

their only resort was prayer. The early church was a praying church, and by using this means of grace became powerful and added daily unto its numbers. All through Paul's Epistles he especially emphasizes the necessity of continual, fervent prayer. "Pray always," says the Apostle, "with all prayer and supplication in the spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Ardent prayer draws out the whole soul after the blessing sought. This, continued for some time, or for any special object, becomes supplication, and if the heart of the supplicant is sound, full of faith and love, God will honor that earnestness and sincerity by giving him a blessing above what he can ask or think (Luke 18, 1-8).

"Pray without ceasing," Paul says, not that the Christian can be always engaged in the positive act, but he ought to have a holy aptitude of prayer. The bird is not always on the wing, but is ready to fly in an instant, so the believer is not always on the wing of prayer, but he has such a gracious aptitude for this service, that he is prepared in an instant when in danger or need to fly for refuge to God.

#### WHAT KINDS OF PRAYER.

We may term prayer as being of two kinds—social or public prayer, and private and secret prayer. Social or public prayer is like dwelling in the outer court—an assembling together in public places of worship and unitedly offering unto God petitions and psalms of thanksgiving. But secret prayer is an entering into the inner temple, the Holy of Holies as a priest before God, enjoying the closest soul communion and partaking of his divine nature. None enter the inner temple who are not found in the outer court. Every want, every grief, every anxiety, every temptation, every sorrow, and every joy should be objects of prayer. But prayer for spiritual blessings for ourselves and for others is the essence of prayer, and spiritual blessings consist chiefly in the gift of the Holy Spirit. Nothing is given us but by the Holy Spirit. He takes of the things of Christ and reveals them unto us.

#### A GREAT NEED.

Another essential in every Christian home is family prayer. It has been said that a home without family prayer is like a house without a roof, in which there cannot be either peace, safety, or comfort. Family prayer is a power to unify homes, promote righteousness in the land, and extend the kingdom of Christ. We have seen the necessity of prayer in the lives of the patriarchs and prophets, and in Christ and the apostles. If they needed this daily communion with God, how much more do we need it today. If the sinless Christ, the only Begotten Son of God needed to spend long hours and sometimes whole nights in prayer how much more do we frail human creatures need to go to our Father and his Father for wisdom, strength, and grace to sustain us in our many trials and temptations.

We have also seen the importance of public, family, and private prayer, and when this is so necessary, can we not trace the lack of spirituality and the need of greater blessing back to the neglect of this divine ordinance in our churches, homes, and lives? God is more ready to give than we to receive, but we must be worthy recipients before he bestows his gifts.

"For so the whole round earth is every way

Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

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## MAY 11.—"JESUS, THE LIVING BREAD."

John 6, 21-55, 48-58.

#### HOME READINGS.

Mon., May 5, The water of life, ..... John 4, 1-15  
Tues., May 6, Spiritual meat, ..... John 6, 1-15  
Wed., May 7, Manna and revival, ..... Ps. 78, 12-33  
Thurs., May 8, Come and drink, ..... John 7, 32-39  
Fri., May 9, Broken for you, ..... John 13, 26-30  
Sat., May 10, Meat and drink, ..... John 4, 31-38

It is well for young people to consider not only the themes of Scripture that point to practical work, but also those that contain deep spiritual truth. In fact all Christian work should be based on the Spirit-life. We must first have Christ "within," before we can manifest Christ without. And to prevent our faith being demolished by the winds and storms of opposition from the worldliness which surrounds us, we must be "rooted and grounded" in the truth. This week's topic will have the tendency, if properly studied and appropriated, both to give us an insight into the necessary spiritual basis for religious effort, and a view of a great doctrine in which all believers should be established—Christ, the Bread of Life.

#### HOW CHRIST REVEALS HIMSELF.

Our Lord revealed himself, says one, under many forms. To the woman at the well, he was the water of life. To the disciples at one time he referred to himself as the life in the vine. In the Last Supper the wine in his blood given for the salvation of the world. In one topic Scripture, he presents himself as "the true bread from heaven;" the "bread of God," and the "bread of life." In and through all these forms our Lord seeks to make the truth as simple and as strong as possible. What appeals to one mind may not appeal strongly to another. One type of person is moved by the manifestation of life, as seen in the vine, another by the sparkling cup of water just out of the deep and cool well; another by the fruit of the vine; while others are impressed most by the life-sustaining power of bread. We cannot represent everything in Christ's character under a single symbol. Look for the essential truth under each figure of speech, and thus determine the mind of the Spirit.

#### BREAD AN ESSEN TIAL.

Bread, implying food for the body, is an essential for physical life. It is "sine qua non." A very plain truth is this, that the body can neither live nor work without food. Man is absolutely dependent for his very existence upon supplies from the outside. His bread and water must be sure, otherwise his life, so far as it relates to this world, comes to an end. Everybody knows this. And everybody knew it in our Saviour's time. And the Great Teacher used this fact with which everybody is familiar to teach a higher truth. And this higher truth appears as follows—Man has a spiritual nature as well as a physical. The physical nature of man must have food or perish. So the Spiritual nature must have Christ as Saviour and Teacher and Lord, or lose its highest hopes and spiritually perish. The ancient Greeks represented their gods as living on nectar and ambrosia, drink and food of divine delicacy and flavor but not to be enjoyed by mortals. But our Lord sends from heaven the food of the immortals embodied in Jesus Christ, that all may partake thereof and live for ever.

#### THE MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL.

"Man shall not live by bread alone," is a subject frequently and urgently referred to by our Lord. And there is a reason for it. The spirit of practical materialism, of giving exclusive attention to the things of the present world is a

common evil, and exerts a baleful influence upon religious life and the interests of men. Our Saviour was well aware of this tendency and strove to correct it, and lead men to put things in their proper proportion, not only to attend to their material interests, but also to their spiritual well-being. "Labor not for the meat which perisheth;" this is not the chief purpose of man—"but for the meat (food) which endureth unto everlasting life." Put your life into that which is permanent, not transient, not into the things seen and temporal only, but into the things which are not seen, and eternal.

#### THE PROVER ORDER.

The spiritual life is of primary importance. Possessing that great boon, there will be none of that over-anxious striving after material things that takes the true spring out of life and often embitters it, but the angel of sweet content will smile upon the way. The Prover order is contained in the memorable words of our Lord, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (that is, spiritual things) and all these things (that is, material things) shall be added unto you." God is the true "summum bonum," and possessing him, his children have all necessary things. The highest good we can attain through Christ alone. And for this true and heavenly food men must labor. Not as though it could be gained by their own unaided effort, but that Christ gives it when men strive after it—seek it earnestly, and with it, every other needful gift.

#### SIDE-LIGHTS.

1. The soul needs food as really as the body.
2. The source of this food for the soul is Jesus Christ.
3. The food for the soul is that which supports its life, enlarges its being, strengthens its faculties, develops its moral character, and satisfies its longings and aspirations.
4. The true aim and purpose of life is that which is spiritual and eternal, longing to the soul, and the character rather than the body.
5. The sentence which used to stand on the title page of Sir William Hamilton's metaphysics is as true now as ever: "On earth there is nothing great but man; in man there is nothing great but mind."
6. The greatest proof of Christianity is Christ himself, his person, his works, his character, his teachings, the effects of his life upon the world.
7. The tests of the bread of life are: (a) It is from God; (b) it is life-giving; (c) it is for the whole world; (d) it satisfies the wants of the soul.
8. The blessedness of the bread of life. (a) It satisfies; (b) it continues; (c) it gives safety; (d) it brings eternal life here and hereafter.
9. God's conscience, and history bear testimony to the fact that man cannot, in his complex nature, be satisfied with material things alone.

#### POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

In this topic you have "the root of the matter," the essential thing in Christianity. Accept Christ as your life, appropriate him in the various offices as your spiritual Father, and you have the essentials of religion. Make this clear at this meeting. Have two or three short papers illustrating Christ's relation to men—"Christ, the bread of life;" "Christ, the water of life;" "Christ, the true vine;" "Christ, the door;" Or, have a short address or paper on "How manna illustrates Christ, the bread of life." Make the meeting deeply spiritual by prayer, testimony, and Scripture quotation.

THEO. J. PARR.