

Hidden Manna

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that true joy and spiritual nourishment come from eagerly discovering, receiving, and internalizing God's Word, even amid affliction and opposition.

Scripture: Jeremiah 15:16, Proverbs 2:1-5, 1 Corinthians 2:14, John 6:35, Psalm 46:4, Isaiah 53:3, Matthew 4:4

Topics: "The Word of God", "Spiritual Nourishment", "Faith and Joy"

Description

In 'Hidden Manna,' C.H. Spurgeon explores the profound joy and spiritual sustenance found in God's Word, drawing from the example of the prophet Jeremiah. He emphasizes the importance of discerning, eagerly receiving, and meditating on Scripture to experience its life-giving power. Spurgeon challenges believers to deepen their understanding and not merely rest on superficial knowledge, encouraging a heartfelt and transformative engagement with the Bible.

Transcript

"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts,"—Jeremiah 15:16.

Jeremiah was a man of exceedingly sensitive temperament; the very reverse of Elijah. Yet he was sent of God to execute a duty which apparently required a person of great sternness and slender sensibility. It was his unhappy duty to denounce the judgments of God upon a people whom he dearly loved, but whom it was impossible to save; for even his deep anguish of heart and melting pathos were powerless with them, and rather excited their ridicule than their attention. Either they did not believe that he was sent of God at all, or else they neither cared for Jehovah nor for his prophet. Naturally mild and retiring, his strong sense of allegiance to God and love to Israel made him bear a fearless testimony for the truth; but the reproaches, insults, and threats, which were heaped upon him, sorely wounded his soul; and even deeper was his anguish, because he well knew that his rejected warnings were terribly true. He carried before his mind's eye at all times the picture of Jerusalem captured by her foes, and her wretched sons and daughters given up to the sword. There is no line in the whole of his prophecy more characteristic of him than that exclamation, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people."

He was eminently the man that had seen affliction, and yet in the midst of a wilderness of woe he discovered fountains of joy. Like that Blessed One, who was "the man of sorrows" and the acquaintance of grief, he sometimes rejoiced in spirit and blessed the name of the Lord. It will be both interesting and

profitable to note the root of the joy which grew up in Jeremiah's heart, like a lone palm tree in the desert. Here was its substance. It was an intense delight to him to have been chosen to the prophetic office; and when the words of God came to him, he fed upon them as dainty food. They were often very bitter in themselves, for they mainly consisted of denunciations, yet being God's words, such was the prophet's love to his God, that he ate every syllable, bitter or not. This also was evermore a consolation to him—that he was known by the people to be a prophet of Jehovah. This distinction, whatever persecution it brought upon him, was his joy “I am called by thy name.” God's word received, God's name named upon him, and God's work entrusted to him, these were stars which cheered the midnight of his grief. However hard his lot might be, and none seem to have fallen upon worse times, there were secret sweetnesses of which none could deprive him. When he was “filled with bitterness, and drunken with wormwood,” he still drank of that ever-flowing river, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God. The basis of faith's joy lies deeper than the water-floods of affliction; no torrents of misery can remove the firm foundations of our peace.

May our hearts be so moulded by divine grace that the words of the weeping prophet in this verse may be proper language for us to use. Especially do I speak to those who during the last few weeks have found a Savior; my prayer and cry to God for you, beloved friends, is that you may say sincerely, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.”

I. In considering these words, we shall begin by dwelling upon A MEMORABLE DISCOVERY—“Thy words were found.” As Jeremiah meant them, they signified this: that certain messages came to him most clearly from God, and he recognised them as such; he ascertained how far the thoughts which passed through his mind were originated by the Spirit of God, and how far they were merely his own imaginings; he separated between the precious and the vile, and when he had found, discovered, and discerned God's word, then it was that he fed upon it.

But the words, as we may use them, may signify something more. Beloved, it is a great thing to find God's word, and discern it for ourselves. Many have heard it for years and yet have never found it. I may say of them as of the heathen gods, “Eyes have they, but they see not: ears have they, but they hear not.” Content with the outward letter of the Scriptures, the inner meaning is hid from their eyes. O that they had known the life-giving truth! O that they had found the “treasure hid in the field!” The word of God to them might as well be the word of King James the First, whose name dishonors our authorised version, for they have never felt that its truths proceed immediately from the throne of God, and bear the sign-manual of the King of kings. Hence they have never felt the weight of authority with which its authorship impresses holy writ. What is meant by finding God's words! The expression suggests the mode. A thing found has usually been sought for. Happy is that man who reads the Scriptures and hears the word—searching all the while for the hidden spiritual sense, which is indeed the voice of God. The letter of the truth contains a kernel, which is the inner life of it. Like some tropical fruits, which are very large, but in which the actual life-germ is a comparatively small thing, so within the sacred volume are many words and books, but the living secret may be summed up in a few syllables. The mystery which was hid from ages, is a secret something which flesh and blood cannot reveal unto us. “Understandest thou what thou redest?” is a vital and heartsearching question, meaning more than appears at once. The chosen of God dig into the mines of revelation, believing that “Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they fine it;” therefore they give their hearts to meditation, and cry mightily unto God to reveal himself unto them. Such seekers winnow sermons as the husbandman winnows his corn; they care little for the chaff of fair

speeches; they desire only the fine wheat of the Lord's own truth. Solomon tells us the method of finding the true wisdom, in that cheering word at the commencement of the second chapter of the Proverbs, "My son, if thou wilt incline thine ear to wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searches for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Though occasionally the Lord in his infinite sovereignty has been pleased to reveal his salvation to those who sought it not, according to his own word, "I am found of them that sought me not," yet there is no promise to this effect; the promise is to those who seek.

To find God's words, means that we have been made to understand them. A man may be well versed in Scripture, both in the English and in the original tongue; he may be accustomed to read the best of commentaries, and be acquainted with Eastern manners, and yet he may be quite ignorant as to the word of God. For the understanding of this Book, as to its depth of meaning, does not lie within the range of natural learning and human research; reason alone is blinded by the excess of light, and wanders in darkness at noon day; for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Before my conversion I was accustomed to read the Scriptures, to admire their grandeur, to feel the charm of their history, and wonder at the majesty of their language; but I altogether missed the Lord's intent therein; but when the Spirit came with his divine life, and quickened all the page to my newly-enlightened soul, the inner meaning-shone forth with quickening glory. The Bible is to many carnal minds almost as dull a book for reading as an untranslated Latin work would be to an ignorant ploughman, because they cannot get at the internal sense, which is to the words as juice to the grape, or the kernel to the nut. It is a tantalising riddle till you get the key; but the clue once found, the volume of our Father's grace absorbs our attention, delights our intellect, and enriches our heart.

To find the word of God means not only to understand it, but to appropriate it as belonging to yourself. To read a will is not an interesting occupation—repetitions, legal phrases, tautologies multiplied to utter weariness; but if there be a legacy left to you in that will, no writing will be more fascinating; you will trip lightly over the lawyer's fences and five-barred gates, and rejoice as one that findeth spoil when you reach those clauses which leave certain "messages, tenements, and hereditaments" to yourself and heirs. In such a case every repetition becomes musical, and technical phrases sound harmoniously. After this manner we learn to enjoy the word of God by discovering that we have a part and lot in it. When we perceive that the Lord is calling us and blessing us, then have we found his word. When the divine promise assures us personally that our sin is forgiven, that our spirit is clothed in the righteousness of Christ, that heaven is for us, that we are accepted in the Beloved, then the word is found indeed. I will ask each hearer here, whether in this respect he has found God's word. Have you an ear to hear gospel truth as the voice of the Infinite God addressed to your own soul? The Dutch farmers at the Cape, at no very distant period, considered the hottentots around them to be little better than beasts, quite incapable of anything beyond mere eating, drinking, stealing, and lying. After our missionaries had labored among the natives for a time, one of them was found reading the Bible by the roadside. The Dutchman enquired of him, "What book are you reading?"—"The Bible." "The Bible! Why that book was never intended for you."—"Indeed it was," said the black man, "for I see my name here." "Your name: Where?" cried the farmer. "Show it to me."—"There," said the Hottentot, putting his finger on the word "sinners." "That's my name; I am a sinner, and Jesus Christ came to save me." It were well indeed if men would but read the Bible, saying, "In this volume the great God condescends to speak to me, and bids me come and reason with him that my scarlet sins may become white; therein he appeals to my weakness that he may remove

it, to my wilfulness that he may subdue it, to my distance from him that he may bring me near!" Happy is that man who hears or reads the word of God for himself, feeling evermore a living power witnessing within his soul, and operating mightily upon him. Unapplied truth is useless. Unappropriated truth may condemn but cannot save. The word of God to an unregenerate heart is like a trumpet at the ear of a corpse: the sound is lost. Beloved, I pray that you may discern the truth, and then may grasp it as your own. May your interest and title to the promises be clearly made out, so that not presumptuously, but with the full approbation of your conscience, you may know yourself to be beloved of the Lord.

"Thy word was found." Yes, indeed, it has been found by many of us, and a blessed find it was! Recollect, my brethren, the time when you first found God's word. Recall the period of your conversion; let the remembrance kindle in you anew the flame of gratitude. Magnify the divine grace which revealed the heavenly word to you. What a removal of darkness, and bursting in of glory you then felt! It was a discovery far more memorable than the finding of a new continent by Columbus, or the discovery of gold mines in the southern continent—you found eternal life in God's word. May you who have never found the life-giving word, be led to desire it. We pray for you, that the Lord may open your eyes to see wondrous things in his law.

II. Secondly, our text testifies to AN EAGER RECEPTION. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them."

It is not "I did hear them," for that he might have done, and yet have perished. Herod heard John gladly, and yet became his murderer. He does not say, "I did learn them by heart"—hundreds have committed chapters to memory, and were rather wearied than benefited thereby. The Scribes fought over the jots and titles of the law, but were blind leaders of the blind notwithstanding. It is not "Thy words were found, and I did repeat them," for that he might have done as a parrot repeats language it is taught: nor is it even, "Thy words were found, and I remembered them;" for though its an excellent thing to store truth in the memory, yet the blessed effect of the divine words comes rather to those who ponder them in their hearts. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them." What is meant by eating God's words? The phrase signifies more than any other word could express. It implies an eager study—"I did eat them." I could not have too much of them, could not enter too thoroughly into their consideration. He who loves the Savior desires to grow in knowledge of him; he cannot read or hear too much or too often concerning his great Redeemer. He turns to the holy page with ever new delight; he seeks the blessing of the man who meditates in God's law, both day and night. It is pleasing to notice the sharp-set, spiritual appetite of a new convert; he hungers and thirsts after righteousness; he will hear a sermon without fatigue, though he may have to stand in an uncomfortable position; and when one discourse is over, he is ready for another. O that we all had our first appetites back again! Some professors grow very squeamish and proudly delicate; they cannot feed on heavenly truth, because forsooth they see defects in the style of the preacher, or in the manner of the service. Some of you need a dose of bitters to keep you from quarrelling with your food. When the word was found by my soul I did not stand to remark upon an inelegant expression or a misplaced word, but I seized at once the marrow of the truth, and left the bones to the dogs. I drank in the expressed juice of the sacred clusters, and left the husks to the swine. I was greedy for the truth. My soul hungered even to ravenousness to be fed upon the bread of heaven.

The expression also implies cheerful reception. "I did eat them." I was so in love with thy word that I not merely held it, rejoiced in it, and embraced it, but I received it into my inner man. I was not in a frame of mind to judge God's word, but I accepted all without demur; I did not venture to sit in judgment upon my judge, and become the reviser of the unerring God. Whatever I found to be in his word I received with intense joy. The stamp of divine authority upon any teaching is enough for the believer. Proud self-will

demands to have doctrines proved by reasoning, but faith lets the declaration of Jehovah stand in the place of argument. Others may cry, "Let us spin our creed out of our own bowels like the spiders; let us find in the easings of the great the grounds of our beliefs, or let us remain in a state of suspense, to be moulded by fresh discoveries;" but we are committed to revelation, our minds are made up; we confess that we have eaten God's word and intend still to feed upon it—upon the whole of it, and upon nothing else. Open your mouths, ye wild asses of the wilderness, and snuff up wind; our food is more substantial, and we will not leave it to wander with you.

The expression signifies also an intense belief. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them." He did not say, "Perhaps it is true, and if it be so it is of no great consequence," but he made practical use of it at once. He set about testing the power of the word to nourish his soul; he brought it into the most intimate contact with his being, and allowed it to operate upon his vital parts. We have heard that God's word is life; be it ours to possess that life abundantly. The truth makes men strong, free, pure, god-like. Let us then eat it, that it may purify, strengthen, liberate and elevate us. Whatever God's word by his Spirit can do for man, it should be our desire to experience for ourselves. Blessed is that man who is so humbled as to become like a little child in the submission of his mind, his judgment, and all his faculties to the operation of the word of divine truth; he has eaten it, and shall live by it.

The language before us means besides both the diligent treasuring up of the truth and the inward digestion of the same. Food eaten does not long continue as it was; the juices of the body operate upon it, and the substance is dissolved and absorbed, so that it becomes a part of the man's body. So when we find God's truth, we delight to meditate, contemplate, and consider. We let it dwell in our hearts richly till at last its sustaining, upbuilding, nourishing influence is felt, and we grow thereby. It is not a hasty swallowing of the word which is blessed to us, but a deliberate eating of it. Our inward life acts upon the truth, and the truth acts upon our life. We become one with the truth, and the truth one with us. I would to God we were all more given to feeding and lying down in the green pastures of God's word; the sheep fattens as it chews the cud at peace, and so do we. Establishment in the gospel is the result of meditation, and nothing is more desirable at this present crisis than that all believers should more constantly study and weigh the word of God. Neglect in this matter has weakened, is weakening, and will weaken the church. We want at this time not merely persons who have been aroused by solemn exhortation, and led to give their hearts to Christ under the influence of deep emotion, but Christians well instructed in the things which are verily believed among us, rooted and grounded in gospel doctrines. Many professing Christians think very lightly of Scriptural knowledge, and especially of an experimental acquaintance with divine truth. Few nowadays have studied the doctrines of grace so as to be able to give a reason for the hope that is in them. Too often converts are made by excitement, and, as a consequence, when the excitement is gone, they grow cold; some of them go back to the world, and prove that they were never taught of God, and others linger on in a half-starved condition, because soul-sustaining truth is hidden from them. The man who knows the truth, and feels that the truth has made him free, is the man who will continue a free man at all hazards. There are enemies of the faith about nowadays; error is put in very tempting forms. Those who try to subvert the gospel are exceedingly dextrous, and know how to make every falsehood fascinating. These will rend and devour, but who will be their victims? Not the instructed saints, not those who can say "Thy words were found, and I did eat them," but the mixed multitude in nominal union with the church, who scarce know what they believe, or knowing it merely in the letter have no inward vital acquaintance therewith. We read in the word of God of certain deceivers who would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect, from which we gather that the elect cannot be deceived, and that for this reason—that the truth is not held in the hand of the elect man as a staff which can be wrenched from him, but he has eaten it: it has

entered into his vital substance. You cannot tear away from a man what has become assimilated to himself. You might draw the silken thread out of a piece of tapestry, and in so doing injure the material, but you cannot remove the truth which is interwoven into the fabric of our new-born nature by the Holy Spirit. A Christian is dyed ingrain with the truth—he wears no flying nor fading colors; he can as soon cease to be as cease to believe what he has learned by the Spirit's teaching. In olden times, the fury of persecutors has failed to make the servants of Christ deny the faith. The saints were taken to the stake, but the fires which devoured their bodies only burned their testimonies into the hearts of other witnesses. They were faithful even unto death. This glorious firmness in the faith is greatly needed now to resist the insidiousness of error. Besides, dear friends, it may in the providence of God happen that some of you will be taken away from the ministry which now feeds you, and what will you do if the word of God be not in your inmost souls? I have observed many who did run well when under a gospel ministry, who, when they have been removed into a barren region, have lagged and loitered in the race. Some whose principles were never very deep have given them up when placed in society which despised them. I pray you get such a hold of the gospel, that you need not be dependent upon the preacher or upon earnest companions. Let not your faith stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. No truth will be of any use to you unless it is branded into you; yea, and made to penetrate the marrow of your being. If you could give up truth you have never received it. He only has the truth of God who so holds it that he could never part with it. A person takes a piece of bread and eats it. He who gave it to him demands it back. If he had put that bread upon a shelf, or laid it in a cupboard, he can hand it down; but if he can reply, "I have eaten it," there is an end to the request; no human power can reproduce what is already eaten. "Give up justification by faith and trust in sacraments," says the Ritualist. "Give up faith and follow reason," cries the Infidel. We are utterly unable to do either. And why? Because our spiritual nature has absorbed the truth into itself, and none can separate it from us, or us from it. To live upon the truth is the sure method to prevent apostacy. "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein." May you all be rooted and built up in Christ Jesus, and established in the faith as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Besides, good friend, you cannot be very useful to others if you are an unintelligent Christian. To do much good, we must have truth ready to hand, and be apt to teach. I desire that you may grow up, you who are new-born into the Christian family, to become fathers and mothers in Israel; but this cannot be, unless you as new-born babes desire the unadulterated milk of the word, that you may grow thereby. O for a race of Bible-reading Christians! We have long had a society for selling the Bible, but who shall found a society for getting the Bible read? A young man who never had read his Bible was tempted to do so, and led to conversion by the gift of a bookmarker, presented to him by a relative. The gift was made upon the condition that it should be put into his Bible, but should never stop two days in a place. He meant to shift it, and not to read the book, but his eye glanced on a text; after awhile he became interested, by-and-by he became converted, and then the bookmarker was moved with growing pleasure. I am afraid that even some professors cannot say that they shift their bookmark every day. Probably of all the books printed, the most widely circulated, and the least read volume, is the word of God. Books about the Bible are read, I fear, more than the Book itself. Do you believe we should see all these parties and sects if people studiously followed the teaching of inspiration? The Word is one; whence these many creeds? We cry, "the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants;" but it is not true of half the Protestants. Some overlay the Bible with the Prayer-book, and kill its living meaning; others read through the spectacles of a religious leader, and rather follow man's gloss than God's text. Few indeed come to the pure fount of gospel undefiled. A second-hand religion suits most, for it spares them the trouble of

thinking, which to many is a labor too severe while to be taught of man is so much easier than to wait upon the Holy Spirit for instruction. Remember ye, my beloved children in Christ, the words of David, and make them your own. "I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word." "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart." "Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word." "My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly. I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee."

III. Thirdly, the text tells us of HAPPY CONSEQUENCES. "Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." He who has spiritually found God's word, and consequently feeds upon it, is the happy man. But in order to get joy from God's word we must receive it universally. Jeremiah first speaks of God's "words," then he changes the number and speaks of God's "word." We are not only to receive parts of the gospel, but the whole of it, and then it will afford us great joy. That man's heart is right with God who can honestly say that all the testimonies of God are dear to him. "But," saith one, "that is impossible: parts of the Bible are full of terrible denunciations; can they afford us joy?" In this way, brethren. If God appoints that sin should be punished, we are not to rebel against his righteous ordinance, nor to close our minds to the consideration of divine justice: God's judgments are right, and what is right we must rejoice in. Moreover, by the threatenings of the word many are led to forsake their sin, and thus the warning itself is a means of grace. To tender-hearted Jeremiah I have no doubt it was a trial to say, "Your city will be destroyed, and your women and your children will be slain." But when he considered that some might be led to repentance he would with tearful vehemence deal out the thunder of the Lord. But, brethren, God's word is not all threatening. How much of it consists of exceeding great and precious promises? grace drops from it like honey from the comb. How would even Jeremiah brush away the falling tear, while that face usually so clouded would beam as the sun when he spoke of the Messiah? Surely, if there be anything in the whole range of truth which can make our hearts leap for joy, it is the part of it which touches upon the lovely person and finished work of our adorable Redeemer, to whom be honor and glory for ever. Receive the whole of God's word. Do not cut a single text out of Scripture or desire to pervert its meaning. Hold the truth in its entirety and harmony, and then as a matter of certainty it will become to you the joy and rejoicing of your spirit.

Allow me to interject another thought. No word of God to Jeremiah would have given him joy if he had not been obedient to it. If he had kept back a part of his Master's message, it would have been a burden intolerable to his conscience. What a wound it makes in the heart if we have inwardly to confess, "I have been unfaithful. I have neglected a command of the Host High." Never, I beseech you, allow any text of Scripture to accuse you of having neglected its teaching or denied its obvious meaning. There are ordinances to which some of you have not submitted yourselves which you know to be the will of Jesus Christ. How can the Scriptures be a joy and rejoicing to you when their pages accuse you of disobedience to your Master's will? In order to have the full joy of the testimony of God, your mind must yield itself to what God reveals as the plastic clay to the potter's touch, your willing spirit must be prompt to run as with winged feet in the ways of obedience to all that Christ commands. Then the word being found, and you having eaten it, it will be to you a song in the house of your pilgrimage.

Let me refresh your memories for a moment by reminding you of certain choice truths in God's word which are brimming with comfort. There is the doctrine of election: the Lord has a people whom he has chosen, and whom he loved before the foundations of the world. I will suppose that you have found it out for yourself, and have read the riddle, and like the apostle Paul, can say, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did

predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son; and whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified." I will suppose that you know yourself to be called, and therefore know yourself to be predestinated. Is not this the joy and rejoicing of your heart? Is it not to you a very heaven below to believe that ere the hills were made God loved you, ere sin was born or Satan fell, your name was in his book, and he regarded you with infinite affection? Could any doctrine be a more abundant table, spread for you in the presence of your enemies? Take the other doctrine, the doctrine of the immutability of divine love. Before you knew the secret of it, it was a mere dogma; but now you understand that Jesus never changes, and therefore the promises are yea and amen, you will, you must rejoice. Having loved his own, he loved them to the end. Is not this music to your ear? "I have loved thee with an everlasting love," is not this a heavenly assurance? As you sit down and consider for yourself, "God has loved me, for he has given me salvation in Jesus Christ, and the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, but the covenant of his grace cannot depart from me;" will not your cup run over, and your soul dance before the ark of God? Of course it will not be so till you have found the word for yourself, and have eaten it, but then it shall be marrow and fatness to you. Thousands of God's people live in doubts and fears, because they have not eaten God's word as they should; they do not know the fullness of the blessings of the gospel of peace. How many are in bondage through the fear that after all though they have been for years believers they are not yet saved, whereas if they read the Scriptures, and received their meaning, they would know that the moment the sinner believes in Christ he is saved in that very instant he has passed from death into life, and shall never come into condemnation. If they read the Scriptures, would they endure such doubts about being left to perish after having believed? The thing is impossible. The people of his choice Jehovah cannot cast away. No members of Christ's body shall be suffered to perish, or else the body of Christ would be mangled, and he himself would be the head of a dismembered frame. To have a clear understanding of the gospel, to know the covenant which like a mighty rock underlies all gospel blessings, to know Christ and our union with him, to know his righteousness, his perfection and our perfection in him, to know the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, these things must inevitably make us strong in the joy of the Lord. Half our doubts and fears would vanish if we had more acquaintance with the Lord's statutes. Other knowledge brings sorrow, but this wisdom is the joy and rejoicing of the heart.

Beloved, if there is a quarrel between you and any text of Scripture, end the dispute by giving way at once, for the word of God is right, and you are wrong. Do not say, "We have always been of one way of thinking, and our parents were so before us." Have respect unto God, and sit at Jesus' feet. The Lord's teaching is in this Book, and may be opened to you by his Spirit. Test everything by the word; prove the spirits whether they be of God. Do not be such fools as to take your religion from fallible men when you may have it from the infallible God. Some who do so are not fools in other matters, but in this case it may be said of them as it was once said of the people of an Italian city, "They were not fools, but they acted as if they were." Persons who would not take the opinion of anybody else as to the goodness of a half-crown, will leave their religion to be settled by an Act of Parliament, or by convocation, or by conference. What are brains given to us for? Are we for ever to be the slaves of majorities and follow a multitude to do evil? God forbid! Stand upright, O Christian man, and be a man. God has given you a judgment, and his Spirit waits to enlighten it. Search the Scriptures! See whether the things handed down by tradition came from the devil or from God, for many an ancient maxim may be traced to the infernal pit. To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them. May we have grace given us like Ezekiel to receive the roll from the Lord's hand, to eat it, and to find it in our mouth as honey for sweetness.

IV. The fourth point is A DISTINGUISHING TITLE. "I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts." This may not appear to some of you a very joyful thing—to Jeremiah it was pre-eminently so. In Jeremiah's day the name of the Lord God of hosts was despised. The God of hosts was the subject of derision among the rabble of Jerusalem, and the weeping prophet of mournful countenance, who spoiled their mirth, came in for his full share of scorn. Now, Jeremiah, instead of feeling it a hard thing to be associated with the Lord in this contempt of the wicked, was glad to be so honored. The reproaches of them that reviled the Lord fell upon his poor servant, and he was content to have it so. O you who love Jesus Christ, never shun the scandal of his cross! Count it glory to be despised for his sake. Let fear be far from you. Remember Moses, of whom it is written, "he esteemed the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt." It does not say he esteemed Christ to be greater riches, an ordinary believer would do that; but he reckoned the worst thing connected with Christ to be better than the best thing about the world. The reproach of Christ he esteemed above Pharaoh's crown. Disciples of Jesus, be willing to bear all the contumely the wicked pour upon you for your Lord's sake, for in so doing they help to make you blessed. Through the mire, and through the slough, march side by side with truth, for those who share her pilgrimage shall share her exaltation. Be content to abide with Christ in his humiliation, for only so may you be sure that you shall be with him in his glory. It was a comfort to Jeremiah that he bore the name of the despised God. It made him the object of very much persecution as well as contempt; the king put him in the dungeon; he was made to eat the bread of affliction, and was in tribulations oft, but he took it all joyfully for the Lord's sake. And if to serve Christ to-day, and bear his name, should entail suffering extreme, as in the days of Rome's tyranny, yet, my brethren, we ought to be cheerful in the bearing of it, and glad that we are counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ.

Yet I am afraid I am speaking to some who do not count it a fair thing to bear the name of the Most High. I gather this from their conduct. They have a belief in Jesus, they hope they have, but they have never avowed Christ's name. You have missed, then, that which was a comfort to the prophet. Why have you missed it? Because you imagined that it would be a source of discomfort to you? Are you wiser than the prophet? To him it was consolation that he was called by God's name. Do you think it would be a sorrow to you? "Oh!" saith one, "I could not bear the world's rebuke." Can you bear Christ's rebuke, when he will say to those who did not confess him before men, "I never knew you"? But you say you could not live up to a profession; you are afraid your life might fall short of what it should be—a very salutary fear; but do you hope to improve your life by beginning with disobedience! If I own my Savior's name, it is Christ's business to keep me; but if I am so overwise that I think I am safer in the path of disobedience, then I cannot reckon upon grace to preserve me. The warfare is arduous, but we do enter upon it at our own charges, there is one who has promised to help us. Well, if you will be cowards, I will part company with you. If you were every one of you this day enemies of Christ, or if you were all of you lovers of Christ in secret, and none of you gloried in him, I, for my part, could not fire a moment without being an avowed Christian. I say not this in egotism, but as fact. My heart might sooner cease to beat than cease to own the Lord. It is a sneaking thing, and utterly degrading that my Lord should die upon the cross for me to save my soul from hell, and I should be ashamed to wear his livery; that he should honor me by redeeming me with his blood, and I should deny to him the little honor that my poor name could give when it is enrolled with his people. Nay, though least of all his followers, put down my name, O recording angel, and there let it stand, and if all men revile and devils rage so let it be. It shall be my heaven to suffer hell for Christ, if such must needs be. I cannot comprehend how so many believers remain outside the visible church of Christ. I would not question the safety of any man who has believed in Jesus, but I do avow that I would not run the risk that non-confessors run. For what is the gospel? "He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh confession of him should be saved." How dare you leave out one half of the gospel command? What was

the gospel which according to the Evangelist Mark is to be preached to every creature? It runs thus: "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." I do not question the safety of the soul that has believed, but I do say again, I would not run the risk of the man who, having believed, refuses to be baptised. It is plainly his Master's will. I question the genuineness of his faith if he starts back from obedience to the known command of Jesus Christ. My dear brother, to confess Christ is so easy a burden, it involves so temporary a loss, and so real a gain, that I would have you say, "I have found God's word, and I have eaten it: it is the joy and rejoicing of my soul; and now from this day let others do as they will, but I will serve the Lord. I bow my willing back to his cross. I will be buried with him in baptism unto death, I would die to the world, and rise to newness of life through his Spirit." Blessed are they who go to their Lord without the camp, leaving the world's religion as well as its sin, in obedience to that sacred call: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." The Lord deal graciously with you, beloved, and lead you in a plain path, because of your enemies, for his name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah 15.

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