

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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THE SOUL'S MEAT AND DRINK.

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## A Sermon

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“For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.—John vi. 55.

It was our Lord Jesus Christ who uttered these words, and some of those who heard him misunderstood his meaning, for they asked, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” This is not altogether surprising, for there are still millions of persons upon the earth who will persist in understanding literally what our Lord intended to be understood spiritually. To us who know the meaning of Christ's words it seems monstrous that anyone could have supposed that Jesus meant men to eat his real, literal flesh and to drink his actual blood. I must confess that, to me, it seems an instance both of the utter depravity of human nature and of the absolute insanity to which sin has driven mankind, that there are still so many persons existing in what we call this enlightened age who actually believe that we can eat the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood. This is a cannibal notion which only needs to be mentioned to be denounced. Instead of having anything sacred about it, such teaching is utterly detestable; it is inconceivably idiotic and blasphemous. Idiocy and blasphemy seem to be blended together in it in about equal proportions. It is strange that such blessed words from such blessed lips should have been so shamefully misunderstood and misrepresented.

Beloved friends, as many of you as have been taught of God know the spiritual meaning of these words. You know that the doctrine of the incarnation of Christ is meat to your soul, and you know that the great truth of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, which is expressed by his blood, is the most nourishing cordial to your heart. You know that, in this sense, Christ's words are full

of deep spiritual teaching: "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." That word "indeed" seems to contrast this spiritual nourishment with all ordinary food and drink. The best of literal food only feeds the body for a time, for that body ultimately decays. It is not in the power of food so to repair the waste that is continually going on that the physical system shall for ever abide firm and strong. This food is meat, but it is not "meat *indeed*." There are also various kinds of drink that refresh and invigorate the body, and by means of these we are enabled to continue from day to day; but where is the water, where is the crystal fount that can give immortality, where is the juice expressed from any fruit that grows beneath the sky that can rid the body of all disease and pain, and cause it to live on without end? You all know that, among all the many kinds of literal food and drink, there is not any meat that is worthy to be called meat indeed, nor any drink that is worthy to be called drink indeed.

That word "indeed" also implies the contrast between this spiritual nourishment and all mere mental food and drink. Our soul needs food, and the proper food for it is truth, wisdom, knowledge. Solomon said, "That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good." No disciple of Christ, who has the spirit of his Master, is opposed to the spread of wisdom. The "children of light" wish to have every kind of light disseminated as widely as possible. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light," but he that doeth good loveth the light, and saith, "The more light there is, the better." But there is no mental food save that of which I am about to speak which is meat indeed and drink indeed. Paul truly says, "Knowledge puffeth up," and so it does if it is not kept under proper control. When a man has fed on the most profound knowledge, the spirit produced by such food has often been a proud and arrogant one, which has led him to rebel against the infinite wisdom of God, and set up his own opinion in opposition to the truths revealed in the Scriptures. What earthly knowledge is there that can afford suitable food to our entire manhood? Suppose I could compass the whole range of science,—if I could thread the spheres as on a string, if I could bore the rocks, and read the whole of their ancient history, if there were no secret of science left unrevealed to me,—yet, if I had an aching heart, all my knowledge would not satisfy my soul or give rest to my affections. In fact, the very acquisition of knowledge has often led to an increase of care. Solomon said, "Much study is a weariness of the flesh," and many have found it to be so. It certainly is not meat indeed or drink indeed. Poets have drunk at the Castalian fount, and their verses have astonished whole nations, yet they have gone to their graves unsatisfied and despairing. Mathematicians, with wondrous minds, have mapped out the heavens, studied the stars, laid down the laws that govern the planets, and traced the pathways of comets for thousands of years, yet their verdict has been the same as Solomon's, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

But I have to speak to you concerning knowledge which is satisfying, concerning truth which does content the spirit; and, in doing so, I must draw a clear, hard and fast line. No one knows the flavour or effect of meat and drink who has not tasted them. It is no use for me to speak to anyone about meat which he has never seen, or handled, or tasted; if he is to appreciate my testimony concerning it, he must have partaken of it; or if my testimony be concerning a certain drink, he must at least have sipped of it; otherwise, let me speak as earnestly as I may, he will be unable to comprehend what I am saying. Now, my Lord Jesus is meat indeed, but the soul must feed upon him if it is to know how he nourishes it; he is drink indeed, but unless this drink enters into the soul, it will be a stranger to the spiritual power which Jesus always imparts when he is received into the heart by faith. If you have really received Christ Jesus the Lord, if he is "in you the hope of glory," then he is the food of your soul; and you can, from your own experience, confirm his declaration, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."

I. While I am speaking, let us each one try to feed spiritually upon the two great doctrines to which the words "flesh" and "blood" may be taken to refer, namely, the incarnation of the Son of God, and his death as his people's Substitute; and, first, let me say that THESE DOCTRINES ARE MOST COMFORTING FOOD TO THE SOUL.

Where will you find any other doctrines so comforting as these? I, a sinner, have broken God's righteous law, and so offended him that I am driven from his presence, and am shut off from all true joy and peace. But, *in order to redeem man, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, himself became man.* "The Word was made flesh." Why, it makes the joy-bells ring in my heart as I tell you again the old familiar story. The angels, when they were sent to tell men that unto them was born a Saviour, proclaimed with joyous songs the glad message that God had come down to earth. What joyful news it is for you, O men and women, that God has taken humanity into union with the Deity, that the Infinite became an infant, that he who made the heavens and the earth was wrapped in swaddling clothes just as you and your own babes have been! Surely, now that God has thus become one with us, there may well be peace on earth, and good will toward men; he cannot be unwilling to bless those who have that human nature which he has himself assumed. Even as I talk of this great truth, I feel in my heart a joy that comforts me, and so Christ's flesh is meat indeed to my soul; and when I think that, in that flesh, Jesus lived here on earth for over thirty years, and knew all the weakness, and temptation, and suffering, to which that flesh is liable, when I think how he proved himself to be bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, then I understand how he sympathizes with the weak, and tempted, and suffering sons of men, and this makes the sad heart glad, and so again Christ's flesh is meat indeed. Then, beloved, when you think that he, at whose girdle hang the keys of hell and of death, once toiled, and suffered, and at last died, just as you have to toil, and suffer, and die; and when you remember that, from the heights of glory, Jesus

looks down both as the Son of God and the Son of Mary, does not this feed you with true soul-comforting food?

Remember, also, that *whatever Jesus did as man, he did as the great representative man*, who was all the while acting on behalf of his people. Adam was a representative man, but I get no food for my soul from him. He took my bread away, he took my life away, for "in Adam all died;" but when Christ came here as the Representative of his people, what did he do? He kept the law of God perfectly, and his obedience was reckoned as the obedience of all who were in him. As Adam's sin was imputed to all who were in him as their federal head, so Christ's obedience was imputed to all who were in him as their federal Head. The condemnation of our Surety and Substitute was our condemnation too; and when he was taken away, and put to death, we were crucified in him; and when he was laid in the grave, we were buried with him; and, blessed be God, when he rose from the dead, we rose with him, and we were justified by his resurrection. He could never have come out of the prison of the grave if he had not paid all his people's debts; and when he was set free, they were set free, his resurrection was the guarantee of their resurrection. Is there not most comforting food for your soul in this great truth? Is not Christ's flesh meat indeed when you look at it as the representative body of your Substitute and Surety?

Best of all, Christ has gone back to glory as the Representative of his people. He did not take his soul alone when he ascended to his Father, leaving his body in the tomb, but that very flesh which was pierced by the nails, that very flesh through which the soldier's spear went to his heart, he carried right up to the throne of God; and, in so doing, he carried us who are in him up there, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in him. What joy it gives us to remember that—

"There sitteth in our flesh,  
Upon a throne of light,  
One of a human mother born,  
In perfect Godhead bright!"

II. Changing the direction of our thought, yet still keeping to the same main track, let us turn to the second clause of the text: "My blood is drink indeed." That is to say, CHRIST'S REDEEMING SACRIFICE IS MOST SOUL-SATISFYING. It is not merely soul-comforting, but soul-satisfying.

We have stated the case hundreds of times in this place, but must state it yet again. Man had sinned, and God was willing to forgive; but the inflexible law of the universe is that sin must entail punishment, and it is so good and righteous a law that to alter it would be ruinous. Therefore punishment for sin there must be, but Jesus endured the punishment due to all his people. In order that he might be able to do so, he took upon him our flesh, and that flesh was made to bleed even unto death in the accomplishment of that purpose. We believe in the real, literal substitution of Christ in the room, and place, and stead of all whom he had covenanted to

save, and as many as believe in him may know assuredly that their sins were transferred from them, and laid upon him. Then, when their sins were laid upon Christ,—

“Jehovah bade his sword awake”—

against the Sin-bearer, and he smote Christ instead of his people, and his flowing blood brings peace and pardon to them as he dies, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring them to God. I cannot help saying that this doctrine fills my soul with an indescribable content; I am satisfied to the full when this truth enters my heart; and so, Christ's blood is drink indeed to me.

For see, beloved, God's justice is satisfied. How could it be otherwise when God himself makes the atonement? When Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made himself liable for his people's guilt, what a complete vindication of the justice of God was there! More than that, the great covenant of grace was ratified by the blood of Christ's atoning sacrifice. No testament is valid so long as the testator lives; but Jesus has died, and therefore every legacy of his love is made sure to all those to whom he has willed it. The covenant made with Adam fell through because Adam could not keep it; but the covenant made with the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, stands fast as the everlasting hills, for Christ has kept it in every particular, offering to God complete obedience, both active and passive, in his life of holiness and in his death of agony.

O then, my soul, God is satisfied, thy sin is pardoned, covenant blessings are secured to thee, so is not Christ's blood drink indeed to thee? As we think that the Son of God became the Son of Mary in order that he might die for us, that he might take our place, and die in our stead, what can we want more to chase away our fears, to fulfil our hopes, and to confirm our faith? If any of you want more than that, it is not possible for us to present it to you, or even to imagine it. What the Son of God said was finished must have been finished, and therein our souls may rest, and rest for ever.

III. But, beloved friends, we not only need spiritual food to comfort and to satisfy our souls, but we also need SPIRITUAL FOOD TO STRENGTHEN OUR SOULS, and here again Christ's flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.

How strong are they who live upon the truth of an incarnate God, and of that incarnate God dying in the room, and place, and stead of his people! What strength it gives to *faith*! I have seen weak faith, and I have seen strong faith; but I have generally found weak faith associated with dependence upon frames and feelings, and I have never known strong faith existing anywhere except in connection with Emmanuel, God with us, living and dying in our stead. I have seen poor humble men and women, who knew little more than that they were lost through sin, and that Christ had come to save them, yet they have lived and died strong in faith, giving glory to God, for their faith had been nourished upon this meat indeed and drink indeed of the incarnation and

substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ the Son of God and the Son of Mary.

And fervent *love* is produced by the same spiritual meat and drink. If Christ is to you merely some historic personage who once appeared upon the earth, and now is gone for ever, your love for him will be very faint if it exists at all; but if he is your own personal Saviour, your ever-present Friend, your living Brother, bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh, your Surety and Substitute who bore your sins in his own body on the tree, then your love goes out to him in a vehement flame. I do not wonder that Mary Magdalene was among the holy women who were last at the cross, and first at the tomb, for Christ had done so much for her that she loved him much; and in proportion as you realize what his incarnation and his death have done for you, your love will feed upon that meat indeed and drink indeed until it shall become stronger even than death itself.

This spiritual meat and drink will also make us strong for *service*. There was a man,—you will all recognize his portrait by the bare outline,—who was at first a great enemy of Christ, but who, after his conversion, lived upon the food of which I have been speaking; and you know what an untiring servant of Christ he became. He went from city to city preaching the Word. He was stoned, and left for dead; but he rose to his feet, and went on preaching. His very dreams were full of service for his Master; for, in a night vision, there stood by him a man of Macedonia, who said to him, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us,” and immediately he obeyed the Spirit’s call. The Lord blessed the Word; but his servant was arrested, beaten, and thrust into prison, yet he and his companion made the prison cell ring with their joyful songs of praise unto their God. This man preached the Word throughout a great part of the then known world. We read of him at Damascus, Jerusalem, Ephesus, Athens, Corinth, Rome, and it is probable that he even came as far as these islands of the West; and wherever he went he preached Jesus Christ and him crucified, and all the while he was sustained by the meat indeed and drink indeed of the incarnation and the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God. If I had the time, I might tell you of other great workers for the Lord Jesus Christ, whose lives were crowded with holy service, and all of whom derived their strength from this same meat indeed and drink indeed of which I have been speaking.

But, beloved, if you need further proof that the flesh of Christ is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed, let me remind you of the many who have been made strong for *suffering* through this spiritual nourishment. You are all more or less familiar with the wonderful story of the persecution of the early Christians, and of their heroic endurance even unto death; what was it that sustained them but this meat indeed and drink indeed? Then, all along the ages, and in almost all lands, there have been brave men and women, and even boys and girls, who counted not their lives dear unto them, but gladly gave them up rather than deny their Lord and Saviour. *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* has preserved the record of

many notable instances that I need not now repeat, but you will do well to keep the story in mind, and to teach it to your children, that they also may learn what suffering can be endured by those who have had such food for their souls as our text describes. No doubt there were many brave utterances like that historic saying of Latimer, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out." Surely these men had food to eat of which the poor puny professors of these days seem not to have tasted. They were made strong for suffering through partaking of this meat indeed and drink indeed; whereof, if a man eat and drink abundantly, he shall be fitted to perform such exploits as were wrought by the heroes of faith of whom Paul wrote in his Epistle to the Hebrews.

O sirs, if you want to be strong to live, or work, or suffer for Jesus, you must feed upon Jesus! It is only in the strength of this meat and this drink that one can, in these days, live an honest and upright life. It is only in the force derived from this meat and this drink that anyone can bear a bold and faithful testimony for Jesus. And, mark you, it is only by feeding upon such meat and such drink as this that one will be able to face death with an unblenching countenance, and look forward to the unseen world with an eye undimmed. Ay, I have seen weak women, with the hectic flush of consumption on their cheeks, and with the unnatural brightness which that disease imparts to the eyes, and I have heard them talk of dying as calmly as if they were speaking of going out for a day's excursion. I have even heard them singing as though their death-day had been their wedding-day, so glad were they at the prospect of soon being where the day breaks and the shadows flee away for ever. Joan of Arc was never such a heroine as these women have been, for they have vanquished even death itself, and waved the banner of the cross all through the valley of death-shade. It was this meat indeed and this drink indeed that helped them thus to die,—nay, that prevented them from dying, for to them death was but a translation from a world of mortals to a world of immortal spirits around the throne of God on high.

IV. I want now to say something that cannot often be said in a great promiscuous congregation, lest it should be misunderstood; but it is a fact that certain kinds of meat and drink produce EXHILARATION in those who partake of them, so that men become joyous and excited after they have been sitting long at a festival. There is often much evil in the excitement which results from these earthly feasts, but there is one kind of meat and drink which gives an exhilaration which is not only harmless, but is truly blessed; and that is the meat indeed and drink indeed of which I have been speaking to you. Have you experienced that exhilaration, my brother? Do you know what this holy excitement is, my sister? Have you, beloved friends, ever thought of Christ dying on the cross for you until you felt that you must sing for very joy of heart? Have you ever realized that your sins were washed right away in the Red Sea of your Saviour's blood, and that there was

not even one of them left to oppress you? Then you must have felt that Dr. Watts was not in the least exaggerating when he wrote those lines that we have often sung,—

“ Yes, we will praise thee, dearest Lord,  
Our souls are all on flame,  
Hosanna round the spacious earth,  
To thine adorèd name.

“ Angels, assist our mighty joys,  
Strike all your harps of gold ;  
But when you raise your highest notes,  
His love can ne'er be told.”

Yes, I am quite sure that you have felt so glad that you have wanted all the angels to assist your mighty joys. When you have realized all that Christ's incarnation and death have meant for you, when you have even in a measure comprehended the transcendent grace that made him stoop so low as to become near of kin to you, your heart must surely have danced at the sound of his name. I feel persuaded that there must have been times, in this Tabernacle, when you were so joyful that you could hardly remain in your seats, when you have almost wished that, like David, you might see the ark of the Lord come along, and that you might dance before the Lord even as David did. You know that there is no other joy that is even for a moment worthy to be compared with the joy which comes to us through Jesus Christ, and the man who has once had a sip from that well wants to lie down beside it, and drink it dry. He knows he can never do that, but he wishes that his soul could be so enlarged that he could take in all the love of his incarnate God, the wondrous heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of that love which must for ever surpass our knowledge. O you who want to find the highest joy that can be found on earth, here it is! Jesu's wounds are the fountains whence heavenly bliss is distilled. In Emmanuel, God with us, born at Bethlehem, and dying on Calvary,—in his incarnation and his atoning sacrifice, you will find that meat indeed and drink indeed which shall give the loftiest spiritual exhilaration to all who feed upon them.

V. Now I close my discourse by reminding you that **WHOEVER EATS THIS SPIRITUAL FOOD SHALL LIVE FOR EVER.**

Just before our Lord uttered the words of our text, he had said to the Jews, “Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” If you had lived with the children of Israel in the wilderness, and you had eaten manna as they did, you would have died as they did. If you come to the communion table, and merely eat bread, “not discerning the Lord's body,” you will die; or if you go to a so-called priest, and he gives you a “consecrated” wafer, and you eat it, you will die. But whoever spiritually feeds upon Jesus, whoever feeds his soul upon the great

central truth that God in human flesh was made the Substitute for all who believe in him, shall never die. His body may pass through the change that we call death, but his spirit shall live for ever; and, in due time, his body and soul shall be re-united, and his complete manhood shall be "for ever with the Lord."

O sinners, unless you feed upon Christ, there is nothing but death eternal before you! But if you receive him into your soul even as you receive food into your body, you shall never die, but the bliss of heaven shall be your everlasting portion. I have preached to you in very simple language, but there is in my theme a mystery that excels all the wisdom of the sages; let me try to put it before you once more before I close. It is a fact that the Word, who was God, and who made heaven and earth, and without whom was not anything made that was made,—it is a fact that this Word was made flesh, and dwelt among men. In other words, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, did come into this world, was here born of a virgin, here lived and laboured as a man, and here died for those who believe in him, "for God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. . . . He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." After Jesus had died in the room and place and stead of all who believe in him, and after he had risen from the grave as the sure sign that his redeeming work had been accomplished, and that his people were for ever free, he returned to his Father's right hand in glory; and there he sits as the Representative of all his chosen until the appointed time for him to come again to this earth, "to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." There is the gospel as Paul preached it. May the Spirit of God enable you to receive it by faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Son of Mary; and so you will find that his flesh will become to you meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed. God grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

### Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN VI. 22—59.

Verses 22—24. *The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone; (howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:;) when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.\**

\* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 947, "Seeking for Jesus."