

“He who eats Me...shall live because of Me.”

— John 6:57

The tree of life — pleasant to our sight

God wants to feed us with Himself as the tree of life. And this tree is pleasant to the sight and good for food (Gen. 2:8-9). This means two things. First, Christ is pleasant to our sight. That is why 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, “But we all . . . beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image.” So God carries out His purpose with man by transforming us into His image. And this happens by our having a life of learning how to linger with the Lord and behold Him.

It has to dawn upon us that the Christian life is not our energy. It is not taking all the shreds of our broken-up life and trying to put them together, trying to fix ourselves. This life is not that way. The blood of Jesus washes, cleanses, and qualifies me to stop all that nonsense. It redirects me — just as I am — out of myself to behold Jesus Christ and to see Him and to talk about Him and to consider Him. Consider His excellencies. Consider His eternity. Consider His fellowship with the Father. Consider how He became flesh. Consider His incarnation. Consider His humanity, His human life. Consider His laying down His life as the Great Shepherd of the sheep. Look at Him, watch Him.

But you are saying, “I have a problem. I have my own problems.” But the Lord says, “Stop yourself.

Look at Me.” That is the meaning of the confession in 1 John 5:5, “. . . he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.” He is the Son of God, and you are enthralled with Him. You are looking at Him. Study Him. Sing about Him. In the church meetings our singing is our looking, especially when we sing songs that extol what Christ is: “There’s a Man in the glory,” “Christ is all in all,” “Christ is my day, my new moon, my Sabbath. Christ is my rest, Christ is my peace.” Just consider Him. He is pleasant to the sight. Look at Him. This is God’s appointed way to change you. Not religion. Not your energy. Not yourself. You and I have to learn how to do one thing — how to behold this Christ, because in the beholding God does everything.

In the beholding He infuses faith. He changes us. He does it by our beholding. Second Corinthians 3:18 is so clear. “Beholding” is in the present tense. It is something that goes on all the time. And while we behold, we are being changed into the same image. It is in this looking, it is in this seeing, that we are being changed “from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.” So when you feel the most discouraged over the most specific failure in your life, it is at that point you need to absolutely lay the whole thing down and go to a song. Sing “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine.” Sing about Him and open to Him, and see what happens to you. You might spend days in a depression over

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trying to fix yourself, when it only takes a split second to say, “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine.” This is God’s way: Put the man in the garden. Make him corporate. Put him in the church, where Christ grows (1 Cor. 3:9). There we learn how to look and behold this Person. Then we get transformed into the same image.

The tree of life — good for food

The tree of life is not only pleasant to the eyes but good for food. Not only do I behold but I eat. What we eat, we are participators in. For example, this morning I participated in cereal. What our food is, we participate in. When you eat, you participate in that very thing. It is not that I just objectively looked at the cereal and left it there on the table and came to the meeting. If so, I would be weak. I would be so hungry. I would feel I need something because I did not participate in the food. The Lord is not just objective knowledge. The Lord Himself is our food. He is the living bread (John 6:51). And what do you do with bread? You participate in it.

God is good for food. The tree of life is good for food. This tree imparts life, and this life is the eternal life. Genesis 3:22 tells us that after man fell, God had to bar him from the tree of life so that he would not live eternally in his fallen state: “Then the LORD God said, Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever —” This means that the tree of life conveys eternal life when you eat it. Here it tells us specifically that man was barred from the tree. That was in Genesis.

Qualified to eat the tree of life

Now let us go to Revelation 22:14 and read it according to the better manuscripts: “Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have right to the tree of life . . .” What is the qualification to eat the tree of life? It is to be washed in the blood of the Lamb. Our robes are washed in the blood. This is all we need. As a redeemed sinner, I am qualified. I am a washed person and now I have right to the tree of life. Back there in the garden God had to bar the tree from man because redemption had not been accomplished. But now redemption has been accomplished and the tree of

life — God as food, God as our enjoyment — is available for all peoples.

Understanding what our real need is

When we eat the tree of life, it conveys life. Life is conveyed when we eat God. When you and I participate in the life of God, when we learn how to eat, how to take God in, when we learn how to feed upon His life, that feeding conveys the very life of God into our mind, emotion, and will. This is God’s way. God’s way is a way of eating Him. It is a way of feeding upon Him. So in the church if there are problems, they are only exposures of our shortage of feeding. This is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4, ¹ “And I, brothers, was not able to speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to fleshy, as to infants in Christ.” Listen to this: ² “I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet able to receive it. But neither yet now are you able, ³ for you are still fleshy. For if there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshy and do you not walk according to the manner of man? ⁴ For when someone says, I am of Paul, and another, I of Apollos, are you not men of flesh?”

Here is a real problem. Here are opinions, divisions, jealousy, and strife in the church. How do you help that situation? What do you do? Do you go to one party and try to convince them not to follow Paul? Or try to convince them to follow Apollos? In other words, do you appeal to their mind, answering the mind, when the very fact that these things are present only tells you one thing — they are undernourished. So Paul had to feed them with milk. He could not even give them solid food. But how he was correcting these problems was by food. It was by feeding them with milk, not with solid food at that time, because he realized that they only had a certain capacity.

Now if you come to me and you are angry with your husband, or you are upset with a sister or brother, or someone just gets on your nerves, the first question I am going to ask you is, how much are you eating and feeding upon the Lord? Tell me, do you really sit down and spend time opening to God in His Word, just eating and drinking Him? While you read, you pray. You let the Spirit shine. You talk to the Lord. You get on your knees. You pray, you fellowship. You let God be your

life. Do you do that? Do you have a time? When you come to the church meetings are you a spectator, or do you exercise your spirit? When you sing, do you participate in God in your singing? Are you actually eating the Lord? If you are not, then I could never in a million years solve your problem. I could only tell you, “Brother, what you need is a little more time with the Lord, a little deeper opening to Him. You need food. You need nourishment. You cannot live this life. You will just be subject to your disposition, your suspicious mind, your reactions in your flesh. You will just be subject to that the rest of your life unless you are an eater. If you are an eater, if you fellowship with the Lord and you stay in the garden, I guarantee that you will be a different person with a different set of reactions. It is in the food. You eat the food, and it is all in the food.”

Living because of eating Christ

John 6:57 says, “He who eats Me, he also shall live *because of Me*.” The King James Version says, “*by Me*.” But “*by*” is not really the preposition used here. It may give you the impression that you are going to do something on your own. The Greek preposition is *διό*, which means “because of.” So it would read, “He who eats Me, he also shall live *because of Me*.” It is more an automatic, spontaneous living out because you have been eating. It is not that I ate my cereal this morning and having eaten that cereal I say to myself, *I am going to live by the cereal*. No. I am living *because of the cereal*. Do you see the difference? So when we eat, we live *because of* what we eat. You know the motto, “You are what you eat.” This is true not only in the physical realm but also in the spiritual realm.

God corrects all our problems by changing our eating

Nutritionists know that many times the way to correct your physical problems is by correcting your eating. Yet we do not always perceive the connection between our problems and our eating. So we work on the symptoms when we really need to go to the source. This is how God handled His people in Exodus chapter 16—He changed their diet. Let us briefly consider this

because it is so unveiling. Verse 1 tells us that the people were journeying in the wilderness after they had come out of the land of Egypt. And verses 2-3 say, ² “Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³ And the children of Israel said to them, Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full!” This is all regret and bitterness in the mind. This happens to us. We might say — “Oh! Too bad! It would have been so much better if I had not taken that road. I made a mistake.” We start calculating where things could have been different. Isn’t this true?

Here are these complaining people, murmuring against Moses and wishing they had not done what they had done. They wished they were back in Egypt. Then they said, “For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger” (v. 3). They fixed their blame on someone. This is the nature of man — just fix your blame. Blame your wife. Blame your husband. Blame the children. Blame the dog. Blame the oven. Blame someone or something. Every blame in us is rebellion to God. You are saying to God, “You do not really know what is best for me.” Then you start to have hard thoughts about God. This is exactly what the devil does, and this is what he did to Eve: “Don’t you know, Eve, that God has held some things back from you, that in the day you eat of this tree you will be like God?” (cf. Gen. 3:1-5). Satan injected hard thoughts about God into her mind. So be careful when hard thoughts are injected into your mind to blame anything. Be careful that you do not intertwine with the serpent in your mind. That is blame.

How do you correct blaming people? How do you handle blaming people? God has a way. Verse 4 says, “Then the LORD said to Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.” And then verses 7-8 say, ⁷ “And in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD; for He hears your complaints against the LORD. But what are we, that you complain against us? ⁸ Also Moses said, This shall be seen when the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to the full; for the LORD hears your

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Serving in the House of God

The Example of Eliakim

Thus says the Lord God of hosts: Go, proceed to this steward, to Shebna, who is over the house, and say: What have you here, and whom have you here, that you have hewn a sepulcher here, as he who hews himself a sepulcher on high, who carves a tomb for himself in a rock? Indeed, the LORD will throw you away violently, O mighty man, and will surely seize you. He will surely turn violently and toss you like a ball into a large country; there you shall die, and there your glorious chariots shall be the shame of your master's house. So I will drive you out of your office, and from your position he will pull you down. Then it shall be in that day, that I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah; I will clothe him with your robe and strengthen him with your belt; I will commit your responsibility into his hand. He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one shall open. I will fasten him as a peg in a secure place, and he will become a glorious throne to his father's house. They will hang on him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the posterity, all vessels of small quantity, from the cups to all the pitchers. In that day, says the LORD of hosts, the peg that is fastened in the secure place will be removed and be cut down and fall, and the burden that was on it will be cut off; for the LORD has spoken." Isaiah 22:15-25

Touching God's House

To touch God's house and to serve in God's house is an awesome thing. Why? Because God's house is awesome. God's house is not a small thing, because it is His possession. It belongs exclusively to Him. It is where God lives. It is where His "things" are. And on this earth there is nothing like God's house. In God's eyes everything else, apart from His house, is very common. His house is something that is holy, something that is set apart to God. God can't really say about a lot of things on this earth, "That's Mine, that belongs to Me, that's something that corresponds to Me." But God's house is the one thing on this earth that is His possession. It belongs to Him and it is set apart for Him. That is what holy means — to be set apart to God, to be exclusively given over to God.

And this is why a person should never approach God's house in a natural, common way. God's house cannot be touched in the same way we touch all the things of this earth. In the Old Testament a person had to be qualified to come into God's house. Those of the nations could not enter God's house. Even most of the children of Israel, God's own people, could not enter the holy place. That was reserved for the priests only. Only the priests were qualified. And how

the priests were to handle God's house was most important. Indeed, large portions of the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are occupied with how the priests were to handle God's house. Everything down to the smallest detail was regulated — what you do, how you do it, when you do it, where you do it. Why? Because God was impressing upon them that they were touching something that was not common. They were touching something so holy. It is interesting to note that different forms of the word holy are used almost 300 times in these four books. Everything related to God's house is holy. His house is so high, so wonderful, and so glorious. It is not common. So in essence God is saying, "Be careful how you touch My house." In fact, God uses a certain phrase in the Old Testament to warn the children of Israel about touching His house — "lest you die" (Exo. 20:19). Lest you die! This conveys the seriousness and awesomeness of touching God's house.

We see an example of this in the Old Testament with Uzzah. No doubt, Uzzah had a sincere heart. He, with David and all of Israel, was bringing the ark to Jerusalem on a cart pulled by oxen (2 Sam. 6:1-11). David was so excited to bring in the ark. As they were proceeding, the oxen stumbled and Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark to steady it. But Uzzah was not a priest. He wasn't qualified. He was sincere, but he was not qualified. And for his error God struck him dead. God fulfilled His warning, "lest you die." Then David became displeased that Uzzah died. Nevertheless, I do believe that this incident made a deep impression upon David. It was as if God was saying, "David, do not touch My house in a light way. I know you are enthusiastic for My house, but be careful how you touch it." It seems that God used this as a lesson for the rest of David's life. Verse 9 says, "David was afraid of the Lord that day." From that day forward, he began to walk more softly in relationship to God's house.

How One Ought to Conduct Himself in the House of God

What about us? That was the Old Testament economy. But today we are in the New Testament economy. Are we qualified to touch God's house? The New Testament clearly reveals that Christ "has released us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" (Rev. 1:5-6). The blood of Christ has purged our conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Heb. 9:14). The Father has qualified us "for a share of the portion of the saints in the light" and "transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col. 1:12, 13). We are now qualified! Not by our own works, but by the blood of Jesus. We are not Uzzahs. We are genuine priests who have the authority, the

qualification, to touch this place called the house of God. He has made us priests to serve in the spiritual house of God (1 Pet. 2:5). In fact, we *are* the house of God. Corporately, the church is the house of the living God (Heb. 3:6; 1 Tim. 3:15).

So we are not in fear and trembling “lest we die” (Heb. 12:18-24). We are those who have boldness now by His blood to gather as His house, to be in His house, to touch His house, to serve in His house. What an enjoyment! What a privilege! However, though we have such boldness by His blood, it is still good to know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God. Paul says to Timothy, “I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). Timothy, you’re a born-again believer, you’re a priest to God, you’ve been washed in the blood, you’re fully qualified. But still, Timothy, it’s good for you to know *how* you ought to conduct yourself in God’s house. This shows us that even in the New Testament age, how we serve in the church is not a small matter.

This can be seen in the way Paul dealt with the Corinthian believers. When they were being sectarian by saying, “I am of Paul,” and “I of Apollos,” and “I of Cephas,” and “I of Christ,” Paul said to them, “Brothers, do you realize who you are? Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are. Your divisiveness in the church is not just touching a mere human organization. Your divisiveness is touching His house, His temple” (see 1 Cor. 3:16-17). It appears that the Corinthians did not have so much inward realization of what holy ground they were on when they were touching the church. So Paul wrote to help them realize how holy and awesome the church really is.

And we must realize that God always observes and notices how we treat His house. God took note of such persons as Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron who offered up strange fire and were consumed by God. He took note of the two sons of Eli who treated His house so shamefully, and of Saul who was indifferent toward His house and ark. But God also took note of those who loved and cared for His house, such as Samuel, David, Solomon, and Joshua the High Priest. How you touched His house often determined how God dealt with you. May God impress upon us the awesomeness of touching His house.

Shebna: An Example of How Not to Serve

In Isaiah 22:15-25 we can see a clear example of how two men, Shebna and Eliakim, served in the king’s house. To give a little background, these two men lived during the

time of Hezekiah, King of Judah, and the prophet Isaiah. They served simultaneously in the king’s house. In fact, both were stewards who served in very high positions for the king. But *how* they served was quite different. Indeed, the contrast between the service of these two men is most helpful because we can observe what God appreciates and what God rejects.

First, let us consider Shebna. In verses 15-18 the Lord is speaking to Isaiah and says, “Thus says the Lord God of hosts: Go, proceed to this steward, to Shebna, who is over the house, and say: What have you here, and whom have you here, that you have hewn a sepulcher here, as he who hews himself a sepulcher on high, who carves a tomb for himself in a rock? Indeed, the LORD will throw you away violently, O mighty man, and will surely seize you. He will surely turn violently and toss you like a ball into a large country; there you shall die . . .” Shebna was the man who was over all the king’s house. He was King Hezekiah’s leading servant and had great authority over all the rest of the servants. At this time he was in a higher position than even Eliakim. This means that Shebna was a very talented and skilled man. In his natural life he was so capable, so able to manage and organize. To reach such a position in the king’s house implies that he was a man of tremendous abilities.

But what is so striking is that when Isaiah comes upon Shebna, he is occupied with hewing out a sepulcher (a tomb) for himself and his posterity. Not only so — he was hewing out a sepulcher “on high.” This was, no doubt, in a place reserved for the burial of royalty. The kings of Judah were buried in a special place on high. So Isaiah says to Shebna, “What have you here, and whom have you here?” Isaiah is asking, “Shebna, what are you doing? You are supposed to be a man caring for God’s interests. That is where your full occupation should be — attending to the house. But I have found you here with others hewing out a tomb for yourself and your family. Shebna, why are you going to all this trouble and expense? Why are you occupying so many others for this?”

What does this tell us about Shebna? It tells us that although he was very talented, his heart was not in God’s kingdom, God’s house. He did not see that he was dealing with God’s interests. He did not see the seriousness and awesomeness of serving the Lord. His heart and interest were not in the things of God, nor “the things of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:21). He did not have a genuine care for God’s house. His heart was elsewhere. He was only interested in his own things. In fact, he was more occupied with his grave and the glory that would be attached to his burial than with God’s house. Thus, his heart was full of self-absorption, full of his own things.

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complaints which you make against Him. And what are we? Your complaints are not against us but against the LORD.” So the Lord hears our complaints, and how does He handle it? He gives us bread from heaven.

So if you and I are blaming people, if we are in that realm, it only tells us one thing. We need fresh manna every morning. Do not correct yourself, and do not get under the devil’s accusation about how awful you are. That is already a foregone conclusion. You already have a Ph.D. in awfulness. You have been perfected in it, and I have been perfected in it! Oh, wretched man that I am! That is a foregone conclusion. So do not mull it over anymore. You do not need to do that. Just acknowledge — rotten to the core! We just need to eat the Bread from heaven. The blood has done its work. The blood of Jesus has now given us boldness just as we are to open up and partake of Him and eat of Him. Day by day we take God in. We have intake. We do not just go through a little ritual. We exercise ourself in reading and opening to the Lord, and then that manna, that living bread, is the way God corrects all the problems.

Different ways of eating Christ

Now let us look at John 6 to see what the Lord said about eating. In the first part of the chapter He uses the Greek word *esthio*, which is the general word for eating. It means to have a meal, to sit down and dine. It would be like spending time with the Lord in the morning or having a lovely time with the saints praying over some verses together — just sitting down and having a good meal. This is one Greek word for eat that the Lord uses. But He changes in verse 54 from *esthio* to *trogo*, another Greek word for eating: “He who is eating My flesh and drinking My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” He uses *trogo* again in verses 56 and 57: “He who is eating My flesh and drinking My blood abides in Me and I in him . . . So he who is eating Me, he also shall live because of Me.” All these usages of *trogo* are in the present tense, meaning that it is a way of life.

Lenski, a Lutheran scholar, was one of the best Bible commentators in defining Greek grammar and Greek words. He studied the Greek word *trogo* and said that it means audible eating, a nibbling, a munching. Sometimes at the dinner table, some are eating in

an audible way. That means it is enjoyable to them, but it may irritate others. This is exactly like the church meetings. Sometimes a new person comes, and the noise of the eating irritates him. But let me tell you what is happening. A lot of people are enjoying God here! The point is we are nibbling, munching, audibly eating. So eating means enjoying a big meal or just taking little bites. It means taking that snack out of your pocket and enjoying little bites. Just take a little bite. That is nibbling. “He that nibbles Me, even he shall live because of Me.”

Do not think that in the New Testament the “truly, trulys” and the “verily, verilys” are there accidentally. The Lord punctuated many of His utterances with “verily, verily,” or “truly, truly.” These words are the English translation for the Greek words “amen, amen.” Before the Lord says many crucial points, He punctuates them with “Amen, amen.” Usually we put the amen at the end of our statements, but the Lord put it at the beginning. If you were around the Lord, many times you would hear Him say, “Amen, amen, I say to you.” This means the Lord was living off of the Father as He was interacting and speaking. It indicates such a present touch with God. So we can see that eating the Lord and feeding upon Him is the secret of living Him. When we eat Him, we live because of Him.

What a diet of Christ will do

A diet of Christ will correct your disposition. Let us see this in the life of the apostle Peter. If there was ever a person with more dispositional failures, it was Peter. He was impulsive and reacted in himself on so many occasions. For example, even after the day of Pentecost, he played the hypocrite (Gal. 2:11-16). In Antioch the Jewish and Gentile brothers had been eating together. No doubt, all the brothers were listening to Peter as he was fellowshiping. Then some from James, from the church in Jerusalem, came through the door and Peter got up and left. The brothers probably wondered, where did he go? What happened? There was so much fear in the atmosphere because the Jewish believers in Jerusalem strongly felt that you should not sit down and have table fellowship with the Gentile believers. Yes, the Gentiles could be saved, but they were saved to remain on their own. So Peter played the

hypocrite. Even Barnabas, who had been with Paul, also left. All of them left the table fellowship with the believing Gentiles.

During this time Peter was a dispositional failure. He was a hypocrite. But toward the end of his life, you see the secret of how he has dealt with himself. First Peter 2:1 says, “Therefore putting away all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envyings and all evil speakings” — put it away. How do you put it away? This is the question. Peter says, “*as newborn babes.*” This is the way you put it away. This is the way you correct your disposition: “*as newborn babes, desire [long for] the pure [guileless] milk of the word in order that by it you may grow into salvation*” (v. 2). The King James Version does not have the better manuscript reading. It just says, “that ye may grow thereby.” But it should read, “you may grow into salvation.” What does it mean — grow into salvation? I am already saved. How can I grow into something I already have? But here Peter is speaking about salvation in another dimension. Here he is speaking about the salvation of the soul, which means the salvation of your mind and the salvation of your emotions (1 Pet. 1:9). God is saving you from yourself. This is the sense of salvation here.

So Peter says, “*as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word in order that by it you may grow into salvation, if you have tasted that the Lord is good*” (1 Pet. 2:2-3). Look at all these dispositional problems — from malice to guile, which is deceit in you, to hypocrisies, which is acting. On the outside you are one thing, but on the inside you are another thing. Then there are envyings and even evil speakings. How do you put all these things away? *As newborn babes.* You do not put them away in your own energy, but you put them away just like a baby. A baby cries, “waaa! waaa!” Every deceitful thing in you is a “waaa!” Every hypocritical thing in you is a “waaa!” So *as newborn babes, desire the milk of the word.* What you and I need is to enjoy God. Drink the pure milk of the word. Taste the Lord, and then His image will come forth. You will discover that Another life is working.

My burden is that faith would be generated in all of us in a fresh way to carve out time in our daily life for eating and drinking, for intake. Prioritize your life for this. It means everything! Live in such a way that there is intake. There are the church meetings with our

corporate enjoyment, and there is also our private time. You and I need private time with the Lord for intake. Then when we come out of our room there is an essence of God. So it is both private and corporate — corporate and private. They are catalysts for one another.

We just live before the tree of life eating God, feeding on God, by calling His name, “Jesus!” What a drink! Open with even a portion of the Word when you can snatch a little time at the dentist’s office while you are waiting. Just think, you do not have to read a magazine. You can have a little bite of Jesus. You do not know how much I take little bites in my spare moments. I just have intake upon intake in this way through the day. For example, I have a book opened up beside me as I’m driving, so that at the stop signs I get a little bit of intake. At the doctor’s office is another opportunity for more intake. Just consider what is happening. You are building up another kind of habit — eating the tree of life, partaking of God and living because of Him. When this vision is before us, we see that this is the way God produces an image where Christ is everything in everyone and where we meet Christ and touch Christ in one another. Amen. Oh, I worship the Lord that we could be under the simplicity of this word and that we could be led to the fountains of the water of life. Let us enjoy together!

— Bill Freeman

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This also tells us that Shebna was using his stewardship in God’s house for his own personal advantage. He was using it to elevate himself to the level of royalty. So Shebna was not only neglecting his service in the house, but he was using the house as a platform for his own profit. He was “working” the house for his own gain. He was found with “a pretext for covetousness” (1 Thess. 2:5), doing things “for the sake of base gain” (Titus 1:11; 1 Tim. 6:5), and “walking in craftiness” (2 Cor. 4:2). This is abominable to God. So Isaiah tells him, “The LORD will throw you away violently, O mighty man, and will surely seize you. He will surely turn violently and toss you like a ball into a large country; there you shall die” (Isa. 22:17-18). In other words, God is telling Shebna that He is about to seize him and roll him out of Judah into a large foreign country where there will be nothing to obstruct the roll. He will just roll and roll. Shebna, God is just going to pick you up and roll you out.

Brothers and sisters, God observes how we handle His

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house, the church. God sees what is in our heart. Perhaps we are gifted, talented people in our natural life. But in God's eyes that does not amount to much apart from a heart that genuinely cares for His house. Of course, our flesh never cares for God's house. Our flesh is only interested in pleasing itself, even if it means using God's house as a platform for its own advantage. This is our flesh and this is the "Shebna" in each of us. But the flesh does not belong in the church. It is foreign to God's house. God's house is holy. It is exclusively for God and not for the gains of the flesh. So whatever we see in ourselves of Shebna must be "rolled out." Any motive that uses the church to serve the self must be rolled out. Any natural ability that is not under the cross must be rolled out. This is what God is doing in each of us. Amen! He is purifying us. He is violently seizing and dealing with every "Shebna" thing in us. And praise the Lord that we can cooperate with His operation. We can say "Amen" to His dealing with our natural life, our self, our flesh, our self-absorption, our motives, and we can watch Him roll it all out. And by so doing, God establishes something so positive in us which we can see in the other servant, Eliakim.

Eliakim: An Example of How to Serve in God's House

Now let us consider Eliakim. Eliakim, we have to realize, is a type of Christ. We know this by putting two passages together. Isaiah 22:22 says, "The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder." And Revelation 3:7 says, "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens." This is Christ! The Lord Jesus identifies Himself to the church in Philadelphia as the real Eliakim. Thus, in Eliakim we have a picture of how Christ serves in God's house. Shebna showed us how the self, the flesh, and the natural life serve. But now we can see how Christ serves. Not only so — we can see how Christ's indwelling life in us serves in God's house. That is, we have a serving life within our spirit. And Eliakim is a wonderful picture of how that life serves.

Now let us look at Isaiah 22:20-21, where Isaiah is still talking to Shebna: "Then it shall be in that day, that I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah; I will clothe him with your robe and strengthen him with your belt; I will commit your responsibility into his hand. He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah." Here Isaiah is telling Shebna that God is not only going to roll him out but He is going to replace him with "My servant Eliakim." Shebna's robe, belt, and responsibility will be transferred to Eliakim. God is going to establish Eliakim in Shebna's

place. In fact, the name Eliakim means "whom God establishes" or "whom God raises up."

Eliakim's Genuine Care for God's House

What is it about Eliakim that causes God to call him "My servant"? What is it about him and his service that so pleases God? First, the name of Eliakim's father, Hilkiyah, means "God is his portion." This indicates that Eliakim was a man who enjoyed God as his portion. He was not just a talented man. Of course, he was very talented and very gifted. But because Eliakim was a man who also enjoyed God as his portion, he knew the Spirit. He knew life. He was not a man that just devised plans but not of "My Spirit" (Isa. 30:1). He was a man that knew the Lord. Because he had such an enjoyment of God as his life, God raised him up to be established.

And because Eliakim enjoyed God as his portion, he had a genuine care for God's interests. The end of Isaiah 22:21 says, "He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." This means that Eliakim was a person who had within him a genuine feeling about the people of God. By enjoying God as his portion, he had a spontaneous care for God's house, God's kingdom. He really felt within his heart like a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus, Eliakim's service in the house was not a duty. It came out of a genuine care. This is just like Paul who told the Thessalonians that when he came to their city and began to establish the church, he was among them like a nursing mother and an exhorting father. He was willing to be spent, to impart even his own soul, for their sake (1 Thess. 2:7-11). This is how a father is. He naturally cares for his children. Brothers and sisters — this is the kind of life that we have within us!

— *To be continued*

— *Kirk Eland*

the Christian

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