

A.B. Simpson:

THE MANNA, THE ROCK AND THE VICTORY.

1 Cor. 10: 3, 4, and 13: "They did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

These three verses give us the substance of three important incidents in the Book of Exodus, in the 16th. and 17th. chapters, describing the giving of the manna; the opening of the Rock in Horeb; and the conflict of Israel with Amalek. These three things, I say, are all summed up in these three verses. "They did all eat the same spiritual meat," seems to be the manna. "They did all drink the same spiritual drink," leads us back to the rock and its flowing rivers. And the last verse quoted, reminds us of the conflict and victory which they obtained in Rephidim as the type of our conflict and victory over our Amalek.

We will look a little at God's supply for our spiritual hunger, thirst and temptations.

SECTION I -- The Manna.

First, then, the manna needs only a simple exposition, and the key to every exposition, I think, your own heart and experience must furnish. You will not understand this unless you know something of this hidden manna which Christ gives to him that overcometh. We read that some of this manna was put into a golden pot and laid up before the Lord to be kept for future generations. And this teaches us that the real substance of this manna is kept for us through all the ages. For Jesus says, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna."

1. The first thing we notice is, that this was supernatural bread. It did not grow from the soil of the desert, but was somehow sent by the power and wisdom of God and given to them from above.

And so our spiritual life, beloved, must be sustained from unnatural and supernatural causes. A Christian cannot subsist on his own strength. A Christian is more helpless than a worldling. And the nearer you get to God, the more we are dependent upon God, and the less able to draw our life from the old sources. You will starve upon the husks of this world unless you have learned to feed upon this manna.

Let us talk to each other's hearts today. Are you living on the spiritual bread? Have you something in your life which is more than the breath of the oxygen and the carbon, which is more than the nitrogen of the food, and the phosphates and ingredients of that which is called bread? Is your soul feeding on something more than the thoughts of men, and the affections and fellowships of life? Is your body upheld by something better than its own cohesive forces and elements? A poor lump of dust, how readily you fall to pieces; how you hunger and how you thirst, if you do not know something of this. O, you have begun to follow Jesus, are you trying to live on the old comforts? You cannot do it. You must be constantly refreshed; you must be constantly comforted; you must be constantly fed from the love of God; from the thoughts of God; from the life of God. For He does not only give us His thoughts, He gives us His very heart's life.

2. I learn another thing: It was simple of bread; there was no variety. They did not start with their different courses, and various dishes, and end with dessert; but they had manna for the first course, and the second course, and the dessert. It was all manna; and they got tired of the sameness.

And so the Christian has only one kind of manna. That is the trouble today, they want variety. And if you will read the columns of yesterday's Herald, you will see there enough dishes set forth to satisfy a French cook. I read of a church the other day that had been killed with that kind of food in six months. You cannot live on such things. God feeds his people on one kind of bread; it is Jesus Christ. It may be presented in a thousand forms, but it is Christ; a living Christ; a redeeming Christ; a faithful Christ; an overcoming Christ; the Christ in whom, and for whom you live; Jesus only. Are you satisfied, or are you getting sick of this one kind of Bread? I am so glad that the dear friends who gather here, have not been drawn by dainties. I sometimes say to my friends when they speak of this little flock, and of the insincerity of Christians, and their desire for earthly things, I say, the little flock that comes here is not drawn by any such things, any human agencies, splendid rhetoric, or

oratory, or music; but they have simply Christ, I trust, the living Bread. And it is a joy to think that one is surrounded by such, for only as they love it will they come to hear it.

And did you ever notice that God said to the Hebrews that the reason He gave them this kind of bread was to prove them and see what kind of people they were? "Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law or no."

You can prove God's children by their tastes. If they love God and his Word, you can depend on them. He says again in Deuteronomy: "Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at the latter end." Dear friends, if you have no taste for prayer and worship, and the Word of God, you will be sure to break down. Your love for God's Word, is a test of your spiritual character and faithfulness. And you will never love God's Word until it fills you; you will never care for the Bible, until it becomes bread to your hearts. A lady said to her friend, "I cannot like the Bible as you talk about liking it; it does not seem real to me as it seems to you." And her friend said, "the reason is, it never speaks to you. Sometime when you are in trouble," and she was all broken down then, "you ask the Lord to lead you to some verse that He will speak to you particularly." The very next day her face was shining when she met her friend and said, "O, He has given me this word;" it promised her healing; and before the week was gone, she was indeed cured. And she is in a Western city today, among scores and scores of those that have been helped by her simple testimony, testifying just as fully as I am preaching to you today; and when I was there last I was met and welcomed by hundreds of Christians drawn together by her life and testimony. Six months before she had not any interest in the Bible; but she took the promise and lived upon it, and then she was interested.

God wants you to turn His Word into manna for yourself, and the manna is just Christ and His personal life.

3. And yet, although this manna only consisted of one kind of bread, it contained all that was necessary for the nutriment and support of their life. God just concentrated in that little round coriander-like seed all the elements of nutrition. Just as the chemists tell us that the milk we drink contains in it all the forms of nutriment necessary, so the manna included everything. How beautifully it teaches us that Jesus Christ is everything. I am so glad that you do not have to get Christ today, and then the next week hunt up some different Gospel, and some new sensation. But it is one thing, and that thing includes all others "As ye have received the Lord Jesus Christ, so walk ye in him." It is the same as when you first tasted it; it will be so through all the years to come; and Jesus Christ will be the very same Jesus through all the ages of eternity.

Dear friends, do you believe that in that blessed Redeemer there are all the supplies of your life, for pardon, for sanctification, for wisdom, for redemption, for service, and that you can just take that personal Savior, and He will become to you everything that you can ever need for comfort, victory, or for blessing to others?

4. Again: this manna was a very insignificant looking thing, a thing that would be very easily overlooked. So Christ is a root out of a dry ground and despised of men. And this Bible is a very common looking thing in many houses, and many think it is a very dry book. But only gather its manna and it will be, as we are told about this manna, as sweet as oil and honey.

This manna had to be gathered every day, or it would become corrupt and breed worms. There are hearts, too, that are corrupting, and their very religion has mortified and turned to an open sepulcher, because the people have not maintained their communion with God. They are living on the old manna of a century ago. The sweetest and purest truth will become infected and unclean, if you do not constantly live on a present Christ, and renew your communion every week and every day. You cannot live on the blessing of this morning, you must still drink afresh, and feed on the Bread of Life, just as the Passover must be eaten on that day, and everything that remained was burned with fire. You will learn that this daily abiding in Christ is the secret of your Christian life.

It is very beautiful that the manna fell on the dew. They found it in the morning, imbedded or lying in the sparkling dew; a little grain of manna, and a trembling drop of dew. You know the dew is the type of the Holy Ghost, the gentle Comforter that drops upon us His promises and His commandments, as if they fell fresh from heaven itself.

5. Again: the manna and the Sabbath are strangely linked together. This chapter tells us about the Sabbath. For the first time since the creation we find it still observed. You know that a little more than a month later, the Sabbath was given in the ten commandments; but here before the commandments, we find the Sabbath

existing. It seems as though God would show us that spiritual food and spiritual rest must go together. The Sabbath is the type of the peace that passeth understanding. The people that are feeding on Christ, are having Sabbath rest; such people are not agitated by the troubles of life, but can stand the tempests of evil, and the trials of life and not be moved because their hearts are established in Christ.

Dear friends, have you learned the meaning of this? We read this morning such strange and mighty words as these: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever, and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Do you know what that means? Jesus Christ a living being, feeding your very being, as if a living soul were breathing life into you every moment, sustaining you inwardly and outwardly! O may the Spirit reveal Him to you. This alone can satisfy and sanctify. This alone can make you strong for service. And this alone, is Christianity. It is not the brain feeding on human thoughts, or Christian doctrine. I say deliberately, that all the Bible reveals is husks and not bread without this experience. One of the most distinguished of the German commentators, who wrote on every book of the Bible said, "I have written about them all. I have explained them all. I understand them in some sense, but I know nothing of it in my heart." That was not Living Bread; that was feeding on husks, and on straw, and not on the kernels of His Word. Or that was feeding, if I might change the figure, on the raw wheat, and not on the flour. It is not the Bible only, or the church only, but Christ making it all personal; and there is the same difference between the letter with Christ in it, and without, as between the letter I pick up on the street and know nothing about the writer, and the letter I get from the friend I love. There is a person behind the latter. There is a person behind this page. As you read it this morning, does it glow in your heart?

SECTION II -- The Water.

We turn to the second verse: "They did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." The people had come to Rephidim, which was one of the oases in the Arabian desert, a place where ordinarily there were fountains. Indeed, travelers tell us today there are fountains there. It was a place of rest. They supposed they would find water as usual; but instead they found the stream dry, the trees withered, and everything desolate and barren. And so the people burst out into wild clamors. They did chide with Moses, and murmured against the Lord. They said, "Is the Lord among us, or not?" And God, instead of meeting them with judgment as they deserved, met them as He ever did. He told Moses to call the elders aside. They were responsible men that could bear witness of it, as the disciples could afterward tell of the resurrection of Jesus. He took these men with him to the place of the fountain, and there before the rock the pillar of cloud and fire took its stand, towering above it, and Moses took the rod and smote the rock, cleaving it asunder; and instantly there poured from it a stream of water, and spread through the camp, and through the oasis, until the people, with eager cries of gladness, were struggling for it and drinking its flowing tides. Eastern travelers tell us how the caravans do when they come to water, they are so delighted; the horses plunge in, and the people crowd upon one another into the stream, until their cries of delight are mingled with shouts of alarm, as they trample each other in their eagerness. And so here they brought their suffering cattle and they all drank and drank. And it would seem that this fountain never closed, but the waters continued to pour forth, until it became a living stream. For Paul says they "drank of that Rock that followed them." It went along as they went along; and though sometimes it could not be found above the ground, they could dig down and find it, they could open a little cavity, and it would burst forth again. And so there was water all through the desert from this opening in the rock. They drank of the Rock that followed them, and it was the same spiritual rock, it was Christ. Water is one of the symbols of spiritual things. We see it in Genesis in the story of poor Hagar. We find its preciousness again in the reign of Ahab, and the life of Elijah. Christ tells the woman of Samaria of the well of water springing up unto everlasting life. And John speaks of the river clear as crystal that flows from the throne of God and the Lamb, and to which the Spirit and the Bride say come, and of which all who will may take freely.

For us, this means the fulness of salvation. More specifically it means the work of the Holy Ghost. The bread is the type of Jesus, and the water of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost is referred to under this image of water in His refreshing grace. Flowing around us in the ocean, above us in the air, the moisture that fills the atmosphere, and without which life cannot exist, one of the most important ingredients that constitute the physical universe, water is the vivid symbol of His Infinite and Illimitable grace. It tells also of the freeness of the Holy Ghost for all who will receive Him without money and without price.

Notice, first, that this water comes from the riven rock. The rod of the lawgiver had to strike the rock before the water came. And God had to smite His Son before the day of Pentecost and the joy of the Holy Ghost could

reach our hearts. Not only was the water started, but left flowing, and ever since that the Holy Spirit has been in the church. He is here today; He is for you today. There is no limitation of the fulness of His blessing to those who will receive.

Not only did the water continue to flow from the rock, but through the desert; a channel was prepared for it; and when the channel was not there, it flowed beneath the ground. And so the Holy Spirit does not travel in aqueducts but everywhere. Traveling through Italy first, I was struck by the vast aqueducts of the country, lifted up like our elevated tracks. If I had been thirsty I could not have reached them. God's water flows in all places. The great peculiarity of water is that it flows down. It will go as high as its fountain head, and as low as the neediest. And so the Holy Ghost goes through your desert life; into the hard place of your life; into your weary round of toil and down to the lowest depths of sin and misery. The men and women before me have a struggling life. I am glad that I know something of work, and Christ knows more. I do not believe that a lazy, indolent man can taste of the full joys of His grace. Christ walked the whole circle of our life Himself, and so these streams flow through your common life. Some of you are going from here to cook your own dinners; tomorrow you are to pass through hours of trial, of toil and business, with all its pressure, and its monotony. It does not matter much, if you have the Divine supply and you can have it for the morning and afternoon and evening, as well as in the hours of sacred service. I do not know anything I am more thankful for, than the sufficiency of Christ for the twelve hours of the day and the twelve hours of the night. I am sure I should have died long ago if I had not found in Him a continual refreshing and delight. I do not believe in merely getting through. I do not believe in riding in an emigrant train; you can have a palace car all the way. God will make it easy for you. He loves to see you put your hand on the hardest things, and find them easy through Christ. This living water is for the desert, and not for those glorious eminences. You dear school girls, it will make your brain clearer, and brush the cobwebs from your mind. And it will help you, toiling women. How God's heart goes out to you. He knows what a life you are living. But He will go with you everywhere.

Now we want to tell the world about this sort of grace. We do not want a religion of silver slippers, or kid gloves. But we want it to be practical heart work. I think I sometimes seem extravagant when I talk about this side of Christianity, but it has been so real to me, you must indulge me.

SECTION III -- Conflict and Victory.

And now one more lesson; and that is, the conflict with Amalek. I am so glad that God does not let the battle come until you have got the bread and the water. If Amalek had come before the manna fell, and before the rock was opened, I am afraid he would have had his own way. But God fortifies you for the battle by filling your life and heart with His sufficiency.

In the first place, this battle with Amalek stands for the temptations that come to us from the flesh. Amalek was a descendant of Esau, and Esau was a man of the flesh. The whole race of Amalek includes the Canaanites; it was at least a branch of the Canaanites. It stands for that in men and women which is animal; but it stands not only for the coarse appetites of the animal, but for the tastes and desires and ambitions which are fleshly, and not pure and heavenly. We can have a business that is earthly, and we can have a business that is consecrated. We can have joys that take hold on the earth, and yet are rooted in God, or we can have these things all center in the earth. Do you know what it is to have an earthly intellect as well as an earthly lust? Amalek stands for all this.

It seems Amalek came a long distance. He came unprovoked; he was not attacked by Israel; but he came himself, because he hated this new way, and he wanted to destroy it before they got to Sinai and the Tabernacle. And you do not know where the campaign will begin; perhaps on the way home today; sitting at the dinner table; or in some of the things that will meet you before night. He will perhaps be along to close up the Lenten season. So Amalek came to fight with Israel. And it seems to intimate here, that Amalek will come until the end, because it says God will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

Another thing I want you to notice, he came not where the pillar of fire was; he does not come there; but he came behind, in disguise, in strategy. And we are told in Deut. 25: 18. "How he met them by the way, and smote the hindmost of them, even all that were feeble behind them, when they were faint and weary; and he feared not God." It is so like his sneaking way. He came and fought the weary. If your face is set steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, he will not be there. If you are away in front, you will not see him. But if you are doubting, and lingering behind and compromising with the world, afraid to trust God with all your heart, you will find him. He came and fought the hindmost. Don't get feeble; don't linger behind; do not take back seats in Christ's house; always press forward. Where God promises anything, say that is for me. If God commands anything, say, Lord, I will do it. When your faith is weak, or your hope, the flesh is apt to get control by its desires or its fears.

(Divine Emblems of Spiritual Life) 13. EMBLEMS FROM THE WILDERNESS

He is the type of our earthly adversaries that come in the world around us, and come often with combined and tremendous power, O how easy it would be to prove this, by turning back the leaves of your life. Dear young friends, what has blighted you? it is the flesh. What has sapped the springs of your life? O if I could tell of the young men that come sometimes to tell me the story of their wreck, it would make your heart ache. Perhaps it was unhallowed reading, to gratify their fleshly taste, not very grossly at first, the book that pleases, the sensational columns of those devilish newspapers; it makes one sick all over to read the headlines.