

To Eat the Flesh and Drink the Blood of Our Lord.

A Communion Sermon by F. M. Perry. September 10, 2008.

(51) I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever, and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh. ... (53) ... Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life within yourselves. (54) He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. (55) For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. (56) He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. (57) As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me. (58) This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate, and died, he who eats this bread shall live forever. (John 6:51-58 NASB).

In these verses our Lord is speaking to us about matters which happen in the spiritual realm, the unseen realm, beyond the reach of our physical senses. So He speaks to us metaphorically, in this case, in terms of analogy, where a fleshly process is substituted for a spiritual process. Here the Lord is speaking to our souls which are part of our spiritual makeup, the spiritual souls in which our spiritual God sees us.

In analogy these verses bear witness to the cross. They point to the broken body and the shed blood as our daily and hourly food, our life-long feast, from which there comes into us the life which the Son of man, by His death, has obtained for us. That flesh is life-imparting, that blood is life-imparting; and this new life that we have is not just for once on earth, but for evermore in heavenly realms.

Reading the verses carefully from John, chapter 6, we see that our new life does not come from the incarnation, that is, not from the birth and life of the Son of God in the flesh as a man like us. And our new life does not come from our Lord's resurrection from death. We are to constantly feed, but not on the incarnation or the resurrection. We are to feed on that which lies between these two, the death, the sacrificial death of the Son of God. It is not the personality nor the life-history of the Christ of God which is the special nourishment of our souls, but the shed-blood. Now, the incarnation of our Lord in the flesh, and the resurrection of our Lord from death is certainly a part of the gospel message. But our Lord says it is on His death that we are especially to feed, and this all the days of our lives.

Almost always speaking in analogy and metaphor, Paul reminds us in his First Corinthian letter that Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. Hence we rest as Israel of old did during Passover, protected by the blood of the Passover lamb, and feeding on the flesh of that lamb, with its unleavened bread and bitter herbs. But we, as Christians are to do it always, day after day. Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). Wherever we are, let us keep it. For we carry Christ, our Passover, through life along with us, always ready, always fresh. As

did Old Testament wayfarers with girded loins and staff in hand, we move along today through our worldly wilderness, our face toward the spiritual land of promise.

Our Passover lamb is CHRIST CRUCIFIED. As such He is our protection, our pardon, our righteousness, our food, our strength, our peace. Fellowship with Him upon the cross is the secret of a blessed and holy life.*

We feed on that which has passed through the fire; on that which has come from the altar. No other food can sustain the spiritual life of a believing man. The unbroken body will not suffice; nor will the risen or glorified body avail. The broken body and shed blood of the Son of God form the victuals on which we feast; and it is under the shadow of the cross that we sit down to partake of these, and find refreshment for our daily journey, strength for our hourly warfare. His flesh is meat indeed; His blood is drink indeed. *

Therefore was it not pertinent for our Lord, knowing human weakness of memory and understanding, to say to His disciples, even as they were eating that specific first century Passover which He was to fulfill as the true Lamb, Take, eat (this bread); this is My Body. And, Drink from it (the cup), all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. (Matthew 26:26:28).

And was it not fitting that Paul, the Apostle of Christ, convey the command to us all corporately to do as the Spirit of the Lord told him. Paul said, (23) For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord in the night in which He was betrayed, took bread; (24) and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, This is My body which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me. (25) In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. (26) For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

And was it not fitting and even necessary, for our sake, for the church of our Lord in its beginning to be revealed in God's Word, as following inspired instructions under the new covenant, for a Christian to meet together with other members of Christ's Body on the first day of the week to break bread. Apparently the Lord knew that, in order for His human creation to worship Him properly in lives of constant daily memory of the death of His Son, we would need to help each other, and be helped by the Spirit, in at least a weekly memorial worship together. (Acts 20:7; Matthew 18:20).

But my words today are to remind us that the assembly of Christians on Sunday to break bread is not the essence of the Lord's plea to eat My flesh and drink My blood. No, that can only be accomplished as we perform the spiritual equivalent of living a life daily as led by His Holy Spirit. The cross on which His body was broken and His blood was shed was really our cross. We must remember His death by taking up our cross in daily life and following Him. (Luke 9:23).

With Love, F. M. Perry.

* Paragraphs quoted from a sermon by Horatius Bonnar, 1808 - 1889.