you should bring a precept anywhere near them—and if you insist upon anything being the duty of a Believer, the very words seem to sting them like a whip—they cannot endure it! If you speak of the "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord," and speak of it as a holiness which is worked in us by God the Holy Spirit and as a holiness of mind and thought and action—a personal holiness which is to be seen in the daily life—they are offended. They can say, "How sweet are Your doctrinal Words to my taste, but not Your precepts, Lord! Those I do not love. Those I call legal. If your servants minister them, I say they are gendering bondage and I go away from them, and leave them to Arminians, or duty-faith men or something of that kind—for I love half Your Word and only half of it." Alas, there are not a few of that class to be found here and there. And there are some who go on the other side! They love God's Word in the precepts of it, or the promises, but not the Doctrines. If a Doctrine is preached, they say it is dangerous—too high—it will elevate some of God's servants to presumption! It will tempt them to think lightly of moral distinctions! It will lead them to walk carelessly because they know they are safe in Christ! Thus they, too, only love half of the Truth of God, and not the whole of it. But, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I hope you are of the same mind as David. If God shall give you a promise, you will taste it, like a wafer of honey, and feed on it. And if He shall give you a precept, you will not stop to look at it, and say, "Lord, I don't like this as well as the promise," but you will receive *that* and feed upon *that* also! And when the Lord shall be pleased afterwards to give you some revelation with regard to your inward experience, or to your fellowship with His dear Son, you welcome it with joy because you love any Truth and every Truth as long as you know it to be the Truth of God's own Word!

It is a blessed sign of Grace in the heart when God's Words are sweet to us as a whole—when we love the Truth of God, not cast into a system or a shape, but as we find it in God's Word. I believe that no man who has yet lived has ever proposed a system of theology which comprises all the Truth of God's Word. If such a system had been possible, the discovery of it would have been made for us by God, Himself—certainly it would if it had been desirable and useful for our profit and holiness. But it has not pleased God to give us a body of divinity—let us receive it as He has given it, each Truth in its own proportion—each Doctrine in harmony with its fellow—each precept carefully carried out into practice and each promise to be believed and, by-and-by, received. Let the Truth of God, and the whole Truth of God, be sweet to our taste! "How sweet are *Your* words!" There seems to be an emphasis on the pronoun, "How sweet are *Your* words!" O my God, if the Words are Yours, they are sweet to me! Had they come to me from the Prophet and I had perceived them to be merely the words of man, I might then have estimated them at their own weight, without reference to

their authority. But when my Father speaks—when the Spirit lives and breathes in the Truth to which I listen—when Jesus Christ, Himself, draws near to me in the preaching of the Gospel—then it is that the Word becomes sweet to my taste! Beloved, let us not be satisfied with the truth unless we can also feel it to be God's Truth! Let us ask the Lord to enable us, when we open this Book, to feel that we are not reading it as we read a common book—truths put there by some means, unimportant to us how—but let us recollect that we are reading the Truth of God put there by an Inspired pen! That we have there God's Truth such as He would have us receive—such as He thought it worth His while to write and to preserve to all ages for our instruction.

The Psalmist is not content to say, "God's Word is sweet, and sweeter than honey," but, "How sweet are Your Words to *my* taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to *my* mouth!" After all, the blessedness of the Word is a matter to be ascertained by personal experience. Let others choose this philosophy and that form of thought. Let then gad abroad after the beauties of poetry, or dote upon the charms of oratory—my palate shall be satisfied with Your Word, O God, and my soul shall find an excess of sweetness in the things which come from Your mouth into my mouth!

The Word of God, then, while in itself certainly most sweet, and all the sweeter when we recognize it as coming from God, will only be sweet to us in proportion as we are able to receive it and to feed upon it. Every man must in this case feed for himself. There can be no proxy here. I wonder not at those who think lightly of God's Word, notwithstanding the rapturous admiration they have heard expressed by others, for unless they have tasted it, and felt and handled it, they still must be strangers to its unspeakable sweetness!

II. Now we shall notice, in the second place, THIS TASTE GRATIFIED.

If we can join in the words of David here, how grateful we ought to be, for there was a time when we had no such taste for God's Word! A few years ago, God's Word was so far from being sweet to us that we thought it the driest book that was ever written. It is not so now. We were then dead in trespasses and sins—and what is honey in a dead man's mouth? But we are alive unto God now by Jesus Christ, being quickened by the Spirit. Remember, my Brothers and Sisters, how Divine Grace has made you to differ from the most of men. Many who see the dainties of God's Word pass them by. Like those poor hungry children that we have seen standing outside a shop where the savory meat is just within the window—they can see it and smell it—but they cannot eat it. Many of our hearers have sense enough to perceive that there is something in the Bible that is very satisfying and nourishing. They see it with their eyes, but, like the unbelieving lord in the city of Samaria, they taste not of it themselves. Yes, and there are some who are so far gone—and we were like that once—that they have no wish to taste, for their palate has become so depraved that they feed upon ashes, a deceived heart turning them aside! Like the raven which has no longing for the clean feeding of the dove, they are content with the carrion of the world. Like the swine, they are satisfied with the husks and they pine not to be fed with the children's bread. Such were some of us—utterly disregarding the Word, or seeing it to be a good thing, but not able to gain it, or else accounting it to be a mere deception, turning from it to the joys of earth as if *they* could satisfy the soul! Oh, blessed change, Divine renewal, which has passed upon us, that now the Word should be sweet!

I remember well the time when I had spiritual life and yet God's Word was not sweet to me. When God first gives us a spiritual taste, He does not make His Word sweet, but rather, if I may so say, salt or bitter. The first taste of the true Word of God I ever got was like Jeremiah's draught of wormwood. It seemed to break my teeth as with gravel stones. It was none other than this, "The soul that sins, it shall die." Did you ever have that in your mouth and have to turn it over and over again as a bitter morsel that you could not swallow? And when at last it did seem to be swallowed, it was like wormwood in your soul and bitterness filled every part and portion of your being, for you felt yourself a sinner, all undone, lost and ruined! Oh, it was a blessed thing when standing at the foot of the Cross, and calling upon the name of the Lord, you could wash your mouth clear of those bitter aloes of repentance and conviction of sin with the cup of consolation—the cup of salvation! After that first bitter draught which purged the mouth so Divinely and made it ready to receive the sweetness of the Word, then it was that on one happy day, looking up and seeing the flowing of the precious blood, you perceived your mouth to be filled with honey, instead of vinegar, for you saw the vinegar transferred to Christ and the gall and the wormwood given to Him, while you drank of the "wines on the lees," yes, "the wines on the lees, well refined."

Since that day, our taste has been satisfied more and more, for it has been a growing taste. It has been educated. We can now discern between things that differ. On our conversion, almost everything was sweet. There was a good deal of false doctrine put into the cup, yet we swallowed it all, for to a hungry man, even a bitter thing is sweet! But now our

palate has been disciplined to discern between things that differ. But all the education, if it is worth anything, comes to this—that God's Word daily becomes more sweet and man's word daily becomes more bitter to us. Our soul is taught more and more of Divine things and we see more and more of the preciousness of the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. Every Christian who has a spiritual taste will tell you that his taste is gratified with every Word of God because he sees something in the Word which glorifies God. My dear Brothers and Sisters, whenever you hear a sermon in which our God is spoken well of and His Glory is set before you, are you not happy? Do you not go from the place of worship and say, "Thank God I was there! God was in the midst of the temple. The Word of God was preached and my heart is satisfied"? And, on the other hand, whenever you hear a sermon in which man is magnified and the nobility of human nature is held up and God is put anywhere or nowhere, how do you feel about that? I am certain that you say, "That word which only glorifies such a poor fallen creature as man, my soul abhors."

God's Word honors His dear Son! I am sure I shall touch one string in your hearts when I say if the preacher shall discourse of Christ—if he shall ring the silver bell of the Savior's precious name and lift up His Cross, and tell you all the power of His blood, the love of His heart, the shame of His death, the glory of His Resurrection, the prevalence of His plea before the Throne and the certainty of His ultimate victory over all His foes—your lips will seem as though you had some dainty on your palate and you will go home, and say—

*"The King Himself came near
To feast His saints today!"*

How often, before you have left the place, have you been willing to sing with Watts—

*"My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this!"*

But suppose you listen to a sermon in which Jesus Christ is *not* glorified—doubts thrown upon His Deity—insinuations made about the power of His blood—the substitutionary Sacrifice twisted into a misty problem—whether an Atonement or not an Atonement, you could not tell—how do you feel then? Why, anything which touches Christ touches the apple of your eye! You say to the preacher, "Your oratory may be ever so fine, but I cannot eat at your table. You may lay silver knives and forks, and spread many a precious thing before me, but your meat is poison! I cannot feed if you do not glorify Christ." O Lord, this is the reason why Your Word is so sweet to the palate of Your children—it glorifies Your dear Son and they delight to see Him honored among the sons of men!

God's Word is sweet, too, when it proves the Presence and discovers the influence of the Holy Spirit. If you hear a sermon in which the Spirit is worshipped and glory is given to Him as one Person in the blessed Trinity, the Word is then sweet to your taste! It is a mark of the child of God that he reverences and esteems that Spirit by whom he is sanctified. If the preaching is never about the Spirit of God—if He is systematically ignored till we can almost say, "We knew not even whether there was a Holy Spirit"—I do not wonder that barrenness and leanness should come into the souls of those who frequent such a ministry! The Word of God is communicated by the Holy Spirit and by the same Spirit it must be ministered to us. Even after His Resurrection, it was through the Holy Spirit that Christ gave commandments unto His Apostles. As it was given, so it must be received, not in words, only, but in power and demonstration of the Spirit—and so shall it be sweet to your taste!

Moreover, God's Word is always pure and holy. It is shocking if there is anything in the preaching that tends to make light of sin. Whenever I read a theological treatise, I can tell it is unsound if it trifles with the guilt of sin, the claims of justice, or the supremacy of the Divine Law. Under the pretence of magnifying Grace, some will dare to say that such-and-such a sin is not what it is thought to be, or not so heinous in God's people as it would be in others! They speak of sin in God's people as if it were only a spot, instead of a mortal disease. Oh, we have known some use expressions in the pulpit not only flippant and vulgar, but verging on the impure! That is enough to make the child of God feel like a sensitive plant when it is touched—he shrivels up. You never find anything like that in God's Word! There are some things in our common version which do not suit the common ear, and should not be there, because they are not necessary to a faithful rendering of the original—but there is nothing that will ever touch the delicacy of the child of God. The pure in heart can say, "How sweet is Your Word to my taste, because there is nothing there that can shock my sanctified judgment or lead me to find fault with it because of its dealing triflingly with sin."

The Word of God will always be sweet to the Christian because it so completely quickens him to every good thing when it comes in contact with him. I am sure, Brothers and Sisters, when you hear the Word of God faithfully preached, or read it with devout appreciation, you rise up like giants refreshed with new wine! What would we do if it were not for

the quickening which this book sometimes gives us? I must confess that I sometimes seem to spring up as from a bed of sloth, quickened and filled with more energy than I ever had before when I have been touched with a single promise, or the power of a single precept! I have heard of the dead member of an animal—perhaps the dead foot of a frog—being touched with the galvanic wire of the battery, and as soon as the galvanism flows into it, the limb has been animated by the energy. Now, we do not receive a galvanic energy from the Word of God, but we get *real life from it* by which we, whose souls seem to be dead, suddenly start up with a Divine Power! To be lethargic in heavenly things must always be unpleasant to the Christian. That which makes a man serve God with the fullest liberty and the greatest excellence is being quickened with the Word of God—therefore the Word of God must be always sweet to his taste!

III. And now, thirdly, see here THE SWEETNESS EXTOLLED.

David does not tell us how sweet God's Words are. He gives us a note of exclamation, the word, "*How!*" and there he leaves it, as though he had tried to fathom the depth in vain and could only say, like the Apostle, "O, the depth!" "How sweet are Your Words to my taste!" He tried, however, to give us some gauge when he gave us a comparison—"Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth." And that shall be the keynote which I will try to strike. Why is this Word of God to us sweeter than honey?

Honey is reputed to be the sweetest of all earthly things, yet you will discover that the Word of God is sweeter than that. Let me speak experimentally. It is a happy thing to be successful in the work of God and to win souls. I think that is the sweetest of all earthly enjoyments. I have sometimes seen 20 or 30 persons in a day, most of whom have found peace under my own ministry. Well, that is sweet, isn't it? But I am distinctly aware that the Word of God is sweeter, for when I have felt happy over my success, I have felt happier by far over some precious promise or some delightful Doctrine of Inspiration. I have thought I heard the Master say to me, when I had brought souls to Him, what He said to the disciples when they worked miracles, "Rejoice not in this; but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven." The thought of my election, or of my redemption, or of the Glory of Christ, or of the faithfulness of God has been distinctly sweeter than the former sweetness which I had. There are things in the world that are very white. Some good housewives have made the linen look so delicately white that they have supposed that nothing could be whiter! And then there has come a fall of snow and, in contrast, the fairest and whitest damask has seemed dark! So, the joy of winning souls, the joy of domestic love, the joy of having served God has been like the damask of the housewife—but get a promise of God's Word, and in comparison that will be like the snow which is whiter still! All the sweetness you can get from earthly joy will be exceeded by the sweetness of an applied promise from the Word of God. It is "sweeter than honey."

The Word is sweeter than honey because it will sweeten every kind of bitter, and there are many sorts of bitter which honey will not take out of your mouth. You may feel the honey striving with the bitter, and the effect will be a singular combination of flavor more horrible than the bitter itself. It is never so with God's Word. Let a man have his mouth full of bitter poverty, or the more bitter draught of scandal and contempt—ah, let his mouth be full of the last bitter draught of death—and if he gets the Words of God sent home to his soul, death, itself, shall be swallowed up in victory! In the pleasure he shall lose the smart! In the Divine Words of God to his spirit he shall scarcely know that there is such a thing as pain or grief, or even death, for all these things shall be gain to him when his faith gets full hold upon the oath and Covenant of the ever-living God!

It is sweeter than honey, because God's Truth never cloy. You cannot eat much honey. If you want to like it, only eat a little of it, for if you eat much, you will soon come to think, "What a weariness it is!" It cloy upon the palate. Not so God's Word! You may suck as you will, but you shall never have too much out of the breast of Scriptures. Here you can come and drop your bucket every morning and night, but you shall never draw too much from this well, whose cool depths supply an ever-crystal stream! Oh, come to the banquet, you hungry ones, and never think to rise from that table, but sit there till your souls shall be taken away to a table yet more richly furnished! Feast on with appetites whose edges are always keen. It fell to this lot of one of our missionaries, in translating the Word of God into a very difficult language, to have to read one passage over a hundred times—a very laborious process, if anything would exhaust the sweetness of the Word—but he said that after the hundredth time, he began to understand it. He felt, then, as if he was just beginning to read it! This is a pasture where the grass grows the faster the more the sheep eat of it. This is a mine where the gold increases the deeper your researches become. You may keep on eating of the Word year after year, but still you will never get tired of it! I suppose the most of us would not like to have the same thing for dinner every day. And if we are confined to one form of diet, we get weary of it. There are some of you who knew the Lord when you were 11 or

twelve, and some at 15 or twenty, and I perceive that years have passed over your heads till you have got to be 50 or sixty—but do you want a new Gospel now? Would you like to have another form of Doctrine, another system of theology, another Cross to trust to, or something in lieu of the Atonement by the precious blood? “Oh, no,” I think I hear you say, “the longer we live, the more we are fastened to the old faith! The deeper we study, the heavier our trials, the faster we cleave to Christ—

*“Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies
And bind the Gospel to my heart.”*

And, verily, the Word of God puts the mouth in taste. Some things are sweet in the mouth if the mouth is sweet, but if the palate is out of taste, you cannot get the flavor of them. But the Word of God cleans the mouth for you and though a man of God may find himself as much out of sorts as he can be, if he needs to get his mouth in proper order for feasting on the Word of God, he need not go anywhere else but to the Word, itself! The idea of preparing ourselves for Christ is not a Gospel idea. The idea of preparing our minds for the Gospel by thinking about something else always seems to me unnatural. If your minds are inactive, go and read a good stirring part of God's Word and that will prepare you for another part—for the Word will act first as a tonic to give an appetite and will afterwards be a food upon which that appetite can be satisfied!

Yet honey, with all its sweetness, may be forgotten. But the Word of God, if we once know its sweetness, will abide with us forever. Let your child eat honey to its heart's content, yet the flavor of it will not be in his mouth in a week's time. So, too, have some of us retained the flavor of the honey we got 15 years ago. “Ah,” says David, “I will remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.” I do not know how many years that was, but some of us can remember times of communion and refreshing from the Presence of the Lord ten, fifteen, or, perhaps, 40 years ago! When Christ spread His flavor upon your soul, no sweetness was so sweet and you have the sense of it now! You like to talk of those seasons of delight, and you think—

*“Did Jesus once upon me shine?
Then Jesus is forever mine!”*

Thus you get back the sweetness of the honey and the recollection of what you once knew of it.

I gather, from what I know of God's Word, that all we know of it is very little. When we get to Heaven, I imagine it will be among our surprises to find what fools we are. When young men go to college, they think they know a great deal. And after the first year, they think they don't know as much as they did. I recollect hearing my grandfather say that in the second year he was at college, he thought he was a fool. And in the third year he knew he was, and then the tutor thought he might get out. That is one of the things that we shall find out in Heaven—“Oh, what a fool I was! I thought I knew everything.” Those of us who preach to others will be of the same mind as Rutherford, who says that the poorest child who has once passed the veil and come into the immortal state, knows more of heavenly things than the most learned divine who has lived for 60 years to teach others the way of salvation. What we get in the wilderness is only just one bunch from Eshcol—we have not come into the valley where all the clusters grow. They have got us a little balm, and a little oil, and a few almonds from the land, but the land itself flows with milk and honey. “Since we have tasted of the grapes,” we sometimes long to go—

*“Where our dear Lord, the vineyard keeps,
And all the clusters grow.”*

But it is amazing how little we know about it—how little sweetness we ever enjoy! And yet, little as it is, it is so sweet that it makes us hold up our hands and say with amazement, “How sweet are Your Words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”

Hereby our growth in Grace may be ascertained. Is God's Word very sweet to me this day? Is it like honey to my mouth? Very many of God's children cannot say this. They can say it as a general rule, but not, perhaps, at the very moment of their present experience. It is a pretty sure sign of growth in spiritual life if God's Word is more sweet to us than it used to be. The sweetness of some parts of God's Word we can only know by being placed in circumstances where we shall understand the application of such-and-such a promise to our case. The man who never has any sickness, who has no losses in business—whose course is always one even stream—cannot, I am sure, understand some of the promises that are especially meant for the tried people of God. You cannot see the stars in the daytime, but I am told that if you went down

a well, even in the daytime, you could see them from there. God often takes His people down the well of affliction and then they can see the stars of the promises. Some of the promises are written in invisible ink—and if you hold the parchment up to the fire of affliction, they will become visible—but till then, the page will be as if they were never written there at all. Now, take this promise, “When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” Why, you who never went through fires and flames can never know the meaning of that promise! “I will never leave you, nor forsake you,” has often brought comfort to the tried and the persecuted. And the man that has been brought low in pecuniary matters, how often has he fed upon this promise, “Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks.” If you were never slandered, you never drank wine out of this bottle, “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn.” I am sure, if you feel the sweetness of God's Word, the secret of it is that you have experienced something or other of trial, outside or within, which has distinctly brought to your soul the sweetness which otherwise you could not have known.

That experience which does not make you prize God's Word is good for nothing. A great deal of the experience of a Christian is not Christian experience. He experiences it as a sinner and an offender against God. But that which is Christian experience always has this for its result—that it leads to a deeper prizing of the Word of God and a higher estimate of the preciousness of it. If you now have a very keen sense of the sweetness of God's Word, you have grown in confidence. Were anybody to say to me, “Honey is not sweet,” I could not be very clear about it. Perhaps I could not argue upon the subject. But supposing there were a dish of honey here, and I just took a spoonful of it, I would say, “You tell me that honey is not sweet? Why, my dear man, I have got some in my mouth.” I should scorn to argue upon it because I had the honey still in my mouth as an internal evidence and, therefore, argument would be too poor to be used in the case. I should laugh in his face when I had once got the sweetness of it on my palate. So it is with you. No infidel or skeptical remark can have any power over your mind if you are at the present moment in the conscious enjoyment of the comfort and sweetness of God's Word! If you feel that it cheers you in the dark, what a fool he must be who says that it does not give you light! Why, the man can have no toleration from you if he says it does not strengthen when you feel the strength of it!

It is a sign that you have grown in spiritual health when the Word of God is sweet to you. I remember my father saying to us children at home, when we did not like our food, that he had been to the Union House and the boys and girls always liked their breakfast there because they were hungry, and, he said, “If you had to go without, it would do you good.” Sometimes, children of God get worldly and then they have no appetite for God's Word. They say, “We do not profit under Mr. So-and-So.” The truth is, we do not profit under the Bible, itself, and should not profit under the Apostle Paul or under the Lord Jesus Christ, for we have spoiled our appetites! But when our appetite is healthy, we can come to the Scripture and not care much how it is carved. We would rather the preacher would carve it well, but some people must have it served up always in such dainty style—it must have little bits of poetry, like parsley to garnish the dish, and so on, and if a rough hand should bring them meat, they say, “No, we cannot feed in this style.” But if you have been in the field at work for God and have got an appetite, and the blood is circulating in your veins, then you can feast upon it till your soul rises up and says, “I thank You, Lord, for this, my food, and that You have made it sweet to my taste. I will tell my fellow Christians the delights that I have received in searching Your Word, that they may come and feed at the same table where I have been so daintily fed.”

May God the Holy Spirit make this the experience of every day to each one of us, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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