

Chewing the cud, dividing the hoof

Part 1

Speaker	Ernest Brown
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[00:00:00] I have a fundamental proposition to put to you tonight, and having made the suggestion, I would like to trace through a few examples in the Scriptures which demonstrate that the proposition is valid. Again, I would be very surprised if you hear anything new this evening, but hopefully, with the Lord's help and by the Spirit, what is said will come to our souls freshly, with a fresh challenge.

The basic proposition is this, and it's a simple one. If we spend time in the Lord's presence in communion with him and spend time meditating about him, his person, his glories, [00:01:08] his offices, his works, this, by a process we may well not be able to explain, but which the Word of God makes plain again and again, that that in itself will have its effect upon the lives that we live on earth. Now that's the basic proposition.

And I want to use this illustration from the book of Leviticus, chapter 11, to demonstrate that quite early in the Word of God that these things are made plain. I well remember the first occasion when this particular picture was drawn to my attention. I had spent a happy [00:02:02] weekend, as many of us spent a happy weekend last weekend, in one part of the country or another, in fellowship and in ministry of the Word. And when I got back to my own local meeting, I was going over with some of my local brethren some of the things that I'd enjoyed. And I happened to say that I had found the comments of a particular brother of special help to me. I thought what he had to say was choice, and the way that he put things was particularly helpful to me at that time. One of my local brethren looked at me quite soberly. He nodded his head, and he said, yes, I would expect you to find that particular brother's ministry helpful. You see, he said, he chose the cud, and he has a cloven foot. Now, I must admit that being the first occasion that I'd heard these words [00:03:04] quoted from the scripture, my immediate reaction was, how dreadful. What a terrible impediment to go through life with that kind of disability. But of course, I knew my local brother well enough, and perhaps he knew me well enough, to know that I would go away and think about it, which is what I did. Now, I said to myself, I suppose there must be some spiritual significance in what my brother has said to me. I'd better look it up in my concordance. I'd better see what comments other Christians have made about it, and I must spend some time thinking about what it means. I suppose, even at that early stage in my spiritual history, I was beginning to do something that had already been referred to. I was beginning to chew the cud.

[00:04:12] I think perhaps many of us are aware that there are animals called ruminants. Their digestive system depends upon this process of chewing the cud. Let me just go over for a few minutes the kind of thing that happens. The animal, cow or something else, will have a meal. It will imbibe the food. It will go off on its own, and it will settle down, perhaps in a sheltered place, and it will chew, and chew,

and chew.

And by a process that I cannot explain, the animal itself certainly cannot explain it, but that which is good [00:05:07] is passed into the digestive system and perhaps goes to what, in that kind of animal, will be called the first stomach or the first stage of the stomach. That which is unfit, that which is of no use, that which won't build up all that's good in the animal is passed into the crop and eventually is discharged as waste. That which is good goes into the system to build up that which is useful. That which is of no use and worthless is ultimately rejected and discharged. Oh, what a simple picture of what our God intends us to do.

We study the scriptures. We meditate about the Lord Jesus Christ. We spend time with him. And then, in quietness, [00:06:06] we chew, and chew, and chew. We chew over it. We meditate about it. We think about it. We come to certain conclusions, and, I suppose, in so doing, that which is refuse and worthless is discharged as waste. There are many, many scriptures where we learn that we imbibe the food, we take account of that which is good, we reject that which is evil.

Now, let's get back to our ruminant. Having chewed the cud, having rejected that which is waste, having passed down into the first stage of the digestive system, that which is ultimately to be built into the production of that which is helpful and healthful, [00:07:02] the animal, I suppose, it's a partial regurgitation. It brings up from the first stomach that which has previously been consumed, and it chews it again, and again. Any finer waste that comes to light in the chewing, again, is discharged.

That which is good, more refined, goes into the system. And I believe this can go on in some animals at least four times. With this assurance, that every time that it's passed down further and deeper into the system, the more refined is that which is helpful, and the less likelihood that anything that is unhelpful to the system has been retained.

Or that we might meditate like that. Or that we might spend our time chewing the cud like that.

[00:08:05] Because in a way that we perhaps cannot explain, it is the way that God uses to not only communicate truth to us, but to ensure that by this spiritual digestive system, that that which is evil is rejected, and that which is good is integrated into our soul and spirit.

To take a parallel, and I'm not only not a farmer, I'm not really a gardener, but I can understand and I can see that the more regularly ground is worked over, the more often it is dug and broken down into smaller pieces, the more frequently that which is foreign matter is rejected, the more likely any germ, any seed that is placed there, the more likely it is to germinate and fructify.

[00:09:10] Or that we might be continually turning over in our minds, and in our heart, and in our conscience, that which the Lord communicates to us of himself. And then that which is spoken of as chewing the cud and parting of the hoof will come to light in the lives that we live. Now there's a very important double principle that is detailed in these few verses, and it's this.

Chewing the cud, which doesn't lead to a parting of the hoof, is no use.

Conversely, a parting of the hoof, which is not the product of chewing the cud, is equally worthless. Now what does this mean morally and spiritually? [00:10:02] It means this, that if I spend time meditating upon Christ and his word, if this is not reflected in a practical righteousness which men

can see, the chewing of the cud has not got to that point which our God and his word considers to be the end product.

In other words, a mere academic approach to the studying of the scriptures, which goes rightly into the mind but stays there without getting into the heart and the feet, is of no positive account before God. Likewise, if there is that in the life of a Christian, which is seen to be practical righteousness, which shows a fair line of demarcation between the Christian and the world, [00:11:03] which is not soundly based upon the person and the doctrine of Christ as revealed in the scriptures, is on a faulty basis, and sooner or later flaws will come to light.

Putting these things together, we learn that it is our God's intention that we should so spend time with the Lord Jesus, thinking about him, learning from him, as we have sung, that in meditation, in communion, the outcome of that will surely be a life which bears the stamp of those who are true to Christ in his absence. This will undoubtedly lead to what is spoken of here as the cloven foot. Every step that is taken in this life will show a distinction, will be a distinctive step.

[00:12:08] We are different to the children of this generation, and if we are true to Christ, as a result of spending time with him, this will be demonstrated every step that we take.

Communion will lead to that kind of separation, which is not mere conformity to a set of rules and regulations, but will rather be the fruit of the life that we were reading about this afternoon. Now then, having looked at that, I would like to trace through a few examples in the Word of God where these things are put together. And I'd like to look first at the book of Joshua, chapter 1. Joshua, chapter 1, and verse 1.

[00:13:07] After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses, my servant, is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. Verse 7. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses, my servant, commanded thee. Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. [00:14:03] This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein. For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Moses had brought Israel out of the land of Egypt. He'd conducted them through the wilderness. They were now on the threshold of the land, about to go in.

For reasons which we needn't go into this afternoon, Moses was not to be the leader who would take them into the land. Another leader must be found.

And for this exceedingly important and significant responsibility, what kind of man was to be found that was capable and competent to lead them into the land of promise? [00:15:14] So having read the verses that the death of Moses had occurred, Joshua is reminded that as to title, all had been made out to the people.

I do give to all this people this land. As to possession, every place that the sole of your foot shall

tread upon, that have I given unto you.

Oh, we heard this afternoon, didn't we? Things that are our own, because they've been vouchsafed to us in Christ. We have title to them. There's a need to make possession of them, isn't there, to put the sole of our foot upon that which is given unto us. [00:16:08] Well, here in type, Joshua, the leader of the people, leading them into the land, is given certain words of exhortation and encouragement on the lines that we've read about in Leviticus. Let us ask ourselves again the question, what kind of man is going to be competent to lead them into the land? If you look in verse 7, Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee, turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. In the language of Leviticus 11, the leader to conduct them into the land must be a man who demonstrated in his life his preparedness and the experience of having the cloven-footed walk, departing not from the law of the Lord, neither day nor night, neither to the left hand nor to the right hand.

[00:17:22] And here we have this demonstration of the kind of man, the man who in practical righteousness demonstrated how far removed his practice was from the world represented by Egypt that they had relatively shortly left behind them. And when we look at verse 8, we learn the secret. How is it that a leader like this can be found? What was the secret of a life lived like that, true to his God? I think when we look at verse 8, we find that Joshua was the kind of leader who was suitable to be taken up for this particular responsibility because he was used to chewing the cud. [00:18:08] Let us read the words again, self-explanatory, aren't they? This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein, the verses we read will use this word again and again, thou shalt meditate therein, day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein. Are we those who spend time day or night meditating upon the Lord Jesus who died to save us?

Are we the kind of Christian who seeks out Christ in all the scriptures with a view to getting a more enhanced view of him as the motivation and the secret of living the kind of life, the kind of clean life, the kind of righteous life, the kind of holy life, the kind of sacred life that is depicted by the cloven foot? [00:19:15] Let us turn over to Psalm 1. I'm sure we are all aware that in the book of Psalms, very often, the first verse of the Psalm is a heading over the Psalm, and then the rest fills out the detail. I think we'll also be conversant with the fact that if we take the 150 Psalms as a whole, that Psalm 1 is a heading over the whole of the Psalms, and in particular, a heading over the first book of Psalms, the first 41 Psalms. The first book of Psalms, like the first book of Moses, the book of Genesis, is the book of God's man, that when days are evil, and when it needs a man to stand for God, who can be found that is suitable? [00:20:13] I hope that we shall read these first two verses and find that the kind of man filled out to perfection, no doubt, in the life on earth of the Lord Jesus Christ. But I don't regard this particular Psalm as only messianic. I think it is more empirical. It's the kind of man, and of course, the Lord Jesus was that kind of man more than any other that has ever lived. Now, these are things that are observable in the negative.

[00:21:03] We read, it's a man that doesn't walk in the counsel of the ungodly, that doesn't stand in the way of sinners, that doesn't sit in the seat of the scornful. We often lament, don't we, that the first things that other people notice about the Lord's people are the negative things. We don't go here. We don't do that. We don't partake in that kind of life, that kind of habit. Let us not be upset if we appear to be different to the children of the world. We are different, no doubt about it. We shouldn't be surprised if it shows itself, not in any bizarre way, not in any contrived way, but those who are to be

suitable, those who are to be clean in the sight of God, this will come out in a negative way to others, and it will show itself, this, again, the evidence of the cloven hoof. [00:22:12] Let us not be surprised that when we turn to Romans 12, verse 2, which we had this afternoon, that the first evidence of this once and for all handing over to the God who has blessed us in such a wonderful way, that the first evidence of this seems to be negative, not conformed to this world. But it leads to that which is positive in verse 2. [00:23:07] The word life is that his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night, almost word for word, isn't it, to the words that were spoken to Joshua on the very threshold of the land. That the kind of man, in that day, in that dispensation, who was to be suitable to lead the people of God into the land, is the kind of man who in any day will stand for God. Turn over, please, to Psalm 119.

Psalm 119, as we know, is the longest psalm. Broken down into 22 sections, each of it verses.

And I think most of us will know that this is of significance because there are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet, even if we don't know what they are. [00:24:10] Perhaps we know that. It's also evident that in Hebrew poetry, that their mode of expression is different to what most of us are used to. The kind of poetry that most of us are used to is the kind where there's a rhyming sound at the ends of the lines. In Hebrew poetry, the rhyme, the rhythm, was given by the same letter or a similar letter being used at the beginning of each line. And if we were looking at a Hebrew one and could understand it, we would find that the first eight verses commence with the equivalent of our letter A. The second eight, the equivalent of the second letter of our alphabet. And so on till the last eight verses of the 176, each begin with the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. [00:25:10] Now, there's something else when we read through the psalm that becomes evident very quickly. And that is that almost every verse has a reference to that which God has communicated to us of himself. His law, his word, his commandments, his statutes, his judgment, and so on and so on.

In fact, to save you the trouble, I think the only verse that I have found which doesn't seem to include one is verse 84. But again, there's a reference to his judgment, and perhaps it might be included in that. Now, putting these two together, what can we draw from it? Oh, I think it's this. The psalm covers the life of those who belong to God from A to Z, as we would speak of it.

[00:26:06] Every department, every aspect of the life of the one who seeks to be true to God is governed by his word, is governed by an answer to it in the lives that we live. And I just want to read three verses which demonstrate that. Verses 9, 10, and 11.

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? In other words, in our context today, how can the cloven hoof be produced?

Wherewithal shall a young man be able to live a clean life? In other words, how can the cloven hoof be produced? By taking heed thereto according to thy word. Oh, when we are young, how busy we are.

[00:27:01] And the pace doesn't slacken off as we get a little older. But what we learn here is that whatever else we have time for, there's a need not only to imbibe the word of God, but to retire from the hustle and bustle of everyday living to meditate upon it, to chew the cud, to put it into our digestive system.

And every time we chew over it, there's a bit more refuse, worthlessness, evil which is rejected, and

there is that which is good, which is integrated into our spiritual system. This is the way that it happens. You know, I suppose many of us, to draw attention of a gospel audience or an open air audience, just to attract the ear of the passerby, would say something like, I cannot understand how a brown cow eats green grass, produces white milk from which you get yellow butter and [00:28:05] orange cheese, but I know from the end product that that's the way it works. Now, while we might say that to the unbeliever, can't we apply it to this? Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word. There is the constant need, a young man, yes?

A young woman, yes? Any of us to make time, to withdraw from activity, to meditate upon the word and what it reveals of the Lord Jesus Christ. Times like today, I suppose, give us the opportunity and the incentive to do some collective cogitating, collective chewing of the cud, going over things that we know to be right in order that they might go a bit further down into our system. [00:29:01] The next verse, with my whole heart, have I sought thee, yes? The psalmist has been chewing the cud. With my whole heart have I sought thee. The result? Let me not wonder from thy commandments. Verse 11, lovely verse this.

I remember listening to a masterful, masterly address on the inspiration of the word of God, or to God that we might hear more.

Not decrying that at all. Perhaps some of the good of what was said passed into my system, I trust so. But I cannot remember any of the detail of what was said. What I can remember is that at the end of that address, the brother got up and to link what had been said with the announcements that he was going to make, he just said this. [00:30:03] Thy word, a good portion.

Have I hid in my heart a good place that I might not sin against thee, a good purpose. Oh, even if I got nothing else that day, that was worth having, wasn't it? Thy word, a good portion.

Have I hid in my heart a good place that I might not sin against thee, a good purpose. But here, I want to split it into two. Thy word, have I hid in my heart. We need to read it. We need to think about it. It needs to become a conviction. It needs to go through the eye, into the mind, into the heart. Thy word, have I hid in my heart, having chewed the cud. And then the result is, not that it might be, not that it should be. That I might not sin against thee.

Let's turn over quickly, please, to Isaiah 30, another well-known phrase. [00:31:10] I would suggest that we are doing some collective chewing of the cud this afternoon. Going over the scriptures, thinking about what they say in order that the result might be that our lives are affected. And as the Psalm 119 reminds us, not only some of our life, but every aspect of our lives on earth affected and lived, regulated by the truth of God.

Isaiah 30, verse 21.

Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left. There was a time in my life when I was taken by my job into relative isolation.

[00:32:07] Although I was in touch and I was happy in a small meeting. But one of the pleasures was that we used to get brothers who were free, they had their time free. They used to come along and help us with our Bible readings. And one brother in particular, whom the Lord preserved to us for a

long, long while, was particularly useful to us. And on one occasion, you know, we were reading, I think, the book of Colossians. And we'd got to chapter three and verse one. And this brother referred to this particular verse. This is the way, he said, walk ye in it. And he said, for the first time in my hearing, something that most of us, I suppose, have enjoyed for long. And he said this, in the New Testament epistles, particularly the Pauline ones, [00:33:01] he said the first part, the first half, more or less, of the epistle, is taken up with doctrine, with teaching. Or as this verse says, this is the way. The way is outlined clearly before us. In the second half, there is the walk, there is the life that is appropriate to the teaching that has been given. Or as the verse says, walk ye in it. Oh, I suppose, in going over the teaching, the truth of God, as revealed in the first part of the epistles, we are given the facility to chew the cud. And then the outcome of that, as before the Lord, is that the life consistent with such teaching is brought before us. Oh, let us take every opportunity at imbibing and meditating upon what God has said to us through his precious word, [00:34:03] in order that that which is demonstrably plain in the scriptures, consistently happens in our lives, that having been shown the way, that we walk in it. Second Timothy, chapter 3 and verse 10. I don't think really I need add anything to what was said this afternoon, other than to read the words. Second Timothy, chapter 3 and verse 10. Paul, writing to the younger man Timothy, says, thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life.

In Acts 20, we read the words that Paul addressed to the Ephesian elders.

I have taught you, this is the way. I have shown you in my own life, and here he sums it up, [00:35:05] to the younger man Timothy, who had especially been made responsible for how things were going on at Ephesus. And here he writes, thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, in that order. I have heard in ministry, well-meaning brothers, saying something like this, don't give me doctrine, give me Christ. It's plausible. It sounds all right. But if we learn anything today from these scriptures, it is this. It is the balance between the two. We learn what we learn of the person of Christ and the doctrine of Christ from the scriptures. The doctrine that we learn is that which is from Christ and of Christ. And this is what we need to spend time in meditation upon. [00:36:03] Again, let us go back to Leviticus 11. If it is possible for me to live an outwardly correct life, well and good.

But unless it is based upon a proper appreciation of the doctrine of Christ, as revealed and emphasized in the word of God, in the word of God, a flaw in my life will come to light sooner or later. It will come to light in my home. It will come to light in the meeting. It will come to light professionally in my job. It will come to light in my contact with the world. And again, if I do spend time meditating upon the Christ of God and his doctrine, this will surely show itself in a life which is true to him. [00:37:04] Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life. And lastly, John's first epistle in chapter 3. 1 John 3 and verse 3. Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.

One of the beauties, but one of the problems of the English language, is that much of the meaning is conveyed not so much by the words that are used, but by the inflection of the voice when they are read. Now, I have often heard this verse read like this. Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.

[00:38:04] That's all right. It's read in that way that every man that possesses this hope, every man that hath this hope in him. Well, that's a good statement. But it's not what this verse says. It is true. There are exhortations in the scriptures that it is incumbent upon us to live a life which is consistent with the doctrine that we hold, with the beliefs that we have, with the teaching we've had communicated to us. That's true. There are many scriptures to substantiate such an exhortation. We need challenge. We

need exhortation. But that is not what the verse says. I will read it again as I understand it. Every man that hath, all right, possesses. Every man that hath this hope in him, him who is to be manifested, [00:39:02] purifieth himself, that is the possessor, even as he who is to be manifested is pure. For simplicity, every man that hath this hope in Christ purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Doesn't even say should purify himself. Doesn't say might purify himself. It is a statement of fact. The Christian whose hopes are rightly centered in Christ purifies himself.

I would put it around this way. I cannot apply it to you. I must apply it to myself. You may well judge the measure in which my hopes are centered in Christ by the measure of practical purification that you can witness in the life that I live. [00:40:04] I think that's important enough for me to say it again. You can measure the degree to which my hope, my belief, my doctrine is held in relation to the person of Christ by the degree to which you can see evidence in my life by practical purification. No good me giving lectures, talking about things that we all know to be true when you know from things that you can observe that there isn't the response. Of course, at times like this, we always need to remind ourselves my responsibility tonight is to pass on to you that which I'm convinced is the Lord's message for the moment. Your responsibility is to accept it as from the Lord. My responsibility is to ensure that as far as in within me [00:41:04] that my life is consistent with what I say. And here we find this happy little verse towards the end of the New Testament. Every man that hath this hope in him. I suppose again that one who choose the cut, the one who meditates upon Christ, who meditates in the presence of Christ, the Christian who thinks about Christ, his person, his names, his offices, his titles, his works, his worth, his works, his words. Those of us who secrete ourselves away and spend time like the ruminant in chewing these things over again and again are those Christians who because our hopes are centred in him and held in relation to him will give evidence [00:42:02] by way of what the illustration calls the chosen, the cloven hoof. We need a balance in ministry. We have inclinations in certain directions. At about the time that Mike was speaking about this afternoon, we had a feast of ministry on the tabernacle and associated matters. One of the things that seemed to be continually pressed upon us at the time that there were three kinds of ministry which needed to be fulfilled.

There was the service of the Corthites, the service of the Gershonites, and the service of the Moroniites. And we were quickly led to understand from the word of God and it's substantiated in the scriptures that the Corthites whose responsibility it was to look after the holy vessels [00:43:03] perhaps depicts the need for a devotional ministry or how necessary it is that Christ is ministered to the heart. The Gershonites looked after the furnishings of the tabernacle telling us perhaps of the need for a doctrinal ministry and or how we need to have set out in order the truth of God for the edification of our souls. But perhaps it's when we come to the Moroniites who had the practical responsibility of looking after the bits and pieces where the tabernacle system came into contact with the earth. And we know that Mara Mirari is having connections with things that mean bitter. Oh how true it is that devotional ministry is very palatable indeed.

How doctrinal ministry has its appeal. [00:44:01] It's when practical ministry is applied to our consciences that that's when we find we are having the bitter waters applied to our souls. It need be no surprise to the student of scripture who choose the cud that it was the function of the Mirariites to have that practical ministry. Now at that time we were always looking for verses that pull these things together to demonstrate the need for the blend of all kinds of ministry for the people of God. And I was reading this verse on one day and next time I saw Michael I said to him I think I found one. So he said try it on. So I read this verse and I put it this way. He that hath this hope in him devotional. He

that hath this hope I suppose we'll start with that one. He that hath this hope doctrinally in him devotionally [00:45:06] purifies himself practically.

Well Michael thought about that. He said well that's not bad. He said but how about John 14. And he gave me an even better one and I'll leave this with you. He that hath my commandments doctrinal and doeth them practical.

He it is that loveth me devotional. Oh if we spend time chewing the cud there will be room for devotional ministry. There will be room for doctrinal ministry. There will be an appetite a willingness to obey practical ministry on the lines that we've had this afternoon and to some extent this evening. May the Lord help us so to chew the cud as before him.

That we are led indeed to have more substance and character in our worship. [00:46:08] A better grip and allow the word to have a better grip upon us in an understanding of the truth. And that it might lead to that practical purification of which John speaks. May the Lord help us to that end.