TRULY EATING THE FLESH OF JESUS

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"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him."
John 6:53-56

OUR Lord Jesus did not, in this passage allude to the Lord's supper, as some desiring to maintain their sacramental superstitions have dared to affirm. I will not dwell upon the argument that there was no Lord's supper at the time to allude to, though there is certainly some force in it. But I will rather remind you that with such an interpretation this passage would not be true.

It must be confessed, even by the most ardent advocate of the sacramental meaning that the expressions used by our Lord are not universally and without exception true if used in that sense, for it is not true that those who have never eaten the Lord's supper have no life in them, since it is confessed on all hands that hundreds and thousands of children dying in childhood, are undoubtedly saved, and yet they have never eaten the flesh of Christ nor drank His blood, if the Lord's supper be here meant.

There have been also many others in bygone times who, by their conduct, proved that the life of God was in their souls, and yet they were not able to eat bread at the sacramental table, from sickness, banishment, imprisonment, and other causes. Surely there are some others, though I would not excuse them, who have neglected to come to that blessed commemorative ordinance, and yet nevertheless for all that they are truly children of God.

Would the highest of high Churchmen send every Quaker, however holy and devout, down to the bottomless pit? If this should refer to the Lord's supper, then it is certain that the dying thief could not have entered heaven, for he never sat down at the communion table, but was converted on the cross, and without either baptism or the Lord's supper, went straight away with his Master into Paradise.

It can never be proved, indeed it is utterly false that no one has eternal life if he has not received the bread and wine of the communion table. And on the other hand, it is certainly equally untrue that whosoever eats Christ's flesh has eternal life, if by that is meant every one who partakes of the Eucharist, for there are unworthy receivers, not here and there, but to be found by the hundreds.

Alas, there are apostates who leave the Lord's table for the table of devils, who profane the holy name they once professed to love, there are also many who have received the sacramental bread and wine, and yet live in sin, who increase their sin by daring to come to the table, and who, alas, we fear, will die in their sins as many others have done.

Unregenerate persons are very apt to make much of the sacrament and nothing of Christ. They think a great deal of the bread and wine of the (so-called) altar, but they have never known what it is to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, these eat and drink unworthily—carnally eating bread, but not spiritually eating the Redeemer's flesh, to them the ordinance is a curse rather than a blessing. Our Lord did not refer to the feast of His supper, for the language will not bear such an interpretation.

It is evident that the Jews misunderstood the Savior, and thought that He referred to the literal eating of His flesh. It is no wonder that they strove among themselves over such a saying, for, understood literally, it is horrible and revolting to the last degree, far greater is the wonder that there are millions of

people who accept so monstrous an error as actual truth, and believe in literally feeding upon the body of the Lord Jesus. This is probably the highest point of profane absurdity to which superstition has yet reached—to believe that such an act of cannibalism as could be implied in the literal eating of the flesh of Christ could convey grace to the person guilty of such a horror.

While we wonder that the Jews so misunderstood the Savior, we wonder a thousand times more that there should remain upon the face of the earth men in their senses not yet committed to a lunatic asylum who endeavor to defend such a dreadful error from Holy Scripture, and instead of being staggered, as the Jews were, by so fearful a statement, actually consider it to be a vital doctrine of their faith—that they are literally to eat the flesh of Christ, and to drink His blood.

Brethren, if it were possible that our Lord required us to believe such a dogma, it would certainly need the most stupendous effort of credulity on the part of a reasonable man, and the laying aside of all the decencies of nature. In fact, it would appear to be necessary before you could be a Christian that you should altogether divest yourself of your reason and your humanity. It were a Gospel certainly more fitted for savages and madmen than for persons in the possession of their senses, and in the least degree removed from absolute barbarism. I greatly question whether the creed of the king of Dahomey contains a more unnatural doctrine.

We are not required, however, to believe anything so impossible, so degrading, so blasphemous, so horrifying to all the decencies of life. No man ever did eat the flesh of Christ or drink His blood in a literal and corporeal sense. A deed so beastlike, nay, so devilish, was never yet perpetrated, or could be.

No, brethren, the Jews were under an error. They made the mistake of taking literally what Christ meant spiritually. Judicially blinded, as the result of unbelief, they stumbled at noonday as in the night, and refused to see what was plainly set forth. The veil was on their hearts. Ah, how prone is man to pervert the words of the Lord!

I believe that if Christ had meant this word literally, they would have spirited it away, but such is the perversity of the human mind, that when He intended it spiritually then straightway they interpreted it in a grossly carnal manner. Let us not fall into their error, but may divine grace lead us to see that our Lord's words are spirit and life. Let us not be held in bondage by the letter which killeth, but follow the spirit which quickeneth.

The spiritual meaning is clear enough to spiritual men, for to them belong spiritual discernment. But as for the unregenerate, these things are spoken unto them in parables, that seeing they might not see, and perceiving they might not understand.

Our first head will be, *what is meant then by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ*? And our second point of inquiry shall be, *what are the virtues of this act*?

I. First, then, WHAT IS MEANT BY EATING THE FLESH AND DRINKING THE BLOOD OF CHRIST?

It is a very beautiful and simple metaphor, when understood to refer spiritually to the person of our Lord. The act of eating and drinking is transferred from the body to the soul, and the soul is represented as feeding—feeding upon Jesus as the bread of life. Eating is the taking into yourself of something which exists externally, which you receive into yourself, and which becomes a part of yourself and helps to build you up and sustain you. That something supplies a great need of your nature, and when you receive it, it nourishes your life. That is the essence of the metaphor, and it well describes the act and the result of faith.

To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, first, *we must believe in the reality of Christ*—we must not regard Him as a myth, an imaginary personage, an invention of genius, or a conception of the Oriental mind, but we must believe that such a person actually and in very deed lived, and still lives. We must believe that He was God, and yet condescended to be incarnate on earth, and here lived, died, was buried, and rose again.

"Except a man eat my *flesh* and drink my *blood*." It is a mode of expressing the actual existence and true materialism of our Lord's body, and the sureness and truthfulness of His existence in human nature. You cannot be saved unless you believe in an historical Christ, a real personage.

"A man there was, a real man,
Who once on Calvary died,
And streams of blood and water ran
Down from His wounded side."

That same actual person has, in His own proper personality ascended to the skies, He is now sitting at the right hand of the Father, and is ordained to descend ere long to be the Judge of quick and dead. We should not use the terms flesh and blood unless we meant to indicate an actual person, such language could not describe the creation of a dream, a phantom, or a symbol.

Before all things, if you would be saved, you must believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God as having been really manifested in human nature among the sons of men. "The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us," and the apostles declare that they "beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

We must believe not only in the reality of the Savior, but in *the reality of His incarnation*, acknowledging that while He was divine He was human also, that He did not assume human nature in outward appearance, as certain heretics have said, but that Jesus came in the flesh, and as such was heard and seen, and touched and handled. He was in an actual body really nailed to a tree, was really laid in the grave, and Thomas did in real deed put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into His side.

We must also believe that He did assuredly and in very deed rise again from the dead, and that in His own real body He ascended into heaven. There must be no doubts about these foundational facts, if we would feed upon Christ He must be real to us, for a man does not eat and drink shadows and fancies.

We must also truly believe in *the death* of the incarnate Son of God. The mention of His flesh as eaten, apart from His blood which is drunk, indicates death. The blood is in the flesh while there is life. His death is more than hinted at in the 51st verse, where our Lord says, "And the bread that I will give him is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Brethren, we must believe in our Lord's death, as it accomplishes the expiation of sin, for so faith feeds on His body as given for the life of the world. There are some who profess to believe in Christ's life, and they hold Him forth as a great example who will save us from selfishness and other evils if we follow Him. Such is not the teaching of the text.

The blessing of eternal life is not promised to following Christ's example, but for eating and drinking His flesh and blood, or in other words, taking Christ into oneself. And the promise is not made to receiving His example or His doctrine, but His person, His flesh, His blood—His flesh and blood as separated, and therefore Himself as dead for us and made a sacrifice for us. Just as in the peace-offerings the offerer sat down and feasted with the priest upon the victim which he had presented, so Jesus Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us, and we are to feed upon Him as the Lamb of God, receiving Him in His sacrificial and propitiatory character into our souls.

It is vain for us to hope for salvation apart from this. The Father sets Him forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood, and if we refuse Him in this character Christ has become of none effect unto us. Christ the exemplar cannot save you if you reject Him as the Christ who bowed His head to death, even the death of the cross, suffering in His people's stead.

Christ as a King cannot save you unless you believe in Christ as a victim. This is absolutely necessary to saving faith, except ye eat His flesh and drink His blood, that is, accept Him in His real personality, offered as a sacrifice for sin, ye have no life in you. This is what is to be *believed*.

But in order to eat, a man not only believes that there is bread before him and accepts that bread as being proper food for his body, but the next thing he does is to *appropriate* it. This is a great part of the act of feeding upon Christ. As a man in eating takes the morsels to himself and says, "This is bread which I believe nourishes the body, and it shall now nourish *me*, I take it to be *my* bread," so must we do with Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters, we must say, "Jesus Christ is set forth as a propitiation for sin, I accept Him as the propitiation for my sin. God gives Him to be the foundation upon which sinners' hopes are to be built. I take Him to be the foundation of my hopes. He has opened a fountain for sin and for uncleanness. I come to Him and desire to wash away my sin and my uncleanness in the fountain of His blood."

You cannot eat, you know, unless you make the food your own. In fact, nothing is more specially a man's own than what he has eaten. His possession of it cannot be denied, nor can it be taken away from him. So you must take Christ to be as much your own as the bread you eat or the water you drink—He must beyond question be yours personally and inwardly. Looking up to Him upon the cross you have to say, "Savior of sinners, those who trust in You are redeemed. I also trust You as my Savior, and I am therefore assuredly redeemed by Your most precious blood."

Eating lies in part in appropriating food, and so except you appropriate the flesh and blood of Christ to be your own personal hope and confidence, you cannot be saved.

I have laid stress upon a *personal* appropriation, for each man eats for himself, not for anyone else. You cannot eat for anybody but yourself. And so in taking Christ you take Him for yourself. Faith is your own act and deed, nobody can believe for you, nor can you savingly believe for another. I say it with reverence, the Holy Ghost Himself cannot believe for us, although He can and does lead us to believe, and indeed, if the divine Spirit did believe for us, we should not obtain the promise, since it is not made to proxy faith, but solely and alone to personal believing.

We are not passive in believing, we must be active, and perform the personal act of appropriating the Lord Jesus to be our soul's meat and drink. This believing in Jesus and appropriating Him go far to explain what is meant by eating His flesh and drinking His blood.

Eating and drinking also consist principally in *receiving*. What a man eats and drinks he appropriates to himself, and that not by laying it on one side in a treasury or casket, but by receiving it into himself. You appropriate money and you put it in your pocket—you may lose it. You secure a piece of land, and you put your hedge about it, but that hedge may be broken down. But when you receive by eating and drinking you have placed the good things where you will never be robbed of them, you have received them in the truest and surest sense, for you have real possession and enjoyment in your own person.

Now, to say "Christ is mine" is a blessed thing. But really to take Christ into you by the act of faith, is at once the vitality and the pleasure of faith. In eating and drinking, a man is not a producer, but a consumer. He is not a doer or a giver forth, he simply takes in.

If a queen should eat, if an *empress* should eat, she would become as completely a receiver as the pauper in the workhouse. Eating is an act of reception in every case. So it is with faith, you have not to do, to be, or to feel, but only to receive. The saving point is not a something which comes forth of you, but the reception of a something imparted to you. Faith is an act which the poorest sinner, the vilest sinner, the weakest sinner, the most condemned sinner may perform because it is not an act requiring power on his part, nor the going forth of anything from him, but simply the receiving into himself.

An empty vessel can receive, and receive all the better because it is empty. Oh soul, are you willing to receive Jesus Christ as the free gift of divine mercy? Do you this day say, "I have so received Him"? Well then, you have eaten His flesh and drunk His blood. If you have received the incarnate God as suffering in your room and place and stead, so that you now trust in Him and in Him alone, then you have eaten His flesh and drunk His blood.

The process of eating involves another matter, which I can hardly call part of it, but yet it is indissolubly connected with it, namely, that of *assimilation*. What is received in eating descends into the

inward parts, and is there digested and taken up into the body. Even so faith takes up and absorbs into the man the heavenly bread, Christ crucified. "The word preached," we read in one place, "did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Now, in the original, there is the idea of food taken into the body, but never getting mixed with the gastric juices, and consequently remaining undigested, unassimilated, unprofitable, and even injurious.

Faith is to the soul what the gastric juice is to the body. As soon as Christ is received into the man, faith begins to act upon Him, to extract nutriment from His person, work, and offices. And so Christ becomes taken up into the understanding and the heart, builds up the entire system of manhood, and becomes part and parcel of the renewed man.

Just as bread when it is eaten becomes dissolved and absorbed and afterwards is turned into blood, and flows through all the veins and goes to make up the body, even so is Christ the soul. He becomes our life and enters mysteriously into vital union with us. As the piece of bread which we ate yesterday could not now be taken away from us because it is a part of ourself, even so does Jesus become one with us.

You ate the bread yesterday, and whereabouts it is now no philosopher can tell. Part of it may have gone to form brain, and other portions to make bone, sinew and muscle, but its substance is taken up into your substance, so that the bread dwells in you now and you in it, since it makes up your bodily house. This is to feed upon Jesus Christ, so to take Him in that your life is hid with Him, till you grow to be like Him, till your very life is Christ, and the great fact that Jesus lived and died becomes the mightiest truth under heaven, to your mind, swaying your whole soul, subduing it to itself and then elevating it to the highest degree.

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." Even as flowers drink in the sunlight till they are tinted with rainbow hues, so do we receive the Lord Jesus till we become comely with His comeliness, and He lives again in us. This it is to eat His flesh and drink His blood.

But now I will make a series of remarks, somewhat out of order with the view of setting forth this mysterious eating and drinking in a clearer manner.

Observe that *Christ is as needful to the soul as bread is to the body*. Meat and drink are absolutely requisite, and so you must have Christ, or you cannot live in the true sense of that word. Take away food from the body, it must die, deny Christ to a man, and he is dead while he lives.

There is in us a natural desire after meat and drink, an appetite which springs out of our necessity, and reminds us of it, labor to feel just such an appetite after Christ. Your wisdom lies in your knowing that you must have Jesus to be your personal Savior, and in owning that you will perish if you do not receive Him. And it is well with you when this knowledge makes you crave, and pine, and pant for Him. Hunger after Him, thirst after Him. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Him, for He will fill them.

Meat and drink do really satisfy. When a man gets bread and water, having eaten enough, he has what his nature requires. The need is real, and so is the supply. When you get Christ your heart will obtain exactly what it wants. You do not yourself fully know what the needs of your soul are, but rest assured that known or unknown, your necessities will all be supplied in the person of Jesus Christ. And if you accept Him, as surely as meat and drink stay hunger and thirst, so surely will He satisfy the cravings of your soul.

Dream no longer of any satisfaction apart from Him, and ask for nothing beyond or beside Him. Christ is all, and more than all. He is meat and drink too. Be content with Him, and with nothing short of Him. Hunger after Him more and more, but never leave Him to spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not.

Beloved, *a hungry man never gets rid of his hunger by talking about feeding, but by actually eating*. Therefore do not so much talk about Christ as actually receive Him. Look not on viands and say, "Yes,

these will satisfy me, oh, that I had them," but eat at once. The Lord beckons you to the banquet, not to look on, but to sit down and feast. Sit down at once. Ask not for a second invitation, but sit down and feed on what is freely presented to you in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. You need Him to be formed *in you*, the hope of glory. But this can never be unless you receive Him into your inmost soul.

In healthy eating there is a pleasure. No healthy person needs to be flogged to make him eat, for the palate is conscious of pleasure while we are feeding, and truly, in feeding upon Jesus there is a delicious sweetness pervading the whole soul. Right royal are His dainties. No "cates ambrosial" or "nectared bowls" can more delight immortal banqueters than Jesus delights believers. He satiates the soul. A thousand heavens are tasted in the Savior's body and blood.

If ever you lose your relish for Christ, rest assured that you are out of health. There can be no surer sign of a sad state of heart than not to delight in the Lord Jesus Christ. But when He is very sweet to your taste, when even a word about Him, like a drop from the honeycomb, falls sweetly upon your tongue, then there is not much the matter with you, your heart is sound at the core. Even though you should feel faint, it is a faintness of nature, and not a failure of grace. And if you feel sick, if it is sickness after Him whom your soul loveth, it is a disease which it were well to die of.

Eating times as to our bodies come several tines a day, so take care that you partake of the flesh and blood of Jesus often and often. Do not be satisfied with yesterday's receiving of Jesus, but receive Him again today. Do not live upon old fellowships and experiences, but go to Jesus hourly, and be not content till He fills you again and again with His love.

I wish that we could become spiritually like certain animals that I know of, which stand in the stall and eat all day long and half through the night too. Here I would fain possess the appetite of the horse-leech and never feel that I must pause. Happy is that Christian who can eat abundantly of heavenly meat, as the spouse bids him, and never cease eating while Christ is near, but feed on and on till far into the night, and then awake with the dawning to feed on the bread of heaven.

It is well to have set tines for eating. People are not likely to flourish who pick up their food just as they can, and have no regular meals. It is well to have settled times when you can sit down to the table and take your food properly. Assuredly, it is wise to have appointed periods for communing with Christ, for meditating upon Him, for considering His work, and for receiving His grace.

You know with children it is "little and often," and so with us, let it be line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. A bit between regular meals often comes very sweet to a laboring man, and so, though you have special seasons for getting alone with Christ, do not deny yourself a snatch by the way. Get a wafer made with honey between whiles, and lay it on your tongue to sweeten your mouth—a choice thought, a Scripture text, or a precious promise about Jesus.

I am sure there is one thing I can say about this feeding upon Christ that *never was a man guilty of gluttony or of surfeit in feeding upon Christ's flesh and blood*. The more you eat of Christ the more you will be able to eat of Him. We readily weary of any other food, but never of this heavenly bread. We are often in an ill condition in reference to our Lord because we have not had enough of Him, but we can never have too much. When we receive Him to the full, we still find that He enlarges our capacity, and we all the more able to enjoy His preciousness.

Observe that the text tells us that the believer is to *eat* His flesh *and drink His blood*, for observe that Christ is meat and drink too, He is all in all, and all in one. A man must not only eat Christ, but he must drink Christ, that is to say, he must not receive Christ one way only, but all ways, and not a part of Christ but all of Christ. Not merely Christ's flesh as incarnate, but Christ's blood as the slaughtered sacrifice and bleeding Lamb.

You must have a whole Christ and not a divided Christ. You have not truly received Christ if you have only said I select this and that virtue in Him. You must open the door and let a full Christ come in to take possession of your soul. You must receive not merely His work, offices, graces, but *Himself*, His whole self. Those receive no grace at all who reject the blood of Christ, for that has special mention.

Oh, what hard things I have heard said, even of late, about those that preach the blood of Christ. Let them say on if they will, it is at their peril. But as for me, my brethren, I hope I shall deserve their censures more and more, and preach the blood of Christ yet more abundantly, for there it nothing that can give satisfaction to the soul and quench that fierce, strong thirst which is aroused within our nature, but the blood of Jesus as of a Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world.

Beloved, it is one sweet thought that *the flesh and blood of Christ is food suitable for all conditions*. This suits babes in grace and is equally suitable for old men. This suits sick Christians, they cannot have a daintier morsel, and this suits Christians in the full vigor of their strength. This is meat for morning and meat for night, and meat for midday. This is meat to live by and meat to die by—ay, he that eateth it shall never see death. This is meat for feast days, and this is meat for days when we mourn and sorrow. This is meat for the wilderness and meat for the royal gardens—meat, I was about to say, for heaven itself, for what better food shall our souls find even there than His flesh and blood?

And remember all the Lord's people are free to eat it—ay, and every soul that hungers for it is welcome. No one needs to ask whether he may have it. It is set forth to be food for all believing souls, whatever their previous character may have been. Come and welcome, come and welcome, hungering, thirsting souls, come eat His flesh and drink His blood!

Thus have I tried to set forth in broken accents what it is to eat His flesh and drink His blood. It is to take a whole Christ into you by trusting yourself entirely to Him as a man trusts his life to the bread he eats and the water he drinks. How do you know the bread will feed you? How do you know the water will sustain you? Well, you know by experience, you have tried it, you have found that bread is good for you.

Why do you not take plaster of Paris? Why do you not drink vitriol? Oh no, you know better, you know you can trust to bread to build you up, and water to refresh you, and even so you do not take in priestcraft and false doctrines, but the blessed person and work of Jesus Christ in His life and in His sacrificial death, you take these in, for you feel that you can feed upon them, these are the dainty viands that your soul loves.

II. Now let us briefly consider WHAT ARE THE VIRTUES OF THIS EATING AND DRINKING OF CHRIST.

Turn now to your Bibles, and in the 53rd verse you find that this act is essential. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." It is *essential*, for if you have no life in you, you have nothing that is good, "No life in you."

You know the modern theory that there are germs of life in all men which only need developing. Universal Fatherhood spies some good in all of us, and what he has to do is to educate it and bring it out. This is the philosophical notion, but it is not Christ's way of putting it. He says, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." No, not an atom of true life. There is no life to be educated, the sinner is dead, and in him there is no good thing whatever. If ever there is to be any good thing it will have to come into him, it must be an importation. And it can never come into him except in connection with his eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ.

But suppose a man has many convictions of sin. He begins to see the evil of sin, and he dreads the wrath to come. This is hopeful, but I solemnly remind any of you who are in this state, that except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man you have no life, until you have believed in Christ, you have no life. Until you have washed in His precious blood you are still dead in sin. Oh, do not be satisfied because you feel some legal convictions, do not sit down in thankfulness because you are somewhat disturbed in mind. You never must be satisfied until you have received Christ. For you have no life in you till you have received Christ.

But perhaps you have attended upon ceremonies, you may have been baptized and taken the sacrament. Yes, but if you have never eaten Christ, taken Him into you, you have no life in you. You are dead while you live. Now, here is a proof in our text that life does not mean existence as people now talk, who, when they read that "the sinner dies," say that means that he goes out of existence. Ungodly

men have an existence in them, but that is a very different thing indeed from eternal life, and you must never confuse existence with life or death with non-existence, they are very many leagues apart from one another.

The unconverted man not having Christ, has no life in him at all. You members of the church, have you life in you—real life? You have not if you have not eaten the flesh of Christ. You may have been many years professors, but did you ever eat Christ and drink Christ? If not, you have no life in you.

You may be excellent moral people, your characters may be patterns to others, there may be everything that is beautiful about you, but if Christ be not in the heart, you are the child of nature, finely dressed, but dead. You are not the living child of grace, you are the statue beautifully chiseled, but like the cold marble, there is no life in you.

Nothing but Christ can be life to the soul and the highest excellencies to which human nature can reach apart from Him fall short of salvation. You must have Jesus, or death abides in you and you abide in death. That is the first virtue of feeding upon Christ, it is absolutely essential.

Now, secondly, it is *vital*. Read the next verse—"Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." That is to say, he has been quickened by receiving into himself a whole Christ. He is therefore alive. Though he may be, sometimes led to doubt it by his state of heart, yet if he has really received Christ he has been quickened from the dead and is alive. And what is more, he always shall be alive, for he "hath eternal life."

Now, a life that can possibly die out is evidently not eternal life, and the life which the Arminian gets as the result of faith, according to his own statement, is not eternal life, because it may come to an end.

Good soul, I know if he has really believed in Jesus he will sweetly find out his mistake, and his life will go on living under temptation and trial, for it shall be in him "a well of water springing up unto everlasting life," it shall be "a living and incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever." Oh, let us believe the precious doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood *hath* eternal life." He has it now. It is a life that shall last as long as God Himself, eternal as JEHOVAH's throne.

And then, as to the body, that will die, will it not? Yes, but such is the power of the life which Christ puts into us, that the body itself shall rise again. We have our Lord's pledge for it, "I will raise him up again at the last day." As yet the body is dead because of sin, though the spirit is life because of righteousness. But there is a redemption coming for this poor frame, and for this material world in which we dwell. When Christ shall come, then the creation shall be delivered from the bondage under which it was placed, and our material bodies with the rest of creation shall be emancipated.

The bodies of the saints delivered from all imperfection, corruption, and defilement, shall live again in the glorious image of Christ, and the Lord shall fulfill His gracious word, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." This eating and drinking of Christ, then, is vital.

In the third place it is *substantial*, "for my flesh is *meat indeed*, and my blood is *drink indee*d." This is opposed to the unsubstantial character of symbols. The Jewish feasting was a mere shadow, "But," says Jesus, "My flesh is meat indeed." This is also said in contradistinction from carnal food. Carnal food being eaten only builds up the body and then disappears, but it cannot touch the soul. But feeding upon Christ the soul is fed and fed unto life eternal, so that Jesus claims to be "*meat indeed*."

Do you ever attend a ministry where the preacher preaches anything and everything but Christ, do you get fed? Well, if you are of a windy sort you may get blown up with the east wind, as wild asses are when they snuff it up. But I know, if you are a child of God it does not matter who preaches, or how poor his language, if he preaches Christ you always feel as if you were fed, your soul is satisfied with marrow and fatness when Christ is the subject.

There is no such meat for the soul as Christ, and the sweetest refreshment is from the weakest parts of Christ, for God's strength is perfect in His weakness. You say to me "What do you mean?" Well, our

Lord in the text says, "My flesh is meat indeed," not "my Godhead." "My *blood* is drink indeed," not My resurrection and ascension. Not, "My second advent," but My weakness as a man, My death as a man, My sufferings, My griefs, My groans, these are the best food for believers. Do you not find it so?

O I rejoice to hear of Christ as coming a second time, but there are times when that doctrine does not yield me an atom of comfort. The brightest stars that charm the sky for a poor benighted pilgrim are those which burn around the cross. Strange that we should turn to that spot where sorrow culminated to find our purest comfort, but it is so, "My flesh is meat indeed"—Christ in His weakness, "My blood is drink indeed"—Christ pouring out His soul unto death, this is the truest and best food of the heart.

Now, brethren, if you want to grow in grace, feed on Christ. If you would become strong in the Lord, feed on Christ. If you want a something that will build you up in all parts permanently and well, feed on Christ, for other things are meat and drink, but His flesh is *meat indeed*, and His blood is *drink indeed*. Substantial fare this.

And lastly, another virtue of this feeding is that *it produces union*. Notice the next verse—"He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." How wonderful is that word—"dwelleth in me." You get by taking Christ into you as a whole Christ to live in Christ, and Christ in you. There is this difference between the two privileges—to live in Christ is the peace of justification. You believe in Him, you trust yourself with Him, you feel that you died with Him and that you rose with Him, that you have gone to heaven with Him, and that therefore, you are accepted in Him and so you live in Him.

For Him to live in you is another thing, namely, the peace of sanctification, for when you have fed on Jesus He enters into you and abides in you, living again in you. He speaks through your lips, loves with your heart, looks through your eyes, works with your hands, and witnesses among the sons of men by your tongues, He lives in you. Oh, wondrous union! Blessed union.

The next verse makes it more wonderful still, for it says "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Three living things, the living Father, the living Son, and then the living believer. There is the Father with life in Himself as God. Then there is the Son as Mediator, God-man, deriving life from the Father. And then the believer, taking the life which came from God through Jesus Christ. O blessed union this, not merely with Jesus, but through Jesus with the Father! So that Christ says, "I live, and because I live ye shall live also." He lives by the Father, and we live by Him, and all this because we receive Him and feed upon Him.

Oh, my soul, I charge you, open your mouth wide after Christ, and take Him into your very self. Give Him a lodging in your heart, ay, let Him dwell forever in the best pavilion of your nature, in the rarest place of your soul. Hunger after Him, feed on Him everyday, and when you have so done, and He dwells in you and you in Him. Then tell others about Him and spread His dear name abroad that hungry, perishing sinners may know that there is corn in Egypt and bread to be had in Jesus. And may come and eat and drink of Him as you have done. I charge you, brothers and sisters, remember this, and the Lord bless you, for His name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 6:26-65

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—410, 819, 613

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