

Chapter 23. Feeding on the Word

"Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." – Jeremiah 15:16

Here we have three things. The **finding** of God's Word. This only comes to those who seek diligently for it. Then the **eating**. This means the personal appropriation for our sustenance, the taking up into our being the words of God. *"MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD OF GOD."* (Luke 4:4). And then the **rejoicing**. *"The Kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."* (Matthew 13:44). The finding, the appropriating, and the rejoicing. *"Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart."*

The central word here is *eating*. It is preceded by the searching and finding. It is accompanied and followed by the rejoicing. This the only aim and use for the search and finding. The secret of the inner chamber depends on this – **I ate Your words!**

To understand the difference between the eating and finding of God's words, compare it to a man who stored up wheat in his granary and then eating the bread later he has on his table. All the diligent labour to sow, harvest and gather his grain, all the rich reward he has for his care, cannot profit him, unless he feeds on the daily portion of bread his body requires. The greater the quantity of wheat he found, harvested, and gathered, the speed with which he does all these things, are great to see. But in the eating the very opposite takes place. Here it is the small quantity, and the slow and unceasing continuation of eating that characterises the appropriation of the harvest, making the wheat his own.

Can you see the application it has to your study of Scripture in the morning watch? You need to **find** God's words, and by careful thought **master** them, so as to have it **stored** in your mind and memory for your own use, and that of others. In this work there may often be great joy, the joy of harvest or of victory; the joy of treasure secured, or difficulties overcome; and yet, we must remember that finding and possessing the words of God is not yet the **eating** of them, which alone brings Divine life and strength to the soul.

The fact of being occupied with, and possessing good wholesome wheat, will not nourish a man. *The fact of being deeply interested in the knowledge of God's Word will not of itself nourish the soul. "Your words were found" was the first thing. "And I ate them" - that brought the joy and rejoicing.*

What is this eating? The wheat which the farmer grew and rejoiced in as his very own, could not nourish his life, until he took it and ate it, and so completely assimilate it, that it became part of himself, entering into his blood, forming his very bone and flesh. This has to be done in a small quantity at a time, two or three times a day, every day of the year. This is *the law of eating*. It is not the amount of truth I gather from God's Word; it is not the interest or success of my Bible study; it is not the increased clearness of understanding or largeness of grasp I am obtaining, that secure the health and growth of the spiritual life. By no means! All of this often leaves the natural man very unsanctified and unspiritual with very little of the holiness or humility of Christ Jesus. Something else is needed. Jesus said: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me." (John 4:34). Taking a small portion of God's Word, some definite command of the new life, quietly receiving it into the will and the love of the heart, yielding the whole being to its rule, vowing to perform it by the power of the Lord Jesus, and then *doing it*, this is eating the Word. Taking it into our inmost being that it becomes part of our very life. The same goes for a truth or a promise. What you *eat* becomes part of yourself, you carry it with you where you go as part of the life you live.

Do you now understand the difference between the wheat stored in the granary and the eating of the bread on the table? This will become the life of your Bible study. The gathering of Scripture knowledge is one thing; the eating of God's Word, the receiving of it into your very heart by the power of the life-giving Spirit, is something totally different. Do you see how the law of eating the food, in contrast with finding and gathering it, needs to be obeyed? You can gather and store grain to last for years, but you cannot swallow a large enough quantity of bread to last you for days. Day by day, and more than once a day, you need to eat your daily food. And so, the eating of God's Word must also be in small portions, just as much as the soul receive and digest each time. And this needs to be done, day by day, from one end of the year to another.

Feeding in the Word like this will enable you to say: "*And Your word was the joy and rejoicing of my heart.*" George Muller said that he learned that he should not stop reading the Word until he felt happy and satisfied in God; then he felt fit to go out into his day's work.

Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Bread of Life. I want to feed on You. Teach me to eat the Word, to receive it in my heart, so that it will become part of my life. Remind me often that gathering knowledge about the Word is not the main reason for reading the Bible."