

that It became a source sheer delight, yea, “sweeter than honey and the honeycomb”! He had entered into the spiritual joy of his illustrious predecessor, King David, who exclaimed: *“More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb”* (Ps. 19:10); and, *“How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”* (Ps. 119:103). But note carefully that this spiritual exultation was the result of a voracious appetite, a craving of a spiritual sort, that goaded him to eat up God’s Word until It became a constant source of joyous strength in the face of viscious and life-threatening opposition. The conspiracy of the men of Anathoth (his home-town) (Jer. 11:21), the plotting of his own father’s house (12:6); the painful night in the stocks (20:2); the animosity of priests, prophets, and people (26: 8,9), his prison-time and pit-time (37:15,16; 38:60)—all paled into insignificance when compared to the joy unspeakable he derived from his assimilation of the prophetic Word of the Lord and the exhilaration of being “moved by the Holy Ghost” to “speak as the oracles of God” (II Pet. 1:21). Dear saints, we also can overcome this present world of tribulation (Jn. 16:33), if God’s Word lives and abides in us as the supreme object of our affection, the chief joy of our

lives, and the greatest source of our delight!

Fruitfulness In Prayer

While Jeremiah traced his joy in the midst of sorrow to the Word of God within, Jesus stressed that the internalization of His word in the hearts of His disciples would result in a fruitful prayer-life. In the course of instructing on the need of a constant abiding in Him, He gives special notice of the impetus provided by the indwelling Word of God to our prayer lives: *“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you”* (Jn. 15:7).

The residual Word, remaining within the believer will so govern his or her desires as to make them coincide with the will of our Heavenly Father, thus insuring that we ask “according to His will” (I Jn. 5:14,15), and therefore granting us the confidence that we “have the petitions we desired” of the Lord. The indwelling Word also begets faith, as the memory of and meditation upon His exceeding great and precious promises (II Pet. 1:3) become a basis for our faith and fairly beckon us to believe (Rom. 10:17). Additionally, the Word of Christ lodged within functions as a Divine purgative, purifying our hearts and lives of base and undesirable elements

that we might offer unto God prayer with no inward regard for iniquity (Ps.66:18). Hearts thus united to fear His Name (Ps. 86:11) will be assured of answers to prayer as one aspect of Word-borne fruit.

Strength To Overcome Temptation

Another spiritual benefit of the Word of God within is the spiritual fortification necessary to successfully withstand Satan’s allurements and suggestions and the constant pressure to conform to this world’s pattern. A mind reoriented and renewed by the instruction of God’s Word (Rom. 12:2; Ps. 119:104) is better able to detect Satan’s subtle devices (Heb. 5:13,14), and resist his advances (I Pet. 5:18,19). When the moral nature is fortified with the reinforcement of The Word hid in one’s heart, there is the strength present to say “No!” to the “god of this world”’s dubious offer of fame, fun, or fortune (I Jn. 2:15-17). The Psalmist could therefore trace his spiritual victory to the Word of God kept in store for times of temptation (Ps. 119:11) and John the beloved could refer to young men who were granted world-conquering power by virtue of God’s indwelling Word (I Jn. 2:14). Even Jesus our Lord, in the days of His flesh, resorted to the quoted Word in the day of temptation (Matt. 4:4,7,10).

Preparation For Future Proclamation

Ezekiel received his prophetic impetus and animus from a whole-hearted reception and digestion of God’s holy Word. The Word of the Lord was internalized, entering his very belly and bowels until withal It was fitted in his lips as (Prov. 22:18) unctiozied proclamation. In order to become an acceptable conduit for God’s fresh and free-flowing Word, he was told to lay aside the sinful, human characteristic of rebellion, to eat what God gave him, and to assimilate the communicated message until his belly was filled with the digested contents thereof. Ponder for a moment the Divine injunction and how it relates to every potential spokesman for God, who would speak as the oracles of God (I Pet. 4:11): *“But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe”* —*“Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto*

me, Son of man, cause thy belly [בִּטְנֶךָ] to eat, and fill thy bowels [וּמֵעֵיךָ] with this roll [הַמְּגִלָּה] that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness. And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them” (Ezek. 2:8-10; 3:1-4).

Therefore as one can readily see, Ezekiel’s future effectiveness, and ours, we might add, is predicated upon our present, inward absorption of God’s Word until its content becomes as it were the blood and pulp of our being. When we are thus united with the spiritual and dynamic quality of God’s Word, a corresponding compulsion to speak will carry us along in the ministry of proclamation. Jeremiah, the 7TH and 6TH centuries BC prophet, discovered that this compulsion was so wonderfully overwhelming that it prompted him to the path of prophetic duty in the face of relentless opposition and despite his determination to withdraw from the scene of active ministry. He recounted, “Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay” (Jer. 20:9; cf. also Jer. 6:10, 11; Job 32:18-20).

The Apostle John in exile upon the isle of Patmos was likewise prepared

for future proclamation by a present assimilation of the full contents of God’s message to the nations. Rev. 10:10, 11 states: “And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.” Obviously, this transaction in vision of eating up (Gk. κατασθίω, “to devour completely”) and swallowing the entire contents of the little scroll, represented his inward appropriation of the message which in turn fitted him for a future prophetic proclamation to the nations. In a similar vein, the fleshy hearts (II Cor. 3:3) of present-day believers who sit like Mary at the feet of Jesus to hear His Word, are, as with a seal, stamped with the indelible impress of the good Word of God, that will not be taken from them (Luke 10:39,42).

The Key To Spiritual Success

God’s Word dwelling in our heart and in our mouth, is mentioned in Scripture as a key to spiritual success and victorious conquest of the believer’s many foes. As Joshua was charged to lead the children of Israel over the Jordan river and into the promised land, after the death of Moses, the

importance of God’s internalized Word as a basis for an effective plan of action was emphasized. Israel could defeat their enemies and possess their inheritance only to the extent that they were familiar with and obedient to God’s Word, as the subsequent failure at Ai bore witness. Therefore, God included this command in Joshua’s commission: “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Joshua 1:8).

God’s Cure-All

Proverbs 4:20-22: “My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health [בְּרִיאָה] to all their flesh.”

God has a spiritual tonic that is a bodily cure-all—an inward inclination to hear, read, retain, and search the Holy Scriptures. By means of such a preoccupation with God’s Word pain must bow and disease release its hold as spiritual life and bodily health are communicated by the inherent vitality of God’s living Word (Ps. 107:20). In view of such a range of benefits, may God’s Word become the joy of our hearts!

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GOD’S WORD

WITHIN

When Jeremiah reached a low point in his call to prophetically warn the nation of Judah of its imminent collapse, which actually came with the destruction of Solomon’s elaborate temple complex by Nebuchadnezzar’s hordes in B.C. 586, he recalled the joy, zeal, and enthusiasm that had characterized his introduction to the prophetic call. He recounted, “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” (Jer. 15:16). Indeed, it seemed that this was the only source of joy that lightened his burden of declaring coming woe to a rebellious nation. It was his unmitigated “joy in the midst of sorrow.” As this young lad (Jer. 1:6), who pleaded an undeveloped diction at the time of his call, found the contents of God’s Word, Its dire warnings and comforting promises, together with the impulse of prophetic inspiration, drew him into such a vital union with Its spirit (Jn. 6:63)