

The Ordinances of Christ, Part 2: The Lord's Supper

1 Corinthians 11:23 ESV (Pg. 558) For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when 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 also he took the cup, 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.

27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. **28** Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. **29** For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. **30** That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. **31** But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. **32** But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

- I. Two weeks ago we began a two-part series entitled "The Ordinances of Christ". We learned that an ordinance (sacrament) is a rite specifically instituted by Christ, that unveils a mystery for the church. Saint Augustine, in the 3rd century, said a sacrament (ordinance) is a visible sign of an invisible grace.
 - A. We began by talking about the initiatory rite of believer's baptism.
 1. It is "initiatory" in that it is Christ's authorized method for a person to show they have been crucified with Christ, and raised with him to walk in newness of life, thus being saved from God's wrath, and eternal damnation in hell.
 2. Baptism in and of itself cannot save you, but someone unwilling to obey Jesus in baptism has no sure footing on which to lay claim to salvation. Therefore, baptism is a necessary prerequisite to membership in the church.
 - B. Today we will discuss the Lord's Supper, sometimes called "communion". Some of you might have been a part of congregations where this ordinance was referred to as the Eucharist (from a Greek word meaning "to thank") or the mass.
 1. In some cases where these terms are used, there is a significant disagreement of how this ordinance is to be performed, what it accomplishes, etc. We will use the terms communion or the Lord's Supper.
 2. But, as we discussed last time with the word "sacrament" vs. "ordinance", we shouldn't get hung up on words people use to define the Supper either.
- II. In the passage we read at the beginning; which we read at least in part at almost every communion service, Paul gives the most complete doctrine and instruction found in the New Testament to the Corinthians concerning the Lord's Supper.
 - A. This text tells us many things: (a) The church has been celebrating communion since the beginning, when Christ instituted it -it is not new and should not be changed; (b) there are things that must be considered in order to receive it meaningfully; and (c) because of the sacredness of this rite, there are severe warnings given to those who would partake of it flippantly.

1. Paul says, “**anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks *judgment on himself*. That is why *many of you are weak and ill*, and *some have died*.”**
 2. The Lord’s Supper should always be observed with a dual sense of both great rejoicing, and careful sobriety; a glad heart, yet one that is simultaneously serious and somber. I imagine something similar to the state of mind of most people at their wedding -overcome with gladness that the day has arrived, but in awe of the magnitude of the vows they take.
- B. Therefore the Lord’s Supper is reserved for those wearing Jesus’ wedding ring. It is not a conscience-easing religious performance, or something you do to impress God or make yourself right with Him by performing a churchy duty.
1. On the contrary, it is to be approached as a deeply tender candlelight dinner between Christ and those who can say, “Christ is my beloved, and I am his”.
 2. For this reason, Paul says “examine yourself” and “judge yourself”! Just as you wouldn’t barge over to an anniversary dinner between a man and his wife and pull up a chair, you must realize that if you haven’t put your trust in Christ, completely surrendering to him, you are an intruder, and have no business at this table...more on this later.
- III. So what is this ordinance all about anyway? I want to list for you six things that the Lord’s Supper should remind us of every time we gather:
- A. First, **The Lord’s Table serves as a perpetual reminder of Christ’s dying on the cross for our sakes, and as the pledge of his undying love for us.**
1. In Luke’s account of the Last Supper, where Christ ordained communion, he records these words from the mouth of Christ, after he had broken the bread and passed the cup, explaining that they represented his soon-to-be-broken body, and spilled blood: “Do this in remembrance of Me.”
 - a) It should seem impossible that we should forget such an important reality as Christ’s suffering, but how often are we truly found thinking about his sacrifice? How often does remembering result in waves of praise?
 - b) **“We are so dull and stupid as the result of sin, that we might forget even this, the death of the Son of God for us, and his agony and his shame and all that he endured on the cross. And his eternal love for us, we would even forget that. So the Lord himself ordained and commanded that we should meet together and break bread and drink wine: ‘This do in remembrance of me’”. -D. Martyn Lloyd Jones**
 2. But much more than that, a trip to the communion table reminds us not only of what Christ did on our behalf, but the love that was at the root of such an act! If Christ commands that we keep coming to the table, it can only mean that he never wants us to forget his sacrificial love for us!
- B. Second, **Communion serves as a bond of our union with him and each other as members of his mystical Body.**
1. **1 Corinthians 10:16 ESV** The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not **a participation in the blood of Christ?** The bread that we break, is it not **a participation in the body of Christ?**

- a) The word Paul uses for “participation” is the Greek word for fellowship (koinonia). This same word is translated “communion” in the KJV. Communion literally means “sharing together”.
 - b) Paul is stating here that by consuming, we are literally fellowshiping with Christ, meaning that we are mysteriously aligned with his cause, that we share his sufferings, as well as the benefits of his death and resurrection. We are actually sharing Christ together.
2. But it is important to remember that we are sharing Christ **together**. One of the great blights on the Western Church is the way we have reflected the individuality of the culture; overemphasizing “me” at the expense of “us”.
- a) In the New Testament, we are told to love one another and serve another, to weep and rejoice with each other. But today instead of expecting people to be incorporated into Christ’s Body, we are only allowed to ask if they have made him their “**personal** Lord and Savior”.
 - b) **1 Corinthians 10:17 ESV** Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. One of the marvelous mysteries unveiled in communion, however, is not just that we are participating in, fellowshiping and communing with Jesus, but that by doing so, we are becoming one with each other!
 - (1) This is one of the key reasons why people who have not yet settled issues of surrender and Lordship have no place at this table until they do! This is why we discourage you from bringing your children until they have clearly articulated what it means to trust Christ.
 - (2) To come without belief, or to allow your unregenerate children to come, indicates a total lack of understanding of what means to be made a part of “one body” through the brokenness of Christ.
- C. Thirdly, **The Lord’s Supper is a seal of his promises to us and a renewal of our obedience to him.**
- 1. His promise was that his body would be broken “for you”. Peter reminds us of a promise from the prophecies of Isaiah: **1 Peter 2:24 ESV** He himself bore our sins **in his body** on the tree, **that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.**
 - 2. His promise was that his blood would usher in a New Covenant for those he calls to be his own. **Hebrews 10:11 ESV** And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. **12** But when Christ had offered **for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God**
 - a) As we make our way to the Table, we remember these promises, forever sealed, and we joyfully obey his command to continue gathering in remembrance of those great and precious promises.
 - b) When you come, you can let the bread and cup remind you that, because of Christ, you are dead to sin. You are alive to righteousness. By his brokenness, you have been healed spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically. You can be reminded that Christ has offered one perfect sacrifice that forever frees you from the need to perform or produce.

- D. Fourthly. **Communion reminds us of the blessed assurance of his presence with us who are gathered in his name.**
1. One of the perversions of Roman Catholic teaching is that when you consume the bread and the wine, it magically becomes the *literal* body and blood of Christ. Lutherans believe something similar, though slightly different.
 - a) During the corrective days of the Protestant Reformation in the 1500's, a Swiss theologian named Huldrych Zwingli, desiring to correct this overreach, began to teach that the power of communion was entirely symbolic, and is more memorial, made only effective by faith.
 - b) John Calvin, however taught a "middle ground" approach to communion. While rejecting the position of the Catholics and Lutherans that Christ was literally, physically present in the elements, he taught that by the power of the Holy Spirit, he is made to be spiritually present within them. When the church celebrates communion, "the Holy Spirit unites heaven and earth. Thus, the church soars up to heaven to be with Christ, or Christ descends to the church by the Spirit's power."¹
 2. No matter which position you take, the point is that by faith, miracle or both, Christ is present at this table, and that should give us both comfort and pause for reflection.
- E. Fifth, **The Lord's Supper is an opportunity for those of us who love the Savior to feed spiritually on him who is the Bread of Life.**
1. In John chapter 6 Jesus raises quite a ruckus with the Jews (just as he would have if he'd said this in Lubbock) when he tells them that he is the Bread of Life, symbolizing the manna that came from Heaven, and sustained the wandering Children of Israel for 40 years in the wilderness.
 2. But speaking with deep symbolic clarity about how he must be received, and not just agreed with or "joined", he says **John 6:53 ESV** "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever feeds on 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 Whoever feeds on 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 whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.**
 - a) Jesus quoted Deuteronomy to the devil in the wilderness, telling him, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." What did John call Jesus in his Gospel? "The Logos; the WORD!" Are you living by bread, or are you living by Christ?
 - b) The Lord's supper is an opportunity to come with people that love Christ and feast on his grace, his mercy, his forgiveness, his promises, his joy, his discipline, his direction, his word, his life, his death, his resurrection and his reign. Come to the table, and don't leave hungry! Don't come for bread and juice - John said in John 1 "from his fullness we have all received, **grace upon grace.**" Come and feast on grace!

¹ Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological terms, pg 200; © 2016, Gregg R Allison, Baker Books

- F. Lastly, **The Communion Table is a pledge of his coming again!** In Luke, Jesus said that “I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” and “from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”
1. He does not say “I will not drink it again” as though his death would end his ability to enjoy a banquet with his friends; but rather, “I will not drink it **until** the kingdom of God is finally, irrevocably established and we celebrate!”
 - a) **Revelation 19:9 ESV** And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the **marriage supper of the Lamb.**” And he said to me, “These are the **true words of God.**”
 - b) Paul tells us “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.” Not if he comes, but until he comes.
 2. As you come to the table, say in your heart to the Lord, “Today I remember you with a piece of bread dipped in juice, but tomorrow I shall be seated at your table, robed in white, having cast my crowns at your feet, hearing the unceasing eternal worship of angels, having looked upon your long robe and the golden sash around your chest.
 - a) “Having seen the hairs of your head white, like white wool, like snow. Having been pierced through by your eyes which are like a flame of fire, and having worshipped at your feet which are like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and having been thrilled by your voice which is like the roar of many waters.
 - b) “Having seen the seven stars you hold in your right hand, and the sharp two-edged sword proceeding from your mouth, and having looked into your face which is like the sun shining in full strength.
 - c) “Our food that day will not be just bread and wine, but the leaves of the tree of life, which are for the healing of the nations, and are always in season!
- IV. Let us come to the table, remembering his death, fellowshiping with Christ, united with each other, obediently reveling in his promises, enjoying his real presence, feasting on his fullness, and anticipating his return!
- V. **“Shame on the Christian Church that she should put it off to once a month and mar the first day of the week by depriving it of it's glory in the meeting together for fellowship and breaking of bread and showing forth the death of Christ till he comes. They who once know the sweetness of each Lord's day, celebrating his supper will not be content, I am sure, to put it off to less frequent seasons. Beloved when the Holy Ghost is with us, ordinances are wells to the Christian, wells of rich comfort and of near communion.”** Charles H. Spurgeon