

Spiritual Appetite

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A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 4, 1875,

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The full soul loathes the honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet."

[Proverbs 27:7.](#)

IT is a great blessing when food and appetite meet together. Some have appetite and no meat, they need our pity. Others have meat but no appetite. They may not, perhaps, win our pity but they certainly require it. We have heard of a gentleman who was accustomed to take an early morning walk and frequently met a poor man hastening to his labor. One morning he said to him, "I have to walk this early each morning to get a stomach for my meat." "Ah," said the other, "and I have to trudge to work this early to get meat for my stomach." Neither of them was quite satisfied with his position—only the happy conjunction of the appetite and the food could secure content.

Are we thankful enough when we have both? It has often happened that men have been so luxuriously fed that appetite has departed from them altogether. The Israelites, when they were in the wilderness, became so squeamish that though they were fed with the bread from Heaven and, for once, men did eat angels' food, yet they said, "Our soul loathes this light bread." And you in the world are in great danger of falling into the same condition, for you do not enjoy the rarest luxuries! You pick and choose as if nothing were good enough for you and, like the old Roman gluttons, you require sea and land, earth and air to be ransacked for your gratification and then crave pungent sauces and strange flavorings before you can eat.

The fact is, the old proverb is true, that the best sauce for meat is hunger, and while the confectioner and the cook may labor with a thousand arts to produce a dainty dish, Nature teaches us the way to enjoy our meat, namely, not to eat it till we need it—and then to partake of only so much as our bodies require. That hunger gives a relish even to objectionable diet is certain. Our forefathers found it possible to live upon food which we could not touch. Even so late as the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the mass of the poor seldom tasted wheat bread, but fed on rye or barley cakes. And they often had to be content with bread made of beans, peas, tares, oats, lentils and even these had to be frequently mixed with acorns. They had a saying that, "Hunger sets his foot in the horse's manger," meaning that food which was only fit for horses was devoured by men in the time of famine.

Those delicate people who are forever complaining of this and that, and regretting the, "good old times," would change their tune if they had a trial of such fare—and could earnestly pray to be projected, again, into the times in which we live. The rules which apply to the

bodily appetite hold equally true of the mind. We easily lose our taste for anything of which we have our fill. Many men of the world have gone the round of amusement and now nothing can please them. They have worn out all their playthings and are tired of every game. Poor things, more wearied of their follies than the slave by his servitude!

For them laughter and mirth have become ghastly mockeries—men and women singers are no delight—and instruments of music are discordant. Gardens and palaces are dreary—and treasures of art a vexation of spirit. By the road of folly they have reached the very point to which Solomon came with all his wisdom and like he, they cry, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." In a higher order of things the same process can be observed. In the pursuit of knowledge men may come to loathe honeycombs through sheer repletion. Many a literary man has reached such a condition of fastidiousness that the books which he can enjoy are as few as the fingers of his hands. With a toss of the head he passes by volumes with which ordinary readers are charmed. His delicate poetical taste is shocked by the hymns which delight his countrymen and his ears are tortured by the tunes to which they are sung.

For my part, I would sooner retain the power of enjoying a simple hymn, sung to a tune which delights the multitude, than find myself proclaimed king of critics. And I would sooner be able to sit down and read a child's storybook

with interest, than rise into the sublime condition of those literary gentlemen who glance over every book with a sharp critical eye—and see nothing meriting their attention. In fact, they never will see anything worth reading unless the book is written by themselves or one of their party. "The full soul loathes the honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet."

I would not have said so much upon this principle of our nature if it had not happened to enter into religion. It is upon religious fastidiousness that I have to speak this morning. Men, in the things of God, have not always an appetite for the sweetest and most precious Truths of God. The Gospel of Jesus, revealed from Heaven, is full of marrow and fatness. But the condition of men's minds is such that they cannot perceive its excellence. They regard it as a tasteless thing, at best, while some even treat it as though it were wormwood and gall to them. They feed upon the husks of the world with greedy relish, but turn from the provisions of Mercy with disdain! They are full of the meat from the flesh pots of Egypt—for the Bread of Heaven they have no desire! Nor will they, till the Holy Spirit quickens them into spiritual life, and makes them feel the keen pangs of spiritual hunger.

The three points of my discourse will be as follows—first, that Jesus Christ is, in Himself, sweeter than the honeycomb. Secondly, there are those that loathe even Him. And then, thirdly, blessed be His name, there are others who appreciate Him—"To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet."

I. Let us begin, then, with the assured truth that JESUS CHRIST IS, HIMSELF, SWEETER THAN THE HONEYCOMB. Whether you believe it, or not, the fact remains, the Incarnate

Word is sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. Whether it is your privilege to revel in the delightful knowledge of His love or not, that love will still be equally precious. That Jesus Christ is sweeter than the honeycomb is clear if we consider who He is and what He gives and does. If you think of it you will see that it must be so. Our Lord is the Incarnation of Divine Love.

The love of God is sweet and Jesus is that Love made manifest. "God so loved the world"—I pause to ask how much? Where shall we see at a glance the fullness of that Love? Turn your eyes to Jesus, He alone answers the question. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." There, bleeding upon Calvary, we see the heart of the Father revealed in the pierced heart of His only-begotten Son! Jesus is the focus of the Love of God. The boundless goodness of the ever-loving God finds its best expression in the Person of the Redeemer—surely, then, He must be sweet beyond comparison!

When God takes His Love and culls the choicest flower from it, and hands it down to earth for men to gaze upon it as the token of His favor, we may be sure that its fragrance surpasses conception. God is Love and when that Love is concentrated in one Individual that it may afterwards be diffused through multitudes, there must be an infinite sweetness in that blessed Person. Judge you what I say—must it not be so? Moreover, Jesus Christ is, in Himself the embodiment of boundless Mercy to sinners as well as Love to creatures. God loved men, for He had made them, but He could not bless them, for He must judge them for their offenses.

Lo, Jesus Christ has vindicated the Divine Honor, satisfied the Law, and now the Mercy of God can descend freely to men, even to the rebellious and the undeserving! Who would find mercy, let him look where Jesus died upon the tree, and he shall find it blooming freely from the crimsoned ground! Who would behold Mercy in all its plenitude, let him go where Jesus stands with open hands welcoming the vilest of the vile to the feast of love, cleansing their every stain and robing them in garments of salvation! He must be sweet from whom such sweetness flows that He makes the foulest and most offensive of mankind acceptable to God!

If His merits turn our Hell to Heaven, our gall of bitterness into joy and peace, it is not possible that even the honeycomb dripping with virgin honey should fitly set Him forth. You bees that wander over fairest flowers, your choicest gatherings can never rival the quintessences of delight which must dwell in One in whom the Mercy of God is concentrated! You poverty-stricken sons of men, Christ must be sweet, for He meets all your needs. Sweet is liberty to the captive and when the Son makes you free, you are free, indeed! Sweet is pardon to the condemned and proclaims full forgiveness and salvation! Sweet is health to the sick and Jesus is the Great Physician of souls!

Sweet is light to those who are in darkness and to eyes that are dim, and Jesus is both sun to our darkness and eyes to our blindness! All that men can ever need—all that the most

famished souls can pine after—is to be found in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus, and therefore sweet He must be! He is sweet because, whenever He comes into a man's heart, He breathes into it the sweetness of abounding peace. Oh, the rest our souls have known when we have leaned upon His

bosom! "The peace of God which passes all understanding" has kept our heart and mind by Jesus Christ! Our soul has drank nectar from His wounds!

Nor has it been bare peace, alone, the glassy pools of rest have bubbled up into fountains of joy. In Jesus we have rejoiced and do rejoice and will rejoice all day! No happiness can be more Divine than the bliss of knowing Him and feeding upon Him and being one with Him. All the true peace and joy that are known on earth—I might have said that are known in Heaven among the ransomed throng—all come through Jesus Christ our Lord, whose name is the sum of delights! Those spices must be sweet, indeed, from which the sacred oil of joy distills! That honey must be infinitely sweet of which one single drop fills a whole life with rejoicing!

It is clear that our Lord must be sweet because His very name smells of celestial hope to Believers. No sooner do we taste of Jesus, than, like Jonathan in the woods, our eyes are enlightened and we see the invisible! The veil is taken away and we behold a way of access to our Father God and to the joys of His right hand! Once understand that Jesus has borne our sins and carried our sorrows, and we see that the felicities of eternity are prepared for us! His name is the open sesame of the gates of Paradise! Learn but to pronounce the name of Jesus from your heart as all your confidence and you have learned a magic word which will scatter troops of opposing foes and will open the two-leaved gates, and cut the bars of iron in sunder if they stand between your soul and Heaven! Since Jesus is all this and vastly more than any human tongue can tell, it is clear upon the very face of it that He must be sweet.

But we are not left to the supposition and inference that it must be so, we know it is so. Our Lord is as the honeycomb, for He is sweet to God, Himself. The taste of the High and Holy One, who shall venture to judge? What the Lord Himself calls sweet must be sweet, indeed. Now, the very smell of Christ's Sacrifice, no, I will go further—the very smell of that which was the type of Christ in the days of Noah—was so pleasing to God that it is written, "The Lord smelled a sweet savor of rest, and He said, I will no more destroy the earth with a flood." If the very smell of that which was but the emblem of the bleeding Lamb was grateful to Jehovah, how sweet to the Divine Father must the Lord Jesus Himself be in His actual Sacrifice?

Why, the very sight of the blood—and, mark you, not the blood of Christ, but only the blood of a lamb slain in type of Christ—the very sight of that blood sprinkled on the lintel turned away the destroying angel from Israel of old, for the Lord said, "When I see the blood I will pass over you." Now, if a mere glimpse of the type of Jesus' atoning blood is so satis-

factory to the heart of God, think what the sight of Jesus must be, for He has been obedient to death, even the death of the Cross! If I had time I might mention the many ways in which our Lord is set forth in Scripture as being sweet to the Father—all the senses are represented as being gratified—the Lord hears His voice crying from the ground and answers it with blessing.

He tastes His Sacrifice as wine which makes glad the heart of God, and He feels His touch as the Daysman laying His hands both upon Judge and offender. In every possible way Jesus is most sweet and pleasant to the Divine mind. Hear how from the highest Heaven the Lord declares, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake. Now, if the heart of Deity, itself, is satisfied and filled to the full with content, there must be an Infinite sweetness in the Person of the Lord Jesus! That honeycomb must be sweet with which the Triune God is satisfied!

Moreover, our Lord Jesus is sweet to the angels in Heaven. Did they not watch Him when He was here below with careful eyes? When first they missed Him from the courts above, they flew with eager haste to discover where He was, and when they found that He was come to this poor planet, they made the night bright with their radiance and sweet with their chorales. While He tarried here they watched His footsteps, they ministered to Him in the wilderness, and in the garden, and at other times they waited in their legions, eager to deliver Him if He would but have beckoned them to use their celestial weapons.

When they saw Him at last, ready to ascend, I can well believe that the poet's words are no fiction, but describe a fact—

"They brought His chariot from on high To bear Him to His Throne; Clapped their triumphant wings and cried, 'The glorious work is done!'"

He was "seen of angels," and was very dear and precious to them. Surely He who attracts all those bright intelligences and causes them to gaze upon Him unceasingly, and pay Him Divine honors must be sweet, indeed. Sweet is Christ, Beloved, for it is His Presence that makes Heaven what it is. You are in a garden and smelling a dainty fragrance. You say to yourself, "Where does this come from?" You traverse the walks and borders to discover the source of the pleasant odor and at last you come upon a rose. Even thus, if you were to walk among those fruitful trees which skirt the river of the Water of Life, you would perceive a peerless perfume of superlative delight, but you would not have to ask yourself, "Where does this fragrance come from?"

There is but one rose in the Paradise of God which is capable of scattering such perfume of joy—and that is the "Rose of Sharon," that famous, "plant of renown," which has diffused fragrance over both earth and Heaven! Well may He be sweet to us, since when He was broken like the alabaster box of precious ointment, He filled all the chambers of the House of God both above and below with an unrivalled sweetness! If you need proof from nearer home, let me remind you how sweet the Well-Beloved is to His own people. What was it

that first attracted us to God? Was it not the sweetness of Christ? What was it that banished all the bitterness of our fears? Was it not the sweetness of His pardoning Love?

What is it that holds us so that we cannot leave, which enchains us, seals us, nails us to the Cross so that we can never leave it? Is it not that He is so sweet that we shall never find any to compare with Him? Yes, and therefore we must abide with Him because there is nowhere else to go! Brothers and Sisters, I appeal to you who know Jesus, are you not satisfied? I mean not only satisfied with Him, but satisfied altogether? Does He not fill and overflow your souls? When you enjoy His Presence, what other joy could you imagine?

When He embraces you, have you any heart left for other delights? Do you not say, "He is all my salvation, and all my desire." My cup runs over, my Lord Jesus, when I have communion with You—

"Jesus, to whom I fly, Does all my wishes fill! What, though the creature streams are dry, I have a fountain still."

All the saints will tell you that Christ is most sweet and altogether lovely. And some of them will confess that, sometimes, His sweetness overcomes them, carries them right away and bears them out of themselves! The eagle wings of Jesus' Love uplift us to the gates of Heaven and this will happen to us even when there is nothing on earth to make us happy, and all without and within is dark. When the poor body is full of pain and every nerve is unstrung by disease, even then, Jesus comes and lays His fingers amid the strings of our poor nature, until charmed by His touch, they pour forth a music which might teach the harps of Heaven His praise!

In His Presence our heart is glad beyond all gladness! We are beatified if not glorified. Would God it might be always so! My dear Lord and Master is very sweet, but my lips fail me and I blush at my poor attempts to speak His praises. One thing that proves how sweet He is, is this—He removes all bitterness from the heart which truly receives Him. The quassia cup of sickness is no longer bitter when a drop of His love falls into it. In His society, sick beds grow into thrones in which the invalid does not so much pine as reign! The lonely chamber becomes a royal reception room. The hard bed a couch of down and the curtains are transformed into banners of love!

So, too, His love digs out of the garden of life the roots of the regret of care and the wormwood of anxiety. A man may be vexed with a thousand anxieties, but in communion with Christ he will find rest unto his soul. The delectable mixture of fellowship with Jesus effectually drowns the taste of the world's bitterness. Saints in persecution have found the love of Christ cleanse their mouths from every taste of hatred's gall. They have been able to bear imprisonment and think it liberty, to regard chains as ornaments, to find the rack a bed of roses and the blazing stake a chariot of fire to bear them to their reward!

If a child of God were called in the pursuit of duty to swim through a sea of Hell's most bitter pains, yet with the sweetness of Christ's love in his mouth, he would not so much as

taste the sea of gall. As to death, we have learned to swallow it up in victory! Surely its bitterness is past. Where else can you find such delicious dainties? Where else such all-subduing sweetness? Jesus is bliss itself! Thus have I shown sufficiently that facts have proven that Jesus is sweet as the honeycomb, but I detain you just a moment to notice that He is incomparably so.

Whether I am right or not in speaking thus of honey, I shall be right enough in saying it of Jesus Christ—He is not only sweet, but Sweetness itself! We need not say of Him that He is good, for He is essential Goodness. He is not only lov-

ing, but Love. Whatever good thing you may seek in the world, you shall find it thinly spread here and there upon good men, as God deals out these precious things by measure. But the fullness of all good you shall find in Jesus Christ! He is not the sweet odor, but the ointment which gives it forth! He is not the brook, but the fountain from which it springs! He is not the beam of light, but the sun from which it proceeds!

Honey is the conglomeration and compounding of a thousand sweets. The bees visit all sorts of flowers, knowing by a cunning wisdom denied to us, where all sweet things are hidden—they take not only the nectar of the ruddy rose but also of the snow-white lily—and gathering ambrosia from all the beauties of the garden, they thus concoct a luscious sweetness altogether unsurpassable. Even thus my Lord is all excellences compounded and commingled in Divine harmony—a rare confection of all perfections to make one perfection—the meeting of all sweetnesses to make one perfect sweet!

They said of Henry the Eighth that if all the features of a tyrant had been lost, they might have been painted afresh from his life. And surely we may say of Christ that if all the sweetness and light of manhood had been forgotten. If all the love of mothers, the constancy of martyrs, the honesty of confessors and the self-sacrifice of heroes had departed, you would find it all treasured up in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ! Each bee, as he performs his many journeys, selects what he thinks best and brings it to the common store. And I doubt not they have each a dainty tooth so that each one chooses the best he finds. Oh, you preachers of the Gospel, you may each seek out the richest thoughts and words you can, to proclaim my Lord!

Oh, you who are the mighty orators of the Church, you may utter the choicest language of poetry or prose, and so you may bring all sweets together, but you shall never match the altogether peerless sweetness which dwells in the Person and work of Jesus the Well-Beloved! Honey is a healthy sweet, though many sweets are not so. Children have been made sick and even poisoned by berries whose sickly sweetness has decoyed them to their hurt. But as for our Lord, the more you feed on Him the more you may! Christ is health to the soul, yes, strength and life! Eat, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved. Have you found honey? Eat not too much, but have you found Jesus? Eat to the full, and eat on still, if so you can, for you shall never have too much of Him!

II. Secondly—THERE ARE THOSE WHO LOATHE THE SWEETNESS OF OUR LORD. This shows itself variously. Some loathe Him so as to trample on Him, and this I find to be the translation given in the margin, "The full soul tramples on a honeycomb." God have mercy upon these boastful ones who persecute His saints, revile His name and despise His Gospel! If there are any such here, may Sovereign Mercy change their hearts, or a fearful judgement awaits them! Others show that they loathe Christ because they are always murmuring at Him. If they do not find fault with the Gospel, itself, they rail at its ministers. Nobody can please them.

John comes neither eating nor drinking, and they say he has a devil. The Master comes eating and drinking and they say—behold a Man gluttonous and a wine bibber! One man preaches very solemnly and they call him heavy; another mingles humor with his discourse and they accuse him of frivolity. One minister uses a lofty rhetoric, he is too flowery. Another speaks in simpler style, he is vulgar. This generation, like the generations which have gone before, cannot be satisfied—but it is Jesus they are discontented with. O you carping critics of the Gospel, you find fault with the dish, but it is a mere excuse—you do not like the meat! If you hungered after the meat you would not object to the platter on which it is served! But because you love it not you complain of the dish and the carver.

Often this loathing is shown by an utter indifference to the Gospel. The great mass of our fellow citizens will not attend a place of worship at all, or if they do attend it is but seldom. And when they come, they leave their hearts behind them, so that the Word goes in one ear and out the other. The suffering Savior is nothing to them. Heaven and Hell are nothing to them. Whether they shall be lost or saved is nothing to them! Thus they show their loathing. Perhaps some here, present, loathe our Lord at bottom and yet think not so. They attend to His Word, but what is the attention? They care for Jesus, but they care so little that it leads to no practical result.

Some of you, after 10 years of hearing the Gospel, are still unconverted! And after 20 years of the enjoyment of Gospel privileges you still have never tasted the honey of the Word of God. If you thought it sweet, you would have tasted of it before now—you loathe it or else you would not let it stand right under your nose untasted for years. You must be full, or you would not allow this honeycomb to lie untouched so long. You have meant to eat of it, you say. Yes, but I never knew a hungry man to sit without eating for six hours at a table! No, he begins eating as soon as Grace has been

said, and in your case the Grace has been said a great many times—and yet you sit with the sweets of mercy before you and refuse to eat.

I cannot account for it on any other theory but that there is a secret loathing in your soul. This loathing is manifest by many signs. There is the Bible, a book of infinite sweetness, God's letter of love to the sons of men! Is it not dreadfully dry reading? A three-volume novel suits a great many far better. That is loathing the honeycomb! There is the Gospel

ministry. Sermons are dull affairs, are they not? Now, I will admit that some sermons are dreary and empty as a desert, but when Christ is honestly and earnestly preached, how is it you are so weary? Others are fed, why do you complain? The meat is right enough, but you have no appetite for it—for the reason given in the text.

When a man loathes Christ he finds prayer to be bondage and if he carries it on at all, it is a very dull exercise, yielding no enjoyment. As to meditation, that is a thing neglected altogether by the godless many! Sunday, with some persons, is a very weary day—they are glad when it is over. I heard one say the other day he thought Sunday ought to be spent in recreation. Upon which a friend replied that he wished he might find true re-creation, for he needed to be created anew in Christ Jesus—and then he would judge the Sabbath to be the best day of the week!

Alas, these dull Sabbaths and these dreary preachers! And this dull praying and singing. And all this weariness— they are sure signs that you are full souls—and therefore loathe the honeycomb. This loathing comes of a soul's being full—and souls may be full in a great many ways. Some are full because they have never discovered their natural depravity and nothingness. They have never realized that they are condemned by the Law of God. These full souls who are what they always were—good people from their birth—do not need a Savior and, therefore, they despise Him. Why should the whole value a physician? Is He not intended for the sick?

Alas for you full ones, for your time of hunger will come when there will be no more feasts of love, and then, as Dives could not obtain a drop of water, you, also, will be denied a crumb of consolation! Some people are full with enjoying the world. They have wealth and they are perfectly content with it. Or they have no wealth, but still they are pleased with the groveling pursuits of their class. Their thoughts never rise. They are like the rooster on the dunghill that scratched up a diamond and said, "I would sooner have found a grain of barley." They are satisfied if they have enough to eat and drink and wear—but they do not think of Divine things. They are full of the world and therefore loathe the honeycomb.

Some are full of confidence in outward religiousness. They were christened when they were babes and they were con-firmed—and if that doesn't save people, what will? A bishop's hands laid on you! Think of that!! Since then they have taken the sacrament and they have always been told that if you go regularly to your place of worship, and especially if you pay 20 shillings in the pound you will do very well—at least if you do not—what will become of your neighbors? These full souls do not appreciate Free Grace and dying Love—salvation by the blood of Christ seems to them to be but idle babble.

Some are full of self-conceit—they know everything—they are great readers and profound philosophers. Their thoughts have dived to the bottom of infinity! They are so nice in their criticisms that they—

"Can a hair divide

Between the west and north-west side!" It is not possible to satisfy them. The knowledge of Christ Crucified is foolishness and a stumbling block to them. Others are full of the pride of rank. Yes, they are very glad to hear that the poor people hear the Gospel—and they have no doubt that the plain preaching of the Gospel is very useful to the lower orders—but respectable people who live in the West End and ride in carriages do not require such preaching. They are too respectable to need saving and so their full souls loathe the honey-comb.

But we need not go on any longer talking about them, for we shall do them no good as long as they are full. If the angel Gabriel were to preach Christ to them it would be as a sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal. Serve up the meat as well as you may, but never will it be appreciated till the guest has an appetite! May the Lord send them an appetite by the work of His Holy Spirit!

III. And so I close with the third point, which is this—THERE ARE SOME WHO DO APPRECIATE THE

SWEETNESS OF CHRIST. I would to God I could find such out this morning. Hungry Souls, we are Brethren if you are hungry after pardon, mercy and Grace. I remember when I was in your condition. What would you give to have Christ? "I would give my eyes," says one. Give Him your eyes, then, by looking to Him, and you shall have Him! "What I would give," says one, "to be delivered from my besetting sin! I hunger after holiness." Soul, you may have deliverance from besetting sins and have it for nothing!

Jesus Christ has come into the world to save His people from their sins! Looking to Him, He will deliver you from that disease which now makes you love sin! And He will give you a taste for holiness and a principle of holiness by the Holy Spirit and you shall, from now on, become a saint unto God! He turns lions into lambs and ravens into doves! Nothing is impossible with Him! You have but to trust your soul with Him and you shall have pardon, peace, holiness, Heaven, God, everything! Those who hunger are those, then, who know the sweetness of Christ. But they must do more than that—being hungry, they must feed—though the text does not say so, it is very clear that merely being hungry does not make meat sweet. It is only sweet when you eat it.

If meat were placed where we could not reach it, and we were hungry, we should be inclined to think it bitter, after the model of the fox and the grapes in the fable. If there were a Savior, but we could not reach Him, it would make our life still more miserable. Poor Soul, if you need Christ, receive Him! It is all you have to do! The bread is before you, eat it! The fitness which is needed for eating is an appetite—you have it—lay to, then, by holy faith. Receive Christ into yourself and He will be sweet, indeed, to you! The text says that the hungry man's appetite makes even bitter things sweet. Is there anything bitter in Christ?

Yes, there was much in Him that was bitter to Himself, and that is the very sweetest part to us. Those pangs and griefs of His, and unutterable woes, and bloody death, how

bitter! The wormwood and the gall were His. But to our believing soul these bitter things are honeycombs! Christ is best loved when we view Him as crucified for us. There are other bitters with Christ. We must repent of sin and to carnal minds it is a bitter thing to hate sin and leave it. But to those who hunger after Christ, repentance is one of the daintiest of Divine Graces. Christ requires of His people self-denial and self-sacrifice—unrenewed nature nauseates at the suggestion of these things—but souls eager after Jesus are glad to deny themselves, glad to give of their substance, glad, even, to suffer hardships for His dear sake—even bitter things for Him are sweet.

There are doctrines, also, which are very distasteful to carnal minds. They cannot agree with them—they are angry when they are preached—even as those who left our Lord when He said, "Except you eat My flesh and drink My blood, there is no life in you." Those who hunger after Christ prize the Doctrines of Grace—only let them know what Jesus teaches and every syllable is, at once, acceptable to their minds. It may be there are ordinances which you shrink from. You have felt Baptism especially to be a cross, but when your soul fully knows the sweetness of Christ, and your mind perceives that it is His ordinance, you feel at once that the bitter thing is sweet to you for His dear sake.

Possibly you may have to suffer some measure of persecution and be despised and nicknamed for Jesus' sake. Thank God they cannot imprison you and put you to death, but even if they could, if you have an appetite for Christ, you will eat the bitter herbs as well as the Paschal Lamb—and think that they go well together! Christ and His Cross—you will give your love to both and shoulder the Cross right bravely and find it a sweet thing to be despised for the love of Jesus Christ your Lord. Have but an appetite for Christ and the little Prayer Meeting, though there are few poor people at it, will be sweet to you. That poor broken-down preaching, which is the best that the minister is able to give, will become sweet to you because there is a savor of Christ in it.

If you can only get a leaf torn out of the Bible, or half a leaf, it will be precious to you! Even to hear a child sing a hymn about Christ will be pleasant. You remember Dr. Guthrie, when dying, asking his friend to sing him "a bairn's hymn"? He needed a child's hymn, then. A simple little ditty about Christ was what the grand old man desired in his departing moments. And when your soul hungers after Jesus Christ, you will love simple things if they speak of Him. You will not be so dainty as some of you are. They must have a comfortable cushion to sit upon. When you are hungry you are glad to stand in the aisles.

Full souls need have a very superior preacher. They say of the most successful evangelist, there is nothing in him, he only tells a lot of anecdotes. But when you are hungry you will rejoice that the man preaches Christ and his faults will vanish. I remember my father telling me, when I was a boy, and did not like my breakfast, that he thought it would do me good to be sent to the Union House for a month and see if I did not get an appetite, then. Many Christians need to be sent under the Law a little while—Moses would cure them of

squeamishness so that when they came back to Jesus and His Love they would have a zest for the Gospel!

The lesson from all this is—pray for a good appetite for Christ—and when you have it, keep it. Do not spoil it with the unsatisfying dainties of the world, or by sucking down modern notions and skeptical philosophies—those gingerbreads and unhealthy sweetmeats so much cried up nowadays. Do not waste a good appetite upon anything less sweet than the true honeycomb. When you have got that appetite for Christ, indulge it. Do not be afraid, at any time, of having too much of Christ! Some of our Brethren seem alarmed lest they should grow perfect against their wills! Dear Brothers and Sisters, go into that river as far as you please—there is no likelihood of your being drowned. You will never have too much Grace, or peace, or faith, or consecration! Go in for the whole thing! Indulge your appetite to the very full. We cannot say it to our children with honey before them, but we may say it to God's children with Christ before them— "Eat, yes, eat abundantly."

Pray the Lord to give other people appetites. It is a grand thing to hear of ten and twenty thousand rushing to hear the Gospel! I hope it is because they are hungering for it. When the Lord gives the people the appetite, I am certain He will find them the meat, for it is always true, in God's family, that whenever He sends a mouth, He always sends meat for it, and if any one of you has a mouth for Christ this morning, come to Him and be filled to the full! While you pray to God to give others an appetite, try and create it. How can you create it? Many an appetite has been created in the streets among poor starving wretches by their passing the place where provision is prepared—the very smell of it has made their mouths water.

Tell sinners how happy you are! Tell sinners what Christ has done for you! Tell them how He has pardoned you, how He has renewed your nature. Tell them about your glorious hope, tell them how saints can live and die triumphant in Christ and you will set their mouths a-watering! That is half the battle—when once they have an appetite they are sure to have the meat. May the Lord the Holy Spirit send that appetite to sinners throughout the whole of London! And to Jesus Christ, who satisfies all comers, shall be glory forever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Peter 1. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—907, 436, 559.