The Master's Method Of Increase

In the account given in Matthew 14 and John 6, where Jesus fed the five thousand men, there is an interesting study in the way in which Jesus fed the people. There are four verbs used to describe the process of that miracle. Those four verbs are: He "took"; He "blessed"; "He broke"; and He "gave." These four actions set forth the steps of redemption, and of our own salvation, and of how God uses us for His glory.

All the actions of Christ are exhaustless foundations of revelation, for they lift the curtain and let us look into the depths of His nature, and His actions are not only histories of what He has done, but they are distinct prophecies of what He will do.

Then, again, His actions are never haphazard nor out of time, but the order in which His actions follow each other is a beautiful unfolding of the method of all creation, and providence, and grace.

I want us to study a little into these four words, which describe the way He fed the multitude, and see how it reveals the way in which He still deals with us today. The first word is "took." He took the five loaves and two fishes from the lad—that He might enlarge them into a supply for many thousands.

The act of taking the bread is significant, for it shows that before He can use anything in redemption or grace it must pass into His own power, and be pervaded with His own will, and, as it were, be baptized with His own choice, and saturated with His authority.

Just as long as the loaves and fishes were in the hands of the lad they were under the lad's control, and not under the personal and absolute will power of Jesus, the Son of God, but when the lad turned them over to Christ, they passed out from his personal choice, and became the personal property of the Master, and, as it were, the bread and fishes went from the creature to the Creator, from the human to the Divine, from the control of a man to the control of God.

How true this is, that God's will must get perfect possession of anything in order that it may be multiplied and utilized for God's glory!

And this brings us to another thought—that our Lord recognizes and honors the free agency of His creatures in a most amazing manner. Nobody in the universe pays so much respect to the free will of man as the God that created him.

Everywhere in the Bible we see God coming to man and asking him for his heart, for his submission, and then waiting for man to choose, and showing the utmost courtesy and deference to man's free will, just as if man were His equal instead of being His helpless creature.

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He would not trample on the rights of a poor fisherman's little boy by seizing his lunch against the boy's will. He could not have wrought that miracle and so multiplied that bread if it had not been willingly yielded to Him.

It is thus that the foundation of our life is turned over into the absolute possession of God's will, and then the Son of God, the Second Person in the divine Trinity, takes the bread, that loaf of humanity, into His personal power, that with it He might multiply and feed others who will receive Him.

Thus it is beautiful to see how God awaits upon free agency, and will not take perfect possession of anything—of a loaf of bread, or of a human heart—until He can do so in a lawful way, and with the perfect consent of the creature that yields it.

Just as He took the bread from the lad, so He wants to take us and make us into bread for the feeding of others. It is the longing of our Lord to get boundless control of ourselves, to have us saturated in His will, but in order to do this He has to wait until we put ourselves into His perfect possession.

Deliberately Choosing God's Will

Self-will is the center of all sin, and it lies hidden away in the depth of the soul, and in so many subtle ways that it takes a great deal of grace to get to the end of self-will, and to utterly relinquish the loaves and fishes of our whole being to the divine possession.

God can only save us and purify us and possess us and use us in proportion as we put ourselves under His control, and cooperate with His choice.

It is not only what we give to God, but the way in which we give it—the spirit, the love, the willingness, the continuousness, the intensity with which we give it.

The measure in which God possesses us depends on the measure that we apprehend and yield to His desire. It is the willingness that gives flavor to the will.

Jesus is asking for loaves of bread—little, common loaves—such as the working man carries in his dinner pail—loaves of ordinary life, loaves of common capacity—that He may possess them with His vitality, with His own power, and use them in a supernatural way for the nourishing of hungry souls.

The incarnation of God's eternal Son into a human body is the key that unlocks every secret in creation and redemption and providence, for it is God coming down into the creature, accepting what the creature yields, and possessing what His creatures give up to Him.

Thus the act of Jesus in taking from the lad the loaves and fishes is a typical act of all His dealings with mankind, and illustrates how He took His own human body, and how He took the tabernacle from the hand of Moses, and how He still takes the hearts and lives that are given up to Him, to be purified from the will of the creature, and pervaded with the authority of His own personal possession.

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The Master Blesses What He Possesses

The word “blessed” is the second of the four verbs that describe the feeding of the multitude by our Saviour in Matthew 14. Above, I have dwelt upon Christ taking into His own possession the five loaves and two fishes from the lad, as a typical act of taking into His power whatever we yield to Him.

Now let us consider the blessedness which flows from Jesus into whatever He gets possession of!

After taking the loaves and fishes, He stood in the presence of the vast multitude, and lifting His eyes to Heaven, while holding the loaves and fishes in His hands, He blessed them. The Greek word translated “blessed” is *eulogized.* He thanked His Father for providing such good, wholesome food.

What a train of thought is set going by this very word, that Jesus *eulogized* the bread and fishes, those plain loaves made of barley, which modern people consider very rough and poor food.

Yet there stood the Second Person in the Godhead, by whom the worlds were created, by whom all harvests are produced, the Creator of the fishes, the Producer of all barley and wheat, *eulogizing* those plain loaves, thanking the eternal Father for the good qualities in that food. This was “saying grace” in the loftiest and truest sense, and is a sample for our grace at meals.

Just as soon as those loaves and fishes were given up by the lad, and passed into the personal possession of Jesus, they entered, as it were, a supernatural world, and became flooded with the divine will and glory, and were then in the realm of the miraculous.

As long as those loaves were in the boy’s hands, they were under what we call natural law, but when Jesus took them into His hands they were above natural law, for they were under the immediate will of the Creator of all laws, and hence could be miraculously multiplied above all known processes of bread making.

Instruments to Show Forth His Glory

There are two sides to this word “blessed.” On the one side Jesus blessed by eulogizing it, and appreciating its virtues; and on the other side He blessed the bread by pouring into it a stream of miraculous power, and multiplying it, and making it the instrument to show forth His glory. In the same way He took His own human body to make it the Bread of Life.

When Jesus stood that afternoon on the eastern shore of Galilee, and held in His sacred hands those loaves and fishes and blessed them, that was a typical act of the eternal Son of God—taking into His possession His own human body, and standing in the midst of a hungry world, and blessing His own body, and lifting up His own, spotless body on the cross, and blessing it, and offering it up to the Father to be the Bread of Life to all who receive Him.

Thus every act of Christ is related to every other, and every act of His is a type or a prophecy

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of every other act. But this same truth of blessing the bread applies to us. When we put ourselves into the hands of Christ, and His personal will can seize entire control of our hearts and lives, He then lifts us up, and "says grace over us," and blesses us—just as He did with the loaves and fishes.

And He blesses us in the same double way in which He blessed the bread, that is to say, He eulogizes us, He praises the eternal Father for the value of our souls and bodies, and for our capabilities, and for what He sees can be done in us and through us. He prizes our faith, our love, our fellowship.

He praises the Father for the privilege of saving us, and washing us in His own blood, and imparting to us His own character, His holiness, His glory.

We are but common barley, yet in these plain barley loaves, grown on the earth, He sees the true value, and appreciates everything in our being except sin, and He will make an end of that by the sacrifice of His own body.

He not only blesses us by appreciation, but as He blessed His own human body by the inflow of the divine Presence, so, after He takes us into His own hands, He blesses us by the impartation of His own life and holiness and power.

A plain barley loaf, blessed in the hands of Jesus, is infinitely better than the richest, choice foods of all the world outside of His blessing!

Self-Will Hinders

Our rank in creation depends on what God puts in us and upon us. It is His blessing that makes rich and adds no sorrow with it (Prov. 10:22). It is holding things in our own hands that prevents the blessing of God. It is the touch of self-will that stops the downflow of God's blessedness.

If that little boy had even held on to those loaves and fishes with his little finger, or with the unseen clutch of an unwilling mind, it would have prevented Jesus taking the bread and blessing it.

It is the lingering clutch of an unwilling heart—upon ourselves or our belongings—that hinders Jesus from holding us up and saying His divine grace over us, and blessing us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.

The Master Breaks What He Possesses

We have dealt with the two previous verbs of Jesus "taking" the bread, and "blessing" it in order to feed the multitude, and now we will study the third verb of "breaking" the bread. This is another key word to all the works and ways of God.

A saintly man used to pray, "Lord, take me, and break me, and make me." He had learned the secret of this miracle in Matthew 14, that, in order to the full making of us into the image of

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Christ and into vessels of service, there must first be the taking and the breaking!

The loaves never began to increase till at the point where they were broken in pieces. When Jesus took a loaf and broke it, then suddenly each half of the loaf swelled into a full-sized loaf, so that the bread He held in His hands did not diminish in size.

But notice, not a single loaf was increased in size except by being broken. Why are we so long learning that this is the way God is always dealing in nature and in grace? A seed planted in the ground must first be broken, and have its shell rent, before it can yield a crop and be multiplied. The egg under the fowl must be broken, and have the shell shattered before it can grow into a living fowl to multiply itself in laying other eggs.

The rocks must be broken and pulverized into fine soil, in order to liberate the fertile chemicals to produce forests, and grass, and harvests. The increase begins where the breaking ends, and, if you stop the breaking, you stop the multiplication!

Jesus breaking that bread, set forth a parable of His own death, and how He must break His own body, the true, divine Loaf of Bread, in order to distribute it, and in order that that body might be multiplied in forming that larger mystic body of saints—His Church—who are to be one with Him forever and ever.

Jesus Himself tells us that a grain of wheat will remain alone except it fall in the ground and be broken in death, and that only through death it can be multiplied (John 12:24).

If Jesus had not broken the bread of His own body, not one single human being could ever have been saved, for He gave His life a ransom for us. We are not saved by the incarnation, nor by the birth of Christ, nor by His example, nor by His character, nor by His perfections in and of themselves—but by His death!

A hundred Scriptures could be collected to prove the truth that it is by the actual death of the body of Christ, the breaking of that Loaf of Bread, that we are saved and nourished.

Unless His love had poured itself out in His blood—it could never have saved us, and furthermore, even the shedding of His blood would not have saved us—if it had not been to the death.

He died, the Just for the unjust. Hence His body was broken, and the blood vessels were broken, and His heart was broken unto death, for nothing less than death would have met the demands of God's holy law, nor have been sufficient for our salvation.

As a loaf of bread, be it ever so beautiful, or ever so pure, can never feed us except by being broken and eaten so the flesh and blood of Jesus, be they ever so pure, or ever so lovely, or ever so perfect, can only be life to us by being broken and received into our hearts by faith.

Very few grasp the true thought of salvation— by having the life of Jesus imparted to us through His death. It was by smiting the rock that the water flowed out, and so it was by the smiting of Christ on the cross—that the stream of His life was poured forth for us to drink

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(Exodus l7:6).

It is by bruising the olive berry that the sweet oil can be obtained, and by the bruising and breaking of the body of Jesus, the oil of the Holy Ghost is given to believers.

It was only when Mary broke the alabaster box that the sweet spikenard was liberated, and the pent-up odors floated out on the air and filled all the house, and so the body of Jesus was the true alabaster box, and only by the breaking of it could the sweet odor of His inner life fill all the world (Matt. 26:7; Mark 14:3).

It was only by breaking the pitcher on the part of Gideon's band, that the light of the lamps could flash forth to the bewilderment and utter confusion of the Midianites (Judges 7:19-21).

And thus Jesus broke the pitcher of His own flesh that the inward lamp of His spiritual life could shine forth in this dark world. When we chew a piece of bread, we are but breaking it that its hidden qualities may be liberated and enter into our bodies, and thus Jesus broke the bread of His own flesh that its life might enter into us.

Christ's Body Broken on the Cross for Us

We begin to live where His life ended. See the eastern shore of Galilee. See Jesus standing on the hillside late in the afternoon, with five thousand men, besides women and children, seated on the grass, and as the soft, yellow light of the declining sun streams over them, Jesus and the Apostles standing in the midst, and He holding the loaves and fishes in His hand, in the act of breaking those loaves in order to feed the people.

And then look upon Calvary, and see Jesus surrounded by myriads of starving souls, and see the Son of God, by His permissive providence, breaking His body on the cross, that He might give it to His disciples, that they might eat it, and that they might give it to others.

And you will see that the pictures are closely related to each other, and that the breaking of His body was the fulfillment of that prophetic scene of breaking the loaves of the fisherman's boy.

And all this is repeated over again when Jesus enters into us, and takes possession of us, and breaks us, that through our breaking He may make us distributors of His life. The word "Christian" means a man who belongs to Christ, and is possessed by Christ, and anointed with the Holy Ghost by the authority of Christ.

Just as the history of redemption consists first in Christ taking a human body, and then blessing that body, and then breaking that body, so the true history of a real Christian is in having Christ first take us, and then bless us, and then break us all to pieces, to be distributed—in His will and service.

Our self-will must be broken, our foolish sentimentalism, our natural affections, our wild fancies, our self-esteem, our pet projects, our human creeds, that beautiful white loaf of the self-life, which seems so fair, like angel cake instead of brown barley, must be broken to pieces, if

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ever God makes us to conform to Jesus Christ.

Never since the day when Abel put his life like a barley loaf in the hand of Jehovah, and had that loaf broken by Cain's club, has there ever been a man or woman or child that God has honored with eminent holiness, or usefulness, or rich fruitfulness, that has not been broken like a loaf of bread.

God's Word says, "The lame take the prey" (Isa. 33:23). When God made Jacob lame, and broke his strength, he was then taken up into the supernatural, where he could conquer his brother, and make the heathen afraid as he marched through their country with his family and herds. It is the soul that God breaks—that has a supernatural strength (Genesis 32:1-32; 33:1-16; 35:5).

If you look in a very large mirror, you will see only one reflection of yourself, but if you break that mirror into a hundred pieces, each separate piece will reflect your image, and thus Jesus multiplies His reflection in us by breaking us into fragments, and the highest glory of God can only be reached by the destruction of self-glory.

Thus Jesus is dealing with us as He dealt with the five loaves and two fishes—when He takes us, and blesses us, and then breaks us. Only think of the amazing love of God in dealing with us as He dealt with the spotless humanity of His own dear Son!

Christ's Way of Dealing With Those Who Yield to Him

This word "gave" is the fourth and the crowning verb descriptive of the actions of Jesus in feeding the five thousand. The other three actions of "taking" and "blessing" and "breaking" the bread were but preparatory to this crowning act of giving out the bread to the disciples, that they might give it to the multitude. Notice the circuit around which the bread traveled.

It was in the hands of the lad, and he put it in the hands of Jesus, letting it pass entirely out of his will; then Jesus took possession of it, and tilled it with His miraculous power in blessing and breaking it, and then returned it again, and of course, the lad who had given it up received all he wanted and more besides!

This is a sample of the way God is ever dealing with those who yield themselves to Him. What we give to God becomes doubly ours, for it is ours to give, and then He gives it back to us—enlarged and multiplied and filled with His blessing!

In a marvelous and beautiful way Christ treats us the way we treat Him, for we see that they committed the loaves and fishes into His hand, and then He in return committed the same bread back into their hands again, just as we consecrate ourselves unlimitedly to Christ, He in turn consecrates Himself unlimitedly to us.

We notice that in distributing the bread to the multitude, Jesus used His Apostles as His agents of disbursement. Those Apostles could not, in the true sense, bless the bread, nor multiply it, but after it had passed through the miraculous power of Christ, they could serve—in giving it out to the hungry people.

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As you watch the disciples taking the bread and fishes from the Saviour's hands, and giving them out to the five thousand men, that is a picture of what Christ is doing now, for, from His position at the right hand of God, He is still commanding His Spirit-filled believers to take His bread of life and eat of it themselves, and then distribute it to hungry souls among all nations.

Just as it was through the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ broke His body on the cross, so it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that His servants can take that living bread and give it out to others (Hebrews 9:14; Zech. 4:6; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 1 Peter 1:12; Eph. 5:18).

Bread Multiplies in the Act of Giving

The bread was multiplied in the very act of giving it away! Just as fast as Jesus broke the bread and gave it out to the disciples, just so fast it grew upon His hands, and when He stopped giving it out it ceased to multiply. This truth extends all through the kingdom of God, and through nature and providence as well.

Very few people ever learn the truth that giving is the very best of living, and the true way of increase. After Jesus takes us, and then blesses us, and then breaks us to pieces, it is then, and not till then, that in the highest and broadest measure He begins giving us out for the helping of others (Read 2 Kings 4:1-6).

It is the broken heart, but mark you, it is the heart that Christ has broken, that He can distribute and give out for the edification, or the salvation, or the consolation of a multitude of other souls. The devil breaks many people, and breaks many hearts, and they become only shattered wrecks on the shores of life.

But those souls that God takes in hand, and that He breaks are made into vessels of the water of life and the bread of life. The breaking that God does is like the breaking of the flax out of which is made the beautiful linen, or like the breaking of grains of sand out of which is made the exquisite cut glass, or like the breaking of volcanic lava out of which is made the most fertile soil on earth.

It is thus that often Jesus breaks us out to others and unites us with Himself, to work with Him in distributing the virtues of that divine Loaf of Bread which was broken on Calvary.

When We Stop Giving, We Cease to Multiply!

It is just as true with us as was with the miracle, that when we stop giving out we cease to multiply! The more we give out our thoughts the more they increase, and the more we pour ourselves out in prayer and good works, the more they multiply.

And it is by giving of our substance, our money, our efforts to scatter the bread of life, the more surely we will have to give....

Thousands of God's people are kept on the verge of want because they will not give, and it is impossible for anyone to convince them that the Bible is true where it says, "Give, and it shall be given unto you" (Luke 6:38).

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The same truth manifested in Christ giving out the five loaves and two fishes, and then giving out the bread of His broken body, applies to us in being broken ourselves, and giving ourselves out to others.

That little lad that gave up his lunch into the hands of Jesus got a better dinner in return for it than if he had eaten his lunch by himself.

What we give to Jesus will in due time come back to us, having been baptized into the will and divinity of Christ, multiplied and more fragrant and more enduring than if we had kept it in our own power. Just see how they collected twelve baskets of fragments after all the thousands had been fed. There is always an overflow in the things of God!

After the bread of the crucified body of Jesus has been given out to feed the millions in the Gospel Age, there will be a great overplus of that bread for the Millennial Age. After we have been broken by the Lord and our lives and possessions have been given out in service to others, there will be gathered up as our reward the twelve baskets of an abundant overflow at our Home gathering! (Matt. 14:20).

The poor widow who gave away her last morsel of bread to feed Elijah, got it back in the shape of an exhaustless meal barrel and oil cruse. Mary, who gave away all her costly spikenard upon the feet of Jesus, got it back again in fragrance on her own head when she wiped those feet with her hair. If we believe these things, happy will we be if we do them (1 Kings 17:8-16; John 12:3; 13:17).

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