

THE MESSAGE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

John 6:47-59

Intro: (Read the text, and pray.)

I doubt if there is any passage in the NT or the OT that is more closely connected with the Lord's Supper than this passage in John 6. Obviously the Lord had not introduced the Lord's Supper at the time when He spoke these words, but He certainly had it in mind. He was not speaking of the Lord's Supper here, or His words would have meant that only by partaking of the Lord's Supper can anyone be saved. When the Lord originated the Lord's Supper, He did not transform the bread and the wine into His own flesh and blood, but He was establishing a Supper which would bring to the minds of His people the one and only way of salvation. In verse 47 of John 6 the Lord Made it perfectly clear that having eternal life was a matter of faith alone. (Read.)

Here in John 6 we have the real truth of salvation; in the Lord's Supper we have the commemoration, or the remembrance, of that truth. No one can be truly saved who does not eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood. Our task in approaching a passage like this is to try to learn what the Lord meant by what He said.

Let us begin by thinking about the word:

I. "FLESH."

This word appears six times in our text. Cf. vv. 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, and 56. Five of these were spoken by the Lord, and one (v. 52) by the Jews. With its close relationship to "my blood" in verses 53, 54, 55, and 56, we can only come to one conclusion: it refers to the Lord's body, His physical body.

Note also that the title that the Lord used for Himself in this passage is found in verse 53: "the Son of man." In addition to being a Messianic title, this title when compared with the title, "the Son of God," places special emphasis upon *the humanity of our Lord*.

After our Lord's resurrection, when He was seeking to convince His disciples that He was truly a Man, the same Man that He had been before His crucifixion, and not just a spirit, He said to them,
Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and

see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have (Luke 24:39).

Therefore, all of the evidence points to the fact that when the Lord spoke of His flesh, He was speaking of His body, His true humanity. And we can add, His *perfect* humanity.

Now, as we have seen, the Lord coupled His references to His flesh, with the word "blood." What did He mean by "my blood"?

II. "BLOOD."

We know that it was our Lord's purpose in becoming a man that He should die, die to provide salvation for sinners. His blood was shed. He gave His life. The wages of sin is death, and the Lord died, not because He was a sinner and deserved to die, but because He was taking your place and mine that we might "not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

The "blood" takes us to Calvary where our Lord suffered and died, shedding His precious blood.

So when we think of His flesh and His blood, we have the sacrifice offered by the Son of man Who took our sins upon Himself, and by His death offered a perfect, a complete sacrifice, which has perfectly satisfied God because it is sufficient for every sinner who ever has been saved, or who ever will be saved!

But now we come to the part of this passage which has caused so many different interpretations to be given, and yet which seems perfectly clear from what our Lord said about it. I refer to:

III. EATING CHRIST'S FLESH AND DRINKING HIS BLOOD.

This is the part of the Lord's teaching that caused "many ... of His disciples" to say, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" (John 6:60).

However, it may also have been what the Lord had to say about salvation in general. And I am thinking here about verse 53 – that there is no way to have eternal life except by eating the Lord's flesh, and drinking His blood. The Jews did not really want to think that the Lord had anything to do with salvation. And so to limit salvation to Christ to them was offensive and intolerable. It was tough and severe. This is what they meant by saying that it was "a hard saying."

You can see that same limited teaching about salvation in verse 47. Note how the Lord emphasized the truthfulness of what He was saying by the words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Neither here, nor on any other occasion, did the Lord leave open the possibility that eternal life could be obtained except through faith in Himself. "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47b). And just as there were in those days "many" even among those who professed to be His disciples, who could not accept this teaching, we have the same situation today. People would rather believe that you can get to heaven in many different ways, and not just through Christ. But this is one subject about which no one can afford to be wrong, and the only place we can go to get the real truth about salvation is the Bible, this marvelous Book which God Himself has given to us by the Holy Spirit.

But now let us go back to think of what it means that we need to eat the flesh of the Son of man, and to drink His blood.

I learned many years ago that things equal to the same thing, are equal to each other. And that is very evident here. Let me show you from the text what I mean.

I pointed out a moment ago that the Lord said in verse 47, "He that believeth in Me hath everlasting life." When we get down to verse 54 we read that the Lord said this: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life." In the first case the Lord said that we have eternal life by believing in Him, and in the second case He said that we have it by eating His flesh and drinking His blood. If you are bothered because it says "everlasting life" in verse 47, and "eternal life" in verse 54, let me assure you that they are both the translation of the same two Greek words. So there is no difference there.

So, if our Lord Who taught only one way of salvation, one way to have everlasting, or eternal life, then for Him to say that it is by believing in Him in one instance, and then by eating His flesh and drinking His blood in a second instance, it must mean that eating our Lord's flesh and drinking His blood is the same as believing. What eating His flesh and drinking His blood do, is to explain more in detail what it means to believe. And those expressions also indicate *what* we must believe if we are to be saved.

The Lord Jesus Christ is "the living Bread" Who came down from heaven. We see this in verse 51. And there the Lord said, "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give us my flesh,

which I will give for the life of the world." So in these figures of speech we have evidence of the Deity of our Lord – He came down from heaven. And we have evidence of the Humanity of our Lord. He came in human flesh. He was born of the virgin Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit. So we can speak of His flesh, His humanity. And His blood, of course, speaks of His death.

So to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ means that you believe that He is "the Bread of life" Who came down from heaven, the divine Son of God Who became a Man, and that as the God-Man He shed His precious blood to save us from our sins.

But let us follow on with the teaching. We "eat" Him, and "drink" His blood. That is, we take Him into our very beings. He becomes our life, our eternal life. And this is why the Lord Jesus said,

56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me (John 6:56-57).

We all understand what it means to eat and drink food. That is the way our lives are sustained. The Lord was speaking of making Christ and all that is taught about Him in the Scriptures, our very life. Christ actually comes to live in the person who truly believes in Him. He becomes our life, our eternal life. And we will live eternally by Him.

But let me point out two other truths in this eating and drinking which are very important for us to understand if we want to know what it means to become a Christian, a child of God.

I would remind you that eating and drinking is a very personal matter. Take, for example, what we do every time we sit down at our tables to have a meal. We all eat for ourselves, and we all drink for ourselves. What I eat doesn't benefit Lucille at all, and what she eats doesn't benefit me. The same is true of drinking. If she is thirsty, she doesn't ask me to take a drink of water for her; she needs to drink water to quench her own thirst. We all understand this, don't we?

Well, the same is true about our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. You and I can't believe for each other. It is absolutely necessary for everyone who intends to be saved to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for himself, or herself. Lucille's faith does not make me a Christian. Neither one of us

has been able to trust Christ for any of our children. One by one God has brought them to the place, as He did us, where by faith we have eaten the flesh of the Son of man, and have drunk His blood. We believe in the incarnate Son of God, and believe that His blood is sufficient for the eternal salvation of our souls – and we all have to come to Christ, trusting Him, one by one. You can't believe for me; I can't believe for you. Each of us is to eat and drink of our Lord Jesus Christ, and He becomes our life.

But the last point that I want to make is this.

You all know that we observe the Lord's Supper over and over again where in eating the bread and drinking from the cup symbolically we are doing that which pictures our salvation. The bread which we eat tonight becomes a part of us, and the same is true of the juice which we drink. But why do we do this over and over, month after month, year in and year out?

Bishop Ryle, in his commentary on the Gospel of John, said that our Lord used two words for eat in this passage. One word is in verse 53; the other is found in verses 54, 56, 57, and 58. The word in verse 53 is an aorist subjunctive of the Greek verb, ἐσθίω; the word in the other verses is a present participle from the Greek verb, τρώγω. Commentators have not really discovered the reason for the change in verbs, but one thing is clear from the four times that τρώγω is used, and that is that the present tense suggests *a continuous eating*. This also may find some added support in the fact that τρώγω is a word that is commonly used of a wild animal eating its prey continually, through the day and even into the night. To this Bishop Ryle added, "I venture to suggest that the word is purposely used, in order to show that our Lord meant the habit of continually feeding on Him [Christ] all day long by faith" (Vol. I, pp. 405-4-6).

And so both in the verb that is used as well as in the tense which our Lord employed, we have a basis for saying that one reason we observe the Lord's Supper over and over is to remind us of the need that we have to be continually feeding about our Lord – learning of Him, enjoying fellowship with Him, but always rejoicing in the great truth that by His coming into the world and by the shedding of His blood on the Cross, He has forever "put away" our "sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9:26)

Concl: As we come to the Lord's Table tonight we remember the Lord and His death in the symbols of bread and wine. But let us pray that in our hearts tonight and in every coming day we will be feeding on Christ.