

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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THE WITNESS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

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## A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

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“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.” I. Cor. xi. 26.

THE centre of our holy religion is the Cross. The central thought of the whole of Christianity is Christ, and the great point in Christ's history is his crucifixion. We preach Christ; but more—we preach him crucified. Beloved, this, which is the keystone or the whole arch of our religion, should be more constantly in our minds than it is. It should more frequently occupy our meditations; it should engage more incessantly our tongues; we should sing of it oftener; we should pray more in the shadow for it, and we should live more under the control of the impulses its suggests. In the cross of Christ let each one of us glory, and, like the apostle, say, “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In order to keep in our mind's eye what, alas! we so easily forget—the death of our blessed Lord—he has been pleased to institute the supper which we are about to celebrate. Beneath yon fair white linen cloth we have memorials of his passion, full of instruction to those who rightly view them. If any in this place should ask, “What mean ye by this service?” our ready answer shall be according as it is written—“For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come” (1 Cor. xi. 26). We eat bread and drink wine, not out of any foolish superstition that these can be transmuted into the very flesh and blood of Jesus Christ—a superstition which would be a disgrace to a Bushman; a superstition which *is* a disgrace to those who hold

it in this enlightened land, and not a disgrace only, but a vast sin—a black delusion which is given to them that they may believe a lie—whereby they involve themselves in the doom of perdition. We hold no such folly. Because we are rational, and because we are spiritual, both our reason and our spiritual nature revolt against anything so atrocious as to believe that the body of Christ—the absolute flesh and blood—can be eaten and drank, or that if it could be done it ought to be done, or that it could confer any spiritual benefit upon those who could perform so cannibal and revolting an act. We believe in the real presence, but not in the corporeal presence. We believe that Jesus Christ spiritually comes to us and refreshes us, and in that sense we both eat his flesh and drink his blood; but as to any such literal feast as some believe in, we reject the thought with horror and with contempt.

The great meaning of “The Lord’s Supper,” as we call it, is that we show the Lord’s death till he come. We *show it to ourselves*, and we show it, or represent it, to others—to unbelievers who may *chance to look on*. The former of these is, perhaps, the more important. In coming to eat of the bread and drink of the wine at this supper,

#### I.—WE SHOW THE LORD’S DEATH TO OURSELVES.

Not, indeed, that this is the exclusive manner of exhibiting the passion which our dear Saviour endured, or the decease which he accomplished; for there are, it must be admitted, other methods of showing the Lord’s death. *One is by this Book*, this inspired volume, which contains the record of his crucifixion—which explains it—which enforces upon men the duty of putting their trust in the merit of him who died. Wherever this Bible is opened there is a showing of Christ’s death. Why, the whole Book is full of it. There is a crimson line of atoning sacrifice running from Genesis to Revelation.

“Here I behold my Saviour’s face  
Almost in every page.”

Every distinct book of inspiration is like a mirror reflecting the image of Jesus—“as in a glass, darkly,” it is true; but still sufficiently clear even for these dim eyes of ours. All the Scriptures are the swaddling-bands of the child Christ Jesus, as said Augustine of old—If you would see Jesus, you must search for him in Holy Scripture, and, by the light of the Holy Ghost, you will not go far until you find him.

The Lord Jesus Christ’s death is also shown forth *in public ministry*. There are some who are so fond of painted windows, because, they say, they preach by painting. Brethren, we paint by preaching, that is the only difference, and to paint by preaching is an infinitely better thing than to preach by painting. All the methods that are adopted to show forth Christ’s death throughout all the world are utter vanity compared with the ministrations of

the Gospel. It is not possible for the preacher too much to magnify his office. It is God's predestinated channel of grace to the sons of men. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God"; and as we speak, God helping us, Christ is set forth, manifestly crucified, amongst you. How many in this place have seen Jesus by what they have heard spoken of him? The eye of the mind has seen him. 'Twere of little avail for the eye of sense so to do. Thousands saw Christ with their natural eyes, and perished in their sins. But to see him with the eye of the spirit, this it is that saves. The preaching of the Gospel paints Christ to the mind's eye, not to the natural eye, so it is the best way of depicting him, for it exactly meets a vision that it is intended to impress.

Still, over and above the showing of Christ's death in the Word printed and the Word preached, there comes in this emblematical supper in which we show Christ's death, after a manner I will try to explain. We show to ourselves as we come here *that Christ was really incarnate, and so could die.* My soul, as thou takest that bread into thy fingers, remember that it is a thing to be handled and to be touched—a material substance. And so, God, the infinite, took into union with himself actual flesh and blood, such as thou dost have in thine own body. A strange thing that a pure Spirit should condescend to tabernacle in flesh; and yet so it is written—"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Oh, matchless mystery! He who fills all things became an infant of a span long. He who is eternal and omnipotent became a humble working-man, putting on the garment without seam, suffering, toiling, and at last yielding up his life. As each drop of wine shall pass thy lip, and thou dost recognise it as a material substance, thou showest to thyself, O believer, that Jesus Christ became incarnate. Think thou of this. Take care that thou dost not make a God out of the manhood, nor a man out of the Godhead. Rest thou assured that as certainly as Christ was God, without diminution of his splendour, so certainly he was also man, pure man, with a manhood like thine own, even as he himself said—"Handle me and see; a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see I have." See, then, brethren, your next of kin, a sufferer like yourselves, and let the bread and wine remind you of him.

Then, next, the Supper *reminds you of your Lord's sufferings.* There is the bread broken; the wine, the juice of the grape, crushed out with pain and labour—poured out. Now, remember that Jesus Christ, though not a bone of him could be broken, was broken in spirit—"Reproach hath broken my heart; I am full of heaviness"—he poured out his soul unto death. Let the bread and the wine remind you of the bloody sweat in the garden—of the anguish unto death which he endured in dark Gethsemane, amongst the olive trees. Let them bring to your recollection, beloved in the Lord, the scourging at the hands of Pilate and of Herod. Think you see him standing patiently there, giving up his back to the smiters,

and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, hiding not his face from shame and spitting. That bread broken, and that wine poured out, should remind you of the journey along the *Via Dolorosa*, as he went fainting beneath the burden of his cross. They must remind you of the cross and the nails, and the grief of being forsaken, and the anguish of thirst, and the bitterness of scorn, and the torment of fever, and, at last, death itself. I do not say that, perhaps, you will be able to make the whole scene pass before your minds, but I bid you try to do so. Drive away every other thought, as Christ drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple. Charge your soul to stand with his Virgin Mother at the Cross-foot, and pray that his blood may fall upon you, drop by drop, that you may be so enchanted by what you see, withal so dreadful, but yet so full of bliss, that you may not dare for a moment to let a stray thought come in: this and this only, think of; think of Jesus incarnate and of Jesus suffering.

But the bread and the wine do show more than this. What do I see? Bread, the flesh; wine, the life, the blood. Flesh and blood, then, when separated, are both dead, so that the cup and the bread together distinctly signify the actual death of our Lord. There is no such thing as a Lord's Supper with the bread alone nor with the cup alone, nor with the bread and wine mingled. They must both be distinct. Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, and until the blood has been poured forth, the flesh still remains and retains its life. But put the two distinctly, and you get the idea of death as clearly as you can have it. Now, beloved, I want you to come close up to this truth, that the Lord of Glory actually died. For our Saviour there was no passing into heaven by a chariot of fire. It is not said of him, as of Enoch, that "he was not, for God took him"; but he must die. You dread death. You look forward to it frequently with trepidation. But Christ passed absolutely through it, and the human soul and the human body of our Saviour were rent from each other. He actually descended into the abodes of the dead. He bowed his head to the great enemy, and yielded up the ghost. Had he not so died, there had been no ransom paid for you; for God's law demanded a life. The sentence was, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Christ has actually died; and let this Supper bring home the thought most sweetly to yourselves that Jesus died.

We have not yet shown Christ's death wholly to ourselves. *The spreading of that bread and wine on yonder table is a showing to ourselves that God has made a provision for human wants.* A hungry man coming to that table thinks at once of eating and drinking. He perceives that if it is placed there, it is placed there for use. Bread and wine in the cupboard may be stored, but bread and wine on the table are evidently for use. Now, child of God, catch that thought and hold it. Jesus Christ has come into the world, not to withhold, but to give; not to reserve, but to distribute; not to keep to himself any good thing, but to bestow all that he hath upon his

people. Come, then, with all your great necessities; come to the Saviour, for he freely presents himself to all believers. Great sinner, do you want great pardon? Jesus will give it you. He puts on the table the cup. Do you want, Christian, great comfort? Come and take it; it is put on the table. Jesus keeps open house for all comers who come by faith to him. Hast thou the faith to come and trust him? Then all that Jesus is and has thou mayest be and have. Specially you that are his friends, you that have leaned upon his bosom, do not stint yourselves, for he doth not stint you. You are not straitened in him: if straitened at all, it is in yourselves. Jesus puts upon the table to us himself, and, being put there, it is as good as an open invitation, by a loud voice, saying, "O, ye hungry, come and feed! O, ye thirsty, come and drink!" There is nothing in Christ which he will deny to his people. Christ has nothing in heaven or on earth which he will keep back from the believer that dares to come and ask for it. Come, then; oh, come boldly! The Lord give you access unto this grace.

And do we not show the Lord's death a little further when, *after having spread the Supper, we come to eat it?* then we say to ourselves, "Just as I must eat this bread, or it will not nourish me, so must I take Jesus Christ personally, by a distinct act of faith, and take him to be mine; and as this bread, after I have taken it, incorporates itself with me, so that there shall be no distinction between this bread and my body, but it shall help to build up the structure of my body. So when I take Christ and trust him, he becomes one with me, and I become one with him, and my life is hid with him; and He saith that because he lives I shall live also." Now, is not that a wonderful lesson to teach by so simple an action? You eat, you drink, the food becomes assimilated into yourselves. You come to Jesus, you trust him, and Christ becomes one with you, and you become one with him, so that henceforth you can say, "It is no more I that live, but Christ that liveth in me"; and, as to Jesus, he calls you a member of his body; he calls you a branch from his stem; he calls you the spouse, and he himself your bridegroom. Oh, sacred union, effected by the act of reception which is the act of faith!

And now, beloved believer, as you first lived by receiving grace, you can only grow in that life by still receiving. Do not come to this table and say, "What can I bring?" No; but come and say, "What can I take away?" Do not say, "Am I worthy?" That question never ought to be asked. You are not worthy; but come, unworthy as you are, and take what Jesus has provided for unworthy sinners. "Well," says someone, "but we are to take heed lest we eat and drink, being unworthy." No, you are not; there is no such text in all the Bible. You see, you have left out a syllable. What it does say is about eating and drinking unworthily; and that is with respect to the way of eating it. If you come to this table lightly—if you come to it irreligiously, profanely—if you come as they did at Corinth, to drink merely, if you come to get money by

it, as some did in years gone by, to qualify themselves for office or to obtain charity, that would be to eat and drink unworthily; but, unworthy as you are, if your

“Hope is fixed on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness,”

then come ye hither; for, for such as you the table is spread.

And when you do come, I do pray you yet once more, *do not let unbelief keep you back from enjoying all that is to be enjoyed*. You know a very hungry man does not stand on many manners. If he is told to eat everything that is set before him, then his hunger does not permit him to stand on niceties, but he eats all he can get. And so may you: ay, and you may carry away what you will, too, with you. You may come and get a feast to-night, and the sweet remembrance of it in days to come will be permitted to you. Do believe that Christ does not refuse you anything. When you pray, do not ask as if you were getting something out of a hard-hearted being, but come to One whose delight it is to give—whose very glory it is to scatter his mercies amongst his beloved ones.

“Come, make your wants, your burdens known;  
He will present them at the throne;  
And angel-bands are waiting there,  
His messages of love to bear.”

Thus, you see, in the bread and the wine, in the bread and wine separated, in the bread broken and the wine poured out, in the two emblems put on a table, and in these two being so partaken of that they become united with the fabric of our body, we set forth the whole mystery of the death of Jesus Christ to ourselves. May the Spirit of God help us to do this truly.

Observe now that

## II.—WE ARE TO SHOW CHRIST'S DEATH TO OTHERS.

As often as we eat this bread and drink of this cup, we do this. *We show to others the fact that Jesus died.* I think historians have taken it as one of the best proofs of a fact when some rite has been instituted to commemorate it. A pillar with an inscription is not always a certain index to truth. Our own Monument, for instance, had a record on it that London was burned down by the Catholics, who had no more to do with it, certainly, than the Mohammedans had. The inscription in that case was not a record of fact; ay, and a pillar might be erected to record an event which never occurred at all. But, as a general rule, large bodies of men will not agree together to celebrate continually events which never occurred. Nobody doubts, I suppose, the siege of Londonderry, when the 'prentice boys meet every year to make a noise and disturbance. They at least bring before the historian's mind the certainty that such an event did occur; for it is still thus recorded. Now, our

Lord gave us this simple method of breaking bread and drinking wine to be our way of setting up our pillar—our mode of keeping up a great historical fact—that there was a Man who lived in Judea, who professed to be the Son of God, who was the King of the Jews, who lived a humble life and died a marvellous death. There is no fact in history so well attested as this; so that those who have given up the inspiration of Scripture have seldom touched either the life or the death of Jesus, but have conceded both to be facts. And now this very night, perhaps, in fifty thousand places, at this moment, this commemorative act of eating bread and drinking wine is about to be performed in this one country of England. Now, that is something by way of record, and by this act we help to perpetuate to all generations the fact that Jesus died.

But we do a great deal more than this to others. We assert by coming here to-night, and eating this bread and drinking of this cup, *that we believe that this man, Jesus of Nazareth, was the Son of God and the Saviour of men, and that we go in with him for everything that is involved in the story of his life and death.* That is to say, if it be a shame for Christ to die upon the Cross, we are willing to bear part of the shame. If it be thought to be foolishness to believe in a crucified man, we are fools, and come here to avow it. If it be said to be a stumbling-block to many that Jesus of Nazareth should be the Son of God, we come to declare that it is no stumbling-block to us. We accept him as divine; we trust in him as the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, when you shall take that bread you take part with Christ. You take lot with him; and, mark you, he goes up the bleak side of the hill often, and you will have to do the same, with the snow between your teeth. And he lodges often in huts and hovels; yea, he hath not where to lay his head. He hath handfuls of the world's filth thrown at him, and but little of its gold laid at his feet. He is despised and rejected of men, and if you will keep him company, you must expect to be despised, too, and to get as ill-usage as he had; for the servant is not above his Master, nor the disciple above his Lord. Whoever follows David must go to him in the wild goat-tracks of Engedi, or dwell with him in the Cave of Adullam. He that would be David's man must share David's want and David's disgrace, or else he cannot share his crown. Believers, have you counted this cost? You professors who come to this table, and who say to the onlookers, "We go with Christ; we are enlisted under his banner; we have given ourselves to him"; have we counted the cost?

"Have you counted the cost? Have you counted the cost

Ye followers of the cross?

And are you prepared for your Master's sake

To suffer all worldly loss.

"And can you endure with the virgin band,

The lowly and pure in heart,

Who whithersoever the Lamb doth lead,

From his footsteps ne'er depart?"

Oh! that, so counting the cost, you may continue with him till life's journey is over. Thus, you see, you not only assert that Christ died, but you communicants assert that he died for you, and that you are one with him, and will take shares with him when he cometh into his kingdom.

You do more even than that. *You explain the meaning of Christ's death by the mere fact of coming to this table.* "How," say you, "is that?" In eating the bread and drinking the wine, you set forth a sacrifice—a libation of blood and a slaughter of flesh; and you say to all the world, "Our trust for salvation rests in a sacrifice; we have no hope of being saved by anything that springs of ourselves; we look wholly out of self, and entirely to the sacrifice which was offered up on the Cross." While some of you sit down to the table, others of you will be onlookers; I do pray you, as you look on, if you have never known this truth before, learn it now. All your hope of ever entering heaven must lie quite out of yourselves and be concentrated in another—in God's only and own dear Son. While I am stating this fact, which is so well known to you that it sounds commonplace, I feel as if I could burst into a flood of tears, to think that it should grow so commonplace and yet be not believed. Does God become man and die, and will you not trust him? Does my God, that made the heavens and the earth, of whom I read that without him was not anything made that was made; does he become a man, and suffer that sinners might live? And is it nothing to you, is it nothing to you, and will you prefer the tawdry pleasures of this world to the solid bliss which he can give you? And will you dash yourselves upon the bosses of Jehovah's buckler, and run upon his glittering spear, and ruin yourselves for ever, rather than close in with Christ, and kiss the Son lest he be angry? I can understand why it is that you do not love my Lord, for once I was so foolish myself; but, oh! it is brutish—it is worse than that, it is devilish, to despise a dying Christ. I know not whether I have not vilified the devil in using his name in such a matter as that; for, surely, had Jesus died for devils, they would not have been such devils as men are who, hearing of a Saviour, and believing the story of his passion, yet turn a deaf ear to it, and give their souls up to Madame Wanton, or to base-born Mammon, or to some other carnal thing which will but delude and destroy them. There are some of you I shall never see again. I charge you before the Eternal God, as we shall meet at his last judgment-seat, do think of this—that if it is worth God's while to come here, and be incarnate, and so to suffer, to make atonement, it is not a thing for you to trifle with; or if you do you will find that the stone which you refused will grind you to powder in that day when, like some cliff that is loosened from its socket, long quivering there, it shall come rolling down upon the heedless traveller, to crush him and utterly destroy him. God save you, my dear hearer, stranger to me, and stranger to yourself, and stranger to my God; and though you may remain a stranger to me, yet may you begin to know something of yourself to-night, and

something of my Master, of whom I will say this one thing—If you did but know him you must love him.

“ His worth if all the nations knew,  
Sure the whole world would love Him too.”

Thus, then, do we show the fact of our participation in Christ's death, and the meaning of it.

Does not the voice of ages and of generations after generations speak to you now in the constancy and frequency of this celebration? And do you not perceive that we move forward to the boundary which shall realise the Church's hope? “ We do show the Lord's death till he come.” Then he is coming; he is coming. I know not when; no, nor knoweth the angel of God that is nearest to the Eternal Book when God unfolds the leaves. But he is coming. As when the earthquake cometh, with divers signs and prodigies that make men start, and yet they know not what it is, he cometh. As the lightning-flash that is seen from east to west, he cometh. As the thief that steals silently through the shadows of the night and robs the sleeper, so he cometh. The Man that wore the thorn-crown is coming, with a crown about his brow more glorious than all the coronets of earth. He is coming; the Son of Mary is coming, to wear no more the garment without seam, but wrapped

“ With rainbow wreath and robes of storm.”

He is coming. The Man that did hang upon a cross will sit upon the great white throne—

“ On cherub wings and wings of wind,  
Appointed Judge of all mankind.”

And you said to-night—you said it, and I heard you—that you crucified him, and you said that yours were the hands that drove the nails and made the hammer fall. You sang just now—

“ 'Tis I have thus ungrateful been.”

Now you have confessed it; you, who have trusted in him will confess it; and yet, thank God that out of a fault springs your salvation. But you who have not trusted him, what will you say to him in that day when he shall come to judge the world? You shall look on him whom you have pierced, and you shall weep and wail because of him. Oh! that you would look at his wounds now and trust him; for if you do not you shall look on them then, and you shall say, “ I made those wounds ”; and that thought will shake you as when a lion shakes his prey. That thought will melt your bones as though they were but ice in the heat of the sun, and your loins shall be loosed, and your soul shall sink in dismay. I pray you—I beseech you, by the love you bear to yourself, and to your soul that can never die—look unto Jesus and be saved. Look unto him now. You must look one day: look to-night. You must look, either with

repentance and faith, or else with terror and despair. Choose you which it shall be. Choose you now. Young men and women who have stepped in here to-night, I pray God that you may have grace to decide for Jesus now. Old men and fathers, maidens and matrons, may you have grace also to say, "I will take him, as my Saviour, not as my Judge."

"But if your ears refuse  
The language of his grace,  
And hearts grow hard like stubborn Jews,  
That unbelieving race.

"The Lord in anger drest,  
Shall lift his hand and swear,  
'You that despise my promised rest  
Shall have no portion there.'"

## Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

EZEKIEL XXXVI. 16—38.

Verses 16—20. *Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols wherewith they had polluted it: and I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them. And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, these are the people of the LORD, and are gone forth out of his land.*

All through Scripture we are told that God has great regard to the honour of his holy name. "The Lord thy God is a jealous God." And this is no small blessing to us, for it has so happened that, when there has been no other reason for mercy, God's regard to his own name has found him a reason for dealing mercifully with his unbelieving, undeserving people. See how he had scattered his chosen people; he had sent them away into captivity, justly, on account of their sins. But it came to pass that wherever they went, whether it was into Persia or Babylonia, the people said, "These are Jehovah's people; these are Jehovah's people; and they are gone forth out of his land." What was the consequence of this?

21. *But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went.*

He had pity for his own name. He had a reverence and esteem for his own renown and standing, even among these heathen nations.

22, 23. *Therefore say unto the house of Israel, thus saith the LORD GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD saith the LORD GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.*

Brethren, what must God think of a nation like to ours which has come to be called by his name, albeit it so little deserves that great honour? What, I say, must he think of the fact that if there are any vices yet unknown, white men will teach them to the heathen, and when the heathen have heard the Gospel, the great sources of doubt are the white men—Englishmen. Full often the greatest oppressors will spring of our own nation. Certainly we hold the belt for drunkenness, and where our fellow