

THE HAND THAT FEEDS

I. The Garden Gate is Locked

A. People must ask God to feed them. “Give us this day our daily bread.” (MATTHEW 6:11)

B. God restricted life in the Garden of Eden. “But *of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*” (GENESIS 2:17)

C. Sorrow, shortage, and the struggle of existence derive from rebellion. “And unto Adam he said, *Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;*” (GENESIS 3:17)

D. The natural order is distorted to some degree in every area because of human sin. “For *the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*” (ROMANS 8:20-22)

E. Moral shortcomings yield material consequences; sin is expensive. “But it shall come to pass, *if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee*, and overtake thee: Cursed *shalt* thou *be* in the city, and cursed *shalt* thou *be* in the field. *Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store.*” (DEUTERONOMY 28:15-17)

II. Life’s Trials Turn Believers to Grace

A. As other solutions to life’s pressures fail, believers come to understand that they will only find what they want and need in the Providence of God. “*And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.*” (DEUTERONOMY 8:3)

B. Providence kindly weeds self-confidence out of the believer’s life. “And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of *mine* hand hath gotten me this wealth. But *thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth*, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as *it is* this day.” (DEUTERONOMY 8:17-18)

C. Life’s great material and cultural struggles inevitably derive in some measure from pervasive sin. “For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them *every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.*” (JEREMIAH 6:13)

D. Economic, social, and political prosperity must begin in the heart where sin makes its home. “For *from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:*” (MARK 7:21-22)

E. It is for the good of His people that God suppresses some forms of prosperity. “Ye *ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*” (JAMES 4:3)

III. With Food Comes Patience as Well

A. The state of mind which Providence cultivates is as important in its own way as the food which satisfies human hunger. “But *godliness with contentment is great gain.* For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And *having food and raiment let us be therewith content.*” (1 TIMOTHY 6:6-8)

B. Believers actually seek to avoid distractions. “*Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*” (PROVERBS 30:8-9)

C. When a believer’s priorities are right, everything else falls into place. “But *seek ye first the kingdom of God,* and his righteousness; and *all these things shall be added unto you.*” (MATTHEW 6:33)

D. Christian contentment is not so complex an idea. “For *we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.*” (1 TIMOTHY 6:7-8)