

**Andrew Murray:**

"Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. I-He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him"-John vi. 5 35 6.

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?"-I Cor. x. 16.

The drinking of the blood of the Lord Jesus is the subject brought before us in these words. Just as water has a twofold effect, so is it also with this holy blood.

When water is used for washing it cleanses, but if we drink it we are refreshed and revived. He who desires to know the full power of the blood of Jesus must be taught by Him what the blessing of drinking the blood is. Everyone knows the difference there is between washing and drinking. Necessary and Pleasant as it is to use water for cleansing, it is much more necessary and reviving to drink it. Without its cleansing it is not possible to live as we ought; but without drinking we cannot live at all. It is only by drinking that we enjoy the full benefit of its power to sustain life.

Without drinking the blood of the Son of God-- is without the most hearty appropriation of it--- life cannot be obtained.

To many there is something unpleasant in the phrase "drinking the blood of the Son of man," but it was still more disagreeable to the Jews, for the use of blood was forbidden by the law of Moses, under severe penalties. When Jesus spoke of "drinking his blood," it naturally annoyed them-but it was an unspeakable offence to their religious feelings. Our Lord, we may be sure, would not have used the phrase, had He been able otherwise to make plain to them, and to us, the deepest and most glorious truths concerning salvation by the blood.

In seeking to become partakers of the salvation here spoken of, as "DRINKING THE BLOOD OF OUR LORD" let us endeavour to understand:-

I. WHAT THE BLESSING IS, WHICH IS DESCRIBED AS. "DRINKING THE BLOOD."

II. HOW THIS BLESSING IS WROUGHT OUT IN US.

III. WHAT SHOULD BE OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS IT.

I. WHAT THE BLESSING IS WHICH IS DESCRIBED AS "DRINKING THE BLOOD."

We saw just now that drinking expresses a much more intimate connection with water than washing, and hence produces a more powerful effect. There is a blessing in the fellowship with the blood of Jesus which goes much farther than CLEANSING, or SANCTIFICATION; or rather we are enabled to see how far reaching is the influence of the blessing indicated by this phrase.

Not only must the blood do something FOR us, by placing us in a new relationship to God; but it must do something IN us, entirely renewing us within. It is to this that the words of the Lord Jesus draw our attention when He says: "Unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Our Lord distinguishes two kinds of life. The Jews, there, in His presence, had a natural life of body and soul. Many among them were devout, well intentioned men, but He said they had no life in them unless they "ate his flesh and drank his blood." They needed another life, a new, a heavenly life, which He possessed and which He could impart. All creature life must obtain nourishment outside of itself. The natural life was naturally nourished, by bread and water. The heavenly life must be nourished by heavenly food and drink, by Jesus Himself. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Nothing less must become ours, than His life the life that He, as Son of man, lived on earth.

Our Lord emphasised this still more strongly in words which follow, in which He again explained what the nature of that life is: "Whoso eateth my flesh and DRINKETH MY BLOOD hath eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day." Eternal life is the life of God. Our Lord came to earth, in the first place, to reveal that eternal life in the flesh and then to communicate it to us who are in the flesh. In Him we see the eternal life dwelling in its divine power, in a body of flesh; which was taken up into heaven. He tells us that those who eat His flesh and

drink His blood, who partake of His body as their sustenance, will experience also in their own bodies the power of eternal life. "I will raise him up at the last day." The marvel of the eternal life in Christ is that it was eternal life in a human body. We must be partakers of that body, not less than in the activities of His Spirit, then our body, also, possessing that life, will one day be raised from the dead.

Our Lord said: "My flesh is meat indeed and MY BLOOD is drink indeed." The word translated "indeed" here is the same as that He used when He spoke His parable of the True Vine, "I am the true (the indeed) vine," thus indicating the difference; between what was only a symbol and what is actual truth. Earthly food is no REAL food, for it imparts no real life. The one true food is the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ which imparts and sustains life and that in no shadowy or merely symbolical manner. No, this word so frequently repeated, indicates that in a full and real sense the flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus are the food by which eternal life is nourished and sustained in us := ` My flesh is meat INDEED, and my blood is drink INDEED."

In order to point out the reality and power of this food our Lord added:-"He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him." Nourishment by His flesh and blood effects the most perfect union with Him. This is the reason that His flesh and blood have such power of eternal life. Our Lord declares here, that those who believe in Him are to experience not only certain influences from Him in their hearts, but are to be brought into the most close and abiding union with Him. "HE that DRINKETH MY BLOOD DWELLETH IN ME AND I IN HIM."

This then is the blessing of drinking the blood of the Son of man-becoming one with Him : becoming a partaker of the divine nature in Him. How real this union is may be seen from the words which follow :-"As I live by the Father, so he that eateth me even he shall live by me." Nothing save the union which exists between our Lord and the Father, can serve as a type of our union with Him. Just as in the invisible, divine nature, the two Persons are truly one, so man becomes one with Jesus; the union is just as real as that in the divine nature, only with this difference, that as human nature cannot exist apart from the body, this union includes the body also.

Our Lord "prepared for himself" a body into which He took up a human body. This body became by the body and blood of Jesus a sharer in eternal life, in the life of our Lord Himself. Those who desire to receive fulness of this blessing must be careful to enjoy all that the Scripture offers them in the holy, mysterious: expression "to drink the blood of Christ."

We shall now try to understand:

**II. HOW THIS BLESSING IS WROUGHT OUT IN US: or what the "drinking of the blood of Jesus" really is.**

The first idea that here presents itself is that "drinking" indicates the deep, true appropriation in our spirit, by faith, of all we understand concerning the power of the blood.

We speak sometimes of "drinking in" the words of a speaker, when we heartily give ourselves up to listen and receive them. So when the heart of anyone is filled with a sense of the preciousness and power of the blood; when he with real joy, is lost in the contemplation of it; when he, with wholehearted faith, takes it for himself, and seeks to be convinced in his inner being of the life-giving power of that blood ; then it may be rightly said that he "drinks the blood of Jesus." All that faith enables him to see of REDEMPTION, of CLEANSING, of SANCTIFICATION by the blood he absorbs into the depths of his soul.

There is a deep truth in this representation, and it gives us a very glorious demonstration of the way in which the full blessing by the blood may be obtained. And yet it is certain that our Lord intended something more than this by so repeatedly making use of the expression about "eating his flesh and drinking his blood." What this further truth is becomes clear by his institution of THE LORD'S SUPPER. For, although our Saviour did not actually deal with that Supper when He taught in Capernaum, yet He spoke on the subject of which later on The Supper was made the visible confirmation. In the Reformed Churches there are two aspects of viewing the Holy Supper. According to one which is called after the name of the Reformer Zwingli, the bread and wine in the Supper are merely tokens, or representations of a spiritual truth, to teach us that JUST AS, AND AS SURE AS, bread and wine when eaten or drunk, nourish and revive, so surely-and even more surely-the body and blood recognised and appropriated by faith, nourish and quicken the soul.

According to the other view which bears the name of Calvin, there is something more than this in the eating of the Supper. He teaches that in a hidden and incomprehensible way, but yet really, we, through the Holy Spirit, become so nourished by the body and blood of Jesus in heaven, that even our body, through the power of His

body, becomes a partaker in the power of eternal life. Hence He connects the resurrection of the body with the eating of Christ's body in the Supper. He writes thus:-"The bodily presence which the Sacrament demands is such, and exercises such a power here (in the Supper) that it becomes not only the undoubted assurance in our spirit of eternal life, but also assures the immortality of the flesh. If anyone asks me how this can be, I am not ashamed to acknowledge that it is a mystery too high for my spirit to comprehend, or my words to express. I feel it more than I can understand it."

"It may seem incredible indeed that the flesh of Christ should reach us from such immense local distance so as to become our food. But we must remember how far the power of the Holy Spirit transcends all our senses. Let faith then embrace what the understanding cannot grasp, namely :-The sacred communication of His flesh and blood by which Christ transfuses His life into us, just as if it penetrated our bones and marrow."

The communion of the flesh and blood of Christ is necessary for all who desire to inherit eternal life. The Apostle says:-" The Church . . . is his body " (Eph. i. 23) ; " He is the head from whom the whole body fitly joined together maketh increase of the body " (Eph. iv. 15, 16). Our bodies are members of Christ (z Cor. vi. 15, x6). We see that all this cannot take place if He is not attached to us in body and spirit. The Apostle again makes use of a glorious expression, " We are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones." Then He cries out, " The mystery is great." It would therefore be folly not to recognise the communion of believers in the body and blood of the Lord; a communion which the Apostle esteemed so great that he wondered at it, rather than explained it.

There is something more in the Supper than simply the believer appropriating the redemptive work of Christ. This is made clear in the Heidelberg catechism in Question 76 : " What is it then to eat the crucified body of Christ and to drink His shed blood? " The answer is, " It is not only to embrace with a believing heart all the sufferings and death of Christ, and thereby to receive pardon of sin and eternal life; but, also, besides that, to become more and more united to His sacred body, by the Holy Spirit who dwells at once both in Christ and in us ; so that we, though Christ is in heaven and we on earth, are, notwithstanding, flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bones ; and we live and are governed for ever by one Spirit."

The thoughts that are expressed in this teaching are in entire agreement with Scripture.

In the creation of man, the remarkable thing which should distinguish him from the spirits which God had previously created, and which should make man the crowning work of God's wisdom and power was, that he should reveal the life of the spirit and the glory of God in a body formed out of dust. Through the body lust and sin came into the world. Full redemption is designed to deliver the body, and to make it God's abode. Redemption will be perfect and God's purpose accomplished only then. This was the purpose for which the Lord Jesus came in the flesh, and in Him dwelt " all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." For this He bore our sins in His body on the tree, and by His death and resurrection He delivered the body, as well as the spirit, from the power of sin and death. As the first fruits of this redemption, we are now one body, as well as one Spirit, with Him. We are of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. It is because of this, that in the observance of the Holy Supper the Lord comes to the body also, and takes possession of it. Not only does He work by His Spirit on our spirit, so as to make out body share in redemption at the resurrection. No, already, here, the body is the temple of the Spirit, and the Sanctification of soul and spirit will progress the more gloriously, just in proportion as the undivided personality, including the body, which exercises such an opposing influence, has a share in it.

Thus we are in the Sacrament so intentionally fed, by "the real natural body, and the real blood of Christ "-not following the teaching of Luther, that the body of Christ is so in the bread, that even an unbeliever eats the holy body; but in such wise "real," that faith, in a secret way, by the Spirit, really receives THE POWER OF THE H-DLY BODY AND BLOOD FROM HEAVEN, as the food by which soul and body become partakers of eternal life.

(NOTE: The words within inverted commas, " the real natural body and the real blood of Christ," are quoted by Dr. Murray from the Articles of the Confession of Faith of the Reformed Churches of Holland, but Dr. Murray did not add the words immediately following, which declare that " the manner of our partaking of the same is not by the mouth, but by the Spirit through faith." Dr. Murray remained true to the Reformed Faith. His own view is expressed on page 99 by the words quoted from the Heidelberg Catechism.)

All that has now been said about the Supper, must have its full application to-"The drinking of the blood of Jesus." It is a deep spiritual mystery in which the most intimate, the most perfect union with Christ, is effected. It takes place where the soul, through the Holy Spirit, fully appropriates the communion of the blood of Christ, and becomes a true partaker of the very disposition which He revealed in the shedding of His blood. The blood is the soul, the life of the body ; where the believer as one body with Christ desires to abide perfectly in Him,

there, through the Spirit, in a superhuman powerful way, the blood will support and strengthen the heavenly life. The life that was poured out the blood, becomes his life. The life of the old " I " dies to make room for the life of Christ in him. By perceiving how this drinking is the highest participation in the heavenly life of the Lord, faith has one of its highest and most glorious offices.

It remains to inquire:

### III. WHAT SHOULD BE OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS THIS DRINKING?

Beloved brethren, you have already heard that we have here one of the deepest mysteries of the life of God in us. It behoves us to draw near with very deep reverence while we ask the Lord Jesus to teach us and bestow upon us what He means by this " drinking of His blood."

**ONLY HE WHO LONGS FOR FULL UNION WITH JESUS WILL LEARN ARIGHT WHAT IT IS TO DRINK THE BLOOD OF JESUS. " He that drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him." He who is satisfied with just the forgiveness of his sins ; he who does not thirst to be made to drink abundantly of the love of Jesus ; he who does not desire to experience redemption for soul and body, in its full power, so as to have truly in himself the same disposition that was in Jesus, will have but a small share in this " drinking of the blood." He who, on the other hand, sets before him as his chief object, that which is also the object of Jesus : " abide in me and I in you " ; who desires that the power of eternal life should operate in his body; he will not suffer himself to be frightened by an impression that these words are too high or too mysterious. He longs to become heavenly minded because he belongs to heaven, and is going there ; therefore he desires to obtain his meat and drink also from heaven. Without thirst, there is no drinking. The longing after Jesus and perfect fellowship with Him is the thirst which is the best preparation for being made to drink the blood.**

**IT IS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT THAT THE THIRSTY SOUL WILL BE MADE TO DRINK OF THE HEAVENLY REFRESHMENT OF THIS LIFE-GIVING DRINK. We have already said that this drinking is a heavenly mystery. In heaven, where God the judge of all is, and where Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant is, there also is " the blood of sprinkling " (Heb. xii. 23, 24). When the Holy Spirit teaches us-taking us, as it were, by the hand-He bestows more than our merely human understanding can grasp. All the thoughts that we can entertain about the blood or the life of Jesus about our share in that blood, as members of His body ; and about the impartation to us of the living power of that blood ; all are but feeble rays of the glorious reality, which He-the Holy Spirit-will bring into being in us through our union with Jesus.**

Where, I pray, in our human bodies, do we find that the blood is actually received, and as it were drunk in ? Is it not where one member of the body after another, through the veins, receives the blood-stream which is continually renewed from the heart ? Each member of a healthy body ceaselessly and abundantly drinks in the blood. So the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus who unites us to Him, will make this drinking of the blood the natural action of the inner life. When the Jews complained that what the Lord had spoken concerning eating His flesh and drinking His blood was " a hard saying," He said " it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." It is the Holy Spirit who makes this divine mystery LIFE AND POWER in us; a true living experience, in which we abide in Jesus and He in us.

**THERE MUST BE ON OUR PART A QUIET, STRONG, SETTLED EXPECTANCY OF FAITH, THAT THIS BLESSING WILL BE BESTOWED ON US. We must believe that all the precious blood can do, or bestow, is really for us.**

Let us believe that the Saviour Himself will cause us, through the Holy Spirit, to drink His blood unto life. Let us believe, and very heartily and continuously appropriate those effects of the blood which we understand better, namely, its Reconciling, Cleansing, Sanctifying effects.

We may then with the greatest certainty and joy, say to the Lord : " O Lord, Thy blood is my life drink. Thou who hast washed and cleansed me by that blood, Thou wilt teach me every day ` to eat the flesh of the Son of man, and to drink His blood' so that I may abide in Thee and Thou in me." He will surely do this.