

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE MATCHLESS MYSTERY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

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“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”—Ephesians v. 30.

I do not hesitate to say that this is one of the most wonderful texts in the whole compass of revelation. It sets forth the mystery of mysteries, the very pith and marrow of the loftiest divinity. It is fitted rather to be the theme for a hundred elaborate discourses than for one brief homily. Most assuredly it is a deep that knows no sounding, an abyss where thought plunges into never-ending contemplations. He who handles it had need, first of all, to be filled with all the fulness of God. Hence we feel incapable of dealing with it as it should be dealt with; it is all too great and vast for us, we can no more hope to compass it than a child can hold an ocean in his hand. Beloved, it is a text that must not be looked upon with the eyes of cold, theological orthodoxy, which might make us content to say, “Yes, that is a great and important truth,” and there leave it. It is a text to be treated as the manna was that fell from heaven; namely, to be tasted, to be eaten, to be digested, and to be lived upon from day to day. It is a text for the quietude of your meditation, when you can sit still and turn it over, and, like Mary, ponder it in your hearts. Long and loving should be your gaze upon the facets of this diamond of truth, this Koh-i-noor of revelation. It is a golden sentence fitted for those choice hours when the King brings us into his banqueting house, and his banner over us is love; when the distance between earth and heaven has become less and less, till it scarce exists—those halcyon times when all is rest round about us, because he who is our rest enables us to lean upon his bosom and to feel his heart of love beating true to us.

I ask you, O my brethren, therefore, as though you were quite alone in your own chamber, to pray for that frame of mind which is suitable
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to the subject, and to pray for me that I may be placed in that condition of heart which shall best enable me to speak upon it. We need our thoughts to be focused before they can reveal to us the great sight before us. Get to the place where Mary sat at Jesus' feet, and then will this text sound like music in your ears. Without any accompaniment of exposition from me, it will have all heaven's music in it: "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Sevenfold will be the happiness of the spirit which knows how to sit down and to taste of the marrow and the fatness, to drink of the "wine on the lees well refined," which are to be found in this inspired declaration.

Ere I preach upon it, there is one thing which it is necessary for us to do. They have a way in Scotland, before the communion, of "fencing the tables;" that is to say, warning all those who have no right to come to the table to avoid the sin of unlawful intrusion, and so of eating and drinking condemnation unto themselves. They help the hearers to self-examination, lest they should come thoughtlessly and participate in that which does not belong to them. Now, my text is like a table of communion richly loaded, and far hence be ye to whom it does not belong, except ye learn the sacred way of coming in by the door into this sheepfold, where the pasture is so rich and green. If ye come by Christ the way, come and welcome; if ye rest in him, if his dear wounds are the fountains of your life, and if his atoning sacrifice is your soul's only peace, come and welcome; for of you, and such as you, and al of us who are trusting in Jesus, it may be truly said, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." But if not believers in him, this heavenly verse has nothing to do with you. It is "the children's bread;" it belongs only to the children. It is Israel's manna; it falls for Israel. It is the stream which leaps from Israel's smitten rock, and flows neither for Edom, nor for Amalek, but for the chosen seed alone.

Look back, then, to the beginning of the epistle, and see of whom the apostle was speaking when he said "*we*." This little word "*we*" is like the door of Noah's ark, it shuts out and shuts in. Does it shut us out or in?

Now, the apostle wrote his epistle to those of whom he said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Answer thou this question, thou who wouldst enjoy this text, Hast thou made thy calling and election sure? Has that matter ever been decided in thy spirit after honest search and inquiry into the grounds of thy confidence? Hast thou been led to choose thy God, for if so thy God had long ago chosen thee, and that matter is ascertained beyond all question, and out of it springs the undoubted assurance that you are one with him, since of all whom he has chosen it is true, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

The apostolic description is before you, I pray you read on: "Having predestinated us into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Knowest thou any-

thing about adoption? Hast thou been taken out of the family of Satan and enrolled in the family of God? Hast thou the Spirit of adoption in thee? Does thy soul cry "Abba, Father," at the very thought of God? Art thou an imitator of God as a dear child? Dost thou feel that thy nature has been renewed, so that, whereas thou wast a child of wrath, even as others, thou hast now become a child of God? Judge, I pray thee, and discern concerning these things, for on thine answer to this question depends thy condition before God, thy union with Christ, or thy separateness from him.

Note, still, the apostle's words as you read on, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Dear hearer, dost thou know the meaning of those last words, "Accepted in the beloved"? Thou canst never be accepted in thyself thou art sinful, and undone, and unworthy; but hast thou come and cast thyself upon the work, the blood, and the righteousness of Jesus, and art thou therefore accepted, "Accepted in the beloved"? Hast thou ever enjoyed a sense of acceptance, so that thou couldst draw near to God; as no longer a servant beneath the curse, but a son beneath the blessing? If so, come and welcome to the text; it is all thine own.

But note the next verse:—"In whom we have redemption through his blood." Oh, dear hearers, do you know *the blood*? I do not care what else you know if you do not know the blood; nor do I much mind what else you do *not* know. You may differ very widely in doctrine from some of the truths which I think I have learned from the word of God, but do you know the blood? Were you ever washed in it? Have you seen it sprinkled over-head and on the side-posts of the house wherein you dwell, so that the destroying angel passes you by? Is the blood of Christ the life-blood of your hope? God save me from preaching, and you from believing in a bloodless theology. It is a dead theology. Take Christ away, take the atonement by a substitutionary sacrifice away, and what is there left? But, oh, if we in very deed have redemption through his blood, then we are "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

The apostle adds, "The forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." And here, again, I press home the question upon the consciences of the members of this church, and upon the members of every professing church of Christ—Have you tasted forgiveness? Have you felt the burden of sin? Have you gone with that burden to the foot of the cross? Has the Heavenly Father ever said to you, "Thy sins are forgiven thee"? Do you believe in the forgiveness of sins, and that in reference to yourselves? Oh, do not be satisfied unless you do. Do not be put off with a bare hope that perhaps your sin is forgiven you, but struggle after that blessed full assurance which is able to say—

"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of my Saviour's precious blood,
With divine assurance knowing
He has made my peace with God!"

And if you do so know, possess, and enjoy the forgiveness of sins, then are you "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

Oh, how this last sentence concerning pardon and rich grace seems to cheer my soul ! If none might come but those who never sinned, my guilty soul could never venture near the Lord. If none might come but those who have committed little sin, then must I be debarred. But it is "the forgiveness of sins" on a grand scale. Let me read the words : "The forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." So it is great forgiveness, the forgiveness of great sin, because of great love. O beloved hearer, great sinner as you have been, yet if you are "accepted in the Beloved," and have "redemption through his blood," then all that is in the text belongs to you ; so I will keep you waiting in the vestibule no longer, but set the door wide open, saying, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord. Wherefore standest thou without ?" I pray the Holy Ghost to help you to come in to this high festival, give you a sacred appetite, and enable you now to appreciate the extraordinary sweetness of the words before us.

First, I shall try and expound—and it must be but feebly—*what the text means*, and, secondly, *what the text secures*.

I. First, WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN ? "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Read it in the light of the second chapter of the book of Genesis, for it is evident that there is a distinct allusion to the creation of Eve. The very words of Adam are quoted, and we are mentally conducted to that scene in the garden of Eden when the first man gazed upon the first woman, created to be his dear companion and helpmeet. What did Adam mean when he used these words ? for the great husband of our souls must mean the same, only in a more spiritual and emphatic sense.

And, first, there was meant here *similarity of nature*. Adam looked at Eve, and he did not regard her as a stranger, as some creature of a different genus and nature ; but he said, "She is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." He meant that she was of the same race, a participant in the same nature ; he recognised her as a being of the same order as himself. Now, that is a low meaning of the text, but it is one meaning. Brethren, beloved, think of this truth for a moment. Jesus, the Son of God, counted it not robbery to be equal with God. "Without him was not anything made that was made." He is "very God of very God." Yet he deigned for love of us to take upon himself our nature, and he did it completely, so that he assumed the whole of human nature, apart from its sin ; and in that respect we may say of ourselves—that we are "bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh." The very nature which we wear on earth Christ Jesus once carried about among us, and at last carried aloft to heaven. You believe in his Godhead, take heed never to commingle his Godhead and his humanity. Remember, Christ was not a deified man, neither was he a humanised God. He was perfectly God, and at the same time perfectly man, made like unto his brethren in all things. Dwell for a moment upon this truth, for the text sets it forth. Born of a human mother, and swaddled like another child, he was from his birth as perfectly human even as you are. In nothing did he differ from you except in this, that he never wandered from God and broke his commands, and he was not defiled with that hereditary taint of original sin which dwelleth in you by nature. The like

depressions to those which sadden your spirit he knew ; the temptations of your nature assailed him ; men and devils both sought to influence him. He was amenable to all the external physical arrangements of the globe. On him the shower pelted down, and wetted his garments ; and on him the burning sun poured forth its undiminished heat. Upon his sacred person on the lone mountain-side, the dews descended till his head was wet with them, and his locks with the drops of the night. For him there were poverty, and hunger, and thirst, reproach, slander, and treachery. For him the sea tossed the barque as it will for you ; and for him the land yielded thorn and thistle, as it does to you. He suffered, he ate, he toiled, he rested, he wept, and he rejoiced, even as you do, sin alone excepted. A real kinsman was he, not in fiction, but in substantial reality. Are you man ? Jesus was a man. Do not doubt it. Do not look at your Lord as standing up there on a pinnacle of superior nature, where you cannot come near him, but view him as your own flesh and blood, "a brother born for adversity." For so he is. He comes to you and says, "Handle me and see. A spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me have." He invites your faith to look at the prints of the nails, and the scar of the spear-thrust. Did he not, after he had risen from the dead, prove his true humanity by eating a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb ? And that same humanity has gone to heaven. The clouds received it out of our sight, but it is there.

"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 blest man exalted sits high on his Father's throne. Believe this, and you will see how he is bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh.

And then recollect that, as his nature is as yours, so, in another sense, he has made your nature as his ; for you are born again, and gifted with a higher life. You were carnal ; he has now made you spiritual. You could not drink of his cup, or be baptised with his baptism, till his Spirit had come upon you. But now ye are made "partakers of the divine nature,"—strong words, but scriptural : "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." "For as ye have borne the image of the earthy Adam, ye shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Now you, as spiritual men, cry out to God in prayer, and so did he when he was here. Now you are in an agony as you strive with God, and so was he, but the bloody sweat is a part of his substitutionary work, in which he trod the wine-press alone. His meat and drink was to do the will of him that sent him, and it is yours, I trust ; at any rate, it should be if you are your Lord's. He lived for God ; he lived and died for love of men ; and that same love of God and man, though in a feebler measure, burns within your heart. You are, therefore, now made by his grace to participate in his moral and spiritual nature, and you will never be satisfied till you awake in his likeness. But you will awake in his likeness, so that when he sees you and you see him, then

shall be abundantly manifest to you that you are a member "of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones:"—

"Such was thy grace, that for our sake
Thou didst from heaven come down,
Thou didst of flesh and blood partake,
In all our sorrows ONE.

"Ascended now, in glory bright,
Still ONE with us thou art;
Nor life, nor death, nor depth, nor height,
Thy saints and thee can part.

"Oh, teach us, Lord, to know and own
This wondrous mystery,
That thou with us art truly ONE,
And we are ONE with thee!

"Soon, soon shall come that glorious day,
When, seated on thy throne,
Thou shalt to wondering worlds display,
That thou with us art ONE!"

Similarity of nature, then, is the first meaning of the text.

Regard, I pray you, brethren, with much solemn attention, a higher step of the ladder. It signifies *intimate relationship*, for I hardly think that Adam would have said quite so strongly, "She is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," if he had thought that the woman would disappear, or would become the wife of another. It was because she was to be his helpmeet, and they were to be joined together in bonds of the most intimate communion, that therefore he said, "Not only is she of the same bone and flesh as I am, but she is bone of *my* bones, and flesh of *my* flesh. She is related to me." What a near and dear and loving relationship marriage has bestowed upon us! It is a blessing for which good men dwelling with affectionate wives praise God every day they live. Marriage and the Sabbath are the two choice boons of primeval love that have come down to us from Paradise, the one to bless our outer and the other our inner life. Oh, the joy, the true, pure, elevated peace and joy which many of us have received through that divinely ordained relationship! We cannot but bless God every time we repeat the dear names of those who are now parts of ourselves. Marriage creates a relationship which ends only when death doth us part. It may be dissolved. Alas, sin enters even here! A dark crime may be committed, but, with the exception of that, it is for life—for better, for worse; only the mortal stroke can part. Now think of it. As is your relation, O woman, to your husband, and as is your relation, O man, to your wife, such is the relation which exists between you, as a believer in Jesus, and Christ Jesus your Lord. It is the nearest, dearest, closest, most intense, and most enduring relationship that can be imagined. I love and bless God for ever declaring that his relationship to us may be likened to that of a father or a mother to a child. Did you ever hear those words without tears—(I think I never did)—"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget; yet will not I forget thee." And yet there is a closer intimacy, somehow, in the relationship which is declared in

the text, because there is a kind of equality between the married ones, tempered by that headship of which the apostle speaks, and which we delight to recognise in our beloved Lord towards ourselves. The child cannot, while it is yet a babe, at any rate, enter into its mother's feelings, it is far below the mother; but the wife communes with her husband, she is lifted up to his level; she is made a partaker of his cares and sorrows, of his joys and his successes, and the intimacy arising out of their conjugal union is of the closest kind. Now—again I say it, and I cannot open it up further than to say it—such is the relationship between the believer's soul and the Lord Jesus. Well did the spouse break out with the rapturous language, which forms the first word of the song—"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine," as if she did not need to describe her relationship, but longed to enjoy the sweets of it. My brother, I pray you may so enjoy it; that now, if you be poor in this world, if you be an orphan, if you be almost a lone one in this great city, you may feel, "No longer am I an orphan, no longer am I alone. My Maker is my husband. The Lord of Hosts is his name, and my redeemer the Mighty One of Israel; and from this day forth will I rejoice that I am bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh." Similarity of nature, and closeness of relationship, are evidently in the text.

But I clearly see another and deeper meaning. It meant, from Adam's lips, *mysterious extraction*. I will not make bold to say that he knew what had occurred to him in his sleep. He might not have known all, but he seems to have had a mystic enlightenment which made him guess what had occurred—at least the words seem to me to have that ring in them. "She is bone of my bones"—for a bone had been taken from him, "and flesh of my flesh," for out of him had she been taken. He seems to have known that somehow or other she sprang of him. Whether he knew it or not, Christ knows right well the origin of his spouse. He knew where his church came from. There is the mark in his side still: there is the memorial in the palms of his hands and on his feet. Whence came this new Eve, this new mother of all living? Whence came this spouse of the second Adam? She came of the second Adam. She was taken from his side, full near his heart. Have you never read, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit"? Had Jesus never died, he would have been made to abide alone as to any who could be help-meets for him, and could enter into fellowship with him; but, inasmuch as he has died, he has brought forth much fruit, and his church has sprung from him, and in that sense she is bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh. What mean I by the church? says one. I mean by the church all the people of God, all the redeemed, all believers, as I explained at the commencement. Think you I mean by the church the harlot of the seven hills? God forbid that Christ should have fellowship with her! How can he so much as look upon her except with horror? Means he by the church the politically supported corporation that men call a church now-a-days? Nay, but the spiritual, the quickened, the living, the believing, the holy people, wherever they may be, or by whatsoever name they may be called. These are they that sprang of Christ, even

as Levi from the loins of Abraham. They live because they receive life from him, and at this day they are dead in themselves, and their life is hid with Christ in God. So the text leads us to a deep meditation as to mysterious extraction.

But I find the time goes too swiftly for me, and I must observe next that I am sure that in the text there is more than this. There is, in the fourth place, *loving possession*. He said, "She is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh;" he felt she was his own, and belonged solely to him. Of anything there might be in the garden, Adam was but owner in the second degree; but when he saw her, he felt she was all his own. By bonds and ties which did not admit of dispute, his bone and his flesh was she. Now, beloved, at this moment let this thought dance through your soul: you belong to Jesus, altogether you belong to Jesus. Let not your love go forth to earthly things, so soiled and dim; but send it all away, up to him to whom you belong; ay, send it all to him. "Set not your affection upon things on the earth," but set it all upon things above, for you belong wholly to your Lord. All that there is of your spirit, soul, and body, the treble kingdom of your nature, Christ has purchased by his blood. It were a dark thought to cross a man's mind, that his spouse belonged in part to some other. It could not be. And will you provoke your Lord to jealousy? Will you suffer it to seem so by your actions or your words? Nay, rather say to-night anew,

" 'Tis done, the great transaction's done;
I am my Lord's, and he is mine.
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.

" High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

"For ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." We belong entirely unto him.

And to close this exposition—this skimming of the surface, rather—there is one more matter, and this is the very essence of the meaning. A *vital union* exists between us and Christ. When the apostle was showing that we were one with Christ, as the wife is with the husband, he felt that the metaphor, though it set forth much, did not set forth all. He would have us know that we are more closely knit to Jesus than is a woman to her husband; for they are, after all, separate individualities, and they may act, and too often do so, far too distinctly for themselves. But here he puts it, "We are members of his body." Now, here is a vital union, the closest imaginable. It is not unity; it is identity. It is more than being joined to; it is being made a part of, and an essential part of the whole. Do you think I strain the text, and go beyond the fact? Listen to this word. The apostle, in speaking of the church, said, concerning Christ, that the church was his body, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." And note the majesty of that speech—that the church should be the fulness of Christ. Now, Christ, without his fulness, is evidently not full: he must have his

people ; they are essential to him. The idea of a Saviour is lost, apart from the saved. He is a head without a body if there be no members. What without his people is Jesus but a king without subjects, and a shepherd without a flock ? It is essential to any true thought of Christ, that you think of his people. They must come in. They are one with him in every true view of Jesus Christ our Lord.

How we are one with him ! Ah, brethren, much might be said, but I fear little would be explained by words. I want you to feel it, and to be comforted by the fact of the vital union of Jesus and his saints. Have you never heard him say to you—

“I feel at my heart all thy sighs and thy groans,
For thou art most near me, my flesh and my bones.
In all thy distresses thy head feels the pain,
They all are most needful, not one is in vain ” ?

Oh, do get to know this, you tried and tempted ones, you poor poverty-stricken people of God, you who could not help coming here to-night; wet as it was, because you must have spiritual meat, you were so hungry after your Lord. Oh, do get this morsel now, and feed on it. You are one with him. You were “buried in him in baptism unto death,” wherein also you have risen with him. You were crucified with him upon the cross ; you have gone up into heaven with him, for he has raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. And surely you shall be actually in your very person with him where he is, that you may behold his glory. You are one with him.

Now, tie up these five truths like five choice flowers, in a nosegay. Blend them like sweet spices, and let them be a bundle of camphire and a cluster of myrrh, to lie all night upon your bosom, to give you rest and to sweeten your repose. There is between you and your Lord a similarity of nature, and an intimate relationship ; you have a mysterious extraction from him, and he has a loving possession of you, and a vital union with you.

Come, now, we must only have a few minutes to catch some of the juice that will flow out of these clusters of Eshcol while we tread them for a moment, just to show what the wines of the kingdom are like. WHAT DOES THE TEXT SECURE ?

First, it seems to me, that the text secures the eternal safety of every one who is one with Christ. You know the figure we often use, that when a man's head is above water you cannot drown his feet ; and as long as my Head is in glory, though I be but the sole of his foot, and only worthy to be trodden in the mire, how can ye drown me ? Is it not written, “Because I live ye shall live also ”—all of you who are one with him ? The idea of Christ losing members of his body is to me grotesque, and at the same time ghastly. Does he change his members like some aquatic creatures which shoot their limbs and get fresh joints ? I trow it is not so with Christ, the second Adam. Will he lose his members ? Can he lose *one* member ? Then can he lose *all* ?

“If ever it should come to pass
That sheep of Christ could fall away,
My fickle, feeble soul, alas,
Would fall a thousand times a day.”

But herein lies our safety ; " I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish ; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." I know that some have perverted this blessed truth into the wicked lie that the Christian man may live as he likes, and yet be safe. No such doctrine is to be found between the covers of that book ; the doctrine of the safety of the saints is far other than that. It is that the renewed man shall live as God likes, shall persevere in holiness and hold on his way, until he arrives at the blessed perfection of his Lord, changing from glory to glory into that image which he shall reach and possess for ever. I see—I pity those who do not see it, but I will not blame—I see, I think, strong reason for believing in the security of every soul which is one with Christ.

But, next, I see here a very sweet thought. If I am one with Christ, then I certainly enjoy, above all things, his love. Last Saturday week in the evening I was trying to turn over this text to preach to you from it in the morning ; but I was wrung with bitter pains which made me feel that I should not preach, and kept me wearily waiting through the night watches. But do you know what comforted me very much about the text ? It was that sentence which is a near neighbour of it : " No man ever yet hated his own flesh." I seized upon that, and my sad heart cried out, " Surely the Man Christ Jesus never yet hated his own flesh." If we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, he may chasten, he may correct, and lay on heavy strokes, and give sharp twinges, and make us cry out ; he may even thrust us in the fire, and heat the furnace seven times hotter ; but he never can neglect and abhor his own flesh. Still is there love in his heart. I hate no part of my body, not even when it aches. I hate it not, but love it still ; it is a part of myself ; and so doth Jesus love his people. And you, poor sinners, who feel that you are not worthy to be called his people, nevertheless his love goes out to you, despite your imperfections. Having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them to the end, and he has left it upon record, " As my Father hath loved me, even so have I loved you. Continue ye in my love."

Another most enchanting thought also arises from our subject. The apostle goes on to say, " No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." Oh, those two words, " nourisheth it." Are you living in a district where you do not get the gospel ? Well, then, go to the gospel's Lord and say to him, " Lord, hate not thine own flesh, but nourish me." Have you been for a while without visits from Christ ? have you lost the light of his countenance ? Do not be satisfied with nourishing : go further and plead for cherishing. Ask for those love tokens, for those gentle words, for those secret blandishments, known to saints, and to none but saints, for " the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." Go and ask for both these forms of love, and you shall be nourished and cherished. The good husband does not merely bring so much bread and meat into the house and fling it down, saying, " There, that will nourish you." Oh, not so, but there are tender words and kindly acts, by which he cherishes as well as nourishes. And your Lord will not only give you bread to eat which the world knows not of, but he will give it you according to his loving-

kindness and the multitude of his tender mercies : for he maketh us to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth us beside the still waters, gently guiding as a shepherd conducts his flock. Rejoice, then, that your nourishing and your cherishing are secure.

I will not keep you longer when I have said this much. If we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, then he will one day present us to himself, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," for the whole body must be so presented. Alas, our spots are many, and sadly mar our beauty! Brethren, I love not to think little of my spots. I wish I had not even a speck. Alas, our wrinkles! Let us not talk lightly of them. It is most sad that on the Beloved's darling there should be a solitary blot. It is the worst wrinkle of all when a man does not see his own wrinkles, and when he does not mourn over them. But spots and wrinkles there are. I hope we do not say, "Yes, they are there," and then add, "And they must be there." No, beloved, they ought not to be there: there ought to be no sin in us. If there be a sin which ought to be upon us, why it is clear it is no sin. A thing that ought to be is not a sin. If we served our Master as he deserves to be served, we should never sin, but our lives would be perfect; and therefore it is our daily burden that the spots and wrinkles still will show; and this is our consolation, that he will one day present us to himself, holy and without blemish, "not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

"Oh, glorious hour, oh, blest abode;
I shall be near, and like my God.
Nor spot nor wrinkle shall remain,
His perfect image to profane."

It will be a blessed thing indeed to have attained to this, to wear the image of the heavenly, and be perfect even as our Bridegroom is perfect.

Then, remember, all the glory Christ has we shall share in. You cannot honour a warrior who returns from the wars, and say to him, "Great general, we honour your head." Oh, no; he who fought his country's battles, and won the victory, when he was honoured was altogether honoured as a man. And when the Master at the last shall have finished all his work, and, the whole battle that he undertook being finished, and the victory gained, he enters perfectly into his joy, we shall enter into the joy of our Lord. Does he sit upon a throne? He has said we shall sit upon his throne. Has he triumphed? We shall bear the palm branch, too. Whatever he has we shall share. Are we not heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ? My soul feels ready to leap right away from this body at the thought of the glory that shall be revealed in us—not in Paul and Peter only, but *in us*. Poor things, poor things, that struggle hard each day with infirmities and trials, ye shall be with him where he is, and shall behold his glory for ever. "So shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

"Since Christ and we are one,
Why should we doubt or fear?
If he in heaven hath fixed his throne,
He'll fix his members there."

In this spirit come ye to the communion table, and find your Master there. But oh, if you are not resting in him, if the blood was never upon you, you are condemned already, because you have not believed on the Son of God; and I pray that your bed may be cold and hard as a stone to you to-night, and your eyes may forget to sleep, and your heart may know no rest till you have said, "I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned." Then take with you Jesus as a mediator, and draw nigh to the throne of grace. Go, plead his blood and merits, and you shall live; and then you, too, shall be able to join with the saints who say, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Amen. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Genesis ii. 18;
Ephesians v. 22—33.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—761, 762.

I have revised this sermon at Cannes, to which place I have come for health. I am happy to inform all friends that I am already much better. The influences of a warm, sunny climate, and rest from great labour, are being blessed by infinite mercy to my restoration. I commend the work I am obliged to leave to the prayers of God's people; and I desire also to thank numerous friends for their substantial help to the College and Orphanage, so that I am not tempted to be anxious about funds for these objects at a time when ease of mind is especially desirable. With this I send most loving salutations to all my readers. May the Lord send to our beloved land a great revival of true religion. C. H. SPURGEON.