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The Mystery and Miracle of Divine Support

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(A message given in conference)

Reading: John 6:25-27, 30-33, 47-48, 53.

During this past week we have been considering the Lord Jesus as God's pattern to which He is seeking to conform us, and have reminded ourselves of the Apostle's words that we are "*foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son*" (Romans 8:29). So we have been looking at some of the features of that image.

This afternoon we are going to consider the mystery and the miracle of divine support. This was evidently a very important matter in the mind of the Lord Jesus, for four times over in this connection He used that double affirmative: "Verily, verily". That means that He said four times: 'Most truly, truly, I say unto you'. There must have been a very serious look on His face when He was saying these things, for it was as though He was saying: 'If you forget everything else, don't forget this!'

Firstly, He said: 'Verily, verily, this meat I give to you endureth unto everlasting life.' Then He said: 'Verily, verily, it was not a man - Moses - who gave you bread, but My Father who gives you the true bread.' Thirdly, He said: 'Verily, verily, I am the bread of life'; and finally: 'Verily, verily, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man you have no life in yourselves.'

You will recognize that all this is an explanation of a miracle which He had just performed. Out of a little handful of loaves He had fed a great multitude, and, having done so, there were many basketfuls over. But, when He had done that wonderful thing, they had seen nothing more than the bread multiplied. He intended it to be a sign of something else, but He said: 'You have not seen the sign: you have only seen the bread', and it is proved that they had not seen the meaning because they said: 'Well, show us a sign.' That is why He used this double 'verily' four times. He was saying: 'You people only see *things*; you do not see *meanings*', so He proceeded to give the meaning.

In the first place, Jesus was saying: 'This bread that I am talking about cannot be had by any human effort. Labour not for the bread which perisheth! The bread that I am speaking about is something that all your labour will never secure. Man cannot produce it. It is heavenly bread, not earthly bread. Moses did not give you this bread, but My Father does give the true bread, and the bread that He gives, and I give, is Myself. I am the bread of life... Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye have not life in yourselves.'

Perhaps we are not surprised that they were mystified at His language! They said: 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' and because they could not understand many of them went away.

But Jesus only emphasized the necessity of receiving this bread. Bread is essential for strength, for health, for endurance, for work, for growth and for intelligence. If you stop feeding your brain will break down. And Jesus was saying that, just as bread is necessary for all these things in the natural life, so He is necessary for all these things in the spiritual life.

Now let it be understood that Jesus was not only giving teaching. These were not only ideas, however true they might be. Jesus Himself lived His life and did His work on this principle: He received all the resources for His spiritual life and work from heaven. That is, Jesus lived on supernatural support, and He was saying: 'You can do the same.' He is our pattern in this matter. Not only should you live on this principle, but you *can* live on it.

The life of Jesus is a wonderfully full example of this great truth. See the things which He had to do without! All the resources of this world were absent. He was born in a stable, not even in a home, and far from a palace. He was brought up in a poor home, and His mother had to go to the market and strike a bargain. If she could spend just a penny she would get two sparrows, but if she could spare an extra penny she would not only get double, but one thrown in (Matthew 10:29; Luke 12:6). You will remember that Jesus spoke about that, and it was evidently out of His own experience. Later on He said: "*The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head*" (Matthew 8:20), and when it was a matter of paying the tax He had to work a miracle to get the money. He was entirely without all the resources of this world. And then He was completely without the support of men. He was not believed in even by His own family and his brethren - it says: "*For even his brethren did not believe on him*" (John 7:5), which means that there was misunderstanding of Him in His own family. And how often His own friends did not understand Him! Then He had the fierce opposition of all the official people, and those in high places who could have helped Him were against Him. In addition to all that, from the time that He stepped out to do His work, Satan never left Him alone. There was persistent Satanic opposition and energy against Him. And then there was the constant consciousness of how it was all going to end on this earth, for He always knew that the end was going to be the Cross. He knew all the Old Testament Scriptures about Himself.

Well, that is a fairly large mountain of difficulty to encounter! If any man ought ever to have broken down on the way, that man was Jesus. How often in His circumstances did He have good reason to give it all up! His whole life, in every way, was on a basis of dependence upon resources outside of Himself and outside of this world. Under this crushing weight of adversity, of sorrow and grief, of disappointment and reproach, He was sustained from heaven. His heart was broken, but He went right through to the end without failing. There was a mystery and a miracle about His support: He had spiritual bread and spiritual wine from heaven.

That is the meaning of this four-fold 'verily'. He is, in effect, saying: 'As I am supported from heaven so can you be. What I receive from My Father I give to you. As I have overcome so you can overcome.' Do you say: 'How can this be?' I cannot answer that question. There is a mystery about this thing, and there is a miracle in it. The fact is that the Lord allows impossible situations to come into the lives of His people. They think many times: 'Now we are never going to get through this time. We have had many hard experiences before, but this is the end. Surely we are going under this time, for we see no way through. Men cannot help us, and there are no circumstances that help us. We have not the strength or wisdom in ourselves,' and they can go on saying all that they like about it, and yet Jesus says: 'You can get through, and if you will draw on Me as your life, you will never fail. The bread that I give you, which is Myself, is unto life eternal.'

I have often put it like this. While it is true that we wonder very often how it was that we got through a certain situation, when we get to heaven at the end of all the troubles we shall look at one another and say: 'Well, is it not wonderful that we are here? How often we thought that we were never going to get through! But here we are! All the troubles are finished and we are at home.'

There is truly a mystery and a miracle about heavenly support, but how shall this be? Jesus just put it into a very short phrase: "*Except ye eat... ye have not life.*"

All that we have said is true. The bread from heaven is presented to us, but if God does all that He can do and we do not take it, then it is of no avail. Every day, in every situation, we must by faith take Jesus Christ as our life, as our strength, as our wisdom, and as everything that is necessary to see us right through to the end in victory.

Now that may seem a very simple message to you, but Jesus says that it is a very important thing. "Verily, verily" ... again, "Verily, verily" ... and for the third time, "Verily, verily" ... and yet again, "Verily, verily, He that feeds on Me has life eternal."

May this message come back to us whenever we are in need of heavenly support!