

THE LORD'S SUPPER, SIMPLE BUT SUBLIME!

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

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“This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.”—[1 Cor. 11:25, 26.](#)*

IT would be a waste of time, and would tend to mar our fellowship with Christ, were I to attempt an enumeration of the errors and misapprehensions into which men have fallen concerning the object of the Lord's supper. There are some communities of men among us—and they seem to be multiplying,—who turn the communion table into an altar, and convert the bread and wine, which are but a memorial, into the semblance of a sacrifice. I will only say, into their secret may we never enter, and with their confederacy may we never be united; for their table is the table of idolatry, and their altar is little better than a sacrifice unto devils. Such offerings cannot be acceptable unto God, for those who observe them turn aside altogether from the simplicity of the truth unto the cabalistic devices of Antichrist.

This simple feast of the Lord's supper, consisting of the breaking and eating of bread, and the pouring forth and drinking of wine, has two objects upon its very surface. It is intended *as a memorial of Christ, and it*

is intended as a showing or a manifestation of our faith in Christ, and of Christ's death, to others. These are the two objects: "This do ye in remembrance of me;" and "Thus ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

I. First, then, WE VIEW THE SUPPER OF OUR LORD AS BEING A MEMORIAL OF HIM; and as such, *it is simple, and very significant.*

How plainly it sets forth Christ's incarnation. We take the bread. That bread, upon which we feed, and which becomes assimilated with our flesh, is the type of the incarnation of the Saviour, who veiled his glory in our human clay. The same bread broken becomes the type of that body of the Saviour rent and torn with anguish. We have there the nails, the scourge, the cross, all set forth by that simple act of breaking the bread. And when the wine is poured out, there is no mystification, but rather the disclosure of a mystery. It represents the blood of him who took blood in order that he might become one blood with us, his incarnate people; and who, "being found in fashion as a man," "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." So that, just as the wine is pressed from the cluster, and is poured forth into the cup, so was his blood pressed from him in the winepress of divine wrath, and poured forth that he might make atonement for the sin of men. A child, standing by the communion table, and asking the question of his father, "What meanest thou by this ordinance?" might very soon be told, "My child, we break this bread to show how Jesus Christ's body suffered; and we pour out this wine in token that Jesus Christ poured forth his heart's blood for the sins of men." It is marvellous that men should have added so many things of their own invention to screen and veil this very simple, and, therefore, very sublime ordinance. Brethren, let us come to those two symbols, and here discern Christ's body broken for our sin, and view his blood streaming forth for our redemption.

The type, however, is suggestive, because it not only sets forth the

suffering of Christ, but also the result of that suffering. It pictures the end as well as the means; that is to say, when I take that bread, and eat it, and take that cup, and drink from it, I bring to remembrance,—to my own remembrance, and the remembrance of those round about me,—not merely the fact that Christ suffered, but that he suffered for me, and that I had an interest in him. Believe me, beloved, this truth is so simple, that, while I speak, I can half fancy some of you saying, “Why does he not tell us something new?” But let me say to you, it is always a new truth, and there is no truth which the Christian heart more readily forgets. Oh, that I could always feel that he loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*! I know he did; it is long since I had a doubt about it, but I do not always remember it. Going abroad into the world, how apt we are to let the remembrance of the Saviour’s love slip! The love of wife and husband follows us like our own shadow; the love of our dear child seems to encompass us like the atmosphere in which we live; but Jesus Christ is not visibly here, and therefore the remembrance of him requires spirituality of mind, and we are carnal,—too often but babes in grace, and so we forget his sufferings; and, worse still, we forget our interest in them. Oh, that I could have the cross painted on my eyeballs, that I could not see anything except through the medium of my Saviour’s passion! O Jesus, set thyself as a seal upon my hand, and as a signet on mine arm, and let me wear the pledge for ever where it is conspicuous before my soul’s eye! Happy is that Christian who can say, “I scarcely need that memorial.” But I am not such an one; and I fear me, my brethren, that the most of us need to be reminded by that bread and wine that Jesus died; and need to be reminded, by the eating and drinking of the same, that he died *for us*.

I do not want to say a word to-night that shall have any oratory in it,—any elocutionary display about it. I want to speak so plainly, that

those of you who are not Christians will say that it was a dry and dull sermon. I shall not care what you say, and what you feel, if I can get each believer here just to think over this thought, and to remember it,—“The Lord of glory loved *me*, and gave himself *for me*. That head which now is crowned with glory was once crowned with thorns,—and crowned with thorns *for me*. He whom all heaven adores, who sits upon the loftiest throne in heaven, once did hang upon the cross, in agony extreme, *for me*,—for me.” I know you are apt to think that he died for so many that he had not a special end to serve in redeeming you; but it has been very beautifully said that, as the love of Christ is infinite, if you divide the infinite by any number you please, (I do not care what the divisor is, whether it is ten, or whether it is twenty millions,) the quotient is infinite; and so, if the love of Jesus Christ, infinite as it is, can be supposed to be divided among us, we should each one of us have an infinite love. It is our arithmetic that teaches us this; but, oh! if we do but know by experience the infinite depth, the wonderful abyss of the love of Jesus to each one of us, our souls will be comforted, and rejoice with joy unspeakable. The sign, then, is significant.

But, in the next place, it is worthy of notice *that the memorial which we are about to celebrate to-night is a joint one*. There is something painful, but pleasing, when the father dies, for the children to come together at the funeral, and to go together to his grave. Many family heartburnings have been healed when the various members of the family have joined in a memorial to their father. The poor man’s grave, especially, has much charm in it to me. There come the sons and daughters, and club together their shillings to buy the grave and to buy the coffin. Often, over the rich man’s grave, there is a squabble as to who shall share his wealth; but there is not any such quarrel in this case. The man has died penniless, and John, and Mary, and Thomas, all come; and they all see who can do

the most in providing the patriarch's grave; and if there be a tombstone, it is not one that pays for it, but they all put their money together, so that father's memorial may be shared in by them all. How I like that thought! So, in this ordinance, "we being many are one bread," and we being many are one cup. Brethren, I cannot do without you. If I want to celebrate the Lord's death, I cannot go into my chamber, and take the piece of bread and the cup, and celebrate the ordinance alone; I must have you with me, I cannot do without you. And you, the most spiritually-minded of you, if you shut yourselves up in a cell, and try to play the monk and the super-excellent, cannot keep this ordinance. You must have fellowship with other believers, you must come down among the saints, for our Saviour has given us this memorial which cannot be celebrated except jointly, by the whole of us together. You Christians must come together to break this bread, and to drink of this cup. "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." Did the Master foresee that we should be so apt to split up into sections? Did he know that we should be so apt to be individualized till we forgot to bear one another's burdens? And did he, therefore, while he made baptism the personal, solitary confession of faith, make this communion to be a united joint memorial in order that we might be compelled to come together,—might by sweet constraint be driven, to meet in the same place with one accord, or else be unable to make a memorial of his death?

It is a joint memorial. You have thought that over. Well, now, let us try and link hearts together. Are there any differences between us to-night? I am not conscious, my beloved, of any difference with any one of you. If I were, I would seek grace to shake it off; and if you to-night are conscious of anything against any brother with whom you will commune at the table, I pray you now to put it all away before you come

hither. Remember that you must eat and drink jointly with that very friend with whom you are offended now, and therefore make up the offence, and so come together. God has forgiven you so much that you may well forgive your brother this little, supposing him to have offended you. Come, then, together, beloved; together let us keep the feast.

At the same time, I must not forget to remind you that, *while a united memorial, it is most distinctly a personal one*. There can be no Lord's supper, though we all meet, unless every man puts the bread into his mouth, and unless each one of us himself drinks the wine. That cannot be done as a joint act. The bread is passed round, and there must be a distinct reception on the part of every person here. So let us not lose ourselves in the crowd. We are drops in one great sea; but, still, we must remember that we are drops; and, as no drop of the sea is without its salt, so let no one among us be without the salting influence of true communion with Jesus. Dear friend, I cannot commune for you, and you cannot commune for me. If you are all happy, I shall be glad, but it will be little benefit to me unless I can see the Saviour too, and so will it be with each one of you. Therefore let me pray you to cry unto God to give you now personally to remember the Lord Jesus Christ,—his love for you, his death for you, his rising for you. "He loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*;" let that thought be uppermost in your mind just now.

Yet further, I must not fail to remind you that, *as a memorial of Christ, while it is very solemn, it is singularly happy*. Christ has ordained, as a memorial of his death, what? Why, a feast; not a funeral, not a meeting together to sing dirges over his mangled body, or to go to a grave to weep there. That might have been a memorial, but we have a better one; we have a happy one. It is very significant that, after supper, they sang a hymn. Singing *then*? Oh, yes, singing! Joy becomes a feast, and joy is to

attend our recollection of the woes of Jesus. The position which we ought to occupy at the Lord's table suggests also that Christ meant us to be happy. Did he ordain that we should kneel? No, there is not a hint of it. Did he intend us to stand? There is not a syllable about it. How was the Lord's supper originally received? The guests reclined around the table, leaning their heads in each other's bosoms. It was the easy posture of the ordinary feaster in Oriental nations. The most proper posture for us, seeing that we could not well lie along, is to sit in the easiest posture conceivable. Choose for yourselves; never mind what people say about reverence; familiarity with Jesus is the highest reverence. Put your body at the communion table into the easiest possible position in which you can rest, and you have then reached Christ's ideal. It is a feast where you are to be perfectly at ease, in contrast, mark you, with the passover. There they stood, with their loins girt about, with their hats on, and with their staves in their hands, and they ate like men in haste, who had to go through the wilderness. Now, we have gone through the wilderness. We who have believed have entered into rest; our passover has been eaten. We fear not the destroying angel; he has passed over us. We are out of Egypt, we have entered into Canaan, and though the Canaanite is still in the land, we are driving him out. We are not now keeping the passover with haste, and hurry, and fear, and confusion; it is the Lord's supper of rest, and joy, and peace, for, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is a happy memorial. Joy becomes the face of every one who shall come to the table to-night, or at any other time.

Well now, brethren, if to remember Christ be the object of the Lord's supper, then you will not have come here to any purpose unless you remember him. So I pray you to put away every other thought. Have you doctrinal difficulties? Leave them, till tomorrow. Have you a sick

child, or does business go amiss? Well, you will not relieve your cares by violating this sacred hour. Let these burdens be cast on him who careth for you. One thing you have to do with, it is Jesus Christ crucified,—crucified for you, received by you. Now blot out the other stars, and let one star alone shine in the sky,—the Star of Bethlehem. Bid farewell now to every love but the love of Jesus, and to every fellowship but fellowship with him. Ask the Lord to take your heart as an arrow, and fit it to his bow, and shoot it right up to where Christ is in heaven. “Set your affection on things above.” Many people misquote that, “Set your *affections*.” Paul wrote no such thing! “Set your affection”—tie your affections into one bundle, and make them one affection, and then set it upon things above. Let your whole heart, He in the bosom of the Saviour. I pray the Master that we may not one of us hold back; not even you, Mrs. Much-afraid; nor you, Little-faith; and you, Ready-to-halt, may you forget your crutches, and may you now remember only him who is the All-in-all of both the strong and the weak.

“The strong, the feeble, and the weak,
Are one in Jesus now;” —

and let them know it as they sit here, and remember him.

II. The second object of this supper of communion is THE SHOWING OF CHRIST’S DEATH “TILL HE COME.”

“Till he come.” I must not say anything about that, except that he will come, and I think that ought to be enough for Christians. To my great sorrow, I had sent to me, this last week, two or three copies of a tract purporting, according to the title-page, to have been written by myself, prophesying the coming of the Lord in the year 1866. Now, you may expect to hear of me being in Bedlam whenever, by my tongue or my pen, I give countenance to such rubbish. The Lord may come in 1866,

and I shall be glad to see him; but I do not believe he will; and one reason why I don't believe he will, I have told to you before: it is because all these false twopenny-halfpenny prophets say that he will. If they said he would not, I should begin to think he would; but inasmuch as they are all crying as one man that he will come in 1866, or 1867, I am inclined to think he will not come at any such time. It seems to me that there are a very great many prophecies which must be fulfilled before the coming of Christ, which will not be fulfilled in the next twelve months; and I prefer, beloved, to stand in the position of a man who knows neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of man cometh; always looking for his appearing, but never interfering with those dates and figures, which seem to me to be proper amusement for young ladies who have nothing to do, and who take to them instead of reading novels, and for certain divines who have exhausted their stock of knowledge about sound doctrine, and therefore make up, and gain a little ephemeral popularity by shuffling texts of Scripture as the Norwood gipsies shuffled cards in days gone by. Leave the *prophets* to divide the *profits* which they get from simpletons; and as for you, watch for Christ's coming, whether it shall be to-day, or to-morrow, and set no limits, and no dates, and no times. Only work while it is called to-day; work so that, when he cometh, he may find you, as faithful servants, ready to come in to the wedding with him. "Till he come," then, the Lord's supper is to be a showing forth of his death.

Let us just notice how we show it forth.

I think *we show it to ourselves*. The Lord's supper may be celebrated without any spectators. It should be in public where it can be; but if there are none to look on, it may be otherwise. In Venice, in Milan, in Paris, and in other cities, where Romanism prevails, five or six of us have met together in our room at our hotel, and we have had the true

Lord's supper there, though there were none to look on; and probably if there had been, in some cities where we have partaken of it, we might have been amenable to the law. 'Tis a showing forth of Christ's death to ourselves. We see the bread broken, and see the wine poured out, and we ourselves see here, in symbol, Christ crucified; and we see as before our eyes, when we eat and drink, our interest in the sacrifice offered upon Calvary.

But next, *we show it to God*. We do, in effect, say before the all-witnessing Jehovah, "Great God, we break this bread in thine august presence in token that we believe in thy dear Son; and we drink this wine here before thee, thou Searcher of hearts, solemnly to say unto thee again, 'We are thine, bought with Jesu's blood, and washed clean in it.'" It is a showing of Christ's death to God.

Moreover, *it is a showing of it to our fellow-Christians*. We say to those who sit with us, "Come brethren and sisters, let us join together; we join with you, do you join with us. We say to you, 'We love him;' and you say the same to us. Together we clasp hands, and renew our Christian fellowship with one another, through renewing our fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ. We do, as it were, teach one another, and admonish one another, and comfort one another, when we thus show forth the Lord's death.

But besides showing forth Christ's death to ourselves, to our God, and to our fellow-Christians, *we also show it to the world*. We do, in effect, say to the world, "Here we show that we believe in him whom you crucified. He who went without the camp, the Man of Nazareth, despised and rejected of men, is our Master. You may trust in your philosophies; we trust in him. You may rely upon your own merits, sacrifices, and performances; but, as for us, his flesh and his blood are our dependence. As we eat this bread, and drink of this cup, Christ Jesus is set forth to you

as being All-in-all to us,—the bread which sustains our spiritual life, and the wine which gives us joy and sacred exhilaration and delight.”

And then, in addition to saying this to the world, *we also say it to sinners*, who may happen to be present, and to whom it may be blessed. How often within these walls has God blessed the breaking of bread to the conversion of souls! Let me refresh the memories of such. Some of you had been looking on from these galleries; you dared not come down with the people of God, but you did not like to go away; and so you sat, and you looked on, and your mouths were watering, not for the bread and wine, but for Christ. You wanted him, and gradually you were like the robins in the cold wintry days. You first, as it were, tapped at the church’s window-pane very gently, and you were afraid, so you stepped back again; but all the world was cold, and there was not a crumb for you anywhere else. Then you saw the open window of a gracious promise, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;” and, pressed by absolute necessity, you came to Jesus. You came into the family circle of Jesus Christ’s people, and you feasted, and you are glad to-night.

Well, dear friends, as we come together at the table, we will be recollecting any among the on-lookers who are not yet brought to Christ; we will think of them, and we will breathe this prayer, “Lord, save them! As we show forth Christ, help them to see him. May they say, ‘Yes, his body was broken for sinners, his blood was poured out for sinners; so we will trust him.’” And if they trust him, they shall be saved.

Well, now, may we accomplish these two designs, to remember Christ, and to show his death. We can only do it by his Spirit. Let us, with bowed head, ask for that Spirit; let us seek that we may worship Christ in spirit and in truth while we receive the outward symbols of his suffering.