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METAPHORS OF SAVING FAITH

By: C. D. Cole

The Scriptures employ several expressions to tell how one is to be saved. Such expressions as *“coming to Christ; believing on Christ; looking to Christ; feeding on Christ; receiving Christ and following Christ.”* All these expressions add up to the same thing: faith in Christ. Faith in Christ means trusting in Him or depending upon Him for salvation. I want to discuss these metaphors separately.

COMING TO CHRIST

Faith is coming to Christ. Jesus said to the Jews who had tried to kill Him because He had healed the lame man on the Sabbath, in John 5:39-40, *“Search the scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.”* John 6:37, *“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”* In the context believing and coming are used interchangeably. And so, coming to Christ is to believe in or on Him. It is not any bodily or physical coming. The Jews who would not come to Him for life were already in His physical presence. But they would not come to Him in the sense of putting their trust in Him for eternal life. Coming to Christ is an act of the mind and heart. It is believing what the Bible says about Him as Saviour and trusting Him as Saviour. There is no

geographical spot on this earth to which one can go for salvation, nor is there any bodily exercise one can perform for salvation.

LOOKING TO CHRIST

Faith is looking to Christ. Isaiah 45:22, *“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”* John 1:29, *“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* Hebrews 12:2, *“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...”* As a teenager, C. H. Spurgeon, under a sense of sin, one stormy night dropped into a little chapel. He heard a preacher quote Isaiah 45:22. The man held up Christ and said, “Look.” Six years later C. H. Spurgeon preached a sermon from this same text. He analyzed this text. It is not look to yourself, but to Christ. Look, look, look; four letters and two of them are alike. How simple God has made the way of salvation. To look is one of the simplest things. But one must look to the right person and this person is Jesus Christ. No use looking to anybody or anything else but Christ and Him crucified. Some want us to look at the church, or ordinance, or human priest.

that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. 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 every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath

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FEEDING ON CHRIST

John 6:35-51, *“And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he*

THE GREAT PROVIDER

By: C. D. Cole

Psalm 145:16, *“Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.”*

This text suggests the great resources of God. The resources of God are infinitely vast and various. They are wonderful in their sufficiency and adaptation. God is a wonderful provider. His hand is open to all His creatures.

The text also suggests the dependence of all creatures. Our Father has a large family of dependent children. Our Creator has a mighty creation to care for. But He is equal to the needs of all His creatures. He looks after all the details and not even a sparrow is forgotten.

Man is a dependent creature. He has needs, both physical and spiritual. Men fast to demonstrate that man can live without physical food. But their loss of weight and their very appearance prove that they are mistaken. They surely have forgotten the words of the Lord Jesus Christ to His disciples when he warned them against undue concern and anxiety about food and raiment. Matthew 6:25-34, *“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?”*

(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” And in the matter of health, Jesus said, *“They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick,”* Matthew 9:12.

I want to divide our text up into three parts:

(1) It tells us that God provides personally - *“Thou.”*

(2) It implies that He provides easily - *“Openest Thine hand.”*

(3) It teaches that He provides abundantly - *“Satisfiest the desire of every living thing.”*

PROVIDES PERSONALLY

He provides personally. *“Thou openest thine hand.”* There is a tendency in every man to deify nature, and give it credit for the blessings that come to men. In human speech and through much of the praise that belongs only to God is given to nature. The sun is worshiped by the heathen because they believe it to be the source of light and heat. And the same is true of other works of nature like the moon, stars, etc. And Florida is credited with climate and sunshine that God should have the credit for. It is so easy to set the eye on the creation and forget the Creator.

PROVIDES EASILY

He provides easily. *“Thou openest thine hand.”* Luke 12:24, 27, *“Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them; how much more are ye better than the fowls? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”*

It is easy for God to supply the desires of all His creatures as it is for him to open his hand. The figure seems to be borrowed from the housekeeper's habit of feeding a flock of chickens and other creatures. She flings abroad with full and open hand a large supply of grain, not measuring just what is enough.

Let us pause for a moment and think of the needs of God's living creatures. What a quantity of vegetable and animal food is daily consumed in one town; what a quantity in a large city like New York; what a quantity in one nation like America; and in the whole world! And when we remember that men do not constitute a hundredth part of every living thing, the task of supplying every living thing seems well-nigh incredible. What innumerable wants throughout all animate nature; in the earth, in the air, in the waters! Whence comes their supply? The answer comes, *“Thou openest thine hand”* and all are satisfied.

Distinction has been made between God's hand and His heart. It is with His hand that he supplies His creatures with temporal and material things, but His heart is in the salvation of sinners. There is no expense in feeding His creatures. He merely opens his hand and they are supplied. But grace that saves, comes from an open heart; He must purchase the church with His blood.

He opens His hand in the way of providence to His worst enemies. He gave Nebuchadnezzar all the kingdoms of the earth. But He opens His heart in the gospel of His Son. Jesus said, Matthew 5:45, *“...he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”*

ABUNDANTLY

God gives abundantly. *“Satisfiest the desire of every living thing.”* God does not give grudgingly. Spurgeon says it seems to be a characteristic of

God, both in the natural and moral world, to raise desires with a view of satisfying them. What a consoling

Man is the one being who has so many unsatisfied desires, and this is because they are sinful and self-created desires. Much of the scarcity is artificial caused by the luxury of some. Andrew Fuller says that God raises no desires as our Creator without giving enough to satisfy them; and none as our Redeemer and Sanctifier without actually satisfying them. Matthew 5:6, "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*" It is grace that causes men to hunger after righteousness and the grace that creates the desire will satisfy it. "Twas grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved."

The self righteous man is filled with his own righteousness and knows nothing of hungering and thirsting after righteousness on his own.

God usually provides for us according to fixed interposes in what we think of as miraculous. Mr. Spurgeon once lost his railway ticket while riding on a train. Another gentleman riding with him in the same compartment noticed him fumbling in his pocket, and said, "I hope you have not lost anything, sir?" Spurgeon thanked him and told him that his ticket was missing, and that by a remarkable coincidence he had neither watch nor money with him. "But," added Spurgeon I am not at all worried, for I have been on my Master's business and I am sure that He will take care of my needs at this time. I have had so many interpositions of Divine providence in small as well as great matters, that I am sure, that whatever happens I will get along alright. The man seemed interested and said that no doubt it would be alright. When the conductor came to the compartment, he touched his hat to Mr. Spurgeon's traveling companion, who simply said, "All right, William," where on the conductor again saluted and retired. After he had gone Mr. Spurgeon said to the gentleman, "It is very strange that the conductor did not call for my ticket." No, Mr. Spurgeon he replied, using his name for the first time, "It is just another illustration of what you told me about the providence of God watching over you even in little things; I

thought!

The fish desire water in which to live and God has provided. The birds of am the general manager of this railroad, and it, no doubt, was divinely arranged that I should happen to be in your company just when I could serve you."

The shut hand is a symbol of stinginess; the open hand is the symbol of generosity and goodness. The clenched fist reminds us of Mussolini and is a symbol of religious revolt; the closed hand is a symbol of toil; the open hand is a symbol of ease.

METAPHORS OF SAVING FAITH (Continued from Page 1)

heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 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." In this discourse on the bread of life, Jesus uses the words coming, believing, and eating interchangeably. They all mean the same thing, that is, the act of appropriating Christ for eternal life. The Jews, like some people today, carnalize this verse and make it literal eating of the literal flesh of Christ. And since we do not have the flesh of Christ, the priest must make His flesh by an act of consecration of the literal bread and thus turn literal bread into the literal flesh of Christ.

RECEIVING CHRIST

John 1:12-13, "*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*" Christ is God's gift to sinners and the way to be saved is to receive Him. To receive Him is to take Him. You do not buy Him or bribe Him or persuade Him; you just take Him. And this is not done with the hands but with the heart. I John 5:11-12, "*And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*"

FOLLOWING CHRIST

Faith is following Christ. John 10:26-

the air find that which its nature desires.

30, "*But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.*" This metaphor is taken from the work of a shepherd and the response of a sheep. John 10:14, "*I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.*" The sheep's faith is shown by its following the shepherd. And here believing and following are used interchangeably. Some would not believe; would not have faith in Him, but the sheep believed Him, that is, they trusted Him. If you are trusting Christ as Lord and Saviour, you may be sure you are one of His sheep. In following the shepherd, the sheep does not do what the shepherd does, he trusts what the shepherd does.

These various expressions do not tell of different ways of salvation. These five metaphors are not five different things to do for salvation. But they all add up to the same thing; they are different ways to express faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is coming to Christ; it is looking to Him; it is feeding upon Him, that is appropriating Him; it is receiving Him or taking Him as God's gift; and it is following Him as a sheep trusts its shepherd.

THREE TESTS OF FAITH

If one has faith he has renounced his own righteousness; that is, he has lost confidence in Himself. He no longer looks to self or anything self has or can do for salvation. One cannot trust Christ without distrust of himself. One who has faith can sing: "Nothing in my hands I bring, Simply to thy cross I cling."

True faith begets love for Christ. Galatians 5:6, "*...faith worketh by love.*" We are not saved by loving Christ, but the one who trusts Christ will love Him. I John 4:7, 10, "*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God...Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*"

True faith will be manifested in obedience. Faith is not works but it produces works. Ephesians 2:10, "*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*"